



# **The Suburb United Will Never Be Defeated**

– Youth Organization, Belonging, and Protest  
in a Million Program Suburb of Stockholm



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Cover photo: *Courtyard in Husby*. IMAGE BY AUTHOR.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines the continually reconfiguring response of a youth organization towards a renovation project, Järvalyftet, run by the City of Stockholm in the Million Program suburbs. By analyzing this relationship, I aim to discuss how the youth organization works to mediate inclusion in political and representational spheres. More specifically, I will discuss the intersections between Järvalyftet's development and the claims of belonging made by the youths upon the particular suburb, Husby, where they resided. My interest lies in understanding the conjuncture and disjuncture of claims that have been made to community, locality, and local knowledge in the interaction between the youth organization and the project Järvalyftet. I argue that the forms of community instigated by the youth organization, which were based on locality and "blackness", allowed them to position themselves as key proponents of social and political change, as well as mobilize allies in others who identified with those experiences.

**Keywords:** Youth organization, Husby, community formation, protest, Järvalyftet, Million Program.



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# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

When I lecture, they ask me, “Tell us what’s going on in the suburbs. It’s so exciting!”

No, it’s not exciting at all! It’s a tragedy! It’s a tragedy that marginalized youths are filling in the gaps of responsibilities that the municipality and the state have not taken! (Murat, Rinkeby, 2013)

The Swedish suburbs that Murat was referring to were once taken as the welfare state’s most elaborate prodigy. They were part of the large-scale housing project the “Million Program” (*Miljonprogrammet*), which aimed, and succeeded, at constructing one million dwelling units from 1965 to 1974. The future classless society was to be achieved through a standardization of conditions; social equality was tightly interknitted with spatial uniformity. Over four decades after the Million Program’s completion, the longed-for modernist utopia has become the hub where residents, often as young as their early teens, have enacted countless protests.

Since November 2012 I have been studying a youth organization, *the Speaker*<sup>1</sup>, and its actions of opposition aimed towards a project<sup>2</sup> called *Järvalyftet*<sup>3</sup>. The site for my fieldwork

was Husby, one of the Million Program suburbs, a 20-minute train trip from the city of Stockholm. I pay particular attention to the potential for social change embedded in the youths' struggles for belonging, control and representation over what they named as "our neighborhoods" (*våra områden*).

The Million Program suburbs and their scale and speed of construction, were a result of a housing shortage, as well as grave problems of urban overcrowding (Söderqvist, 1999; Arnstberg, 2000). The dwellings built during the 10 year period still stand for 25 percent of Sweden's housing (Wallenstein & Mattsson, 2010: 8). They were made the homes of the extant citizens and of the incoming laborers and asylum seekers, as the Sweden of the late 1960s was industrially strong and rapidly growing (Arnstberg, 2000). One of my informants, Tor, a man well into his eighties, has lived in Husby since 1975. He once told me that these very suburbs were exciting places to move to during that period. Planners had promised that there would be a tree for every child in the district, "and they kept their promise", he proudly confirmed. The Million Program suburbs were spaces of hope and great aspirations for the future, both for those who, like Tor, settled there, and also for the architects and planners involved in the process of their construction. Author Per Forsman captures the ambitions in the following way:

They [the architects] felt the rhythms, and

heard the sounds between the façades, streets, and terrains, a kind of “landscape music of the artifacts” [*artefakternas landskapsmusik*]. They believed that those who would come to live there would also hear the music, maybe not consciously, but as a feeling<sup>4</sup> (Forsman, 1993: 307).

The green area Järvafältet (Järva Field) upon which Husby was built had been used since 1905 as a military training field. After a decision of Parliament in 1962, Stockholm City was permitted to integrate it into the Million Program plans. The vibrant Järvafältet is still an excellent park for locals and visitors (Figure 1:1). Upon my own flânerie there, even in the harshest and snowiest winter days, there would always be other casual walkers, joggers, people with dogs, or kids playing.

Husby, housing 12,203 residents (Stockholms Stad, 2012), is architecturally simple in its form, with different color patterns for different streets<sup>5</sup>, which artist Folke Romell had designed to make up for the lack of other landmarks (Figure 1:2). The colors help one find home. Or as architect/journalist Jerker Söderlind poetically put it, Husby is an end point of late-modernism, a “prosaic poor-man’s functionalism with hints of Eastern European simplicity” (2000: 55).

A specific trait for many of the housing areas built during the Million Program period is traffic separation, which allows



**Figure 1:1.** *Järvafältet (the Järva Field).*

IMAGE BY AUTHOR.

one to walk around without the slightest glimpse of a motor vehicle. The research group SCAFT<sup>6</sup> produced the Swedish version of such traffic planning in the 35-page little green book that addressed the problem of growing motor vehicle related accidents, from 20,000 in 1956 to 60,000 in 1965 (Söderlind, 2000: 26). The book has had enormous influence on movement possibilities for inhabitants in areas built following its code, as it promotes different levels for different kinds of traffic, with pedestrian bridges over car-trafficked streets (Figure 1:3).



**Figure 1:2.** *Courtyard in Husby.*

IMAGE BY AUTHOR.

The ambitions of the Million Program to build: “fast, good, cheap, and a lot” (Cars & Carlén, 1990: 9) also had consequences. The speed of construction and standardization required to enact it took a toll on quality; the simplistic shapes, and the large scale of the project, had all affected the attractiveness of the areas. Critique was aimed towards the Million Program as early as the first bricks were laid. Journalist Olle Bengtzon published the book *Rapport Tensta* in 1970, proclaiming the City of Stockholm incompetent in regards to planning issues, two years before Tensta was even finished. By the 1990s, the subject of the Million Program



**Figure 1:3.** A pedestrian bridge over Norgegatan in Husby.

SOURCE: J. ÅSBERG, 2012.

suburbs were in public debates discussed as being problem-ridden; as a common designation for them, the expression “concrete suburbs” (*betongförort*) was used (Arnstberg, 2000: 53). The citizens that could afford to choose where they would live, did not choose these areas, and many who had, left, leading to what ethnologist Karl-Olov Arnstberg argued was segregation (*ibid.*). Media coverage of Million Program suburbs such as Husby, greatly focusing on crime-rates and unemployment, has far from ameliorated the matter.

The population statistics from the Järva districts, pointing

to 78.2% of the inhabitants having a “foreign background” (*utländsk bakgrund*), as compared to 27.6% in the rest of the city of Stockholm (Stockholms Stad, Järvalyftet, 2009: 9), are usually entangled in the discussions of segregation, and how it is to be done away with. In the plans for project Järvalyftet, the traffic separation has been highlighted as a major cause for it, where it is stated that building strategically to reduce the spatial segregation (*den fysiska segregationen*) “is good”, and that it should not be forgotten that Järva also has to be strengthened as a “meeting place” (*mötesplats*), attracting people from other areas (Vision Järva 2030: Utlåtande 2009: 46 RV [Dnr 319-2070/2008, 336-2252/2004]: 65). In other words, intervening in the physical structure is seen as having an effect on the area’s demographic make-up.

In the “Structural Plan” (*Förslag till strukturplan: offentlig miljö, bebyggelse och gator, 2011*), two alternatives were presented, for the removal of either two, or of six out of eighteen pedestrian bridges, making the integration between car and pedestrian traffic possible. The traffic separation has developed into a particularly infected question among Järvalyftet’s officials and local residents. What the former signified as building away segregation, was for the later “kicking us out of our homes”, as one informant said.

The dynamics between the planners’ and the politicians’ propositions for Husby’s development, and the critical responses from residents, will take center stage in my thesis.

I am particularly interested in the work of protest that the youth organization the Speaker has aimed towards the project Järvalyftet.

This youth organization, which was founded in Husby in the winter of 2008/2009, has approximately 100 active members, most in their late teens and early twenties, and a little over half of them are male. They were either born, or have spent most of their lives in Husby, while the parents of the majority of their members came from countries such as Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Chile, and so forth, thus mirroring the heterogeneity of the district. Counter to the modernist social pattern of youths moving away from the areas they have grown up in (Arnstberg, 2000: 178), the members seem to have a strong relation to Husby, a relation they had imprinted on their member t-shirts, “I will never move away from here, I swear” (*Jag flyttar aldrig härifrån, jag svär*<sup>9</sup>).

The members of the Speaker have revolted against what they understood as political decisions that were not made in the best interest of the local residents, with the propositions for building away the traffic separation as a case in point. I will discuss how these youths have established boundaries of belonging, produced knowledge seen as springing from within those boundaries to forward their interests, and fashioned incrementing alliances within and beyond the city limits – what they have defined as the “struggle for a just society” (*kamp för ett rättvist samhälle*). These issues are highly relevant

for examination. Cities<sup>10</sup> are at the forefront of processes of neoliberalization, and coupled with the consequent retraction of the welfare state (Harvey, 2005); they are increasingly becoming the points of protest and struggle. Or, as Henry Lefebvre has argued, cities are simultaneously the setting for struggles, as well as their stakes (1991: 386). As ever more people live in them, ever more projects come into being, aiming to establish conditions for that growing and increasingly mobile population. Analyzing the claims that citizens manifests and articulate, within and upon the city, might lead to a greater understanding of the agency<sup>11</sup> that lay in the landscapes of their lives.

## **AIMS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

One of my main aims in thesis is to examine the responses of the Speaker towards Järvalyftet in official and unofficial contexts, and how this youth organization has evolved its approach as the Järvalyftet project has unfolded in the suburbs to the north of Stockholm. By analyzing how the Speaker has worked within Järvalyftet, as well as clashed with the project, I discuss how its members work to mediate inclusion in political processes through the claims made upon the city.

My central research questions are the following: How does political action – situated in an urban periphery – allow a youth organization to converge and compete with municipal and state actors? When do suburban “youths”, often

disregarded as marginal members of society because of their age and their geographic location, become key proponents of social and political change? How do the affective attachments of these suburban youths to what they term “our neighborhoods” allow them to inspire others to envision those changes, and in that fashion incrementing alliances?

Setha Low has argued that theorizing the city is an inextricable part of understanding the changing post-industrial, advanced capitalist, postmodern moment in which we live, which can provide us with insights into the linkages between macroprocesses and the human lives (1996: 384). As Byron J. Good solemnly stated, anthropology should take it as a privilege and an obligation:

to bring renewed attention to human experience, to suffering, to meaning and interpretation, to the role of narratives and historicity, as well as to the role of social formations and institutions, as we explore a central aspect of what it means to be human across cultures. ([1994] 2010: 75)

Following Low’s and Good’s prescriptions, as an anthropologist, I have felt it a privilege, as well as an obligation, to bring my attention to the recent years’ developments in one of Stockholm’s suburbs. My attempt at understanding the city that has become my home has

unveiled numerous general insights into how and why a youth organization can inspire political action and sense that a suburb (in this case Husby) is a center of contemporary social life in Stockholm.

## **ORGANIZATION**

This thesis is divided into six main chapters. In Chapter One, “Introduction”, I provide the reader with a brief context for this study, as well as the aims and research questions that I have been developing throughout my fieldwork.

Chapter Two, “the Minutiae”, revises the methodological and ethical aspects of the process, as well the theories that have structured my ideas concerning the study. I will there introduce the project Järvalyftet, which has instigated much critical response in the residents of the affected districts, and will present a genealogy of the youth organization the Speaker, which has opposed the project through protest actions, writing and publishing critical articles, and mobilizing allies.

Chapter Three, “All Power to the People and the People are Us”, will focus on how members of the youth organization the Speaker have tapped into discourses of race, or “blackness” with the purpose of establishing alternative understandings of belonging and community. Black Power struggles here have played an important role in providing members of the Speaker with models for activist practice,

but also for self-reflexive examination. The boundaries of blackness in the case at hand will be discussed as quite permeable; they have not been based solely upon ideas of phenotype and racial discrimination, but on the solidarity between those who are seen as having endured experiences of political exclusion and economic marginality. I will also examine ideas of the suburb as a source of “identity”, and the political agency that the interrelation between the individual and the neighborhood s/he lives in is perceived as having. Here, I will discuss unrealized suggestions for “neighborhood advisory committees” (stadsdelsråd), which could both enable organizations such as the Speaker access to centers of political power, but could also endanger their connection to the grassroots level on which they operate. Both discourses of blackness, and the suburb as the source for identity construction, establish borders of who is seen as belonging to and as a part of the community. They stand as symbolic rebuffs to Järvalyftet’s goals of developing and reinforcing Järva’s diversity.

Chapter Four, “Stand Up for Your Suburb”, takes its inspiration from a debate article that raised a media storm around questions of race and racism in Sweden in the early spring of 2013, author Jonas Hassen Khemiri’s open letter to the Minister of Justice, “Dear Beatrice Ask” (Bästa Beatrice Ask). This chapter examines whose experiences come to the fore in public discourse, and whose experiences have been omitted. The relevance and application of personal

experiences in both the youth organization the Speaker, and within the project Järvalyftet will be discussed. “Knowing” that was situated in the everyday lives of residents, which project representatives for Järvalyftet called expertise, stood in contrast with notions of the “objective expert”. While knowledge springing from the grassroots allowed for the possibility to present the recent years’ developments of Järvalyftet as inclusive and democratic, it also opened a space for conflict and controversy.

Chapter Five, “If We Are Not Heard, Then We Are Not Seen”, will study how members of the Speaker have actively encouraged each other, as well as the visitors at their citizen café meetings, to believe that the stories one holds from the areas one lives in are most valuable and should be spread in all media channels available. While the media has been reproducing a stigmatizing image of the Järva districts, the Speaker regards such personal narratives as instruments to thwart it.

In the final Chapter Six, I will summarize the arguments that have been knitted into the previous chapters. I will conclude by discussing the competition and convergence of claims between the Speaker, and state and municipal actors. I will accentuate how the Speaker has negotiated their often minoritized position through alternative forms of community, sources of identity and mobilization of allies, in the charged context that is the Million Program Suburbs.

# CHAPTER TWO: THE MINUTIAE

## METHODS

My initial experiences from the Husby district, the site for my fieldwork, came from an art course that I attended during the summer of 2012. The Royal Institute of Art in collaboration with the Moderna Museet (the Modern Museum), established the course, which was a most valuable experience that allowed me to get to know people living and/or working in Husby, the Järvalyftet project<sup>12</sup> affecting Husby and its neighboring districts, and the response it has generated in groups, as well as individuals. This sparked my interest to conduct fieldwork there, and attempt to attain understanding for the many conflicts that the project Järvalyftet had stirred up in the area.

During the summer period Husby was swarming with activity: there was a social scientist conducting research there (a sociologist); there were numerous art projects, both attached to the Royal Institute of Art and to other institutions; a non-profit community art organization was painting what according to them, with its 60 meters in width, was Sweden's largest mural; there was a music festival in the square in late August; journalists who reported on these events were present, et cetera. There was no shortage of spectacle.

These activities both familiarized my presence in Husby the following months when I conducted my fieldwork, but also posed challenges. People did not find it peculiar that I, as a student of anthropology, participated in various events, asked questions and wanted to meet up with them. This was indeed a familiar encounter. They had been through it before, and many, in fact, seemed quite tired of it. As the project Järvalyftet had included various surveys, even with an anthropologist involved, throughout the years, on many occasions people had invested their time and energy into answering questions, playing games, putting dots on maps, and discussing issues while sitting in circles. They had failed to see any substantial outcomes for this investment of their time.

Many of the art projects in the district, which I had the opportunity to observe during the summer of 2012, were tainted by difficulties of engaging with those who lived there. The collective mural on a wall of Husby Centrum (an agglomeration of shops) is a notable example, since it involved 250 people, mostly schoolchildren living in Järva. One of the project leaders whom I have met is Leila, a woman in her late twenties who lives in Husby. Her status as a resident there provided great assistance in mobilizing the unusually large number of participants that this particular project enjoyed. The art course that I attended (at the final stage of a two-year project) on the other hand, and the seminars that followed it during the autumn of 2012, were not as successful at attracting people. While situated in

Husby, and focused on art as an instrument for exploring public space (Performing the common, 2012), this project paradoxically had mostly people from central-Stockholm acting as participants, of whom most were artists themselves.

Attending these meetings showed the complex relations between various institutions, groups and individuals, who – albeit with varying agendas – play into the construction of Husby as an active location, or a place of “excitement”, as Murat in Rinkeby said. The meetings can also be understood as part of the deconstruction of the image of a stigmatized Million Program suburb, as everyone who attended seemed to recognize a discrepancy between what they had experienced in Husby, and the narratives perpetuated in media. Thus, while some of these actors were positioned as antagonists, they were not contradictory. The complex intersection of social networks made Husby even more titillating for developers, artists, activists, potential residents, and, among others – the anthropologist – as the numbers of those flocking to have a piece of it, seemed to be rising by the day.

## Fieldwork in Husby

One of the most enduring, perhaps *the*<sup>13</sup> most enduring, metaphors, or ‘keywords’ [...]  
in modern anthropology is ‘fieldwork’ [...]  
‘fieldwork’ is – it goes without saying, and thus

must be said – the *sine qua non* of modern anthropology, the ritual initiation experience in the discipline. (Berger, 1993: 174)

The central period of research for this thesis occurred during the months of November and December 2012, when I conducted my fieldwork on site in Husby, as well as during several sporadic visits during the early autumn of 2012 and the spring of 2013. During these periods, I used the classic ethnographic method of participant-observation, and I also conducted sixteen semi-structured interviews. While fieldwork is still central to anthropology, as Roger Berger highlighted, what that experience entails may be much broader than his succinct explanation suggests.

In relation to Tommy Dahlén's (1997) study of the making of the new interculturalist profession, Ulf Hannerz notes that Dahlén had found international conferences, including ritual events, workshops, exhibits and parties, central to his ethnography, and concludes that such temporary sites are important in much contemporary ethnography (2003: 210). This point corresponds well to my particular fieldwork experience. Much of the performed participant-observation for the present project occurred in similarly transitory settings, as I attended a variety of meetings, workshops, seminars, openings, art openings and the like. Most of those took place in Husby, but others happened during a few visits to Tensta, Rinkeby, and Fittja. This happened in cases when

I suspected that it might be of relevance to my interests in the youth organization the Speaker, organizations they collaborated with, or the Järvalyftet project's developments. As time allowed, I attended meetings that went beyond these contexts, or if I had gotten an invitation to do so, such as a gathering for all of the locally based organizations in Järva, where their representatives discussed how they could collaborate more productively.

Even if these kinds of settings may be the hallmark of much current anthropological research, the temporary character of these events was also one of my greatest challenges during my fieldwork. Many events took place during the same time in locations far from one another, so I had to prioritize. There were also weeks when there was nothing to attend, such as the weeks following December the 15th, as people were off work for the Christmas Holidays, and many were away. During this time, I tried to meet with those informants who were still in Stockholm and available, which required me to organize as many interviews and casual meetings as I could. Most of these took place in cafés or informants' homes.

Another problem has been the accessibility of events. Living in Stockholm, where this study was situated, it has been all too easy to continue fieldwork even during the period intended merely to focus on writing up what I had so far gathered. This notably endangered both time needed to engage in textual production, as well as the mental distance

from all things happening. As Aull Davies argues, “Withdrawal from the field is not simply a matter of physical distancing; it also involves a degree of intellectual distancing from the minutiae of ethnographic observations in order to discern structures and develop theories” ([1998] 2008: 232).

The part of my fieldwork experience that included participating in group meetings conducted in lecture and seminar formats was also the source of ethical concerns that I dwelled upon greatly. While many of those who organized and participated in the meetings knew my status and purpose as a student of anthropology, this did not apply to everyone in the “audience”. Amanda Coffey argues that the level of reciprocity is a crucial issue in ethnographic fieldwork (1999: 40). She writes that while the fieldworker is gaining data, and usually personal satisfaction, the gains for the other social actors will be less easily assessed (*ibid.*). At such events, I could comfortably assert myself as a participant-observer, take notes, ask questions, and use the coffee breaks to mingle strategically, yet I was worried that I was taking without reciprocating. After consultations with the faculty at the anthropological department and fellow students, I was reassured that I should continue with my work. Indeed, these events were public and open for everyone who wished to join, and they were also filmed, and then the videos were available on websites, some of them were live-streamed, or aired on the radio. Thus, I have treated them as any other published or public material. With respect to my informants’

privacy, however, all names in this thesis are pseudonyms (except for well-known public figures), including the name of the youth organization, the Speaker, even as names themselves are rich with meanings that the baptizers have instilled in them. I have accented that I am an anthropologist gathering material for my thesis in all situations available and during conversations. This has even led to the conversation coming to an abrupt end on two occasions, and one person walking away. Nevertheless, I have treated it as a priority to follow the ethical guidelines of the American Anthropological Association to the best of my capabilities, and I have not used material that could lead to the harm of the integrity of any informants.

In the following section, I will present the context of events during which I was a participant-observer, and as this has been a variety, I will limit myself to describing those I have attended more regularly.

## **Participant-Observation and Interviews**

Hal Foster captures the entanglement between art and networks when he writes that the institution of art can no longer be described in terms of physical space as studios or galleries, but it is a discursive network of other practices and institutions, other subjectivities and communities (1995: 305). This entanglement applies beyond the institution of art, for no group or individual can easily be seen as localized in space, or in a time for that matter, for if one is to explore the

connections of funding and/or emotion that exist and stretch geographies and temporalities, denoting anything as simply local becomes a grave fallacy. While I have used the term “local” in variations as “locally based”, “locals” and so forth, throughout this thesis, I will examine how such concepts are produced and made meaningful<sup>14</sup>.

After the summer course came to its end in late August, our coordinator, Erika, organized a series of three seminars in Husby’s Gallery. The exhibition at the end of the series presented the work of 16 artists, as well as our course work. Those seminars were part of Erika’s research project on e-democracy at DSV (Stockholm University’s Department of Computer and System Sciences), and the School of Architecture and Urban Planning at the Royal Institute of Technology. The participants in these seminars were the artists themselves, but also representatives from organizations involved in Järvalyftet, municipal politicians, various academics (urban studies, sociologists, and beyond), a former employee of Järvalyftet (now retired), an architect, and others. The seminars were a good opportunity to hear about the participants’ work and to learn from the experiences of those who had been active in Husby for years. However, as I pointed out in the previous section, “locals” were the missing element of the audience. This is the impression that I had of several other events that I attended, especially if “outside” institutions organized them, as compared to crowded community centers (or whatever

location it was) when a “local” organization took on the initiative.

One of those organizations that have indeed captured the attention of the residents from Järva, and whose work will be in focus for this thesis, has been the youth organization the Speaker. I became interested in the Speaker as many of Husby’s residents, as well as artists present in the district which I met during the summer of 2012, would constantly refer to it. Thus, I began attending the lecture – meetings – that its members intriguingly called the “citizen café”<sup>15</sup> – in early November, 2012. There, I could conduct participant-observation and meet some of the members, as well as visitors. At the time of my fieldwork the Speaker had four branches in Stockholm, those being Husby, Rinkeby, Norra Botkyrka and Hässelby-Vällingby<sup>16</sup>. I have predominantly attended activities in Husby, where the organization was founded, and where most of those activities took place, and this will be the branch that I refer to in this thesis. The background of the organization itself will be discussed further on in Chapter Two. For now, it is sufficient to know that they were founded as an initiative of the tenants’ association in Husby, while the public housing company Svenska Bostäder (SB) provided funding and premises. The formation of the Speaker occurred during the winter of 2008/2009, and their initial aim was to act as representatives of the opinions of 16- to 25-year-olds, an age group that they had difficulty reaching for the Järvalyftet project. This is still the age group that

comprises the Speaker, but there are several members who have “grown”. While they are closing in on their thirties, they are still active in the organization.

