The city’s spatial impact on health

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A discussion paper for the Malmö Commission

This scientific background report is a discussion paper prepared for the Commission for a Sociably Sustainable Malmö. The aim is to bring about a broad discussion about and assistance with the Commission's various questions about how differences in health could be reduced in Malmö. The objective is for the final report that is to be submitted to the City Executive Board in December 2012 to be as well established and specific as possible.

The City Executive Board in Malmö decided in November 2010 to appoint the Commission, which is politically independent. On the basis of its terms of reference, the Commission is to prepare the scientific background as a basis for political decisions on how health inequality could be reduced.

The focus of the final report is on social determinants of health and ill-health. We know that these determinants go a long way towards explaining a major part of the differences in health that exist within the city and that they can be influenced. Examples of determinants are early childhood years, school, unemployment, income, participation in society, residential environment, segregation and exclusion.

The authors of the background report are responsible for the contents. The conclusions shown in this report cannot be seen in the same way as those that will be contained in the final report. In the final report, the overall picture, based on all information and dialogues with various operators, will determine what the Commission ultimately considers to be the factors requiring the most urgent action to reduce health inequalities in Malmö in the long term.

Views on this background report may be submitted to the Commission's head secretary, Anna Balkfors (anna.balkfors@malmo.se) or via the website at www.malmo.se/kommission, where all discussion papers will be available for download.

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1. Aim and purpose

The aim of this background report is to attempt to clarify which factors in the physical environment contribute to health inequalities and to highlight the opportunities available to urban planning processes and their end results to achieve more equal conditions for the promotion of good health. The work is based on conditions that form the basis of urban planning, plus urban basics, which include school, safety, health and communications. The report ends with recommendations for action related to the physical environment. A working group consisting of representatives of the Malmö Commission has supplied useful points of view. However, the commissioners in the small working group are responsible for the final background report: Eva Engquist, Christer Larsson and Katarina Pelin.

2. Physical planning for social sustainability

Physical planning can promote sustainable social development, including a reduction in health inequalities

The role of urban planning at structural level includes using physical initiatives to influence the social sphere, which, in turn, influences health and well-being. For example, the design of the built environment can contribute to geographical enclaves with separate (and undesirable) patterns of life being integrated in a whole in which other normalities prevail. Measures that expand an individual’s social sphere make it more likely that social determinants that contribute to health inequality will have less importance. Physical planning is able to:

- Reduce segregation between residential areas
- Improve trust, safety and social opportunities
- Contribute to deliberate location of schools in good environments
- Contribute to a sustainable, mixed, inclusive city
- Contribute to new economic and strategic structures
- Make use of people’s experience and knowledge

Examples of how this can be converted into action are described in chapter eight.
3. Urban planning and health

It is well documented that people’s health is affected by local environmental factors such as air pollution, noise and lack of natural, green areas. Some of the diseases mentioned in this context are COLD, stress-related diseases and cardiovascular disease. A clear trend towards an increasingly fatter, older population led the WHO’s European organisation Healthy Cities to contact urban planners in the 90s to obtain assistance in identifying the link between a city’s design and its health. This resulted in the Healthy Urban Planning network, which focused first on process and participation in urban planning and was then developed into Healthy Urban Environment and Design, which also looks at the physical results of planning. The conviction that there are strong links between a city’s design and the health of its population is shared by the authors of ‘Shaping neighbourhoods’. They maintain that residential areas with a design that results in a lack of neighbourhood feeling have an impact on personal and global health and increase problems linked to overweight, mental illness and social exclusion.

In all fairness, it is important to state that there were architects and ethnogeographers who previously also looked at environments that contribute to good, healthy environments (Camillo Sitte, Kevin Lynch, Jan Gehl, Torsten Malmberg, to name but a few). The importance of a city’s design is discussed in several of the Commission’s reports and they will not be quoted here. Maria Albin et al. emphasise the importance of the physical environment to the health of the population. Rosvall et al. believe that a residential area can strengthen and create supportive environments for a good physical and psychosocial environment. In her report, Maria Emmelin quotes several examples of studies showing that differences in health, safety and social capital can be related to the built environment.

3.1 The social environment

Research shows that people’s health and life choices are influenced by the social sphere in which they exist. As the physical environment is a framework for all the social interaction that takes place in a city, the design of the city is a fundamental precondition for its residents’ health. Social contacts, social control and trust can be promoted (or impeded), depending on the design of a residential area. Social phenomena such as trust also influence, in turn, factors such as economic growth (Robert Putnam).