About a year and a half later into their collaboration, the Speaker and SB parted ways. As Amir, a man in his early twenties living in Husby, and also one of the founding members of the Speaker said, this was due to feelings of the group being “used to legitimize their work”. Since the Speaker was founded, its members have been successful in gaining support by the general community in the area, and beyond. The Speaker’s citizen café meetings have always been well-attended. The citizen café became more frequent in the beginning of 2013, as compared to 2012, as they went from two meetings per month, to four. A flyer from the citizen café, describes the meetings in the following manner:

The Citizen Café is a relaxed forum for important social issues and dialogue. It promotes discussing issues relevant to the young as well as enables new meetings between people. Exchange of knowledge, insight, and inspiration is the essence of an active commitment to change and development [...], the citizen café is aimed primarily towards young people aged 17–25 and living in Järva. But when is one too young or too old for dialogue and social change? [...] The citizen

café is an independent part of the Inheritance Fund [*Allänna Arvsfonden*] funded project [...], a project that aims to fulfill young people's right to influence decisions in accordance with the UN Convention, and aims to increase opportunities for youth participation.

These meetings were most often held in Husby's community center known as Husby Träff, Tuesday evenings from 18 to 21 o'clock, but they were also occasionally held in Rinkeby, as well as Hässelby-Vällingby.

I attended a great number of events at Husby Träff, which was moved to a new locale in November 2012 (Figure 2:1). It nonetheless remained popular, as one could go there and have a fika (drink coffee/tea and, if one so wishes, have a pastry). However, the new location always sparked stories of the protest actions against SB's decision for the move, even resulting in a two-week occupation held in January 2012, albeit unsuccessfully. Visitors of varying ages seemed to appreciate the citizen café, but a predominant number seemed to be in their twenties. They were not only from Järva, as many took the train to-and-from Husby from the Central Station at the same time I did.

One of the citizen cafés that I attended was a play about youth living in the Million Program, but usually they were organized as lectures, with prominent speakers, mostly

academics, but also artists of varying genres. The format tended to be a 90-minute lecture, with a 20-minute coffee break, concluding in a 70-minute discussion with the audience. Between November 2012 and April 2013, I attended ten of the citizen cafés, as well as watched videos from older ones. In these latter cases, this also afforded me the opportunity to see what the person holding the camera, and subsequently editing, found interesting about the meetings.

Beside the citizen cafés that the Speaker organized, I attended six other meetings, seminars, workshops that the group had arranged with other organizations from Stockholm and from Gothenburg<sup>17</sup>. Two of these were with the non-profit community art organization “Art in the Suburb” responsible for the 60-meter mural on the wall of Husby Centrum; the first was a four-day mural-workshop in Tensta’s community center, which ended in a seminar format, and the second was a seminar in Husby Träff discussing art as an instrument for social change.

Several of the female members of the Speaker were group leaders of an all-girl youth club, “Girls’ Club”, with branches in Husby and Rinkeby. The leaders were in their late teens and early twenties, came from Husby, Rinkeby, Tensta and Kista, and had previously been members of the club themselves. I was originally going to pay the Husby branch of the all-girl club one visit. This was due to an announcement at Husby’s library of the club having invited politicians to discuss “the

local environment” with the members. As I found it quite enjoyable, I attended almost every meeting they had during November and December. They got together every Thursday from 18 to 21 o’clock in the quarters of an elementary school in Husby and arranged various activities for the approximately 60 members, age 12–15. I explained that I was a student of anthropology doing fieldwork in Husby, and they did not seem to find my presence peculiar, possibly because there have been many projects in which they were engaged, as the 60-meter mural, and a couple of other (*community art*) projects that I was told about. As the children were in such an early age, I have not considered using “material” from these meetings in my thesis, since my interest was in the leaders, and the activities they thought relevant to arrange. During my visits, I both observed and participated in various activities. Writing classes, meeting inspirational speakers and film screenings were all part of the program. The Save the Children Fund (*Rädda Barnen*<sup>18</sup>), Rinkeby-Kista’s District Administration (*Stadsdelsförvaltning*) and the Swedish Inheritance Fund (*Allmänna Arvsfonden*<sup>19</sup>) financed the club; these sources also provided funding for the Speaker’s citizen café meetings.

To attain a more nuanced picture of Järvalyftet and the meaning of related developments, I have conducted interviews not only with members of the Speaker, but also with official representatives for the Järvalyftet project: the project managers 20, a politician, an architect and a city

planner (who were engaged in the composition of the Structural Plan), the Information Officer at Järva Dialogue, two employees at Rinkeby-Kista's district administration, and two artists who have exhibited their work at Husby Art Gallery. In most cases, I have met with representatives for Järvalyftet in their offices. There, they could show maps, models, documents, which greatly assisted the visualization of changes to come. I chose to expand my approach with Laura Nader's ([1969] 1974) "studying up" as to improve the chances of better understanding the forces that have generated the recent years critique and protest actions – and the role and position that municipal and state actors have taken towards them.

Going to and from Husby since June 2012, I have also met about a dozen individuals who worked or lived in Husby and were not a part of the contexts that I have named. They have been most helpful, and through casual meetings provided me with their insights on Husby, how it has changed during the last few years, and their hopes for the future.

What I experienced to be a grave impediment for a free-flowing conversation was my audio recorder, the presence of which I constantly was reminded through my informants' gaze towards it, questions if it was "still on", and the most painful of all statements – "I would say something, but you are recording". This influenced my decision not to record all interviews. I have made "after the fact notes" in order to, as

much as possible, retain an atmosphere of a more informal meeting. Needless to say, even if a recorder was not present, I have made clear that what is said could make its way into my thesis. Throughout my writing I have used exact quotes if the interview has been recorded, or if taken from a setting where I have been able to write down the wording, where others also had a pen and paper in hand, and actively jotted, making me less conspicuous, the citizen café meetings being such an example.

I wrote field notes regularly during my fieldwork period, and did not treat them solely as documentation, but also as a space for the analytical development of my ideas, where I could test “what works” in relation to theory. Field notes were indeed an inextricable element of my fieldwork experience. Even in the case of recorded meetings, I have jotted descriptions of the setting and body language. These have at times revealed more than words themselves.

The internet proved to be useful to a much greater extent than I had originally planned. Of course, my e-mail was of service constantly in order to schedule meetings, but I also found that much information could be found on public Facebook and Twitter accounts, particularly those of the youth organization the Speaker. As I personally do not use the benefits of social media, this I had to learn to do on a daily basis. I also used their homepage as an archive where I could “go back in time” and read articles they published

weekly, and watch videos from previous years, or from events held in cities other than Stockholm. I have also followed the publication of the Speaker's articles in the Swedish national daily newspapers Svenska Dagbladet and Dagens Nyheter, as well as the local magazines Norra Sidan and Mitt i Kista (in the later, I am referring to articles written about them, rather than written themselves).

In relation to Järvalyftet, I have also followed up on articles published in the forenamed papers and magazines, as well as assembled plans, maps and brochures for the developments to come, in order to better understand how Husby and the adjacent areas are changing, and the directions they are taking.

### **The Anthropologist and the Field**

When searching for literature that would assist me in theoretically underpinning my position in the field, I found myself wondering if I should seek aid in titles that indicate the anthropological experience "abroad", or if something in the line of Anthony Jackson's edited volume *Anthropology at Home* (1987) would better apply to my experience. I am a Macedonian citizen, but I have grown to consider Sweden as my home. How much I can be seen as belonging in Sweden, though, was placed under question by recent month's debate. A much criticized project called Reva21, which the Swedish Police Department (*Polisen*), the Swedish Prison and Probation Service (*Kriminalvården*) and the Migration Board

(*Migrationsverket*) initiated, has sparked new questions about Swedish belonging. This initiative normalizes and legalizes the seeking out of undocumented immigrants in public spaces, a clear practice of racial profiling, since those singled out to present their identification documents and confirm their belonging in Sweden were of darker skin or hair color. The youth organization the Speaker took active part in that debate through writing articles published on their own website, other public sites, and participating in protest actions against Reva.

While I have made Sweden into my home, however, I do not equate my experience to that of the people I have met the past few months, for I have come to Sweden as a grown woman, and in the eyes of the law, I am classified as an immigrant. Whereas, the majority of those I have met were born here, or moved here in their childhood. My relation to Sweden as a home cannot be paralleled to theirs, thus I do not claim that I have had a position of being an insider in this way. Even the all too easily employed words “immigrants” or “locals” cover such an immense world of experiences that boundaries between them should not easily be drawn. To show this slippery slope between insider/outsider, I will use a brief example from the field. One informant, Vesna, once asked me:

Are you a *jugge*<sup>22</sup>?

**Daniela:** What? [pause] Oh. Yeah, I am.

**Vesna:** I knew it! I could see it on you [*jag kunde se det på dig*]. I'm a *jugge* too.

Amanda Coffey argues that the potential for asymmetrical field relations and power differentiation in fieldwork relations is concerned with status on a number of levels, as well as that of the body (1999: 71). “This includes what is perceived as acceptable/desirable/normal in terms of physical appearance, as well as what is seen as threatening or intimidating” (ibid.). Yugoslavia did not resonate for me as it did for Vesna, who was in fact born in Sweden. For her, the entity of Yugoslavia seemed to be so tangible that she could even see it reflected on me, on my body; she saw a geographical origin as something we had in common that connected us in some way. Even as I did not identify with the category *jugge*, if the other party had categorized me as one of the “insiders” of such a group of people, this undoubtedly affected the material I have gathered, and if I “truly feel” being a *jugge* plays no part of it. The logics can be seen as functioning in both directions, I might have been excluded from certain information because I am seen as being an “outsider”. In the conversation with Vesna, my position was to an extent open for negotiation, as I could choose to agree that I too am a *jugge*. But when a person has walked away from a conversation, e-mails have gone unanswered, and questions have encountered blocks of silence, much more is at stake than simply confirming myself as an “insider” of a certain kind of experience as I could do with Vesna.

All of my fieldwork was conducted in Swedish. Swedish is not my native language, but having a bachelor's degree in Scandinavian Studies, and having lived in Sweden for three years, I consider myself proficient. For a couple of my informants, Swedish was a second language, and with some of them, I exchanged a few phrases in other languages, such as Serbian. However, I have taken into account the warning of not assuming a congruence of meaning even when sharing a language; meaning is variable even within communities (Spradley [1979] & Deutcher [1984] in Aull Davies [1998], 2008: 125). Where I did not feel that translating to English captures the nuances in Swedish, I have provided the Swedish-speaking reader with the words used, in hope that it would bring her/him closer to the ethnographic material.

As the reader will observe throughout the thesis, a majority of my informants were male. When it comes to the Speaker in particular, mostly men have represented the group and have been visible in the work of “countering” Järvalyftet. Thus, I focused my time and efforts on talking with these individuals. When visiting the all-girl youth club in Husby, I quickly realized that I could not steer the conversation with the group leaders, as the tempo of activities there was incredibly high with a group of 60 girls between 12 and 15 years of age. While I understand that there are many more female voices that I could have included in constructing my argument, one has to realize the temporal constrictions with which one is working. It has also not been merely a question

of with whom I have had the time to converse, but who has had the time and interest to converse with me. Those working within the Speaker were well aware of men having taken a more prominent role. Jashar, one of the founding members, during a citizen café devoted to feminism and anti-racism that he was moderating, asked the women and girls attending if they felt included in their work. He specifically asked whether they felt welcomed to join when members of the Speaker were calling out for a common struggle. There was no response from those in the audience<sup>23</sup>.

Being a woman might not have had direct effect on the material that I have gathered during public events, as what was said and done while they lasted would have most presumably been so even without my presence. During private conversations and in interviews, however, my gender presumably did have an effect, as well as my status as an immigrant. Interestingly, this provided me with more possibilities to access information rather than not. The combination of being an immigrated female and a student placed me in a fairly marginal position, and that however I present the different parties involved in my fieldwork, it would play no significant role for their further existence. All these factors have sculpted what grew to become my fieldwork experience, and as I type this, my ethnographic account of it.

The methods that I described in this section have enabled

me to understand better, and to some extent negotiate, my position in settings where “local identity”, and experiences of “socio-economic marginalization” were of the essence to group dynamics. In the following section, I will attempt to provide a deeper dimension of the theoretical work that I have found related to my ethnographic material.

## **THEORY**

### **Community in the City**

Ethnologist Karl-Olov Arnstberg, who has done research on the Million Program suburbs, has argued that welfare societies provide the citizens with a chance to satisfy their short term needs, while reducing the possibilities for “social anchorage” (socialförankring) (1999: 214). He continues to say that through their choices, the citizens steer towards loneliness, or isolation, as well as an arid being (ibid.). As neoliberal forces are increasingly influencing the welfare state (Harvey, 2005), a neoliberal pedagogical apparatus, according to cultural critic Henry Giroux, “celebrates an unbridled individualism and near pathological disdain for community, public values and the public good” (2013: 134). Through the examination of the workings of the youth organization situated in such an “alienating” context, I aim to in this thesis present a differing perspective.

The city as a site of tension between anonymity and community goes back to the studies of the Chicago School of

Urban Sociology during the 1920s and 1930s, when precisely this tension was at the forefront of interest, or to be precise, the persistence of community in spite of the modernizing and rationalizing push of urban processes (Tonkiss, 2005: 8). While almost a century will soon to have passed since the 1920s and 1930s, interest in community and how it is at play with the anonymity that can be found in modern cities has not evaporated. Neither has “community” as a form of organization, while it might have gone through some changes in hand with technological development, and links of community have considerably stretched geographies. The rhetoric of community has been useful in order to frame spatial and social differences of troublesome minorities, and on the other hand, as a strategy for a more assertive politics of difference (ibid: 9). Examining difference in the context of the Million Program suburbs raises interesting matters to the surface. Building those suburbs stood for integration, and class erasure (Arnstberg, 2000: 163). Clearly, differences are far from being obsolete, as the egalitarian Swedish suburbs have taken center stage for their strategic assertion.

Critical to my understanding of community, and how it relates to difference, have been the writings of Anthony P. Cohen. In *The Symbolic Construction of Community* he defines community as a group of people whose members have something in common with each other that distinguishes them in a significant way from members of other putative groups (1985: 12). A focal point for Cohen’s definition is

the idea of the boundary, as communities emerge in the face of what they define themselves as not being. Upon the context of diaspora, drawing from Léopold Senghor's notion of *décalage*, and Brent Edwards re-working of it, Lena Sawyer argues that difference is an integral part of a community's structure, and close attention should be paid to its unevenness, translations and gaps, which should be seen as simultaneous points of linkage and individuation within a larger whole (2008: 88). This thesis is not about diaspora, but this "double nature" of differentiation will further on be engaged with. In a similar vein, Tonkiss writes that recourse to community "can make sense when public spaces seem forbidding, when strangers appear hostile or potentially threatening", but as she continues, as it is a "shifty concept", it lends itself for both progressive and conservative uses (ibid: 24). Community can be used to define groups ethnically and spatially, providing a boundary around what is perceived as common interests or problems, making them susceptible for governmental intervention (ibid: 25). Clearly community can be used for the reverse, as it can become "a vehicle for mobilization, for opposition, for a positioning of and claim to voice" (ibid.). Cohen's, Sawyer's and Tonkiss' perspectives upon the double nature of the concept community will provide insight in the tension between the youth organization the Speaker and the project *Järvalyftet*, but they also problematize the extent of them being seen in a dichotomist manner.

## Experientially Based Knowledge and Its Dissemination

From the industrial revolution onwards, qualitatively altering a permanent problem, there has developed a type of society which is less interpretable from experience - meaning by experience a lived contact with the available articulations, including their comparison. The result is that we have become increasingly conscious of the positive power of techniques of analysis, which at their maximum are capable of interpreting, let us say, the movements of an integrated world economy, and of the negative qualities of a naïve observation which can never gain knowledge of realities like these [...]. Experience becomes a forbidden world, whereas what we ought to say about it is that it is a limited world, for there are many kinds of knowledge it will never give us, in any of its ordinary senses (Williams, 1981: 164–165).

Countering Raymond Williams, Douglas Holmes and George Martin write that experientially based knowledge has gained a power and élan when practiced as “craft” or “intuitive skill” by bureaucratically powerful individuals in central banks (2005). In line with Holmes and Martin, from what

I have gathered during my fieldwork in Husby, I argue that the stream has indeed turned, and knowledge drawn from personal experiences is gaining momentum. The Speaker's struggles for representing "their own stories" in public debates will exemplify this, as well as the suggestion they have circulated for new forms of political organization, the "neighborhood advisory committees" (*stadsdelsråd*), which will be discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis.

The members of the Speaker might not necessarily have the bureaucratic power that the forenamed scholars imply, but they still draw their knowledge from privileged networks of relationships, and construct representations upon which they claim authority, much like the experts in the banking world in Holme's and Martin's work (*ibid.*). As these two scholars sublimely put it:

What makes these anecdotal accounts something more than merely another form of "information" or "data" is their social character – mediated through networks of interlocutors – conferring on these accounts distinctive authority that can inform policy formulation and action (*ibid.*).

This description of the experientially based knowledge represents a rupture in the image of the expert, who is the embodiment of neutrality, authority and skill, and operates "beyond good and evil" (Rose & Miller, 1992: 187). The

expertise of the locals, if you may, was the basis upon which the members of the Speaker in their initial stage were to collaborate with the “standard” experts within the project Järvalyftet. This collaboration was far from conflict-free.

As Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller write about “political authority”, in general, expertise tends to pose problems for that authority because it has “the capacity to generate what we term enclosures: relatively bounded locales or types of judgments within which their power and authority is concentrated, intensified and defended” (1992: 188). Problems like these arise even in the case of the “expertise” of the local residents. As the results of the collaboration between the Speaker and the project Järvalyftet did not necessarily tally up with the expectations of the former, I argue, the members of the Speaker have focused their recent work on producing such an enclosure that defines who is to have an influence upon the making of political decisions, openly countering the existing political representation.

### **Producing Locality and Going Beyond It**

In this thesis the use of local, locality, locally based, and so forth, are in line with the writings of Arjun Appadurai, who in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* argues for a relational and contextual, rather than scalar or spatial dimension of such terms (1996: 178). In their contrast, according to Appadurai, stands the “neighborhood”, which encompasses the actually existing social forms in which

locality is variably realized (ibid.). Local knowledge can thus be understood as the means for producing local subjects, as well as local neighborhoods where those subjects can be recognized and organized (ibid.). This point coincides with Rose and Miller's discussion of enclosures (1992: 188), for the authority which members of the Speaker have sought to assert upon the rights of representation and decision making of what is denoted as being "our neighborhood", becomes instrumental in producing symbolic boundaries surrounding that neighborhood and organizing the subjects that relate to it.

An outcome of subject's engagement in social activities of production, representation, and reproduction, according to Appadurai, is the creation of contexts that exceed material and/or conceptual boundaries of the neighborhood (1996: 185). Various media channels, predominantly on the internet, have provided many possibilities for spreading ideas, finding commonalities with other groups and individuals, and thus fashioning incrementing alliances. Shahram Khosravi and Mark Graham write that the internet annihilates geographical distance and transcends boundaries between classes, gender, sexualities and so forth, endowing it with political significance (2002: 219). And while it does provide the space for political encounters, where the subjects' linkages to community can greatly be expanded, it is also at odds with the production of what locality is, and problematizes the local character of the knowledge produced. Thus, this thesis will also examine how informants reconcile these poles of being situated in place,

but also find points of similarity and togetherness with other groups and individuals that were geographically removed.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Järvalyftet**

Svenska Bostäder's irregular maintenance of the housing and community spaces was a point of major concern among those living in Husby. This municipal housing company owns 2,300 out of the 4,833 apartments in the district. Numerous protests ensued, such as the one in May 2005, when approximately 150 people took to the square in Husby and made claims for better living conditions and better communication with SB. There were even protest actions that included leaving the garbage from a construction site that had not been cleared in front of SB's office in Husby.

Conducting a housing survey in 2006 was the response, which has been the starting point for the new official, long-term goals for the area. The resultant document was called Vision Järva 2030, which a project group put together, comprised of members from the City Executive Office (*Stadsledningskontoret*), the Development Administration (*Exploateringskontoret*), the City Planning Office (*Stadsbyggnadskontoret*), and the Traffic Administration (*Trafikkontoret*). The document paved the way for the reconstruction project Järvalyftet. It specified its aims as the following:

[a] long term investment to improve the living conditions in the neighborhoods around the Järva field: Akalla, Hjulsta, Husby, Kista, Rinkeby and Tensta. The aim is that through the participation [*medverkan*] of residents and collaboration [*samverkan*] with other partners to create a positive social and economic development that makes Järva into an area where many people want to move – and remain. [...] To achieve this, the political steering committee considers that conscious efforts are needed in four main areas: good accommodation and a varied urban environment, security, improved quality of education and better language schooling, more jobs and raised entrepreneurship<sup>24</sup>.

Vision Järva 2030 consists of nine so-called development themes: activate the Järva free zone [*Järva friområde, the green field*] and strengthen the connection between the districts, build anew in strategic locations, establish a link between the districts [*länka samman stadsdelarna*], link the street network – where it is seen as useful [*koppla ihop gatunätet – där det gör nytta*], develop the central streets, respect and develop the values in the existing structures, do away with the traffic separation

– where it is seen as useful, make the road networks clearer, use new development to strengthen the identity of the neighborhoods. (Utlåtande 2009: 46 RV (Dnr 319-2070/2008, 336-2252/2004: 2)

The local residents' critique towards the project continued, despite what seemed to be an overreaching character of the future goals. The first plans that were presented in late 2007 in Husby's community center, Husby Träff, instigated yet another series of protests, informants have told me, due to the predicted 75% rent increase, and the tearing down of several buildings.

Following these uprisings, during June 2009, the City of Stockholm, SB and the Tenants Association (*Hyresgästföreningen*) organized a four day event called the Dialogue Week, housed in the Dialogue Office (*Järvdialogen*), *Järvalyftet's* information office in Husby. With no shortage of spectacle, Husby Square was ceremoniously decorated with cardboard cutouts informing of the event, an art-collective went about the square to draw attention to the activities in the Dialogue Office, and decal footprints were fastened to the footpaths leading there, all attempts to lure people into participating. The decal footprints can still be seen, faded after years of passersby and children's play.

The aims of the Dialogue Week were to facilitate a

possibility for those who live and work in Husby to discuss the area's development with the property owners (*housing companies*), tenants' associations, planners and managers (*White Arkitekter*<sup>25</sup>, 2009: 10). To thank the people for their participation, a lottery was drawn on every one of the four days, rewarding one person per day with one month of free rent, and one with a 1,000 Swedish crowns present card. And indeed, only in Husby, approximately 2,000 people had come, producing 8,000 sheets of opinion on how the area should be improved.

The Dialogue Office was equipped with a floor mat with a large aerial photograph of Northern Järva, along with a large cardboard aerial photograph of Husby, and video-interviews with people from Husby were screened. There were also photographs of various locations in Husby exhibited, with texts such as: "What do you think about Husby Centrum?", "Are the courtyards safe?", "How do you see Husby?" (ibid: 12). The participants could fill in a survey called "Say what you think", where they could write what they thought was good, bad and what needs to be improved in Järva, and accordingly place a red (*bad*), green (*good*) and yellow sticker (*this is where I live*) upon the aerial photograph of Husby (Figure 2:2). There was also a wishing tree, where one could write one's wish upon a silk ribbon, and tie it to the branches. The majority of the surveys and materials that were gathered from the Dialogue Week in Husby, as well as those from Akalla, Rinkeby, and Tensta, were subsequently lost during a cleaning of Svenska

Bostäder's storage areas (Gustafsson, SvD, 2012).

Out of the Dialogue Week came the Structural Plan (2011), a product of a team of representatives from the City Executive Office, the City Planning Office, the Development Administration, SB, and the Stockholm firm White Architects. In comparison to the first plans presented in late 2007, which stirred up a storm of protests, the Structural Plan bore the legitimacy of being co-related to the Dialogue Week, which had "provided a rich base for the opinions of the residents of Husby" (*Stadsledningskontoret et al*, 2011: 7). The construction and reconstruction that Järvalyftet is to bring about are presented in the Structural Plan as an intertwining of the desires and choices of residents with the construction suggested, setting into alignment the residents of Husby, with objectives, organizations and individuals involved in Järvalyftet, or as stated:

The residents of Husby desire a renewal of their neighborhood [...] and it has been confirmed in the dialogues with Husby residents that have followed. The Desired renewal is now underway. (ibid: 5)

When I mentioned the Dialogue Week to informants, I would often be met with a contemptuous wave of a hand, deep breaths of air, and at times direct statements such as "It was a joke". If the Dialogue Week aimed at setting the basis for

Husby's continued renewal upon its residents' opinions on the housing, services, and culture (White Arkitekter, 2009: 10), why did discontent take further shape through squatting, protest and petitions in Husby even after the Dialogue Week? As I have been told on several accounts, the driving force for so much critical response from the people living in Husby was the direction in which Järvalyftet continued to develop even after the Dialogue Week. Magnus, the Information Officer for Järvalyftet, mentioned that "making a plan that means taking away the bridges, after we have been through the Dialogue Week was a stupid thing to do". The traffic separation was not under the jurisdiction of Svenska Bostäder, Magnus' employer, but the City of Stockholm.

A vociferous critique rose up around the question of the traffic separation. Several community-based organizations countering Järvalyftet, including the Speaker, and many local inhabitants, occupied one of the bridges in the autumn of 2011. They also organized the gathering of a petition consisting of 1,600 signatures against the possible demolition of the pedestrian bridges. Informants offered me with many reasons why the bridges should remain as they are; they were "the best thing about Husby", "Husby's identity", and a significant part of "children's habit and play". There were two suggestions made in the Structural Plan that the Urban Planning Committee (*Stadsbyggnadsnämnden*) was to decide upon, being the "New-old" (*Nygammal*) and "Integrated" (*Integrerad*) street structure. The first one required the



**Figure 2:2.** Aerial photo over Husby, exhibited in Järvalyftet's Dialogue Office (Järvdialogen) in Husby. IMAGE BY AUTHOR.

removal of two, the second of six out of eighteen pedestrian bridges (Stadsledningskontoret et al, 2011). The removal of the pedestrian bridges, and raising the level of the motor vehicle trafficked road was to make the construction of a new street connecting Husby to the adjacent IT cluster Kista possible. This street was to raise the influx of people in Husby, and enable the planned "Culture House" at the northern train station exit to economically sustain itself, since Husby would be easily accessible for drivers (ibid.).

Addressing the local inhabitants as individuals whose intimate knowledge from their homes and environments is relevant for the changes the area will undergo, also built up

expectations that the knowledge shared will have a tangible impact. The Dialogue Week designated that numerated and tricolored input as unique and meaningful. Still, the Structural Plan that resulted from the Dialogue Week set guidelines for reconstruction that clashed with what the residents perceived as qualities in Husby – the proposed removal of the traffic separation being such an example. This made palpable the boundaries of how much residents could, or could not, influence change. The recurring comment of “they [the project representatives for Järvalyftet] don’t listen” affirmed the existence of a gap between their suggestions, and unfolding developments even after the Dialogue Week. What was also often questioned was the authenticity of the efforts to have meetings, discussions, and dialogues. These doubts made palpable the boundaries of what can be influenced “from bellow”, or as Amir, the member of the Speaker, said:

What we need are dialogues, but not like the fake ones we have been dealing with so far. There are ways to include people, but you really have to listen to them ...

## **The Speaker**

The genealogy of the youth organization the Speaker goes back to the initiative that the local Tenants’ Association took, who together with SB saw a lack of involvement of young

people in Järvalyftet's dialogue work, and decided that they needed greater involvement with the age group of 16 to 25. The idea began taking form, members of the Speaker told me, after the first round of dialogues in Akalla in 2009, as the few youngsters who would show up would only idle about during the meetings. Amir once joked, that "they would go there for the sandwiches". The several youths who started the work, Jashar explained, were far from the organization that the Speaker has now grown to be. In the organization's first years, as Jashar told me, they were "individuals coming to work together on assignments". They also felt it imperative to start the organization due to the 2008 murder of the 23 year old Ahmed Ibrahim Ali from Husby, called "Romário" (after the Brazilian football player), who was popular for his support of activities and organizations that were focused on youths. As those accused of being involved in the murder were as young as 16 years of age, the tragedy initiated many media debates, as well as protests urging for matters of youth violence to be addressed. The Speaker thus became a way to honor Romário, and to strengthen the presence of youths in the "public sphere"<sup>26</sup>.

The Speaker began its work by publishing an online paper, and apart from that, the explicit expectations for its members on the point of their collaboration with Järvalyftet were that they would gather information on the issues that affect the lives of youths from the Järva districts. They were to compile suggestions in reports that the planning organs of Järvalyftet

would use, and provide the youths involved with feedback, thus maintaining a cohesive relationship between Järvalyftet and a group that they needed assistance on working productively with. The organization was started in the form of a gårdsförening, literally “courtyard association”. Jashar explained that the aim for such associations was to raise feelings of community and well-being (*gemenskap och trivsel*), which the housing company SB funded.

In the beginning of their collaboration with Järvalyftet in 2009, informants have explained that they had gotten no instructions on how they were to work within the project. Youths were seen as a group that did not participate in the various meetings that were organized, thus the Speaker was to fill that slot in whatever way manageable. First, about half a year into the collaboration, they had gotten a concrete assignment and a budget to assemble a report based on their own questionnaires, standardized for youths in their own age, and let them take photographs of their environment. Such practices had a goal of “making them [the youths who took the photographs] feel they have the power”, as Ali, a man in his twenties, also working with youths with another organization in the Järva areas affiliated with the Speaker, once semi-ironically noted. A methodological disjuncture that was pointed out in the analysis of Järvalyftet made on behalf of the City of Stockholm, sheds light upon the concerns within the project, which could have led to the Speaker getting the assignment:

There is also a lack of routines for performance and goal achievement for the individual projects that Järvalyftet funds. For projects financed outside of Järvalyftet, which are intended to form the bulk of Järvalyftet's work, it is naturally more difficult to require having joint guidelines on follow-up work. We understand that many people appreciate the non-bureaucratic way of applying for project funding, but it would be reasonable to have requirements on developing qualitative and quantitative objectives that can be monitored. Some interviewees [working for Järvalyftet], state that on the local level it is difficult to both have the right skills and the time to do evaluations, and it would therefore be of great value if Järvalyftet could offer methodological support and help in evaluations (Governo, 2010: 17).

Drawing from Anthropologist Marilyn Strathern, Johan Lindquist writes that diverse contemporary bureaucratic organizations, be it universities or development NGO's, are under a continuous demand to assess and provide evidence that their goals are being realized with the rise of an audit culture (2010: 225). This is not to argue that organizations

such as the Speaker are bureaucracies per se, but, owing to their complex interrelations with funders, they also need to defend their existence through providing material proof of what they do and why they are necessary.

In 2010, the Speaker produced the 20-page report, which was based on the work with five focus groups that involved 40 youths in the age range between 18–25 years. In it, they had divided the gathered opinions into four sections: the failing quality of education in the area, lack of employment, housing, and cultural and sports activities. Thus, Järvalyftet could use the “social capital”, the “relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu, 1986: 248), which the youths had, to attain information from a group they could not easily reach. The Speaker had assembled a fairly large group of youths to work with and translated their ideas and demands to a form easily accessible for professional actors involved in Järvalyftet. However, members of the Speaker felt that their investment of time and energy did not contribute to Järvalyftet’s further developments. Jashar and Miguel, another member in his mid-twenties, told me that even if some elements required a minimal financial and temporal investment, promises were made, but not fulfilled, so the collaboration soon became burdened with discontents on their behalf, as Jashar said:

After they had their first dialogues, we put our names on the line for them. We told friends and relatives that this [Järvalyftet] could be a

good thing. We were not sure, but we needed a change here. [...] A few months after these dialogues we noticed that they lost interest in this whole thing with citizen-influence [medborgarinflytande]. They did nothing with these ideas that we gathered, even if some of them were small things, like fixing a basketball-hoop. [...] And we told them, we have been here and collected these ideas, we want something to happen, otherwise we will look like idiots! They just say “We’ll do it, we’ll do it”. [...] But the real breaking point was when they closed the Health Clinic here [Vårdcentralen]. [...] We said “Järvalyftet is about developing this area, but you go on closing things down”, and it’s the same politicians that do it, how does this add-up? [...] And we said “If you don’t do anything, if Järvalyftet does not make sure that this Health Clinic stays, then we will do all we can to counter your work [motarbete er]!”.

Along with other community based organizations, the Speaker protested against the decision that the County Council (*Landstinget*) took, to have the Health Clinic closed. Indeed, it was moved to Akalla in April, 2011, while a private one reopened in the same locale. The members of Speaker had spoken; they had spoken not only for themselves, but had

invested their social capital into establishing a well-functioning relationship between Järvalyftet and the local population. The results from this investment, though, had failed to meet the expectations of the youths on influencing the directions of the developments, thus clearing the path for them to pursue goals for their organization which did not endanger the relationships they had built up in their environment, but rather, strengthened them.

The methods that the Speaker have used in order to renegotiate their position towards Järvalyftet as that of opposition have ranged through protest, publishing articles in various newspapers, gathering petitions and meeting with City Officials to present accumulated ideas. Placing themselves as opponents to Järvalyftet's plans, the Speaker did not become a pariah, but a part of a majoritarian stance the population in Husby had taken, articulated through the numerous acts of protest during the previous years. The youth organization's work has not kept a focus on Järvalyftet which they might have to an extent had in the formative years of 2009 and 2010. Currently, their main goals for the organization are to grant young people, who would not necessarily otherwise possess such a possibility, with a medium of expression. Upon my meeting with Jashar, he explained it in the following manner:

We mobilize, or we try to organize young people in different suburbs, as it is now, in

Stockholm. So young people who are not part of different political contexts, which are not members in different political parties, or other organizations, often with no habit of being in associations [*föreningsvana*] from before. Youths that have important things to say, people who are stomped upon time after time, but have no channel to express their position, this is what we try to mobilize, and fight for social rights. [...] An organization that works with different social and cultural activities, that have the community in mind [*community-tanken*], like homework assignment assistance, festivals, trips, barbeques, everything – from things like this to larger political questions that we try to tie together...

The Speaker has expanded their activities towards establishing pedagogical platforms, such as the citizen café, screenings of films with “political and social content”<sup>27</sup>, and study assistance classes (*läxhjälp*). They have also initiated several campaigns for a higher quality of education in the suburb, as well as for the renovation of a local football field, and have actively criticized the project Reva. As already mentioned, the Speaker currently has four branches in Stockholm, this being Husby, Rinkeby, Norra Botkyrka and Hässelby–Vällingby. They also collaborate with other

organizations from Stockholm, and beyond, who are often named as “brothers and sisters”. This collaboration is particularly active with an organization from Alby<sup>28</sup> (Botkyrka Municipality, Stockholm), the Gothenburg group, and with a newly founded organization from Husby’s adjacent Tensta district, which has protested against the high rents and lack of renovation of the neighborhood they live in – running themes in the work of all the forenamed organizations. Through the lens of the Speaker’s collaboration with other groups, the suburbs, which are in the plans for Järvalyftet presented as in need of a physical intervention to become a “meeting place” for people from other areas, can be seen as already being connected to each other in complex ways, which will be examined in the forthcoming chapters.

In Chapter Two, I have summarized the methodological aspects of my fieldwork, as well as the main theories that have been intertwined with the ethnographic material. The inclusion of the brief history of the project Järvalyftet, unfolding in the suburbs to the north of Stockholm, was aimed as to provide the reader with some of its goals, as well as the points of its greatest critique. As the work of the youth organization the Speaker will take center stage in this thesis, I have presented their genealogy, and the methods they have used to articulate and manifest their claims. In the following chapters, I will examine how they establish the borders of who is seen as belonging, and as a part of their community. I argue that the Speaker’s work stands as a symbolic rebuff

to Järvalyftet's goals of developing and reinforcing Järva's diversity. I also analyze how members of the Speaker actively encourage each other, as well as the visitors at their citizen café meetings, to spread the personal stories of socio-economic marginalization and discrimination to all channels available, as they believe in the value of those stories, as well as their potential to question, and ultimately create expansions in representational, and decision-making fora.

## CHAPTER THREE: ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE, AND THE PEOPLE ARE US

In political discourse's problem of 'what shall we do?' the 'we' is always called into question. Part of the issue becomes, if we pursue this or that course of action open to us, who could affirm it, who could regard it as done in his name? Who will still be with 'us' if 'we' take this course of action? (Pitkin, 1972: 208)

The youth organization the Speaker was founded in the winter of 2008/2009 to represent the voices of youths in the Järvalyftet project, a group that was underrepresented in its work of gathering the opinions of the residents. Within the next few years, members of the Speaker had growing feelings of discontent with the role they seemed to play, or as many informants have so often said, they felt they were being used to legitimize the project. Confronted with what they saw as the contradictory nature of Järvalyftet<sup>29</sup>, since 2011<sup>30</sup> they re-positioned themselves to counter the constructions and re-constructions that were taking place, and the ones to come. The Speaker, as an organization, has gone from its function of making the Järvalyftet project a more inclusive one, to as they say, leading a struggle (*föra en kamp*) for a just society (*rättvist samhälle*), where the people are the ones deciding over politics.

Susan Fainstein has argued that the built environment structures social relations, causing commonalities such as race, ethnicity, class, and so forth, to assume spatial identities (1994: 1). Social groups in turn, she continues, imprint themselves on the urban structure through the formation of communities, competition for territory and segregation (ibid.). Thus, following Fainstein, in this chapter I will focus upon how commonalities have been imprinted on in the urban landscape of Husby, and its reciprocal effect upon those commonalities. This will be done through examining how the “we” of the youth organization’s community has been continually reconfigured in relation to the bureaucratic definitions, but also in relation to the presence of other groups and individuals that have “shown solidarity” (*solidariserat*) with their struggle. I will examine how youths that have been saturated with “well-intentioned Swedes” trying to engage them to define their own struggles, strategically form the grounds for their togetherness and belonging. Through this endeavor I hope to illuminate the differences between what municipal and state actors see as “problems”, and what the youths define for and about themselves.

The theoretical works that have been crucial to my response to the matters I will address are Anthony P. Cohen’s *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (1985), as well as Lena Sawyer’s *Engendering ‘Race’ in Calls for Diasporic Community in Sweden* (2008). At the core of the following discussion is

the notion of the boundary (Cohen, 1985), not necessarily as a concept of exclusion, but one of a shifting and relational dynamic, or as Sawyer writes, as points of simultaneous linkage and individuation in a larger whole (2008: 88). The section that follows is about the role that race and Black Power language and symbolism have played in establishing boundaries, but also in engaging people with, and maintaining, the community of the youth organization the Speaker. The discussion deals, however, less with phenotype, than it does with informants' experiences of political and socio-economic marginalization. The dynamic character and multiplicity of meanings that members of the group invest in such concepts will be seen as functioning both as a border, and crossing, for other groups and individuals.

## **ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE: BLACK POWER AND COMMUNITY**

In late December, I was invited to dine at a Persian restaurant in Akalla with the group leaders of the all-girl youth club from Husby, who also were members of the Speaker. After a more than a generous serving at the Persian restaurant, we were to continue the evening with a visit of the Speaker in Husby at their year's-end gathering. Husby Träff could barely contain the group of about 150 people who had come for the occasion. Since we had not arrived on time, we had great difficulty making it past the door, and we had to wait until others exited. The size of the new quarters of the community

center was a matter of much grievance; complaints were often made that not too many people could fit inside. My informant, Tor, once told me it was a conscious decision; politicians were taking away the possibility for people to form large gatherings.

Tables were set in the center of the theater room, and the projector was on. The leaders from the all-girl club and I arrived when a screening was about to begin, so we shuffled around a few chairs with great haste, and took a seat. We were shown a half-hour recording from the Speaker's 2012 trip to Gothenburg where they had participated in the 1<sup>st</sup> of May rally of the youth organization there, the Gothenburg group. Similarly to the Speaker, they had also arranged protest actions urging for the renovation of the suburbs on the terms of the people who live in them.

As the video from Gothenburg's 1<sup>st</sup> of May rally unfolded, the special guest for that occasion was introduced. It was none other than Bobby Seale himself, who had co-founded the far-left organization *The Black Panther Party* in California in the 1960s. In the filmed segments from Bobby Seale's speech in Gothenburg, one could see that time had left its mark on his face and posture, but his voice still bore a great deal of energy. Dressed in a blue shirt, black suspenders, and a black beret, he chanted, "Power to the people! Power to the people! Power to the people!"<sup>31</sup>. A whirl of excitement came from both the audience in the footage, and the one in Husby

Träff. “Power to the people”, they repeated, and raised fists in the air.

The 1<sup>st</sup> of May footage from Gothenburg, also containing some material filmed at the Speaker’s locale in Husby, was intertwined with black and white clips of speeches and protest actions from the Black Panther Party’s apogee during the 1960s and 1970s – leather jackets, black berets and sheer intensity. In the footage from Husby, we could see Jashar squatting against a graffiti painted inside wall, and discussing impressions from the trip:

When Bobby was talking about the riots and the 1960s, I felt like I had been there! If I was young in the US, during that time, I could be one of them [the Black Panther Party].[...] Those people, they saw something special in the Black Panthers; the way they spoke, the way they dressed, that’s what you got to do, you got to be on the edge!

The intertwined narratives that were screened were forging a link between people removed temporally and spatially; they were “brothers”, as Jashar continued to say, who had also fought for a “more just society”. Members of the Speaker commonly referred to many other organizations – such as the Gothenburg group – as “our brothers” (with the occasional “and our sisters” added), thus becoming more

than friends. Karl-Olov Arnstberg argues that friendship is the most “honorable” of all relations between people (as compared to the remaining two, between neighbors, and between relatives) (2000: 209). Arnstberg then points out that friendship can also be lost, which leads to many friends being designated as “brothers” and “sisters” as to underline their relevance (ibid.). In a related argument, in her review of Kat Weston’s *Families We Choose* (1991), Marilyn Strathern writes that chosen families “make explicit the fact that there was always a choice as to whether or not biology is made the foundation of relationships” (1999: 196). As Strathern and Arnstberg suggest, relationships such as those between the Speaker and the Gothenburg group are deeply important, as well as they are a matter of choice. Kinship thus traverses further than biology, and enters the realm of solidarity – one based on experiences of marginalization in minoritized areas.

The screening also seemed to serve a pedagogical function, working on several levels. In the beginning of the footage, the viewers were presented with the speeches that members from both youth organizations held. They discussed contemporary issues – youth unemployment in the suburbs as an example – issues that the audience could relate to problems they might have encountered in their everyday lives. The intertwined segments from the 1960s and 1970s during the Black Panther Party’s apogee, sculpted a context for the struggle against racial and class oppression, widening the community of insurgence. When members of the Speaker

talked about the presence of Bobby Seale, and the Black Panther Party's physical appearance and rhetorical style in the footage, they underlined a reflexive dimension of how one "bodily" becomes an activist, the aesthetics that would achieve an optimal result – attracting supporters to see in you "something special". Indeed, some of the Speaker's members did see something special in taking part in such activities as the Speaker organized. Fatima is both a member of the Speaker and a group leader at the all-girl youth club, and was sitting next to me that evening in Husby Träff. In our between-the-scenes chat, she commented:

Sometimes I sit and think about existential questions, like why am I here, why have I been born? Life has no meaning if you only live for yourself; this is why these kinds of gatherings [both the one in Husby Träff and the Gothenburg 1<sup>st</sup> of May rally] are so important! It makes me feel that we can help each other. We can do anything...

As Helena Wulff has argued in the context of dance, the mirror can be used so that the dancer can see how movements both look and feel when they are done right (Wulff, 2013). The screening in Husby Träff can be understood as such a mirror through which the members from the Speaker could evaluate their own performance

when they made their presentations at the 1<sup>st</sup> of May rally, while observing how someone else enacts an activist role, someone who can be seen as an example, in this case being Bobby Seale. Seeing was not the only sense to be employed, but as Wulff pointed out, one was also to feel when one has attained a standard that feels right. The excitement from the bustling crowds that gathered for the Black Panther Party in the black and white segments from the 1960s and 1970s incited a similar atmosphere among those present in Husby Träff. The footage thus became both a probe and set a standard that the Speaker as an organization was to attain or even surpass, a standard of affect that they should arouse in crowd.

The admiration and respect that several members exhibited towards Bobby Seale and the Black Panther Party, both in the video shot during the 1<sup>st</sup> of May Rally and in the audience in Husby during the screening, underlined the role of a model for practice that such prominent activist personae play for the Speaker. This was not to imply, however, that they did not critically examine the points in which the Black Panther Party and the Speaker came together, and where they went apart. Already in the beginning of the screened material, shot on the bus towards Gothenburg, a young man expressed his doubts upon the extent of similarities one should see as existing between the two organizations:

We have to remember that the Black Panthers are about USA of the 1960s. We are living fifty years later in Sweden. This is worlds apart. Their struggle can't just be applied to our struggle ...

The audience in Husby Träff followed his comment with applause and supportive whistling. The young man's words, coupled with the reaction from the audience, shed light on an understanding of the specificity of conditions that have led the youths in the Speaker to organize and invest time and energy in their "struggle": one that is nonetheless specific to the suburban conditions of Husby, even as it connects to similar movements worldwide.

The organizing vector for the youths in the Speaker was the idea of the familiar neighborhood where one has spent many years, or their whole lives, what I would often hear be referred to as "our neighborhood", *vårt område*. The questions in which they as an organization were engaged were seen as susceptible to the spatio-temporal influences that living in Stockholm, in Husby in particular, in the present bore with it. Even though the Black Panther Party was inspirational, their work could not and should not be replicated. The Speaker and the Black Panther Party, as the young man in the footage pointed out, were "worlds apart". Still, what was seen as an experience of being in a disadvantaged position in society, upheld the grounds of their commonality.

I met with Amir one day in December after his lectures were over at his alma mater, where he was a student. The story he told me of the collaboration with other organizations during the Speaker's occupation of the community center Husby Träff against its move to the adjacent, but smaller locale, during two weeks in January 2012 added depth to the meaning of the use of references to the Black Panther Party.

Comfortably leaned on the faux leather seat in a crowded university café, Amir's speaking voice was gaining in strength, and his body language was becoming more animated. He would smash his fist against the table, causing a wave of vibration to surge through our cups and phones. Those sitting in our surrounding sent us a great deal of looks. Amir did not seem to be bothered; he was in his element. I have seen him speak publicly on various occasions, and always, it was with great fervor, particularly when speaking of representation – of who can speak for whom – and what often came to the fore of the discussions, as I have heard him say, is that “not all matters should be managed by well-intentioned Swedes” (*välmenande svenskar*).

When we occupied Husby Träff, there were others who joined us, who showed solidarity. Anarchists, Marxists, some from [smaller] political parties... We had meetings every Thursday, cooked food, ate together, discussed. But some of my guys, they stood to the side;

they didn't want to join. And I told them: "Come on brothers, what's the problem, they are here, they are showing solidarity, come on"! And they say "No"! For when you look at these who came, you know, with their white body and the blond hair [*med den vita kroppen och det blonda håret*], you think of this ... [Raises his voice] You think of those who have discriminated you! And they say [those who joined] "It's one struggle, it's class struggle". But you know it's not only that, and they don't. [...] And you tell them it's like this, and they say "No, no, no, you have misunderstood". I don't know if they would say that if they were black and Muslim.

This perception of blackness that Amir spoke of, however, was not solely phenotypical. Anthropologist Lena Sawyer writes that a shared experience of economic marginality and racism can become central to widening the category "black"<sup>32</sup> to include migrant Iranian, Chilean, Polish and Kurdish communities, together with people of African heritage (2008: 97). Amir was born in Iraq, and moved to Sweden when he was six years old, so his use of the term to refer to himself as black depends on such an expanded understanding.

The use of Black Power language and symbolism, such as the slogan "All power to the people", or the Swedish version, *All makt åt folket*, as well as common references I

have encountered in my fieldwork to the African-American activists Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, thus become the medium for expressing the subordination and disadvantages that people experienced, going beyond phenotype. The project Järvalyftet, which many informants told me they felt was aimed at forcing them out of Husby to make way for high-income workers that were employed in the adjacent information technology cluster Kista, became more than a nudge in the direction of feeling subordinated.