The figure below is borrowed from the work on Healthy Urban Planning and originated in Dahlgren and Whitehead’s description of the determinants of health. The figures does not illustrate social differences or health inequality. That is a layer that must be placed on top of the fan. What it does illustrate, however, is the possible impact of urban planning on the determinants of health. The orange part shows the appearance of the physical city and the adjacent blue sphere shows the activities that are affected. The social sphere consists mainly of the light blue fields that are closest to the individual, and shows that the circumstances and lifestyle of the individual depend more on these determinants, which concern social contexts, than on the built environment.

The role of urban planning (the orange sphere) in this context is to influence the inner social spheres with physical action. It is difficult to implement a desired change in lifestyle at individual level, for example increased physical activity in everyday life, unless the design of the neighbourhood encourages people to spend more time outside.

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1 Hugh Barton, Marcus Grant, Richard Guise, ‘Shaping neighbourhoods for local health and global sustainability’, 2003, 2010
2 ‘Der Städtebau nach seinen künstlerischen Grundsätzen’ (City Planning According to Artistic Principles), 1889
3 The image of the City’, 1960
4 Livet mellem husene’ (Life between the Houses), 1971.
5 ‘Byer for mennesker’ (Cities for People), 2010
6 ‘Räkna med revir’ (Expect Territory), 1983
7 ‘Bowling alone’, 2000
8 ‘Shaping neighbourhoods for local health and global sustainability’, Barton, Grant, Guise
A description of a good city often coincides with a description of a healthy, safe city. Bo Grönlund is a Swedish architect who has prepared a manual for safe environments with the police force. In addition to the more obvious measures such as intrusion-proof doors and windows, good lighting and open streets and parks, the manual highlights good examples of how social control can be built into an area with deliberate location of entrances, windows and meeting places. Accordingly, the CPTED (crime prevention through environment design) method tries to contribute to safety and prevent crime partly by designing environments that enhance street life and meanings and partly by having areas of responsibility reflected in the design, with clear boundaries between the private and public spheres. What this subsequently means for social contact can be illustrated by the difference between a city with distinct quarters (well-defined edges and an inner courtyard that clearly belongs to the residents) and the large-scale post-war developments (a large number of people in the same place and a lack of defined boundaries between what belongs to each staircase, courtyard and quarter).

With broad social contact, there is a higher likelihood that the city’s residents will feel part of a wide context. A city is able to provide large and small arenas in which people from all groups can meet on equal terms and feel they are participating in city life. The first item in the Swedish objectives for public health is about participation. There are now many examples of participation processes in urban planning. A project from Belfast shows that children can also participate with good results. Schoolchildren aged eight to eleven were asked to develop their own health aspects from observations in their physical environment. This resulted in a ‘Children’s Charter’ with specific, realistic proposals for improvements. One interesting aspect, and something it is easy to forget as an adult, was that active play outdoors was more about creating environments free of harassment by older children than environments free of dangerous places or strangers.

8 Bo Tryggt 2000, Bo Tryggt 05 (Live Safely)

9 ‘Shaping healthier neighbourhoods for children’, Belfast Healthy Cities 2012
3.2 The physical environment

The design of the city also makes various forms of physical activity possible. This may be in the form of play, exercise, outdoor activities and everyday travel from A to B. According to a Swedish estimate, sedentary lifestyles cost Swedish society at least SEK six billion every year.10 A dense city with short distances to important destinations is an environment that supports active living. People who live in high-density communities walk more to shops and services. They weigh less and have a lower risk of becoming overweight or developing high blood pressure than people who live in sparsely populated areas.11 Walking ability is a concept that has interested researchers and involves assessing how walk-friendly an area is. Walking not only improves health. It promotes social capital and makes people more willing to know their neighbours, to rely on people in the area and to become politically and socially involved.12 One interesting study shows that there was a higher likelihood of residents being overweight if their local area had no pavements or only had pavements on one side.13 Environments such as these have been given the rather offputting name obesogenic environments.

Cycling is also part of active transport. Willingness to cycle to work or a shop depends, of course, on how close it is, the quality of the route, how safe it feels and how safe the traffic is. These preconditions can sometimes be contradictory. An environment with safe traffic may mean a cycle route in a green area between residential areas or along a road, which is, in turn not populated and therefore does not feel sufficiently socially monitored and safe. Simple factors such as the ability to cycle, being able to afford to own a bike, being able to park your bike where it will not be vandalised or stolen and, in particular, the ability to shower at work if you have cycled a long way also affect cycle use.