One should on this point, however, be cautious not to deduce every member as identifying with a category “black”, or with Black Power symbolism, and if they were identifying, of course, this is bound to carry a variety of meanings. Antony Cohen writes that the “commonality”<sup>33</sup> that is found in community need not be uniformity, as ideas are not cloned, but the triumph of community lies in maintaining a variety of meanings, without subverting the apparent coherence expressed in that community’s boundaries (1985: 20). Thus, even as language and symbolism can mean different things to different people, the difference in itself, as Lena Sawyer argued similarly to Cohen, can be not only what excludes but also that which allows for connection and community to be established (2008: 88). If we then recall the statement of the young man on the bus towards Gothenburg for the 1<sup>st</sup> of May rally – that Sweden and 1960s USA are worlds apart – we can observe their self-reflexive examination of the extent of commonalities that these two places and time periods

were seen as sharing. However, the very matter of engaging with the Black Panther Party, even if members agreed to disagree upon how relevant they were for the Speaker, still maintained the Black Panther Party as a point of reference. As Appadurai notes, space and time are socialized and localized through performance, representation, and action (1996: 180). The attention provided to the Black Panther Party, and the inspiration there sought, was to me quite fascinating, as I had thought that they were something from a distant past. For the Speaker, though, it was part of their lived present. Even an examination can be understood as a commonality, an examination which every individual present that evening might have had a differing reason for doing. As there may have been a variety of meanings attached to the use to Black Power language and symbolism, their use seemed to persist.

After the screening of the filmed material from the Gothenburg 1<sup>st</sup> of May rally in Husby Träff, some 30 people got up on stage to have their photograph taken. The ones in the first row were holding an approximately six meter long white banner, with the organization's name printed in black on it, and they had all raised their right fists in the air. This photograph eventually made it to the Speaker's Facebook page, and remained there as a background theme.

The raised fist is a symbol that a wide range of social movements and organizations use, from the extreme left to the right, as well as the Black Panther Party. One of the

Speakers members, Miguel, told me the use of the raised fist was a symbol for a struggle, a common struggle for the rights of those who have been excluded, and also something he has learned from his parents, who, coming from Chile, had already been through a turbulent past of fighting against oppression. The Speaker thus works against what is seen as an imposed silence in less “democratic” situations that paradoxically have been repeated in the supposedly more open Swedish context. Many of the youths I met during my fieldwork period would share stories of how the generations of parents and grandparents, coming from different parts of the world, had faced life-threatening situations for wanting their voices to be heard. Bahar, a young poet, who has worked with the Speaker on many occasions, said during a citizen café lecture in Rinkeby’s almost full seated community center, that both her grandfather and father have always been politically active, and ever since she was a child, they would “update her” on the “injustice going on in the world”. Even at an early age, she would stand up for her beliefs, no matter if she was faced with co-students, or adults, leading to many unpleasant moments during her small town upbringing.

Chantal Mouffe writes that social agents are not unitary subjects, but an ensemble of subject positions, precariously and temporarily sutured (1992: 236); seeking homogeneity of meanings thus becomes both impossible, and pointless. Through such a simple movement as the raised fist, members of the Speaker communicated a variety of meanings that

could expand as broad as their togetherness and belonging as a group, their solidarity with struggles that loved ones or strangers, past or present, distant or close had led. “Symbols are effective because they are imprecise”, as argued by Anthony Cohen (1985: 20). Even as symbols employed within the Speaker could exhibit a multiplicity of meanings; for some they represented the struggle of one’s parents, for some the struggle of idols, their use constituted them as a group, a community within which their individuality and commonality were reconciled, uniting them in their disparity (ibid.). And it is precisely in this possibility for differences to be to an extent reconciled that the individual agency of those who have engaged themselves with the Speaker can be observed. “All power to the people”, a raised fist, and discourses of blackness, can be related to what Stuart Hall termed as hailing, or calling to belonging and community that those individuals have a choice if they respond to, or not ([1996] in Sawyer, 2008: 88). Those who have responded have in turn, reconciled the difference of meanings to the extent that allows them to continue functioning as a group, and see themselves as having more in common, than they do with those who are perceived as being beyond the boundaries of the Speaker’s community.

According to Fran Tonkiss, the rhetoric of community has a double nature, being both employed to frame “troublesome minorities”, but also as a crucial strategy part of an assertive politics of difference (2005: 9). The political movement

that the Speaker represents became threatening, even as municipal and state actors have officially encouraged them to do so, because the youths worked outside the frameworks of what those actors framed to be “acceptable” activism – gathering opinions on demand from the “locals” that they could not themselves reach. This has led, as Amir told me, to the municipal housing company Svenska Bostäder refusing to provide a rent-free locale for the Speaker’s branch in Rinkeby after the occupation of Husby Träff. However, as the second half of Tonkiss’ argument suggests, community can be utilized as a strategy (ibid.). In Cohen’s analysis of van den Berge (1981) it is ethnicity that is singled out as a strategy, a choice made and informed by a calculus of advantage, easily mobilized if “they” can be depicted as posing a threat to “us” (1985: 105). Establishing borders of difference through recourse to blackness, I argue, was by the Speaker put to use in order to establish a community consisting of what they framed as a distinct social group. Or again, as Tonkiss suggests, recourse to community can be understood as a “*defensive*”<sup>34</sup> gesture in response to prejudice, threat or discrimination, and an *assertive* gesture of identity, self-determination and mutuality” (2005: 16). Who is on the “outside” of that group, or who those “they” are, as I have experienced, informants formulated relationally: members of the Järvalyftet project; the political leadership; employees of the public housing companies; leftist-oriented groups or individuals “who think they are the only ones who know how to do things, and want to take over our debates”, as one informant said, et

cetera. What “they” had in common was that they did not contain enough of “us”. As blackness was flexible, and based on a shared experience of marginality and racism (Sawyer, 2008: 97), I perceived that who “they” are also went beyond classifications based upon phenotypical traits, even if this might have been accented in the conversation with Amir. A reoccurring theme in many conversations was that there is nothing worse than those of “us” who get a high ranking job, in politics as an example. Then “they forget who they are and where they come from, because money corrupts”, as a young man said during a meeting on youth organization in Fittja Library<sup>35</sup>. “They” are consequently seen as being co-opted by state and municipal bureaucracy, extinguishing their “purity”.

Thus, “they”, I argue, is related to the scale of modern government, which Cohen writes, either operates at a high level of generality, or in response to particular and powerful interest, in whatever case, the majority of people are going to feel either unrepresented, inadequately understood, or deliberately excluded (1985: 107). In this sense, “they” could be anyone, beyond race, ethnicity, gender, class et cetera. “They” represents the disjuncture between political decisions, and people’s possibilities to be included in their making. Hence the motto “All power to the people” acquires such an appeal, it represents a craving for a more horizontal spread of power, and possibilities to influence decisions that a minority of political representatives within governmental institutions now makes. It was such a disparity between who

makes certain decisions to whose lives they influence, that had burdened the Järvalyftet project since it was announced in late 2007.

On a different note, one could wonder why people have responded to precisely such hailings, and why they have had resonance? In this particular case, whatever interpretation we may take, as the hailings being related to the Black Panther Party and Black Power struggles, or with the turbulent pasts of parents and loved ones who have been through political conflicts, they point towards contexts of unrest. And while many of those living in the Järva districts with high rates of unemployment<sup>36</sup>, and general stigmatization in Swedish media, have presumably had their fair share of challenges to face, I would argue that the project Järvalyftet has functioned as a catalyst for their discontent, which made palpable the feelings of one's opinion being disregarded.

In other words, presenting people with notifications that rents can be increased by as much as 75%, that housing apartments will be torn down, that a school and a health central will be foreclosed – just to name a few of the ordeals that have impacted their everyday – communicated a position of subordination, and lack of input of residents in decisions that the public housing companies and the political groups in the City Hall make. The hailings then become an articulation of an assemblage of discontents, and an attempt to regain some control over a world whose materiality was losing

shape in the reconstructions that had taken place, and those to come. I say regain control, because through them, what could be a chaotic world, where things happened without reason in sight, started making sense. Recent struggles can come to service for more than pressing the integrity of one's own claims (Cohen, 1985: 106), but also a prism through which to view and comprehend the world and organize further action. As in the segments with Jashar from the footage that was screened in Husby Träff, where he points out the way the Black Panther Party members dressed and the rhetoric they used, the struggles they have led, and the personalities they represent, have come to be a rich source for learning how to formulate claims.

As I have discussed in the section “All Power to the People”, strengthening inner solidarity and demarcating the boundaries of who does not belong in the Speaker's community have been established through the experience of “blackness”. Blackness has, however, not been based on strictly phenotypical traits. Using the writings of Lena Sawyer (2008), I have argued that blackness has included a wide range of ethnic, racial and migrant groups that share an experience of political and socio-economic marginalization, as well as racism. Relevant tools for the task of strengthening inner solidarity have been Black Power language and symbolism, which the Speaker has strategically used, but also self-reflexively discussed their applicability. Negotiating who does not belong in their community has not only kept many from

participating in their work, as the “well-intentioned Swedes” who were seen as occluding the discourses of racism that members had experienced, with those of class-difference. The boundaries have also made possible connections of solidarity to stretch beyond temporal and geographical borders, as with the Black Panther Party, and current organizations throughout Sweden.

## **THE SUBURB AS IDENTITY: SPACES OF DIVISION AND CONNECTION**

Don't ever feel trapped by the suburban  
concrete / It doesn't matter who you are/ (The  
Concrete Jungle Book) / You understand that  
where I live / The love for the jungle is great /  
I'll never move away from here, I swear<sup>37</sup>. (Ayo,  
1999)

The Speaker holds strong relations to other youth organizations within Sweden, as with the Gothenburg group, which on the Speaker's website are classified under the category *kärlek*, or “love”, subcategory *la familia*, Spanish for “family”. The existence of the internet, and the various social forums that can be found there, where groups of similar interest can discover each other, exchange information, and maintain a working contact, has aided, if not made possible such relations. Saskia Sassen suggests that there has been

a change in the linkages that bind people and places in the formation of claims placed on the city, and while it is true that through history people have moved, the speed has radically been enhanced (1996: 219). Indeed, events from every part of the world have become a mere mouse click away, to state what has grown to become a truism. Nevertheless, if the extent of space within which we form relations and enter into various communities has been expanded, this does not necessarily imply that the interrelations between identity and locality have become obsolete. As argued by Georg Simmel, “The human being is the connecting creature who must always separate, and cannot connect without separating” (1997: 174). This section will explore how the Speaker has negotiated conceptual and spatial boundaries, and how those have been translated into the boundaries of social groups.

Since February, 2013, the Gothenburg group has also begun organizing a citizen café. On their website, it could be read that they have borrowed the concept for such an “informational forum” (*informationsforum*) from the Speaker from Stockholm. One of the Gothenburg group’s citizen café meetings in March, 2013, had a pair of members from the Speaker as guests, along with a representative from the Alby group<sup>38</sup>, and a social scientist that has done her PhD research in the Järva districts. The theme, according to an announcement for the citizen café in question, was how one as a resident can influence a change where one lives, and how “the suburb rises, organizes itself, and wins battles around the

country” (*förorten reser sig, organiserar sig, och vinner kamper runt om i landet*). In the video from the event, one could hear Miguel, with great excitement in his voice, talk about the potential that organizations, as those who had gathered for the event, had for collaborating, and influencing change on a national level.

Imagine having a large suit, three or four sizes too large. But if it's fitting loosely, if it's too big, then we can easily grow into it. If we have tight clothes, if we think only for today, we are not going to get anywhere. I've thought about this idea, I can't get enough of it! You have to always think a little bit bigger, have a suit that's a bit too big. So it's partially important to build up a local identity [*lokal identitet*], the local identity we have here, it's the suburb [*förorten*]. [...] We unite in so many different ways [*enas på så många olika sätt*], doesn't matter which suburb you are from, we have an identity in that. That's why we have one slogan that says 'Stand up for your suburb' [*Stå upp för din ort*<sup>39</sup>], because you are to work locally, you are to work for your right to continue living where you live! Then we have another slogan, 'The suburb united will never be defeated' [*En enad förort kan aldrig besegras*], that you probably recognize<sup>40</sup>. [...] If we work together, to come here [*Gothenburg*]

and break away from this isolation, it's a big step in moving away from these borders. Now we're not thinking about the city borders, but it's national! We meet and realize it's the same problems all over! It's important to feel this togetherness [*känna den här gemenskapen*], and this identity, and if you have that, you can work on that suit and grow into it [*man kan bygga på den här kostymen och växa i den*].

A long ovation from the audience awaited the conclusion of his words. The notion of boundary, Anthony Cohen argues, is central to understanding community (1985: 110). Drawing from Schwartz (1975), Cohen continues to say that “community, and its refraction through self, marks what is not, as well as what is, emphasizing traits and characteristics, ‘at once emblematic of the group’s solidarity and of the group’s contrasting identity and relation to the groups within its ambit of comparison’” (1985: 110). Miguel’s use of the concept of the suburb can be seen as one that translates geographies and their perceived and/or existing boundaries, into the boundaries of social groups, the groups of people who take on the identity of being the suburbanites. The suburb becomes a delimited entity that separates people from each other, but once these separations are recognized, other separate entities can be connected to each other, not in order to be amalgamated, but in order to “work together”.

The movement towards collaboration entangled in Miguel's words alludes to Laclau's and Mouffe's notion of "chains of equivalence" (1985), signifying allied groups seeking transformation of existing power relations. In this formulation, each group has a distinct relation to the existing hegemony, and each group's experience is irreducible to the others, but they come together in their equal disadvantage within existing power relations (Purcell, 2009: 159). In order to enter into a chain of equivalence, the points of intersection need to be articulated, as well as the experiences that set one's group aside from others, both spatially and conceptually. The concept of the suburb is one that lends itself perfectly both for a spatial and conceptual division, as its very nomenclature is laden with breaks and contrasts, that of the "sub-urb" as something that is divided from the "urb".

A brief context might provide us with some insight into why people would want to establish boundaries between each other and struggle to keep them. During a summer promenade with friends from Husby towards Kista, upon one of my earliest visits in June 2012, I commented that Husby was a large area, since we had been walking for quite long. My friend, who had lived in Kista for ten years, pointed out that we had walked past Husby a while back. "How does one notice that?", I asked, and received the telling answer of "you just know". As the novice did not notice the transition, the "local" could see a difference, it was presumably grounded more in symbolic than in physical traits. Husby and Kista

are in fact quite interesting neighbors. Husby is functionally mainly a housing area, and while Kista also contains housing, with many new blocks being built towards Husby, it is also Sweden's prodigious information technology cluster, with a *marquant* and always well-visited shopping-mall<sup>41</sup>. One of the goals for the Järvalyftet' project was to connect Husby to Kista. The method to achieve this was the suggestion I have previously mentioned, for raising the level of the streets in Husby, while (two or six) pedestrian bridges are torn down (see White Arkitekter 2009; Stadsledningskontoret et al., 2011; Stockholms Stad, Järvalyftet 2009). The connection was clearly one benefiting motorists, as Husby is a one-minute train ride, and a five minute walk from Kista. Another goal was to provide a "diverse city environment", as the mixture of housing forms, businesses, meeting places, and so forth, would develop and reinforce "Järva's diversity" (*Järvas mångfald*) (Stockholms Stad, Järvalyftet, 2009: 7). These two goals represent the breaking of the spatial borders – the traffic separation – as well as conceptual, through the influx of the new residents that will fill the mixture of housing forms<sup>42</sup>. As Tonkiss insightfully writes: "The separation of objects, people or places is always shadowed by the idea – the 'fantasy' or the danger – of their connection" (2005: 31). Thus, not only the establishment of spatial and conceptual borders can be perceived as a danger; attempts at connection, if they are (at a contrast from the "chains of equivalence") endangering the distinction and irreducibility of the "bounded" entity, in this case the suburb, can also

be perceived as such. The practices of connection that the Järvalyftet project concerted in its plans were to affect both the physical landscape of habit, and the meaning which the space was imbued with.

At one citizen café in Husby, which focused on the interrelations between anti-racism and feminism, with Paulina, a professor of economic history as lecturer, Jashar, being the moderator, formulated ideas of the suburbanite identity in a similar manner to Miguel:

For us in the Speaker, the single, clearest, political identity we have taken upon us is the suburb [*den klaraste politiska identiteten vi tagit oss an är förorten*]. This is not just something we have done, but many others, in different suburbs all over Sweden. We are not foremost workers, we are not foremost women, we are not foremost immigrants, or children of immigrants, but we are suburbanites [*förortare*], in a way a gathering term [*samlingsbegrepp*] for all these things. [...] To be suburb, like, you hear she or he is not suburb, which means that the suburb is not just a place or a background, but is a collection of traits [*samling av egenskaper*], who is less or more suburb [*mer eller mindre förort*].

The shared sense of identity of being the suburbanites also

implied exclusion for those who wished to enter into alliances with the Speaker's struggles, but did not identify themselves as such. And as one might have been granted "passage" through one's suburban address, further categorization followed. This further categorization was defined by Jashar as there being those who were "less or more suburb". A young woman in the audience expressed having that feeling of not being able to be a part of struggles she solidarized with, if indeed the suburb was what tied it all together:

What do you mean the suburb? You have to define it, explain it, because it's not all of us that are included there. What about the rest of the country? There are many that can't be a part of the suburb. What is it that you mean geographically?

Since the three hours predicted for the citizen café had come to an end, slightly stressed by the elapsed time, Paulina still attempted to create a sense of closure of the young woman's question:

Not everyone has to be from the suburb in order to be a part of the struggle; we all come from the different conditions of our lives. We are all placed in different social contexts, and it is there we have possibilities to make a change.

In grassroots organizations such as the Speaker, one needs input from all.

Both in Paulina's wording, as with members of the Speaker, and others they collaborated with, the idea of helping each other, of solidarizing with each other's struggles could be traced, which asserted a moral dimension to their community. Solidarity has, however, been problematic to call upon in all cases, and as Cohen wrote, achieve a transgression of all factors that divide us in our social lives (1985: 115). According to Jashar, the identity shared within the Speaker, was one that saw beyond class, gender, ethnicity, and race, but centered on the suburb. In such a case, whatever contradictions exist of whose solidarity can be perceived as "legitimate" should be amenable to the commonality of the suburb, while allowing the groups and individuals to retain their difference. In such a case, the suburb as a point of alliance-making would imply that people coalesce from a multiplicity of backgrounds, rendering all identities that individuals carry other than suburban as superfluous. However, the concept of the suburbanite is itself one that establishes boundaries towards those who do not live in a suburban area, but want to solidarize with the "suburban struggles". If we then recollect Amir's story of the different groups that had joined the Speaker in their occupation of Husby Träff, rendering the suburb as a viable concept in establishing chains of equivalence encounters some hinders. While the Speaker had gotten support from "ethnic Swedish" leftist-oriented people

in their protest actions, such as the occupation of Husby Träff, some of their members experienced their presence as problematic. Discussions that the groups who joined the Speaker found relevant – such as class – were seen as occluding the racism that some members of the Speaker had experienced. The “newcomers” could not easily cross the symbolic boundaries that the Speaker had established of their community, for their bodies could not be seen as the bodies of those who have experienced exclusion and discrimination. This had led to them not being able to mix with ease, as the white-skinned, blond-haired body stood out. In fact, some saw upon them as the “discriminators” themselves. They had the bodies of politicians who had made decisions which members of the Speaker understood as going against the best interest of the inhabitants, they had the bodies of the police officers<sup>43</sup> who had stopped them, for reasons that could be no more than arbitrary. Quite simply, they had the bodies of the “other”. Many of them might have been coming from suburbs, but this did not suffice. Their very presence in Husby was seen as what anthropologist Mary Douglas has termed “matter out of place” ([1966] 1984).

In “The Suburb as Identity” I have argued that the project Järvalyftet established guidelines for “preventing segregation” (*förebygger segregation*) by connecting and diversifying Husby. The homogeneity of housing forms, and the secluding street structure in the renovation plans, was to the people who protested the familiarity of the everyday, and the security

of established social ties. The raised mobility that the project Järvalyftet stimulated, both for those who move into renovated and new housing, and for those who move out for not being able to afford staying, was countered on the grounds of the perceived boundedness of the suburb, as the source of group identity. The grounding in location was what identities were distilled from, the so-called suburbanite, or *förortare*, as Jashar said. The suburbanite implies more than living in a suburban area. It envelopes being discriminated and excluded from decision making processes that impact one's life. It is the fear that the police will hassle you for the way you look. It is writing that you live in the borough Spånga-Tensta on your CV, instead of a specific district, just to make it more general, ambivalent; after all, you could be living in the cozy row houses in Tensta<sup>44</sup>.

Presenting the suburb as a referent of identities inclusive for all, unless one does not live in a suburban area and one does not identify or can be identified with the category black, could be seen as a contradiction. Nevertheless, as Cohen argued, contradictions do not render a community hypocritical in its collective self-image, but they are indications of judgments' adjustability to suit circumstances (1985: 113). Since the white (bureaucratic) body in itself invoked in some members the images of those they perceived as discriminating against them, the discourse of blackness was referred in order to keep out those who threatened the knit of the group and reaffirm the insider-solidarity. The same

logic can be extended to the suburbanite identity. While it might have kept many from becoming a part of the Speaker's actions, it reaffirmed the belonging of those who did identify as such, and strengthened relationships between them. In line with Lena Sawyer (2008), I argue that attention should be paid to all such "contradictions", unevenness, gaps, and translations, as they can simultaneously function as points of differentiation and of linkage. Their examination can manifest the mechanisms of exclusion that the youths utilized to position themselves at a contrast to bureaucratic bodies and their goals, as well as those of inclusion and collaboration with a wide array of groups and individuals co-opting the identity of the suburbanite, and utilizing Black Power narratives.

## **NEIGHBORHOOD ADVISORY COMMITTEES AND AUTONOMY**

The suburbanite identity was seen as having the potentiality to play a political role, which representative organs had usually handled – or "the large suit" Miguel was referring to. Fran Tonkiss argues that urban social movements often place an emphasis upon autonomy and self-management, which is coupled with a suspicion of representation or mediation by various delegates, spokespeople, official leaders et cetera (2005: 62). She continues to argue that such movements tend to focus on direct action and participation, and that they have willingness to work outside formal structures of political power, despite protests and lobbying often targeting

the central and local state (ibid.). In the case at hand, I would argue that while the Speaker has mostly worked outside the formal structures of political power through their protest actions during the recent years, they have been exploring possibilities for becoming incorporated in those structures, even if it is on their own terms.

In what could be a hybrid form between autonomy and self-management, and official practice, a suggestion was circulated in Husby to form a neighborhood advisory committee (*stadsdelsråd*). This was a notion mentioned in conversations with members of the Speaker, other residents, and was part of an artist's project, who has been exhibited his work in Husby. Practically, a neighborhood advisory committee would imply that a group of representatives from Järva be housed in the City Hall (*Stadshuset*), and this group would have the authority to decide (*bestämmanderätt*) over directions in which Järvalyftet is developing, together with the existing committees<sup>45</sup>, which Jashar explained was the only way to “have a say” in the project. In Jashar's opinion, a neighborhood advisory committee was a way to democratize Järvalyftet.

**Daniela:** Does this [the neighborhood advisory committee] mean that only those born in a neighborhood can speak of it?

**Jashar:** There could be other forums to make this into a wider question. But when they destroy Husby, who has something to say

about it? Who is fighting to keep it as it is? Not people from other neighborhoods. People have opinions, but when we are out here and doing things... We are the ones standing here!

**Daniela:** Has no one else supported you?

**Jashar:** No one has come, no. Well, they show their solidarity, or they make statements. But it's the same thing, if let's say, Hagsätra [district to the south of Stockholm] has a problem, then they are the ones who should solve it. Sure, it's a Stockholm issue, and we are all citizens, everyone can have an opinion, but if they are the ones leading the battle [*för kampen*], the ones in the battle are going to decide. And we are the ones who have been fighting to get local democracy [*lokal demokrati*].

For Jashar, the relationship between a neighborhood and those who can make a claim upon deciding its future was clear: those who lived there were those who knew what would be best for it. The years' long experiences of living in one neighborhood were thus seen as an asset, shaping an understanding that could assist in running that neighborhood in a way that would benefit the existing residents. A now-retired project leader for Järvalyftet, Karl, told me that he found such statements quite irritating; "one does not own a neighborhood just by living there", he said. Karl, an ethnic

Swede, well into his sixties, had moved several times during his life-time, as he said, depending on his life situation. This was unlike most of the people I met in Husby; many had spent their lives there, or had lived there for decades.

Karl's negative opinion about the residents making "spatial claims" reflected the intolerance of even more "subtle" spatial expressions of belonging, and attempts at control of the environment than one would expect a neighborhood advisory committee to have. One of my early morning arrivals in Husby coincided with the work of a clean-up team at the train station, feverishly trying to remove the sprayed tags from the platform. The elaborate process began with cleaning machines, followed by a layer of bleach being spread on every tag, which was then covered with black rubber sheets, to be finally fastened with layer after layer of silver tape. This left the platform looking like a maladroit teenager's first attempts at shaving (**Figure 3:1**). The patches were there for a week, enough time for the vehemently smelling chemicals to do away with decades' worth of declarations of presence. The efforts might have done more harm, as the bleach discolored the polished stone platform. However, it did not take long, maybe only a few days until a fresh set of tags made their way back to the station.

As previously mentioned, suggestions for a neighborhood advisory committee and an "archive" for Husby were also part of artist Per's work, which was exhibited at Husby

Gallery. The archive was to contain articles and personal materials that residents provide him with, which would grant them the power to decide what is relevant to “remember”, a way of constructing their own history. In Per’s vision, the archive could be used for future work of development in the area. He had a portion of the material gathered from residents printed out in poster formats, and exhibited on the inside of the old Husby Träff’s windows. Many of these posters were articles from the local magazine, *Norra Sidan*, or the North Side, and had quite a critical tone. Approximately two weeks after being exhibited, they were removed from Husby Träff, which was being rebuilt, since the old premises will be in the future used for a call-center.

I met Per in November, a month after this had happened, and he told me that Svenska Bostäder and the construction company bounced the responsibility for the posters’ removal upon each other. I had noticed their absence when passing by Husby Träff one day, and all that remained was a letter of protest Per had written, now placed on the outside of the windows. In the letter, he referred to the public government documents, *Statens Offentliga Utredningar*, and ideas of neighborhood committees surfacing after the Second World War out of the fear of totalitarian power:

Participation and bottom-up perspective are key-terms in recent projects for the renovation of the Swedish suburbs. The citizens’

influence and active participation are said to be necessary for achieving local development. The locals are called experts, and Svenska Bostäder promised to keep the 30,000 opinion sheets that were gathered during the Dialogue Weeks. But how does one take care of 30,000 opinions?[...] Husby's neighborhood advisory committee could be a non-profit organization that represents all those who live and work in Husby, and function as a negotiating party for the municipal administration and housing companies. If the residents are called the real experts in Husby, they should also have the primacy of representing [tolkningsföretråde] the image of their neighborhood.

Through reference to democratic ideals, Per could problematize the extent of Järvalyftet's inclusiveness; the past became a judge of the present and a signpost for the future. Not so distant from the discussions members of the Speaker led, he placed the right to represent the area in the hands of the residents. Establishing a neighborhood advisory committee was understood as linkage, a facilitator for a fruitful exchange between local and political actors, on the terms that better suit the former.

The suggestion for a neighborhood advisory committee was nevertheless problematic for the Speaker as a locally



**Figure 3:1.** *Husby's train station.*

IMAGE BY AUTHOR.

based organization. How do they become an established part of political structures, without perishing in the pitfalls of mistrust towards those structures? In the early spring of 2013, the Speaker posted a document on their website that was called “a political program” (*politiskt program*). Within hours, it was removed. Consequently, I did not have sufficient time to analyze it, but a similarity with the Black Panther Party’s *Ten Point Program* from 1966 was what struck me. The Speaker’s version contained nine points though, with resembling concise explanations, or demands, for decent housing, a higher quality of education, employment et cetera. Since I do not recall the precise wording, and the document is unavailable, I will not go into depth into what they had

written. Nevertheless, I found the removal of the document more interesting than the document itself. Approximately one month after the episode with the political program document, there was a meeting held in Fittja Library, which the Speaker, together with the Gothenburg and Alby group, organized. What came up during this meeting was precisely this: should one become a part of established political structures, and how? In a completely full seated Fittja Library, with perhaps 200 people present for what seemed to be predicted as a meeting of no more than 70 or 80, I found a place beside the biography section and squeezed in next to Che Guevara (in three different versions, from different biographers), Simone de Beauvoir, and Marx. Yet another youth organization was present and got its turn to speak. It had been formed some weeks earlier as a response to what its members said were 50% rent increases that a private housing company in Tensta had announced. All the members present, about five, had red armbands on their right arms, making them quite visible. One of their members' presentations made them quite audible as well, with stories of municipal politicians eating lunches for 130,000 Swedish crowns, and them being unwilling to "really make a change". Even though the young man's words painted a bleak picture of the political life in Sweden, and the possibilities for the "ordinary" wo/man to make a substantial influence, in my understanding, it was not he who set the overall tone of the discussion – that working with "the system" was not feasible.

One young man in the audience tried to question the somewhat skeptical stance, as he said that “people should not talk about politics that generally, as it is a multifaceted system offering various possibilities at various points”. With his buttoned up shirt, and “preppy” look, he did not seem to be a part of any of the youth organizations, who had a more casual appearance. “But the leftists were meddling and domineering” (*blandar sig in och vill ta över*), a member of the Gotheburg group added. The multifaceted system thus stopped at the highly criticized right and meddling left.

The youth organizations present in Fittja Library kept possibilities for working with political structures at bay, and the Speaker retracted their political program, quite possibly because they threatened to place them in the same “corner” with these structures, so often been the aim of much skepticism. These youth organizations were locally based, and had established social circles there. They knew people intimately, they knew their problems, and this was their asset. In their seemingly politically unattached position, they were free to aim a critique towards authorities, which would be hampered if they were to collaborate, and this was a decision based on trial and error, considering their history with the project Järvalyftet.

The perceived asymmetry between politicians and/or officials in relation to “common folk” was often articulated through jokes and belittling comments towards the former.

Bureaucrats would often be called *nissar* (small humanoid creatures, found in Scandinavian folklore, commonly related to Christmas), with versions as *kostymklädda nissar* (a nisse in a suit), or *slipsmaffian* (the necktie mafia). According to Radcliffe-Brown, when “joking relationships” are aimed towards individuals outside one’s own group, the separateness between groups is not only recognized but also emphasized (1940: 200). In the case at hand, this was clearly a one-sided relationship, since there haven’t been public accounts, none from what I have gathered, of politicians reciprocating, for these jokes might never have reached the subjects of amusement. For Radcliffe-Brown the joking relationship is a mode of organizing a stabile system of social behavior in which conjunctive and disjunctive components are maintained and combined (*ibid.*). Given that the jokes were made while one party was absent, they were stabilized in their position as antagonists. While the politicians were placed in a position of disjunction, group members were in conjunction, as they had absent antagonists to align themselves towards.

The jokes were also a call towards members of the community “to come”, as they invited the attention of those who might find meaning in belittling politicians, officials, and so forth. In their function of attracting the attention of others, who might find a point of convergence in those comments, they reminisce the hailing discussed in the section “All Power to the People” (Sawyer, 2008: 88), where one can

decide if one responds to the calls sent out for belonging and community. Calling politicians *nissar* can easily be taken to be arbitrary comments, but considering Husby's history of protest, they communicate a grave problem of seated mistrust and disappointment in political representation.

Maintaining disjuncture between groups, here by the joking relationship, can be utilized if separateness is seen as beneficial, or when there might not be clarity of borders. The Speaker's model for their work with getting the opinions and interests of the young residents through to power structures was handed to them in their founding years when working with the Järvalyftet project. In a related argument, Cohen writes that community provides people with a model for political formulation of their interest and aspirations, a model that may unwittingly originate in authorities at higher echelons (1985: 108). The days of collaborating with Järvalyftet are long gone (so far), and the Speaker have positioned themselves as opposing the project; however, they still collaborate and receive funding from a variety of parties. *Allmänna Arvsfonden* provides funding for the citizen café, as mentioned. Their relationship with "higher echelons" thus needs to be presented as one of antagonism, as to not endanger their role working on and for the grassroots level.

As I argued in the section "All Power to the People", if the youth organization were to be placed in an institutional environment as that of the City Hall, this would imply a

shift in the scale of their work, which as Cohen argued, for modern government brought on the failure of the loss of credibility and relevance of being a referent of people's identity (1985: 107). Balancing the scale between the grassroots and state and municipal structures has often led them into a double bind, which, according to Gregory Bateson, is when an organism is faced with a dilemma of "being wrong in the primary context or of being right for the wrong reason or in a wrong way" ([1972] 2000: 245). Even as in many of their discussions it was concluded that political representatives make the "meaningful" decisions, if community based organizations as the Speaker were to enter and begin officially functioning in that arena as with the suggestions for a neighborhood advisory committee, they would endanger the specificity of their response to what is defined as local interests.

By the spring of 2013, discussions for a neighborhood advisory committee seemed to step aside for the somewhat ambiguous idea of "organizing the suburb". Its practical unfolding has never received a detailed explanation; it has generally rotated around suggestions of utilizing the social circles a person has, their "social capital" (Bourdieu, 1986: 248), to mobilize support for whatever is then seen as a current common goal. In the video from the Gothenburg group's citizen café, Asad, a member of the Speaker, explained it in the following manner:

We are the new social movement [*folkrörelsen*]. We have to work precisely as they did 100 years ago, we have to work in our neighborhoods [accent on our neighborhoods, *våra områden*], and we have to reach out to everyone, friends, cousins, family. When we really can say that we are a social movement that organizes our own neighborhoods, then we can really collaborate, then we are a force to be reckoned with [*en kraft att räkna med*].

While groups separated geographically have been able to create and maintain relationships of “brotherhood” based on having to deal with similar issues of marginalization, or even exclusion, the relationships that stretch geographies, have not diminished an understanding of the relevance and uniqueness of a particular place, and who has a right to decide upon its future – those bearing the affective attachments towards “their neighborhoods”.

In this section, I have argued that the Speaker, and related organizations, have not passively accepted decisions being made for them, but have sought various opportunities to make their own influence upon areas they live in, the Swedish Million Program suburbs. Even as suspicions have been strong towards representation by various delegates, explorations have been made for the realization of the welfare state’s unfulfilled ideas of neighborhood advisory committees, a

group consisting of local representatives working within centers of political power, as in this case, the City Hall. Local actors in a formation as these committees are seen as holding a right to represent their neighborhood and the interest of its inhabitants, whose participation and bottom-up perspective in projects as Järvalyftet is what makes democracy possible. As the committees could endanger the local democracy the Speaker seeks to strengthen, its members have tapped into broader ideas of organizing the suburb, and then establishing functioning networks of exchanging ideas and support throughout Sweden, and beyond. Nevertheless, in the work of the Speaker, the suburbanite identity, or what was presented as the connectedness between persons and location, has remained a focal point for struggling to establish the right of those persons to play a part in the politics that decides the future of the suburbs that are their homes.

In aggregate, Chapter Three has examined the constitution of the Speaker as a community, with boundaries set to contrast the bureaucratic definitions they were founded with – as legitimizers of projects that the state and the municipality ran. The youths, saturated with “well-intentioned Swedes”, using them to define themselves and their own political struggles, have in their recent work accentuated the dimensions they saw as formerly being occluded – their experiences of living in, but also loving, the widely stigmatized Million Program suburbs, and of racism, which they formulated through the

Black Power struggles, which had paradoxically taken place in the supposedly “democratic” Swedish context. Those experiences were seen as commonalities that concerted the insider-outsider dynamics. However, the position of critics and protesters was not greatly appreciated by the very state and municipal actors that had officially encouraged the Speaker, as exemplified by the problems the Speaker encountered with the municipal housing company SB, when applying for a locale in the district of Rinkeby. Deeply instilled in their identity-formation around geography, the so called “suburbanites” (*förortare*), were claims for political agency – their active and meaningful participation in the making of decisions that affected their neighborhoods and their lives, which the existing political representation was seen as having gravely faltered in.

## CHAPTER FOUR: STAND UP FOR YOUR SUBURB

Interesting choice of words: “previously convicted”. For that is exactly what we are. All of us are guilty until proven otherwise. When does a personal experience become a racist structure? When does it become discrimination, oppression, violence? And how can a “holistic approach” exclude a large part of the citizens’ personal experiences? Whose experiences count? I am writing to you with a simple wish, Beatrice Ask. I want the two of us to change skins and experiences. Come on. We just do it. You’ve never been a stranger to slightly twisted ideas [*lite skruvade idéer*]. [...]

Knowing that others have it much worse, we chose silence instead of words and years went by, it was much later that Reva was launched, the judicially just [*rättssäkra*] and effective work of enforcement [*effektiva verkställighetsarbetet*]. The police began to do searches in malls and stood outside the clinics who helped the undocumented and families with Swedish-born children were deported to countries that the children had never visited and Swedish

citizens were forced to prove their belonging [tillhörighet] with their passport and a certain Minister of Justice explained that it was not about racial profiling but about “personal experiences”<sup>46</sup>. The routine of power. The practice of violence. Everyone just did their job. Guards, police officers, customs officials, politicians, the people (Khemiri, 2013).

In the previous chapter, “All Power to the People and the People are Us”, I argued that through the narratives of blackness and the suburbanite identity the youth organization the Speaker have articulated the commonalities that have kept them together as a group, and enabled them to collaborate with others who share their views. From those commonalities have emerged the particular-life stories, which members of the Speaker have supported each other, and the other groups and individuals, that they should be shared. The current chapter commenced with a newspaper article that a young and well-respected Swedish author, Jonas Hassen Khemiri, wrote, which quickly raised media havoc in Sweden. It was widely distributed on social media and received an unprecedented number of views on the national newspaper’s web platform.

Several members of the Speaker have said that Khemiri’s article “punctured” (*spräckte*) the myth of Sweden as a non-

racist country. In its aftermath in settings such as the citizen café, visitors were actively encouraged to share their unique and intimate stories from their lives, to hear of others, but also as Jashar said, “We are here to learn” (*Vi är här för att lära oss*), learn to intertwine their stories with the context that the lecturers provided, and take them further to all channels of distribution they could gain access. The following discussion centers on the position of experience-based knowledge, its use, and circulation, and the agency that it was seen as having for the promotion of the goals of both the youth organization the Speaker, but also the renovation project Järvalyftet.

## **DEAR BEATRICE,**

In early March a newspaper article raised a storm of debates in Sweden<sup>47</sup>. Mona Sahlin, the leader of the Swedish Social Democratic Party between 2007 and 2011, called Jonas Hassen Khemiri’s article “The novel of a generation” (*generationsroman*), saying, “Even though it’s quite short, I believe it will have as much influence as Astrid Lindgrens *Pomperipossa*<sup>48</sup>, or Ulf Lundell’s *Jack*<sup>49</sup>, it describes something that not everyone understands” (Gomorrön Sverige, 2013).

Reva (*Rättssäkert och effektivt verkställighetsarbete* [Judicially just and effective work of enforcement]), a project involving the Swedish Police Department (*Polisen*), the Swedish Prison and Probation Service (*Kriminalvården*), and the Migration

Board (*Migrationsverket*), aimed at localizing illegal immigrants through the control of documents for personal identification at various locations, such as Sweden's borders, airports, and during recent developments, at Stockholm's train stations.

It was not merely the location where Reva officers conducted control that was criticized; it was the practice itself, for it amounted to singling out those who did not fit the image of "Swedish-ness". The critique came from many directions. Media was swarming with articles and comments from politicians, journalists, talk-show hosts, the "common" women and men, but Khemiri's article went directly to the core of the debate. He invited Beatrice Ask, the Minister of Justice, on an Alighierian journey through a Sweden where a six year old boy's father is yet again stopped by customs officers, a Sweden where one is taken into a police van and held there without being given any clear reasons for it, a Sweden of questioning yourself, and every detail of your appearance. Khemiri put to words an unadorned, and yet immensely powerful retrospective of the past 34 years of his life. There, he questioned the body one must have in order for one's life experiences to be spoken, and considered to be discrimination.

The matter was merely aggravated when Sweden's Minister for Migration stated that those who assist illegal immigrants are not the "nice blond Swedish lady in the 50-60s who wants to help, [...] most people live with their compatriots

who are not at all blond and blue eyed” in the national daily newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* only a few days later (Orrenius, 2013).

The Speaker had been using its Twitter page to send out warnings for police controls at subway stations weeks before Khemiri’s article was published. After having read it, I immediately e-mailed Jashar, asking if he had also stumbled upon it. Little did I know, only hours after its publishing on the website of *Dagens Nyheter*, Khemiri’s article had been accessed 250,000 times. And not only had Jashar read it, but Amir had published a debate article on *SVT Debatt*<sup>50</sup> building on Khemiri’s within 24 hours. There he wrote that the project Reva was a part of the same structures that had left the suburbs to decay for decades, and that the government has been leading a war for years against those who have it the hardest: the unemployed, those without social insurance, the working classes (SVT Debatt, 2013). “With the experiences that we non-whites [*icke-vita*] constantly go through”, Amir wrote, “it is time to do away with the myth of Sweden as an anti-racist country; only so can we change the structural racism that affects us”. Amir was one of the members of the Speaker who have been most active in anti-racist campaigns, this done through publishing several articles on the Speaker’s website, as well as in prominent daily newspapers, participating in radio broadcasts on the theme of racism in Sweden, and the like. A point that he has expressed in several of these forums, as he said at a radiobroadcast from

Fryshuset<sup>51</sup> on the topic of “everyday racism” (*vardagsrasism*), is that work with anti-racism is not only a matter for white Swedes. What racism is, those who experience it themselves should define.

In the article *Police Race Relations in England and France: Policy and Practices*, Sophie Body-Gendrot argues that police race relations have remained tense in urban neighborhoods that house a majority of minority populations (all the more so after 9/11), and that notions of belonging need to be clarified in such difficult times (2004: 5). In line with Body-Gendrot, I argue that the Reva project and the debates that followed unmoored who can be seen as belonging – indeed, as true political actors – in Sweden. In a way, the project Reva did not represent much newness. Even before the media debate culminated with Khemiri’s article, I had heard from several informants, and not only those who are members of the Speaker, about unpleasant encounters with the police or authorities in general. At times these were small things, at times incidents that they had experienced throughout their whole lives. Ali, as an example, a man in his early twenties working with youth organizations in Tensta, said that many of the youths that he knows well and works with, as young as their early teens, the police had approached, stopped, questioned, and this for reasons that could be no more than arbitrary, or no more than their appearance, to be exact. What the project Reva did was move the practices of stopping people based on the color of their skin and hair

from neighborhoods with a majority of minority populations, to the center of the city, the Central Station. It was an open statement to who has a right to be there, or as Lefebvre put it, who has a “right to the city” (1968).

On an unusually cold Saturday noon in March, in the company of a couple of friends, I made my way towards Kungsträdgården, a park in central Stockholm. Undiscouraged by the searing wind that all too vividly reminded us of the joys of being indoors, we maneuvered through the crowd to get as close as we could to the stage, to better hear the speeches held. The demonstration, which Save the Children’s Youth Association (*Rädda Barnens Ungdomsförbund*), The Red Cross’s Youth Association (*Röda Korsets Ungdomsförbund*) and Youth Against Racism (*Ungdom Mot Rasism*) initiated, gathered some 2,000 participants, and was aimed against the Reva project. While the police had made an announcement during the previous day that they will not continue using the train stations as control points for localizing undocumented immigrants, it did not mean that the project would cease to exist.

Upon the stage at Kungsträdgården, there was a line of speeches that representatives for a wide spectrum of political parties, grassroots organizations, researchers, poets, and several members of the Speaker gave. In front of two banners the members on stage held, one with the organization’s name, and another with the slogan “Stand up for your suburb”

(*Stå upp för din ort*) was Lana, in her mid-teens, dressed in a military style bomber jacket and olive green jeans, with a proud and strong voice. She read the speech:

Those who have gathered today see and feel how Sweden has changed! The image of Sweden as a country based on solidarity, equality and openness, tending to [*som värnar om*] everyone's equality before the law, has fallen apart day by day! We are here because we have seen through the myth of Sweden as an anti-racist country, the standard-bearer [*fanbäraren*] of human rights. [...] The politics we have now is no more than a manipulative and inhumane way to decide who is more human, who deserves a good life, and who deserves to suffer through it!

Both Amir and Lana phrased Sweden's status as an anti-racist country as being a myth because they did not experience that its inclusiveness went further than "white" individuals. Amir in particular, has argued that discussions need to be raised for the public surrounding the experiences of exclusion which non-white Swedes have gone through. This ties into Nancy Fraser's "standpoint of the collective concrete other", which she uses to refer to the construction of specific collective identities from specific narrative resources and vocabularies available to particular groups (1986: 428). These experiences

of difference, as formulated by Khemiri and the Speaker, were seen as instrumental in doing away with dominant claims of equal treatment and equal opportunities available for all citizens. They can create an opening for expanding conceptions of belonging, and the rights that are seen as coming with it.

Philosopher Maurizio Passerin d'Entrèves, drawing from Hannah Arendt (1965), writes that the “active engagement of citizens in the determination of the affairs of their community provides them not only with the experience of public freedom and the joys of public happiness, but also with a sense of political agency and efficacy” (1994: 161). This is precisely what the Speaker has been struggling for, to no longer be taken as a passive audience, as spectators, but active creators and participants in decisions that they argue have been taken for them, which corresponds well to the phrase members often used to summarize the organization’s goals, of “people being the ones deciding over politics, and not the other way around”. In relation to Järvalyftet, the critique that was aimed towards the project did not have so much to do with renovation, many agreed that it was necessary, and there were even protests in 2005 that urged precisely for it. The problem was that people did not feel they were meaningfully engaged and took part of making decisions “that matter”.

Even as Khemiri wrote that “they<sup>52</sup> had chosen silence”, the

act of writing itself constituted his immensely powerful voice, placing him *in medias res*, as he had articulated something that not everyone understands, but some could feel. However, he was not to be anyone's representative. As Arendt wrote, representation asserts the age-old distinction between ruler and ruled (1990: 237–238). For was not this at the heart of the matter? Everyone should speak for themselves. In April, 2013, an article announced Khemiri's writing school for undocumented immigrants (Stockholm TT Spektra, 2013). Both Khemiri and members of the Speaker have actively sought possibilities for the expression of experiences that did not depend on mediating parties. This logic held truth in both media, as well as political representation. These were practices that had privileged a few, and excluded many.

In this section I have argued that the project Reva, which aimed at localizing undocumented migrants, made palpable who was seen as belonging in Sweden, a practice not distant from racial profiling. Khemiri, as well as several members of the Speaker, tapped into their own personal experiences of being racially discriminated, in order to make their case against a state apparatus, which was, in fact, seen as its very source. Similarly to the critique which had been aimed towards Järvalyftet, Reva underlined the passive position many were being placed in, disengaging them, and their experiences of unequal treatment from partaking in the public sphere. Thus, first-hand experiences of discrimination have become a most powerful instrument for questioning the

difference-neutrality of the state. It is here that the the youth organization the Speaker's work, with that of author Jonas Khemiri converge, but also the suggestion by Per, the artist, of an archive being composed of resident's materials that I took up in the section "Neighborhood Advisory Committees and Autonomy". They have all placed the idea of people telling their own stories in a central position, supporting their active role in both representational and political fora. They have supported people in writing their own stories, in writing them into the city of today, for it plays a part in who can take part in the city of tomorrow.

The following section will go further into detail upon how the members of the Speaker encourage their members, as well as visitors at the citizen café meetings, to perceive their personal experiences as most valuable knowledge, and I will examine the role affect plays into this process.

## **THE NEW VOLTAIRES**

The discussion topic at the citizen café held that week in Husby Träff, Husby's community center, was gentrification and segregation. The citizen café lectures, be it on gentrification, racism, feminism, media's perspective on the suburb et cetera, the members from the Speaker usually presented as meeting places for engaging in questions that are important for them, and the districts they were being held in. "This is not a university where visitors are to perform, and style it up

with academic concepts; the citizen café shows that politics can be relaxed, as our friend [...] calls it, *organiserat tugg*<sup>53</sup>". The audience consisted of some hundred people, roughly in their twenties. The couple of exclusions were members from another organization from the area, who also had initiated many protest actions against Järvalyftet, and they were in their sixties, or older. Amir, who presented the chosen lecturer, Robert, joked that he could not pronounce the term gentrification, even though he had been practicing all day, "genti-fication, grenti-frication, grentri-fication", he played, much to everyone's amusement.

Robert was a member of a Gothenburg-based grassroots organization opposing the renovation of the neighborhood he lived in, which as he said, was announced with a 65% rent increase, and since he had recently become a father, this was beyond his means. He was ethnically Swedish, in his thirties, and with his black attire, clean-shaven head, and a beard that reminded me of the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen, he was a remarkable figure. He spoke quite calmly and slowly, and finished his presentation about half an hour earlier than usual. Robert did not present an academic background in order to speak of these issues. His credentials for being present in Husby Träff were his personal experiences of living in a neighborhood to be renovated with eventual rent increases, and his partaking in a struggle against it, at least, a struggle against the terms of the Gothenburg housing company. He did, however, refer to

sociologist Ruth Glass by name, and her classical definition of gentrification, as a process starting in working class areas, where housing is upgraded and rents are increased, which causes the displacement of existing residents with the newly arriving middle class ones, changing the character of the area itself (Glass 1964: xviii). Then he joked, “In simple Swedish, *fintfolkifiering* (nice-folk-i-fication)”.

Placing a name on a fear of rent increases which they, their families or friends could not afford, awoke the hunger for solutions in the audience, for “What should be done”. “You should start a Facebook group”, Robert said, which would enable an exchange of information between those present. The suggestion, however, was met with little enthusiasm. Jashar, moderating the discussion, added:

Listen, you all know what’s going on here [Husby], you know what’s going on in Rinkeby, with this whole thing about the street with the shops and all they want to do<sup>54</sup>. Everybody that is here must spread this knowledge [*alla här måste sprida kunskapen*]. You have to spread it to everyone so they realize it’s urgent! To everyone you know, you have to say “Listen, the school you went to, where you made friends, the building you lived in, it’s all being torn down”! We got to get this kind of rhetoric through! Sure, we can start a Facebook group,

but if it's the same 50 people again, it isn't worth anything!

He then looked around, slowly, resting his gaze. "I see a lot of faces that I don't recognize, but the same kinds of projects are happening all over Stockholm, in Gothenburg, all over Sweden". As he expanded the theme of gentrification as being of interest not only for those who come from Järva, but for all in the audience, he underlined the relationships that exist between different places, as commonalities upon which collaboration could be built upon. Wherever they were coming from, they were sure to encounter similar issues of displacement of the existing residents with those of greater economic means, and they were encouraged in joining in struggles against such processes in whatever way available, with an accent on sharing one's personal experience. The knowledges that the audience held of the neighborhood they lived in was no less true because of their subjectivity, this was their specific agency that could be put to use in demanding influence upon the developments set in motion as a part of the project Järvalyftet, and political decisions influencing their neighborhoods in general. Such a task did not belong to an individual, there was no single person that was deemed most appropriate for it, but all present were seen as equally capable. Many in the audience acknowledged Jashar with firm nods; they indeed were the connoisseurs of their neighborhoods. "No one person can do it all, but

everyone can do something” (*Ingen kan göra allt, men alla kan göra något*), as Robert firmly added.

Knowing was presented as being embedded in their personal stories from apartments, courtyards, and school buildings, knowing which was not separate from the feelings they had experienced in those places. They were the ones living or working in the Million Program suburbs, the ones who wake up in the late-modernism formed apartments, the wayfarers of traffic-separated streets, burdened by the stigmatization of what has been commonly denoted in Swedish media as high-crime, low-employment areas.

Arjun Appadurai, drawing from Raymond Williams (1976, 1982), in *Modernity at Large* sees locality as a “structure of feeling” (1996: 182), which particular forms of intentional activity have produced, yielding particular sorts of material effects, without being separate from the actual settings in, and through which social life is reproduced (ibid.). The feelings intricately enmeshed in the material environment constituted it as a locality. People’s lives, loves, and losses were as relevant as the concrete and metal, and played into their dialectical production. Appadurai also writes:

Much that has been considered local knowledge is in fact knowledge of how to produce and reproduce locality under conditions of anxiety and entropy, social wear and flux, ecological

uncertainty and cosmic volatility, and the always present quirkiness of kinsmen, enemies, sprits, and quarks of all sorts (1996: 181).

In this view, local knowledge attains value for itself; it becomes a system of defense against what is perceived as encroachments upon the familiarity of the world and its form. Husby, as a locality, cannot be understood without being put into relation to the plans made for its re-construction, threatening that familiarity. And while it is true that the Järva districts have been the location for several projects similar to Järvalyftet during the previous decades<sup>55</sup>, Järvalyftet is of a considerable scale, and it consequently influences many lives, since it is not only apartment buildings of the three largest housing companies that are to be renovated, but also public spaces and social services will be effected. What has been produced through the claims made upon the preservation of the traffic-separation, the old Husby Träff, the Health Clinic, and so on, has been both Husby as a locality in itself, which has these physical structures as its defining traits, and as Appadurai argues, the local subjects, who can be recognized and organized within these settings (ibid.). As the slogan, “Stand up for your suburb”<sup>56</sup>, which members of the Speaker often used necessitates: there needs to be a subject who can perform the “standing”, and a locality, a “suburb” that can be delimited as “your”, for which the subject can perform the action for.

The locality that is produced is in its own turn equivocal. For some of the informants I have spoken to, preserving the old Husby Träff, as a mere example, had greater relevance than the Health Clinic, and vice versa. Husby had a different relief<sup>67</sup> for different subjects, a reflection of the social lives they led. If the person I was speaking to had used the Clinic on a daily basis due to health issues, it would more often come up in conversations, and its transfer to Akalla would be the object of great laments. In the same manner, if they organized meetings in Husby Träff, or just enjoyed being there, its move to the smaller quarters would be discussed. Nevertheless, when such a large extent of the physical environment is “under siege”, many subjects will be affected, and some will react, and as Appadurai argued, this will frame the production of the locality as an exercise of power over a hostile or recalcitrant environment (1996: 184). Thus, events as the citizen café can be seen as forums to test, question, probe and reproduce ideas of who the locals are, and what the local is, where a sense of control over change can be regained.

In *A less modest witness*, Peter Redfield writes that the work of MSF (*Médecins Sans Frontières*, Doctors Without Borders) illustrates a shift in the social forms of knowledge production that collectives with a significant technical knowledge operate, as opposed to individual actors (2006: 5). Redfield continues to argue that the current absence of “Voltaire-like intellectuals”, in transnational advocacy networks, mediated social movements and NGOs now fill (ibid.). In his view,

the combination of sentiment with specific expertise plays into the construction of “motivated truth” – a positioned assemblage of reason and sentiment (ibid.). I argue that while grassroots organizations such as the Speaker represent such a shift toward producing assemblages of reason and sentiment, as a difference from MSF, it has not been a specific kind of technical knowledge required in order to be part of the process. This is, however, not to imply that their members were not technically knowledgeable, most of those who I have met had a varied work experience, and/or were enrolled in various university educations, such as journalism, political science, law, social work studies (*socionom*), sociology, some had completed courses in anthropology, and so on. Those experiences were often put to use in their work. The point of parting between the MSF and organizations such as the Speaker, was that the later were speaking for themselves, for their personal disappointments, needs and expectations; they were representing their own lives’ affects.

During a TV interview together with Amir, from the Speaker, Muro, a member of the Gothenburg group, explained that he studies public administration, which he said was a choice he had made not in order to build a career for himself, but to learn how the bureaucratic system works in Sweden, which he understood as being an “incredible machinery” (*otroligt maskineri*). Muro saw the power that exists within the bureaucratic system, and wanted to take part in it. From his education he had gained knowledge that was used in

the Gothenburg group, he had learned that one had access to the public government documents, or *Statens Offentliga Utredningar*. The Gothenburg group could then react in time for decisions politicians had planned to carry through. “If you don’t know your rights, you don’t have any rights”, Muro said (*Känner man inte till sina rättigheter, så har man inga rättigheter*) (Malou: Efter Tio, 2013). The knowledge of the workings of the state’s bureaucratic system had thus helped them in their use of the welfare state’s own instruments, such as the public government documents. From research of grassroots movements of the urban poor in South Korea, anthropologist Mun Young Cho argues that studying welfare policy became quite popular for activists in the mid-1990s (2005: 6). That signified a change in the growing institutional conduct of the grassroots movements, which could be seen in the organization of workshops and seminars, as these did not use to be a common practice (ibid.). In a similar vein, Henry Giroux frames the image of the young protester as a public intellectual, merging “theoretical rigor with civic courage, meaning with the struggle for eliminating injustice wherever it occurs, and hope with a realistic notion of social change”, with knowledge as a crucial instrument of that change (2013: 133). The educational backgrounds of members of grassroots groups have provided them with possibilities to navigate and negotiate the workings of the state. In a practical sense, this has enabled organizations as the Speaker to sustain a part of their activities on state funds. Collaborating with the state however, rendered them visible to it, a situation in

which they need to answer to top-down demands<sup>58</sup>.

In this section, I have attempted to show that experientially based knowledge, or again, what Fraser called the “standpoint of the collective concrete other” (1986), in settings as the citizen café, was accentuated as an invaluable asset, while being set in context and connection to the experiences of those who come from other parts of the city/country/ beyond. There, members and visitors alike were supported to believe that the experiences they had gathered in the areas they lived in were no less valuable and no less true because they were subjective and laden with emotion. This aspect was in fact, a resource. However, this is not to imply that “academic/professional knowledge” was disdained. As an example, it was seen as a most beneficial instrument that could make adjustments in the “incredible machinery” of the bureaucratic state. Thus, what experientially based knowledge, and knowledge gained through academia/professional life had in common was that they were seen not merely as to benefit the individual, but also the community one was a part of. Career choices were most welcome to serve the group. This builds into Giroux’ (2013) intertwinement of the “academic” and the “protester”, a figure, or better yet, figures, who argue for a more inclusive politics, one that is informed by the particularities of the lived experience of more than majoritarian groups. On another level, I have examined what the movement towards “local” knowledge represents. In line with Appadurai (1996), I have argued that it is a response

towards conditions of uncertainty, which in the case at hand were Järvalyftet's outcomes. In this light, local knowledge can be seen as a system of defense against what is perceived as encroachments upon the familiarity of the everyday. Thus, producing knowledge that is termed as "local" can be understood as both an act that produces the locality in itself, as well as the locals, which can be organized within it. From such complex interrelations between places, and the persons who reside there, they have drawn truths that are no less true because they are non-objective, and emotionally laden, this has been their foundation.

In the following section, I will discuss how this experientially based knowledge has been engaged with by the project Järvalyftet, and at which points Järvalyftet's and the Speaker's approaches were disjoined.

## THE LOCAL AS AN EXPERT

We are the experts, they [representatives for Järvalyftet] have told us so themselves.

(Tor, Husby, 2013)

The value of the knowledge that residents have of the areas they live in has been presented as an inextricable element of the project Järvalyftet: a resource that bureaucrats argue should be utilized. This has been done through the persona of the "expert", even as these roles are delimited to

certain fora and times. Indeed, informants would quite often refer to themselves as such, formulating it as a rhetorical question, “Weren’t we the experts?” (*Var det inte vi som var experterna?*), and so underling their perception of not influencing the project Järvalyftet as they might have hoped for. The term expert, as attached to the residents in Järva, can be traced to the use Joakim Larsson<sup>59</sup> made of it. In the program document Vision Järva 2030, he wrote:

It is positive that Stockholm is growing. A world-class Stockholm requires that the city offers an attractive environment for both living and working, each neighborhood with its own charm and its own character.

The vision is to build on the area’s potential, while pointing to the problems that exist so that these can be addressed. I want the residents of Järva to see themselves [*ska känna igen sig*] in the image of the districts that the vision shows, and that they feel enthusiastic about the future. It is those living and working in the districts who are the experts, while we also retain tomorrow’s citizens in the focus (Utlåtande 2009: 46 RV [Dnr 319-2070/2008, 336-2252/2004]: 13).

The use of the term seemed to have grown out of the

discontent aimed towards the project in its initial stages. Several informants have described the announcement of Järvalyftet, around Christmas of 2007, in a way that sounded much to me as an excerpt from an Orwellian dystopia. A story that informants would often recapitulate was of the not-so-merry letter Svenska Bostäder had sent out, announcing that they “will renovate the housing, you [tenants] have to move, rents will be increased to new-construction [nyproduktion<sup>60</sup>] prices”. At times, I felt the letter attained a fable-like character. Mention of it managed to color the conversation with fear and anger aimed at Svenska Bostäder. A meeting in the old locale of Husby Träff followed the ominous letter, where architects showed drawings of the Husby to come. Foreshadowing Joakim Larsson’s expression of the residents of Järva being able to see themselves in the visions of Stockholm 2030, Bjarne, in his late fifties, who has been one of the initiators for several protest actions in Husby, told me that he was the one who stood up in the middle of the meeting, and questioned the plans. He could not see his building on the street Trondheimsgatan in the drawings. What was to become of it?

In fact, the building Bjarne lived in and several others were to be torn down, and this was the way that the plan to do so was transmitted to him. Enraged for not being taken into account when plans were made, and that several of their homes were to be done away with, many of the meeting participants took to Husby’s Square in protest. Protest

actions continued through the winter and spring of 2008, the Information Officer for Järvalyftet, Magnus, told me, affecting the return of Järvalyftet to the drawing board, a point where they had to rethink both plans, and practices. Presenting the experiences of the residents as being of crucial value for the further developments, and addressing them as experts, can be thus seen as techniques aimed at easing the pressure from the turbulent beginnings of the Järvalyftet project.

Classical theorizations describe the persona of the “expert” as one that embodies neutrality, skill and authority, and operates according to an ethical code “beyond good and evil” (Rose & Miller, 1992: 187). On the other hand, Peter Redfield writes that the relationship towards traditions of objectivity and neutrality have been modified, making possible for truth to be proclaimed in open association to a point of view (2006: 5), thus one can continue being an “expert”, despite, or possibly because, one is emotionally engaged. This, I argue, has been relevant both for the collective production of local knowledge among the Speaker’s members and allies, but also for the project Järvalyftet, and its signification of Järva’s residents as experts. In both cases, the focus was placed upon the firsthand nature of the knowledge that residents held; it needed not be neutral and objective, but firmly situated in the experiential and material ground of what had been delimited as Husby.

To what extent the residents of Järva could play role of

experts, and influence Järvalyftet's developments, can, however, be questioned. We can take the example of the residents' direct engagement with the project - the Dialogue Week (*Dialogveckan*) of 2009 – when they were to place colored dots on aerial maps of the districts, and state their opinions on what was “good” and “bad” there. Residents could also expand in detail on opinion sheets, which resulted in the collection of 8,000 such documents in Husby alone. Children were encouraged to draw, compose poems, and write their wishes for Husby on silk ribbons, which were then attached to a wishing tree (Figure 5:1).

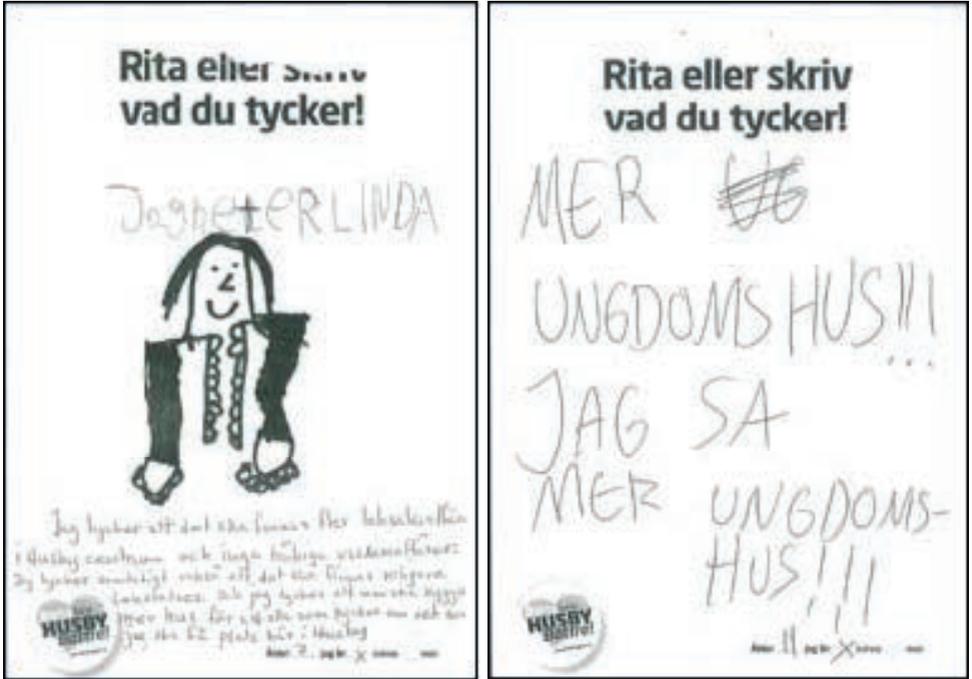
Following Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller, I argue that Järvalyftet's Dialogue Office in Husby (*Järvdialogen*), where the event was held, thus became a “center of calculation” (1992: 185–186). Rose and Miller, in line with Bruno Latour (1987), define these “centers of calculation” as the accumulation of inscriptions in certain locales, which confer upon groups or persons the capacity to engage in certain calculations, and allow them to lay a claim to legitimacy for plans and strategies, as they are *in the know*<sup>61</sup> about the matter in question (ibid.).

The Structural Plan that emerged from the Dialogue Week held the problematic suggestion of intervening in the traffic separation. This suggestion resulted in the protests of 2011, and the gathering of 1,600 petition signatures against it. Thus, designating the residents as experts, and inviting them to

participate in events as the Dialogue Week of 2009, did not necessarily place them in the position to determine Järva's continued development, but it did confer upon the project Järvalyftet the legitimacy of having consulted the districts' own experts, the ones familiar with all their nooks and crannies.

While both Järvalyftet and the Speaker have claimed the relevance of knowledge springing from the "grassroots", it is relevant to examine the differences between their approaches. Michel Foucault has argued that since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the state's regulatory power over life has been divided into two poles (1976: 225). The first is disciplinary, individualizing, and aiming toward the singular body to make it obedient and useful. The second is not aimed toward the body, but the population at large; totalizing it, trying to control the sequence of random events that take place in the crowd (*levande folkmassan*), check their probability for reoccurrence, and weigh their effects (*ibid.*).

During the Dialogue Week, the colored dots that were to be placed upon the aerial map of Husby were enumerated, thus individualizing the input that residents had made. So were the opinion sheets where one could further develop suggestions. Each participant was provided with a space for the expression of their ideas, and the making of choices. After the areas around Husby Centrum, its conglomeration of shops, and adjacent train station exits were marked with numerous red dots, an intervention was called upon. The Structural



**Figure 5:1.** Opinion sheets produced by children during the Dialogue Week in Husby, 2009. From the image to the right, it can be read: “More community centers for youths (literally, youth houses)!!! I said more community centers for youths!!!”.

SOURCE: WHITE ARKITEKTER, 2009.

Plan thus became the totalizing response, which aimed at regulating these spaces. As the argument goes, the removal of the pedestrian bridges, and raising the level of the vehicle trafficked road will make possible a new street connecting Husby to the IT cluster Kista. This street was intended to

provide a boost for Husby, and enable the planned Culture House, built where Husby Centrum now lies, to economically sustain itself – as Husby would be made easily accessible for drivers (Stadsledningskontoret et al., 2011). The new street and the Cultural House were to raise the influx of people, and the feelings of security in these spaces.

The Speaker, on the other hand, has been working for collectivizing the population, through what I in Chapter Three argued was the formation of a community based on the shared experiences of discrimination and marginalization mediated through “blackness”, and through the identities of the suburbanites. The suburbanites were seen by the Speaker as being those who knew their areas intimately, and who should actively be engaged in their development. The particular points of intervention suggested in the Structural Plan have been what the Speaker, and other locally based organizations and individuals, have fervently protested against. Its members and many other residents have claimed the traffic-separation to be “Husby’s identity”. In this view, producing plans that aim to do away with physical structures that are highly valued in the community, communicates either lack of knowledge of the “local” opinions, or utter disregard for them.

In the section “The Local as an Expert”, I have examined the use of experience-based knowledge, particularly, the knowledge of the area one lives in, by the project Järvalyftet. The

knowledge, or expertise, if you will, of members of the Speaker, associated organizations, and any individual coming from Järva, was to be drawn from their networks of relationships they had established in “their neighborhoods”. This was what informants explained gave legitimacy to their stories, they were the ones who should speak of, and make decisions for their areas, they knew them best. Through the Dialogue Week, the project Järvalyftet also attempted to tap into that legitimacy, and ameliorate the conflicts of the turbulent years of 2007 and 2008. The revised plans were to benefit those living in Järva, since Järvalyftet had been in “close collaboration (samarbete) with the tenants”, as written on the piercing green advertising posters for the project throughout the districts. As Nicholas Rose and Carlos Novas write, however, vectors “from below”<sup>62</sup> pluralize truth, introduce doubt and controversy, and relocate science in the fields of experience, politics and capitalism (2005: 446). The critique persisted, despite Järvalyftet attempts to respond to the initial turbulences through the incorporation of the knowledge of the “local experts” in the project’s future plans. This was precisely for the reasons Novas and Rose outlined. The residents continued to see their experiences as being devalued, and their truths disregarded on the expense of economic interests<sup>63</sup> and arbitrary political decisions, as they did not have a meaningful opportunity to play the part of the expert they had been handed.

In Chapter Four, “Stand Up for Your Suburb”, I focused on how the youths, often disregarded for their young age

and geographic location, used precisely this as their asset providing them with unique lived experiences, which they have asserted as inextricable elements of social and political change. These experiences were seen as instrumental in capsizing dominant claims of equal treatment and equal opportunities being available for all of Sweden's citizens. As Holston and Appadurai argue, the mobilization of those who see through the hypocrisies of universal equality, have expanded democracies by generating "new kinds of citizens, new sources of law, and new participation in decisions that bind" (1996: 187). Such mobilizations create unprecedented claims on and to the city, expanding citizenship to new social bases, and in so doing, create new sources of citizenship rights and forms of self-rule (ibid: 198). In Husby, mobilization took place in a highly charged context where bureaucrats were constantly trying to encourage – but paradoxically delimit – political action, as they called for "local expert knowledge", while at the same time, discarding what went beyond their need for legitimacy. The use of the knowledge that local residents drew from the affective relations they had established in their neighborhoods could indeed legitimize the workings of this–or–that project, but it also opened cracks in the edifice of municipal and state authority, since what these actors defined as problems, and proposed as solutions, did not necessarily correspond to the residents' own definitions.

## CHAPTER FIVE: IF WE ARE NOT HEARD, THEN WE ARE NOT SEEN

Indeed, as soon as people find one another, touch one another ideationally, emotionally and maybe experientially, as soon as we<sup>64</sup> begin to reach into ourselves as human beings, we start to piece together certain concepts about *our* lives: we universalize, make more coherent what seems, on the face of it, only specific experience-vague, lived experience. And yet, what appears particular is in fact general; what seems just our plight is actually the plight of many people, the plight of a multitude of different people (Merrifield, 2011: 473,474).

While the discussion in the two previous chapters has predominantly centered upon community, locality, local knowledge, identity, and their production, in the current section I will add another dimension to the youth organization's work – the dissemination of their ideas. In the section “The Suburb as Identity”, I argued that while communicative media have enabled people to enter into communities that overreach geographic borders, this has not made redundant the relation between identity and locality.

This chapter will expand on that point. It was originally not my specific intention to follow the media production of the youth organization the Speaker and their related organizations; this however, was a fairly extensive part of their work, so in the following section I will attempt to present a few points that I have found relevant for this discussion.

In the practical sense, following the Speaker through media channels has implied that I have read through the updates on the Speaker's Facebook page, occasionally their Twitter page, but most actively their homepage. There, I have browsed through the videos and articles that their members publish, an average of one of each per week, on varying topics, such as politics, music, racism, education, the Million Program, and/or a combination of the named. I have followed their publications in the online versions of the local suburban magazine *Norra Sidan*, the daily national Swedish newspapers *Svenska Dagbladet* and *Dagens Nyheter*, and the popular tabloid *Aftonbladet*, and I have used the online archives of TV4, a Swedish television network, due to the appearance of members from the Speaker at one of the talk shows aired there.

In the following discussion, I also include material from "corporeal" meetings, this mainly from the citizen café, not only because even then we are present in the world of various media, through phones with an internet connection, and similar gadgets, but also because the possibilities that

these devices represent for their organization are brought up there. It has not been my aim to conduct media-ethnography *per se*, but to examine how parties that are separated spatially, translate the resources available to them in the virtual to the material realm. This section also focuses on the possibilities that the use of various media channels open for obtaining representational autonomy, as well as the tensions that arise from it.

## **SPREADING THE MESSAGE**

Members of the Speaker were no strangers to utilizing all available channels to funnel their ideas, and form alliances with other groups and individuals. During the evening of the gentrification lecture at the citizen café in Husby Träff, Miguel, turning towards the audience from his seat, commented that people have to talk about gentrification on the square, make movies, radio broadcasts, write articles, or “Whatever it takes, we have to get the message out”. Indeed, “there is no war, then, without representation”, as Paul Virilio wrote (1989: 6). The Speaker was at war with structures that it perceived as exclusionary, and the stories that its members and other residents had to tell of their lives in the areas they called their own, were their weapons.

Throughout most of the citizen café meetings, there was constant mention of reaching “established media”, this being journalist and artists of varying genres, who could widen the

Speaker's exposure and influence. On two occasions at the citizen café, including the one dedicated to gentrification, Henok Goitom was sitting in the front row, a professional football player who was raised in Husby and now playing for *AIK Fotboll*, a Swedish Top League team, as well as Adam Tensta, a famous hip-hop artist born and raised, as the stage name hints, in Tensta. Some days after Henok Goitom was at the citizen café, he posted a message at the Twitter<sup>65</sup> page of the Speaker. He said that he and his father were at the tenant association's (*hyresgästförening*) meeting, where they were attempting to ensure that the Speaker's representatives made it onto the board. His next message was that they had made it. Clearly making alliances with "notable" individuals augmented the power and influence that they themselves held.

One day in late March, while I was looking through the TV-channels for a news program, I was surprised to notice Amir as a guest in a morning talk show called *Malou: Efter Tio* ("Malou: After Ten"), which I perceived as usually dealing with questions surrounding fashion, popular literature, and the like. The host, Malou von Sivers, had prepared that week's episodes around the Million Program suburbs, inviting guests from areas throughout Sweden, whose work is in different ways related to those areas. That morning in, as Malou called it, the "morning sofa" (*morgonsoffan*), sat Amir (whose name Malou kept getting wrong<sup>66</sup>), Muro (the founder of the Gothenburg group), and Madeleine, who lives in Husby, and

has started a think-tank there called “A Million Minds”. For the talk show, Amir was dressed in the Speaker’s member T-shirt with the text reading, “I will never move away from here, I swear” (*Jag flyttar aldrig härifrån, jag svär*). With only twenty minutes to talk before a section devoted to evening dresses, Malou’s questions focused on where they were “originally from” (*kommer från ursprungligen*), their lives in the areas they have grown up in, and their current studies (Malou: *Efter Tio*, 2013). The video from *Efter Tio* was posted on the Speaker’s Facebook page, with an attached comment that despite some biased (*fördomsfulla*) and generalized questions, only focusing on them as individuals, they had tried to explain the need to organize themselves against the structural problems of their areas. This was the problematic aspect of using “established media”; while one was exposed for a wider audience, it was not certain that one would come to complete expression there.

The topic of media often seemed to be caught between utopian hopes for its possibilities and dystopian disappointments about what seemed to be its realities. Media representations were seen as the reason for the stigmatization of Husby and other Million Program areas, but they were nonetheless also regarded as a potential method to alter that image. I relate this to Boris Groys’ discussion of the conflict between passive consumption of mass culture, and the activist opposition to it, both political, aesthetic, or a mixture of the two (2009: 4). The conflict originates in

the ideology of modernity, he writes, being “directed against contemplation, against spectatorship, against the passivity of the masses paralyzed by the spectacle of modern life” (ibid.). The turn of the twenty-first century was according to Groys a new era, not only of mass consumption, but also mass production, making self-documentation into a “mass practice and even mass obsession” (ibid.). Miguel once said that the problem of media lay with the journalists. None of them lived in Husby, so they could not be aware of all the “positive things” that took place there. What journalists did, according to Miguel, was read police reports focusing on the crimes perpetrated in the area, influencing the material from which they had to produce articles. The Speaker was for Miguel, who also studied to become a journalist, a forum that enabled alternative stories from Husby to take shape, thus positioning the organization against passive consumption of the products of mainstream media, but also producing, or partaking in what Groys called the “mass obsession”.

Media coverage of suburbs such as Husby has focused greatly on more or less “spectacular” events, such as car-burnings, organized crime, and so forth. Paradoxically, such portrayals could also be seen as a technique that members of the Speaker used to confer the necessity of their direct involvement in the representation of “their neighborhoods”, as coming closest to the “reality” of those neighborhoods. This yet again positioned them as being the “local experts” that I discussed in the previous chapter: those who can

proclaim truth in an open association with a point of view, a “motivated truth”, as Peter Redfield writes (2006: 5). The space that the Speaker had in “established media” to play that role, was indeed, rapidly expanding. As I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, members have authored articles published in Swedish national daily newspapers; and, as we observed from the brief vignette of Malou’s talk-show, they have been present on daytime television. Nevertheless, cases such as their appearance on Malou’s *Efter Tio* – where Amir’s name was pronounced incorrectly – and the questions posed were interpreted as being “biased” – could also serve as fuel for the ambition to establish their own channels.

Jashar presented the possibilities for the further development of the Speaker’s media aspirations during a citizen café that dealt with the role of culture in political movements, housed on that occasion in Rinkeby’s community center. He seemed to be seeking acknowledgement and alliances in the invited lecturers, but theirs was a slightly more skeptical stance<sup>67</sup>:

**Jashar:** We have a social, a political and cultural<sup>68</sup> movement. Do you think that in two, three years, we could start our own media company [*mediaföretag*], so we stop worrying about everything we can’t get on SVT [the Swedish national public TV broadcaster]?! Which ones of you are ready to take that step? [Applause from the audience]

**Jewel:** That's a classic question; do you have a solution on how to actually do that?

**Jashar:** It's not an unrealistic vision, but it is hard to be self-financed to do this. It could start off as a think-tank [*tankesmedja*], which is the backbone [*ryggrad*] of democracy. We could put issues from the suburb on the agenda. It could eventually grow into a league [*förbund*].

**Jewel:** I have to tell you, you sound exactly like the Black Panther Party from the US; they wanted to build their own society!

**Nadia:** And you don't always have to start your own forums; you could keep the networks you have when you are at the top...

**Jashar:** Yeah. But then you are back to the same problems. We need to spread messages that create alternative thoughts [*sprida budskap för alternativa tankar*]...

**Jorge:** The problem is that everyone wants to get paid!

**Jashar:** We do it for free...

**Jorge:** Sure. But we don't live in a utopian society. We got to live and we got to pay. Everyone has ideals! But I'm 32 years old. I got to have *para* [slang, money]. Society turns people against people [*samhället vänder folk mot folk*], and forces you to think for the moment. Nobody goes 100% in what they do!

This discussion is not so distant from the section “Neighborhood Advisory Committees and Autonomy” in Chapter Three and the dilemmas of working “inside” existing structures that I described there. Many in the Speaker would often express their ideas of constructing alternative and independent forums for expression and influence upon political and representational structures. However, in most cases, to put ideas into action required funding, implying conditions, or eventual constraints, being placed upon them. In that case, the alternative risked being not much of an alternative. One informant phrased the danger as being “hugged to death” (*kramad till döds*), and was used in relation to politicians providing assistance, while helping you – they destroy you. On the other hand, they could attempt establishing something “new”, an independent forum, with no (direct) relations to official structures; however, there lay the danger of marginalization. And as Jorge pointed out, whatever choice made, it needed to be profitable, since we do not live in a utopia, and bills need to be paid. As most of the members of the Speaker were in their early twenties, and many of them still lived with their parents, working *pro bono* was still a possibility. This was not the case for people such as Jorge, who were from an older generation, and had families to provide for.

Before the longed-for media company was made possible, means of communication such as Facebook, Twitter, on-line versions of newspapers, and so forth had to suffice, and

their use was not utterly void of potentiality either. What takes place when subjects produce, represent and reproduce locality, according to Appadurai, is that its material and conceptual boundaries are exceeded (1996: 185). In a more poetic style, but in a related argument, Marxist urban theorist Andy Merrifield argues that when people find one another, they piece together what seems like a specific experience into the “plight of the multitude” (2011: 473–474). When Robert lectured on gentrification in Husby Träff using his personal experience from the area in Gothenburg he lived in, he continuously asked the audience if they recognized the issues he spoke of: if they also felt being displaced for the benefit of “higher” classes, if they also had been through the fear of rent increases. For every nod and every yes, there were questions about what should be done. A young woman was meticulously taking notes during Robert’s lecture. She later presented herself as coming from Alby and being a member of the protest group there. With a voice full of exasperation, she told Robert:

Politicians have told us that they want more Swedes in the area, that it will be a good influence on us. When we tried to meet the buyers for the new apartments, we were being followed by the police, Säpo<sup>69</sup>, and even a police helicopter was flying so low that windows were shaking! We were too late [the buyers had already been to the apartments]. How can we influence legislation, if we can’t even have a

meeting, a dialogue with the politicians? There were some meetings, but they were really strange! Many [residents] don't speak Swedish, so they had to take their kids along to translate, and then they say "No, these meetings are not for children, they can't be here". What should we do now?

The meetings where the residents were to discuss the sale of the apartments with the municipal politicians and representatives from the housing companies were not preordained to be meetings of equals, since as the young woman stated, many were cut off from their possibility to understand what was taking place, or speak back. One is counted as a political subject, according to Jacques Rancière (1999: 27), when one becomes visible, through actually becoming audible, when the noise becomes a voice, when one is acknowledged and heard in a world where one has not before. On one of the Speaker's protest banners, which they sometimes display at the citizen café, it was written: "If we are not heard, then we are not seen" (*Om vi inte hörs, så syns vi inte*), a slogan that could have been to Rancière's liking.

Robert's answer for the young woman from Alby was that it was quite uncomplicated. He said that they should reach different media channels, and that they should see who in their group can write well, and those who do should

“hammer up a message” (*hamra upp ett meddelande*). Then he added, “Media is the way out!”. Robert’s reply did not seem to satisfy the woman’s inquiry, so she continued:

Yes, but media has the power to decide who we are! We are *blattarna*<sup>70</sup> who are messy [*mesiga*]!

**Robert:** But are you? Don’t let yourself be beaten down because of structural discrimination [*strukturell diskriminering*]. If you feel this continues, contact me! We can help each other! [He repeated] No one person can do it all, but everyone can do something!

The next day, there was an article published on the internet culture-pages of *Aftonbladet*, which the Alby group, whom the young woman was representing, had written. There, she explained in further detail the tenants’ exclusion from the sale of the municipal housing apartments in Botkyrka that she had spoken of. Six people from their group had co-authored the article, with a note that several others had partaken in the writing process:

We scream until we lose our voices, but all that’s heard is noise [*brus*].[...] The only thing that happens if we shout loud enough is that the police makes sure that we remain unheard. (Afram et al, 2013)

Did the use of the internet pages of *Aftonbladet* engage them in what Rancière calls political activity, making visible what had no business being seen, and making audible a discourse where once there was only place for noise (1999: 30)?

As Mark Graham and Shahram Khosravi have argued, “cyberspace is not, as yet, a decision-making forum, this privilege is still very much confined to the political institutions of real space” (2002: 242). The article members of the Alby group had written might not necessarily change the outcome the municipality’s council (*kommunfullmäktige*) is to take, since it might never reach a single of their representatives, and their voices might still remain unheard by those who failed to listen before. Nevertheless, on the pages of *Aftonbladet* they could scream without being silenced, and this I say without knowing the ordeals they might have gone through with the tabloid’s editor. Graham and Khosravi write that the capacity of cyberspace lie in its ability to link people and spaces that are normally separate; when bypassing spatial divisions that underpin social divisions, it is endowed with political significance (2002: 219). Even as it is not a decision making-forum, if the participation and production within communicative media do not necessarily directly translate to political agency, it enables the encounter between those who might think alike, and deal with similar matters.

Jashar and Miguel announced both on their Facebook page and during other citizen café meetings that the Alby

group is gathering petition signatures against the sale of the apartments, which were to be presented for the municipality's council. They informed the readers that all who wish to do so should go to Alby and assist the group in the process of their gathering<sup>71</sup>. Promoting what were seen as related struggles was indeed a common occurrence. Several weeks later, there was another announcement, or better yet invitation, in both of these fora; it advertised a protest action in Solna, north of Stockholm, against a decision the municipality and a housing company there had made to withdraw the use of a public locale from a youth club. The announcement had the following text attached:

The only road to justice [*rättvisa*] is that ALL suburbs support each other [*backar varandra*], as politicians, companies and the media clearly show that they do not care about us [*visar tydligt att dom skiter i oss*]. TIME FOR UNION<sup>72</sup>!

According to Appadurai, new forms of electronically mediated communication create virtual neighborhoods, playing into a complex relationship with the spatial neighborhoods (1996: 195). In the virtual one, he writes, ideas, opinions, moneys, and social linkages can be mobilized, that flow back into the lived neighborhoods in the form of currency, arms, and support in localized public spheres (ibid.). The Swedish Million Program Suburbs, often denoted as segregated, were bound

to each other in meaningful and productive ways, in both the virtual and material realm. In fact, the very suburbs were seen as a link of commonality, pulling together those who identified with the suburbanite identity, a basis upon which collaboration could be built, as I argued in “The Suburb as Identity”, in Chapter Three.

Through the citizen café meetings, as well as the media channels that the Speaker used, they encountered groups or individuals to establish relationships with, nurtured those, and exhibited support in the means they had available. At times this included providing these organizations, clubs, associations, protest groups, with five or ten minutes at the citizen café to present their matters, promoting them and providing links leading to more information at their Facebook page, gathering petition signatures for each other, and showing up at each other’s protest actions, or a combination of the named. These fora served the purpose of establishing common modes of perception, which as Rose and Miller argue, imply that events and entities can be visualized according to particular rhetoric of image or speech, thus establishing relations between the nature, character and causes of problems facing various individuals and groups (1992: 184). Political decisions and media representations that were seen as overlooking the opinion and best interest of citizens were a common denominator between the Speaker and those they supported. The situation that was described as unfolding in Alby, as an example, gained ample resonance

with the Speaker, as they had also described themselves as leading battles so that politicians, project representatives for Järvalyftet, and the wider public should hear them. There were many parallels to be drawn between the Speaker's struggle in Alby and what people in Husby had been dealing with the past several years with Järvalyftet. Indeed, Husby had the Dialogue Week, but upon its mention, and of similar events, where upcoming developments were to be spoken of with residents, informants tended to question their authenticity, since they did not feel they had given material results. While the young woman from Alby was lamenting the lack of dialogues with the municipality and housing companies upon the sale of apartments, in Husby they had already been through what was denoted as such. Amir called them "mock dialogues" (*skendialoger*).

Within this kind of understanding of those events, they become no more than a performance of inclusion, a mockery of citizens' influence on decisions that impact their lives, such as the renovation, or sale, of the apartments they live in. As I argued in the section "The Local as an Expert" in Chapter Four, residents were presented with a role which they were never expected to play, nevertheless, their very bodily presence during the Dialogue Week seemed to have sufficed for the project to be deemed inclusive, and people were reminded of it daily, on the green posters that recounted the "close collaboration". Being "really listened to" was a recurring statement, an ideal that informants

aimed for. Utilizing media channels thus became a funnel for accumulated frustrations of not “really” being heard, but also a space of hope that others who think similarly, or have related problems will recognize themselves in your story, and your problem becomes the plight of the multitude, as Merrifield put it (2011: 474).

The demand for the “real”, philosopher Bojana Kunst writes, is a naïve hope that there is something more real than the reality we already are participating in, which could lead to a nostalgic utopian longing for a proper encounter (2009: 10). She then refers to Žižek, who in his book *Violence* (2009) ends by refuting possibilities for taking political action. Kunst argues that Žižek does this at the end of the book, when it has already been written, constituting the possibility for action through critical analysis (2009:10). Informants from Husby both members of the Speaker, and so to say, “unattached”, were also making claims, that to some point could be seen as utopian, claims for really being listened to, really making a change, really being involved. If decisions could amount to no more than being made by an elite group of people, Amir told me, then addressing Sweden as a democratic country had no meaning. “What democracy doesn’t contain is people like me”, he said. Amir explained that the goals of the Speaker were to be able to “expand democracy” (*breda ut demokratin*) as they directly partake in decisions that matter, which political representatives made without relation to – or knowledge of – the people’s lives

they impacted. He said that participation should not be about choosing the kind of bushes a park should have, but that one should be involved when, as an example, social services were downsized. I asked how this could look, to really be participating. He told me that he does not know; he did not have the answers, but he wanted to be a part of the search for them, and for methods that could reach them.

While participation in various media channels provided members of the Speaker with the possibility to tell their own stories, in a setting that as Graham and Khosravi argued (2002:219) –transcends boundaries of class, gender, work, age, and so forth – as they further wrote, these were not the fora where political decisions were made (ibid: 242). Nevertheless, in this section I have argued that they could use them to actively produce a context for the areas they came from, rather than be driven by the context produced by others (Appadurai, 1996: 195), who were not seen as having the intimate knowledge and understanding of them. On another level, the reproduction of claims that “established media” do not have access to the genuine stories from the suburbs due to reporters’ lack of personal experiences, could be seen as motivating the Speaker’s members’ position that it was of critical value that they actively and directly become engaged in producing, and disseminating their own stories. The same can be said for the tension that their actual participation there provoked, while they underlined the feelings of constraint they had felt in such contexts, these feelings

legitimized, and invigorated a struggle for establish their own channels.

Chapter Five, “If We Are Not Heard, Then We Are Not Seen” examined how the Speaker, through their use of media, mobilized allies who have supported them, and they have reciprocated not only in the realm of the virtual, but also the corporeal, through participation in each other’s meetings, or even protest actions, for revolutions are still led on the squares and streets. Issues which could be seen as particular and pertaining to isolated groups or geographies could be bound into each other, and to what is seen as greater problems. The internet is not yet a threat to face-to face interaction, the most palpable effect it has had on interaction is that it has increased the speed of which contact between groups and individuals can be established, it has become a space of countless possibilities, even overwhelmingly many, to reach out to others, find allies, as well as foes, all the while reassuring that a different world is possible.

## CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

A heavy smell of toxic smoke was spreading through the residential area, and curiosity led many of us to Husby's streets – where we were met by armored police officers with dogs, and drawn batons. The police attacked the residents who had gathered in the square. Defenseless people were beaten with batons and chased away from their own neighborhoods. We had no right to be there we wanted, in front of our own homes. [...] We believe in other methods for resistance, as it is our neighborhoods that suffer when such incidents occur. We support a social refurbishment [*social opprustning*] of our neighborhoods, and the politicians have to understand that. They have to listen to us, the people. If they do it seriously, we can avoid such situations in the future. We demand social justice, they respond with batons and dogs. They say “Go home”. This IS<sup>73</sup> our home. And we defend it. As long as our streets are filled with policemen high on adrenaline, and with loaded guns, we will not be moved. We stand up for our suburb. The suburb united will never be defeated. (The Speaker, 2013)

I see them smile, I see how they stand there  
beside / and the whole street knows that what's  
happening is their fault / so I step up and I burn  
it down / Babylon is burning down, Babylon is  
burning down / we say Babylon is burning down,  
oooh yea<sup>74</sup>. (Carlitos featuring Aki & Jacco,  
2010)

Monday morning, May the 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013. It was a turbulent weekend for many. The coming marriage of Princess Madeleine was officially announced and celebrated, and the Swedish ice hockey team defeated Switzerland, thus winning the world championship with the convincing result of 5–1. In Husby, approximately 40 youths took to the streets, setting cars on fire, and throwing stones at the police officers and fire brigade that had assembled. The nightly rampages of fire, ascending and descending batons, and flying stones, were a mere tip of an ice berg. Problems that had become palpable in Husby during the past decades of retracting social services, reoccurring renovation projects and increasing rents, were not only ongoing, they were significantly escalating. With great haste, the Speaker called for a press conference in their locale in Husby, as early as that very Monday morning, which the evening tabloids *Aftonbladet* and *Expressen* directly broadcasted. The Speaker did not aim to defend what had occurred mere hours before, as two of its members explained, but sought to convey a nuanced image. What in

their view initiated the riots was the police shooting that resulted in the death of a 69-year old man in Husby during the previous week<sup>75</sup>, but as they said, this was not the only reason for the violent uprisings; the suburbs had long been suffering the dismantling of the welfare state, and social problems were solved by raising the presence of police. “They [the police] called us rats, monkeys, bums and niggers last night” (*råttor, apor, luffare, negrer*), Roberta, a member of the Speaker, visibly shaken and tired, told the press. A journalist from *Aftonbladet*, Oisín Cantwell, present in Husby, wrote an article laden with a tone of *ennui* after the press conference, questioning why a youth organization would gather the journalists in their “small, and worn locale”; why was this taken so personally (Cantwell, 2013)? “The small, and worn locale”, was what Svenska Bostäder, the municipal housing company, had provided them with. Funneling the voices of Husby to the “higher” echelons was, in fact, the role “handed down” to the Speaker in their beginnings with the Järvalyftet project, a role that state and municipal actors had actively encouraged them to play – and this youth organization has continued to do so. It was taken personally because this was their neighborhoods.

In this Conclusion, I will lay out a general summary of the three ethnographic chapters, before going on to recapitulate on the main questions that I have raised in this thesis, through which I hope to have shown how alternative forms of political action can operate by identity-formation

around geography, and struggles for belonging, control, and representation, particularly with respect to what the youths called “our neighborhoods” (*våra områden*). This takes place in the highly laden setting of the Million Program suburbs, where bureaucrats have continuously tried to encourage political action, while paradoxically delimiting it. There, groups have been invited to share their “local expert knowledge”, even as this knowledge has been gathered and used on the terms of the bureaucrats involved, and everything that has not been contained by their framework, has been treated as threatening.

In Chapter Three, “All Power to the People and the People are Us”, which was the first ethnographic chapter, I examined how the Speaker has been configured as an organization in a complex interplay with the municipal and state actors that took part in its establishment, but also in relation to those who have shown solidarity with its later work of critique and protests. To examine this interplay, I began discussing the community of “blackness” that Black Power struggles had structured. “Blackness” was not reducible to phenotype, as I argued in line with Lena Sawyer (2008), but framed a variety of shared experiences of socio-economic marginality. I continued to discuss identity-formation around geography, or the “suburbanite” (*förortaren*), as it was called. This identity was seen as the bearer of political agency, which could be enacted through the propositions of the “neighborhood advisory committees”. Such committees, I proposed, even as

they were a possible entrance into the corridors of power, threatened to group the Speaker with the jokingly called antagonists – *slipsmaffian* (“the necktie mafia” – politicians, bureaucrats et al.). Black Power language and symbolism, as well as the identity of the suburbanite, might have functioned as a crossing for some groups and individuals, but established a distance from those who were seen as not having been through the experiences of living in the suburbs, socio-economic exclusion, and racism. The establishment of such boundaries should be seen in context with the project Järvalyftet, which contained plans for connecting Husby to the adjacent Kista spatially – through the removal of a segment of the traffic separation, as well as conceptually – through mixed housing forms, which would imply an influx of new residents of stronger economic means. Doing away with boundaries is as great a threat as constructing them. Fran Tonkiss argued that separation is always shadowed by the “fantasy”, or the “danger”, of connection (2005: 31). As such a danger/fantasy was increasingly becoming palpable in Husby’s landscape, those who felt this a threat, have been working actively at establishing “enclosures”, bounded locales of power and authority (Rose & Miller, 1992: 188), regarding who it is that should bear the power of taking decisions that influence people’s lives, and who should represent their interests, if this was various delegates, representatives, and so forth, or if it was the people themselves.

In Chapter Four, “Stand Up for Your Suburb”, the position

of experience-based knowledge was at the fore of the discussion, which members of the Speaker used as an instrument in overturning their often marginalized position in society. I began this chapter by relating the work of the Speaker to a newspaper article that created media havoc in Sweden, which young author Jonas Hassen Khemiri wrote, where he critiqued the ill-famed police project Reva that aimed at localizing undocumented immigrants in public spaces such as Stockholm's train stations. In analyzing actions and reactions around this essay, I attempted to show the commonalities between the work of Khemiri and of the Speaker – their questioning perspective of whose experiences have been occluded from public discourse. This is related to the “enclosures” I mentioned in the previous paragraph, which Rose and Miller argued are a product of expertise, of having resources which others cannot easily countermand or appropriate (ibid.). The particular resources that I am referring to are those occluded stories, the very life stories of people – be it from living in the Million Program suburbs, or of racism, or other kind of discrimination – which I have tied into Nancy Fraser's concept of the “standpoint of the collective concrete other” (1986: 428). These experiences, as Fraser argues, can deconstruct the narratives and vocabularies of dominant groups and collectives, exposing their partiality, and the lack of voice given to the needs and hopes of subordinated groups (ibid.). In connection to Khemiri's article, several members of the Speaker compactly described the potentiality in these experiences as

“puncturing the myth of Sweden as an anti-racist country”. The policing of “differing” bodies in public places insinuated their unequal rights to the city. The protests and critique aimed at the project Järvalyftet are also such an example of probing into the extent of inclusion of citizens in decision-making processes. Insurgencies that bear claims of the citizens’ opinions not being taken into consideration are a grave hindrance for the legitimacy of government that can only be surpassed if government is realigned as an ally in their needs<sup>76</sup>. In the case of the project Järvalyftet, this was done through the Dialogue Weeks, especially through calling locals to testify “as experts”, as they were ostensibly provided with a possibility to choose the direction of the project’s developments. Considering that the results of these efforts did not prove to satisfy the expectations of many of the residents in the Järva areas, the critique and protests have persisted.

Chapter Five, “If We Are Not Heard, Then We Are Not Seen”, examined the Speaker’s use of communicative media. Media was both criticized for its role in the stigmatization of suburban areas, greatly focusing on crime-related news, and seen as a utopian tool that could spread the particular narratives coming from experiences of socio-economic marginalization and racism. The dystopian character of media seemed to be often related to the “established” channels, since even through members’ direct participation there was exhibited displeasure with not being able to

come to full expression. The rigidity and constraints of established media tended to spur and motivate ideas of establishing alternative channels that the youth organization would control. In line with Boris Groys (2009), I argued that such claims for autonomy of representation originate in the very ideology of modernity, being directed against contemplation and spectatorship and passivity, which in the turn of the twenty-first century has gained amplitude through the “mass obsession”, as Groys names it, of self-documentation. Nevertheless, even the “humble” channels that the Speaker used, greatly enabled the expansion of the connections with others who might think alike, or might be facing similar problems. As they funneled their stories through those channels, they made possible for others to recognize themselves in the experiences of discrimination, rent-increases, reduced public space, retraction of social services, and so forth, making the problems of one into what Merrifield called the plight of the multitude (2011).

Central to the discussion in my thesis has been the trail of convergence and competition between the youth organization the Speaker situated in the marginalized suburbs of Stockholm and state and municipal actors. While the youth organization’s beginnings, of attending Dialogue Week events, and writing reports for the Järvalyftet project were positioning these actors as being *in the know* (Rose & Miller, 1992) of the wants and needs of Husby’s residents, the project’s unfolding, and the reduction, or disappearance, of

social services in the area, persisting rates of unemployment, and increasing rents, led them to exploring possibilities for attaining control over how, and where, this knowledge would be used. The collaboration stopped being seen as feasible, as the “local expert knowledge” that they were supplying bureaucratic structures with, did not seem to have a meaningful effect upon the project’s direction, or their life-situations; it was simply legitimizing its workings. Through their continued activities, which included organizing the citizen café meetings and study assistance classes, writing critical articles and instigating protest actions, as Murat in the beginning of this thesis said, they both filled in the gaps that the municipality and state had left, but also mobilized allies that supported the claims that could be made upon them.

The Million Program suburbs, which at the time of their construction held great promises for the future, have been degraded to what one informant named as “Sweden’s backyard” (*Sveriges bakgård*). Nevertheless, the peripheries of power are being reclaimed as the heart of its contestation. I have further examined how the members of the Speaker, who have been marginalized for their young age, and their suburban address, have used precisely these elements as their assets. According to Anthony Cohen, the further the state grows from the grassroots, the more it loses credibility and relevance as a referent of people’s identity (1985: 107). This leads to feelings of being misrepresented, inadequately understood, or even deliberately excluded (*ibid.*). The youths

of the Speaker could thus uphold a position of being key proponents urging for social and political change, as they were themselves immersed in the quotidian experiences of living in Husby; they knew of the “local” peoples’ troubles, as many of these were their own. Through the narratives of “blackness” and the “suburbanite identity” they constructed a base of common, minoritized experiences. Forming communities surrounding these experiences provided the members of the Speaker with a model for political formulation of their interests and aspirations (Cohen, 1985: 108), in which the established bureaucratic and representative entities could not easily tap into, for they were lacking the central premise – they had not lived through them.

I have also examined another core question that has emerged through the youth organization’s work – the affective attachment between the youths and what they term “our neighborhoods”. While the primacy of personal experience, and the emotions that are entangled in it, allude of the work of the MSF (“Doctors Without Borders”, Médecins Sans Frontières) that Redfield has described (2006), where reason is entangled with sentiment; the Speaker also diverges from this image. The youths in the organization were indeed highly knowledgeable in different fields; these were, however, not the foundation of their “expertise”. Figures, such as that of somewhat cynically formulated “well-intentioned Swedes”, have been precisely what the Speaker’s members have been struggling against. The intimate character of their experiences

was what they claimed raised both their authority, and the value of their inclusion in political and representative fora. The Speaker has also actively been encouraging others, as I have observed at the citizen café meetings, that their personal experiences from the areas they live in are most valuable and need to be shared in all medial channels they have available – thus mobilizing allies through the practices of motivation. Greatly assisted by possibilities which exist on the internet for establishing and partaking in platforms where those of related interests can discover each other, and nurture relationships, the Speaker has found allies far beyond Stockholm’s city limits, who also co-opt identity-formation around the suburb, and mediate their experiences of discrimination through the history of Black Power struggles. Fashioning incrementing alliances does not render the allies as identical to each other – they are to retain the specificity of their history and location. The backbone of collaboration is embedded in their shared asymmetric position towards existing power relations, and in their struggles to transform them, and together create a society where “the people are the ones deciding over politics, and not the other way around”.

Zygmunt Bauman presented a bleak image of the young people of today, as being subsumed in “a weakening of democratic pressures, a growing inability to act politically, [and] a massive exit from politics and from responsible citizenship” (2001: 55). In a similar vein, what is different

about today's generation of young people, Giroux added, is their immersion in an unbridled individualism, and pathological disdain for community, public values, and the public good (2013: 135). Throughout the previous chapters in this thesis, I hope to have presented youths whose persistent claims for improved conditions in their neighborhoods on the terms of the residents place them at a sharp contrast to the pathologically passive individualists of Bauman and Giroux's most unfavorable scenarios. They have vigorously struggled for a more inclusive politics; one that contains the experiences, and addresses the needs of a wider spectrum than that of majoritarian groups. It is the work of individuals and organizations such as the Speaker that reminds society of the need to question itself – as a “just” and “inclusive” society is a continuously unraveling process. Power must be held accountable by more than youths who navigated their way through its margins; this is indeed an obligation upon us all.

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The riots have been ongoing for four nights now in Husby, and have already spread to fifteen suburbs in Stockholm. In trying times like these, the voices of those who are affected are of crucial value for providing public debates with deeper dimensions of the troubles embedded in the Million Program areas, beyond stories of “angry young men”, as Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt put it (Kalajdzic, 2013). Yes, it has indeed been trying times – for all those who live in Husby, and in

other suburbs that have been impacted, for the grieving family of the 69 year old man, and for the Speaker, who became the target of much disdain<sup>77</sup> for not being sterner in condemning the riots. And yet – they have done so – they have published an official statement on their home page, and repeated in several interviews that they do not start fires, and that they do not believe in such methods leading to sustainable social change, but that they do understand that the riots are a reaction to unemployment, low quality education and structural racism. What must be missing then, is someone to listen, as many informants have on countless occasions said, someone to “really listen”. Behind the designation “someone” tend to lay politicians, seen as both causing the problems, but still being in the position to solve them. Has a Stockholm in flames gotten their attention? It is yet to be seen.

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 A pseudonym, as are all names in the text.
- 2 The project focuses upon the renovation of existing housing and new construction, as well as raising rates of employment, feelings of security (*trygghet*) and the quality of the education (see *Vision Järva 2030, 2009*). It affects the boroughs of Rinkeby–Kista and Spånga–Tensta, to the north of Stockholm. These boroughs are comprised of these districts: Husby, Kista, Akalla, Rinkeby, Tensta, and Hjulsta.
- 3 The name is derived from the name of the green area *Järvafältet*, “the Järva Field”, around which the boroughs Spånga–Tensta and Rinkeby–Kista were built. *Järvafältet* literally means “the Järva lift”.
- 4 I provided this translation from the Swedish, as I do for all translations throughout the thesis.
- 5 For example, Nordkalottgatan has green houses, Bergengatan has blue, Oslogatan has orange, and Trondheimsgatan has green. Street names originate from Norwegian cities and persons, such as “Edvard Griegsgången”.
- 6 **Stadsbyggnad, Chalmers, Arbetsgruppen för Forskning om Trafiksäkerhet** (City planning, Chalmers, the Work Group for Research on Traffic Safety).
- 7 The Swedish government agency Statistics Sweden (*Statistiska centralbyrån*) defines “foreign background” as applicable to those born abroad, and whose both parents were born abroad (*Statistisk årsbok, 2008: 75*).
- 8 “Proposition for a structural plan: public space, buildings and streets”. Due to title length, I will refer to it as the Structural Plan.
- 9 This is also a refrain from the song *Betongdjungelboken* (“The Concrete Jungle

Book”) by the Swedish hip hop artist Ayo (1999).

- 10 Edward Soja and Miguel Kanak have argued that what a city is, or what the “urban” is, is difficult to estimate, as countries differ on the defining criteria (Kanak & Soja, 2009: 54). However, in the report, “The State of the World’s Cities”, the United Nations HABITAT office had made an estimation of nearly 3.3 billion people living in urban agglomerations in 2006 (ibid.).
- 11 Agency is here, and throughout the text, understood as the negotiation of existing conditions in order to partially reform them (Awan, Schneider & Till, 2011: 29).
- 12 There are even jokes that “lift” stands for “facelift”; the meaning has been explained to me as while facades change, the problems remain.
- 13 Italics and quotation marks in excerpt as in original text.
- 14 For further reference, see section “The Suburb as Identity”, Chapter Three in this thesis.
- 15 *Medborgarkafé*. This is the “sub-name”; I have avoided using the title name to protect the anonymity of informants. I asked several members why this particular choice, but I was told it was a “good name”.
- 16 Rinkeby is a district (*stadsdel*) north-west of Stockholm, close to Husby. Norra Botkyrka designates the northern districts of the Botkyrka municipality (Fittja, Alby, Hallunda, Norsborg), south of Stockholm. Hässelby–Vällingby is a borough west of Stockholm.
- 17 This youth organization will be called the “Gothenburg group” throughout the text.
- 18 An internationally active NGO, promoting children’s rights and doing humanitarian work in 120 countries (Save the children, 2013)
- 19 A government fund consisting of the property of persons deceased without a will, as well as donations. It supports projects related to children, youths and disabled people.

- 20 In plural due to the resignation of the one I met in June, 2012 during the course at the Royal Institute of Art, as I had a scheduled interview with him. I conducted an interview with the “new” one in December, 2012. Interestingly, there seems to be a shift in the field of *savoir-faire* necessary to fill this post – the previous project manager had a background in urban planning, the new one in marketing.
- 21 See section “Dear Beatrice,” Chapter Four in this thesis for further reference.
- 22 *Jugge* is a Swedish diminutive term for a person coming from the now former Yugoslavia (*Jugoslavien*).
- 23 During a discussion at the all-girl club, on the issue of having a joined meeting with another youth club in Järva, the leaders were worried that it might not fare well with the parents of the girls, since the other youth club had boys that were well in their twenties. I suspect that this could be related to the prominence of men and boys in the Speaker, as what was to be a club for those up to 25 years of age, was stretching those borders.
- 24 *Bra boende och mer varierad stadsmiljö, trygghet i vardagen; stärkt utbildning och bra språkundervisning, fler jobb och ökat företagande.*
- 25 “White Architects”, an architectural bureau.
- 26 I follow Khosravi and Graham’s interpretation, and critique, of Jürgen Habermas (1989), that while the “public sphere” is a sphere of sociability taking place in public, where a heterogeneous array of actors interact; the actors can nevertheless be actively formed through their participation in it (2002: 222).
- 27 As an example, there is a link to a 15 minute segment on their webpage from *The Black Power Mixtape 1967–1975* (2011), a Swedish documentary about the black power movement in the United States.
- 28 The youth organization will be called the “Alby group” throughout the text.
- 29 According to my informants’ accounts, the recent years’ developments were at a contrast with the proclaimed benign influence of Järvalyftet, considering that schools (Husby) and libraries (Akalla) have been closed, a local Health Clinic has been moved (*Vårdcentralen*, from Husby to Akalla), and the Public Employment

Service (*Arbetsförmedlingen*) and the Social Insurance Agency (*Försäkringskassan*) have also been moved from Rinkeby to Kista.

- 30 The move of Husby's Health Clinic to Akalla, and the subsequent opening of a private one, in the locale that had been determined as unfit for the purpose, Jasha, a member of the Speaker told me, was the reason the organization finally decided to part ways with Järvalyftet.
- 31 The version the Black Panther Party had more commonly used was "All power to the people". Seale skipped the "all" on that occasion, I presume, as the shorter version seems phonetically more apt to be used as a slogan in spoken language, since it is easier to pronounce several times in a row. With members of the Speaker I have encountered both versions, but more commonly *All makt åt folket* – the Swedish translation of "All power to the people".
- 32 Quotation marks in original.
- 33 Quotation marks in original.
- 34 Italics in original.
- 35 Fittja is a part of the borough Botkyrka, south of Stockholm. The Speaker, the Gothenburg Group and the protest group from Alby organized the meeting. This was in April, 2013.
- 36 The rates of employment in the Järva districts were 55.4%, as compared to 74.6% in wider Stockholm (Stockholms Stad, 2012).
- 37 *Känn dig aldrig fången I förörtsbetongen / Det spelar ingen roll vem du är / (Betongdjungelboken) / Du förstår att där jag bor / är kärleken till djungeln stor! Jag flyttar aldrig härifrån jag svär.*
- 38 They have protested against the sale of 1,300 municipally owned apartments to private owners in the district Alby, in the Botkyrka Municipality.
- 39 *Ort* and *förort* are not synonyms, even if I have decided to translate them both as "suburb". *Ort*, according to the Swedish Academy's Dictionary (*Svenska Akademiens Ordlista, SAOL*) can quite widely signify place. I chose to translate

them as equals because my ethnographic material has not led me to a disparity in their meaning.

- 40 During another gathering in Husby, Miguel explained that this is a modification of “The people united will never be defeated” (*Ett enat folk kan aldrig besegras*). In the original Spanish, it is *¡El pueblo unido jamás será vencido!*, the title of both a song and album from the year 1975 by the Chilean band Quilapayún, whose music had great status in the Chilean resistance movement.
- 41 Kista is a so-called “ABC suburb”, which in city planning designates an area inclosing “Work” (**A**rbete); “Housing” (**B**ostad); “Shopping center” (**C**entrum). Following this logic, Husby is then a “BC suburb”.
- 42 A mixture of housing forms also implies a mixture of economic classes, as 42.4% of the housing in Järva is currently rented public housing (*allmännytt*a), and 35.4% is cooperative housing (*bostadsrätt*) (Stockholms Stad, Järvalyftet, 2009: 9). Raising the percentage of cooperative housing and of owned housing necessitates strength of capital from the resident. In the program document for Järvalyftet, *Vision Järva 2030*, it is written that the new construction will mostly be in the form of cooperative housing and owned housing. Existing rented housing will be converted to the previously mentioned two forms, “if tenants wish so [...] it is an important way to increase variation [...] diversity enriches also in this respect” (ibid: 11).
- 43 One informant commented on the presence of “white” police officers in the district as “Who is this damn [*jävla*] Olle, who is this damn Peter?”. This functioned in both directions, as several informants told me that they have experienced, or knew those who have, being stopped by the police for no other obvious reason, other than not being “the typical *svenne*” (Swede, diminutive form).
- 44 This is what an artist told me she does, since she had gotten many questions when applying for work, of the type “Do you really live in Rinkeby?” (*Bor du i Rinkeby på riktigt?*). She is ethnically Swedish.
- 45 A political committee, headed by the city commissioner (*borgarråd*) Joakim Larsson, and an operational steer group consisting of city officials headed by mayor (*stadschef*) Irene Svenonius, steer Järvalyftet.

- 46 This sentence lacks punctuation in the original text as well, a choice that the author made, I presume, to achieve a stylistic effect.
- 47 I thank my mentor, Jennifer Mack, for drawing my attention to Mr. Khemiri's article.
- 48 A satirical story, published in 1976, which provoked a tax debate. Lindgren was inspired after she paid as much as a 102% marginal tax rate of her income.
- 49 Ulf Lundell's novel, also published 1976, in a nutshell, describes the lives of youths in their twenties in the late 1960's, and the everyday of politics, heavy drinking, drugs and sex.
- 50 The Swedish Television's (public TV broadcaster) debate website.
- 51 An activity center for young people in Stockholm, founded in the early 1980s. The event in question was a panel debate broadcasted on the radio station Metropol 93.8 Sveriges Radio on 2013/02/13. I was at the location. It was about ten other participants besides Amir, and they were media personalities, researchers, founders of think tanks et cetera.
- 52 "We", or *vi* in original.
- 53 Meaning literally, "organized chew", *tugg* is a slang word meaning speaking, language, or food.
- 54 "Rinkeby Allé is proposed to undergo a major transformation to a city street with shops, new homes, entrances and walkways. The street stretching from the center to Stora Ursvik, will develop into an experience-rich route that contributes to increased activity around central Rinkeby" (*Stockholm Växer*, 2013).
- 55 The "Outer City Initiative" (*Ytterstadssatsningen*, 1996–2001), or the "Neighborhood Renewal" (*Stadsdelsförnyelsen*, 2002–2006), can be named as such examples, with the Social Democratic Party as their initiator.
- 56 *Stå upp för din ort.*
- 57 In the sculptural, rather than emotional sense.

- 58 During an interview, Jashar told me that they tried to choose where they acquired their funding, as some funders might put them in a position that clashes with the interest of their members and supporters, as in the case of their collaboration with Järvalyftet. Which focus group the organization works with, cannot be easily divided from the groups that the funders have an interest in working with, for *Allmänna Arvsfonden*, which finances the citizen café, this was youths. Youths, as the Police Commissioner from West Stockholm (*Västerort*), explained during an interview, were a problem group in Järva, as the districts had relatively low crime rates in general, but youth related crime tended to be higher than in other parts of the city.
- 59 Joakim Larsson is the leading city commissioner (*borgarråd*) in the political committee in charge of Järvalyftet.
- 60 What at least three informants on separate occasions told me meant a 75% rent increase. This is not a quote from the letter itself, since I have not seen it, but the wording that informants have used. As it is now, rent increases after renovation fluctuate, as the tenant can choose the extent renovated, but there is a minimal level, including some structural interventions (in the plumbing system, the façade of the building block et cetera) that is applicable to all. Another parameter that influences the extent of the increase is the size of the apartment. As a mere example, from my informants accounts, rent increase is at a minimum 25%, so if one used to pay 4,000 Swedish Crowns per month/per rent, after renovation it becomes 5,000.
- 61 Italics in the original text.
- 62 Quotation marks in original.
- 63 Such as informants' comments that Järvalyftet is about raising the value of the apartments, and eventually converting them from *hyresrätt* (rented housing) to *bostadsrätt* (cooperative housing).
- 64 Italics in the original.
- 65 On Henok's Twitter page there were many Tweets in which he recommends the Speaker, saying that it is doing important work, and that people should attend the citizen café meetings.

- 66 I cannot provide the version she used, since I am using a pseudonym for Amir. As a mere example, Amir became Adin.
- 67 The lecturers consisted of Jorge, a hip-hop musician; Jewel, a music journalist; Nadia and Murat, spoken word artists (performance art); Lasse, a theater producer; and Pelle, member of the Speaker and poet.
- 68 This was the only occasion on which I have encountered the reference to cultural movement; it is usually political and social that is named.
- 69 Abbreviation for *Säkerhetspolisen*, The Swedish Security Service. "The Swedish Security Service protects Sweden's democratic system, the citizens' rights and freedoms, and national security. We do this by preventing and detecting crimes against national security; we fight terrorism and protect the central Government" (*Säkerhetspolisen*, 2013).
- 70 *Blatte*, noun. According to the Swedish Academy's Dictionary (*Svenska Akademiens Ordlista*, SAOL), it is a derogatory term for a dark skinned person of foreign origin. In my personal experience, it can be used to express solidarity within a group, as a mere example, I have been called *blatte* by friends, who also have a non-Western European origin. This was not the use which the young woman who addressed Robert implied. Even if words as *blatte* can be used jokingly, and can express solidarity, they also maintain power relations by singularizing bodies as differing, and laying upon them the symbolical burden which such words are laden with, for the woman it implied "*blattarna* who are messy".
- 71 In early May, 2013 the Alby Group had gathered 5,000 out of 6,000 petition signatures necessary for a referendum against the sale of the municipally owned apartments; they were well on their way.
- 72 In the original text, both capital letters and English were used.
- 73 Capital letters in original. The text was published on the Speaker's home page, signed by the organization, dated 2013/05/20.
- 74 *Jag ser dom le, jag ser hur dom står där bredvid loch hela gatan vet, att det är deras fel vad som sker / så jag kliver fram och jag bränner ner / Babylon brinner ner, Babylon brinner ner/ vi säger Babylon brinner ner, oooh yea.*

- 75 The police was attempting to arrest the man who was reported to have been brandishing a knife in the neighborhood; to later lock himself in an apartment with a woman (it was later disclosed the woman was his wife).As the stun grenade the police set off did not force him out, they resorted to gunfire.
- 76 The needs defined by the Speaker were such as: available and moderately priced housing for the citizens, an education of good quality, employment, “meaningful engagement” in all political decision making processes, and the like.
- 77 From what I have gathered by the statements made by media personalities, the police, and “common” women and men in daily newspapers and tabloids. Their Facebook page has also been bombarded by deeply disturbing, and discriminating comments.