Johan Faskunger finds, in ‘Den byggda miljöns påverkan på fysisk aktivitet’14 (The impact of the built environment on physical activity) , that initiatives to improve residents’ opportunities for physical activity are also initiatives for so much else that is beneficial to public health and to society in general. He refers to the reduced impact on the environment, increased social contact and more involved citizens.

Proximity to greenery is also important to health. Studies from institutions such as Alnarp15 Agricultural University have shown that people who live near a green area use it more frequently and suffer less frequently from stress-related problems. A survey has also shown that 30% more people were designated overweight in areas with blocks of flats with no green area nearby than in other residential areas. The difference remained even after taking factors such as level of education, employment, age and gender into account.

10 Bolin K and Lindgren B ‘Fysisk inaktivitet – produktionssvall och sjukdomskostnader’ (Physical inactivity - loss of production and health costs) 2006
11 Ewing R et al. ‘Relationship between urban sprawl and physical activity, obesity, and morbidity’ 2003
12 Leyden K.M. ‘Social capital and the built environment: the importance of walkable neighborhoods’ 2003
13 Giles-Corti ‘Environmental and lifestyle factors associated with overweight and obesity in Perth, Australia’ 2003
14 A compilation of knowledge for the government task ‘Byggd miljö och fysisk aktivitet’ (Built environment and physical activity), Statens folkhälsoinstitut (Swedish National Institute of Public Health) 2007
15 Studies led by Grahn & Stigsdotter
3.3 The importance of the physical environment to children and young people

There is a clear trend that children have fewer and fewer opportunities to move independently outdoors. An international study that examined trends for children’s activity patterns over time shows that societal obstacles have increased at the cost of children’s freedom of movement. The obstacles consist partly in increased use of cars to take children to school and leisure activities, which, in turn, depend on increased concern about traffic, violence and harassment. A study with the aim of looking at how a residential area’s design affected the physical activity of children and young people showed that an area’s safety and civic spirit affected the level of regular activity, regardless of socioeconomic status, demographics and ethnicity.

This is an extract from the primary and lower secondary school syllabus for sport and health (2011 curriculum):

The teaching in the subject Sport and Health at primary and lower secondary school must aim to ensure that pupils develop versatile movement skills and an interest in being physically active and spending time in a natural environment. The pupils must be given the opportunity to develop their ability to cooperate with others and respect for others. They must learn to find their way in their local environment and understand the structure of simple maps. The teaching must include games and movement in natural and outdoor environments and knowing rights and obligations in a natural environment in accordance with the right of public access.

It follows from this that each school should have a natural environment within walking distance and that there should also be several areas of different kinds nearby, and therefore a range of biodiversity that can be used in outdoor educational work. One of the basic ideas of using teaching in a natural environment as a method of teaching about the environment is to develop, via enriching experiences, living knowledge of subjects such as ecological connections and positive attitudes, belief in the future and respect for nature, which, in turn, is expected to lead to environmental awareness and a positive attitude to the environment. Preschool playgrounds that have natural features give children better motor skills, a better ability to concentrate and lower sickness absence than children who only have playgrounds with built features.

‘Global Age-friendly Cities – a guide’ is a document with checklists in which the environment can be evaluated with questions that can be used for all ages: is there an opportunity for everyday exercise, is there room for play and recreation and are there supportive, safe, social activities in the area?

17 Molna B.E. et al. ‘Unsafe to play? Neighborhood disorder and lack of safety predict reduced physical activity among urban children and adolescents’ Am J Health Promot 2004
19 Grahn P, ‘Ute på dagis’ (Outdoors at Nursery), Stad och Land 1997
20 WHO 2007
Malmö is a segregated city. (Definition from the Swedish national encyclopaedia: segregation Late Latin segregatio 'severance', 'separation' from Latin segrego 'separate (from the herd), the spatial separation of population groups.)

Thematic maps of Malmö clearly show how, for example, income, forms of tenure, age distribution and school results are distributed in clusters across the city (see illustration 1). By overlapping functions such as area libraries or phenomena such as traffic barriers, it is possible to see how accessibility is distributed across the city (see illustration 2). Integrated districts, according to Boverket, the Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, are areas that have equal conditions, for example in the form of access to services and recreation. Segregated districts in which the social gradient is low are often not integrated either, according to this definition.

A good physical environment is particularly important in districts in which many residents have limited financial and other resources. This is not primarily because it will eliminate housing segregation but because it compensates to some extent for its negative consequences. Many of our vulnerable residential areas have deficiencies in terms of standard, service and wear on the outdoor environment. Descriptions of health consequences show that those who are already low on the socioeconomic ladder are also those who suffer the most negative consequences of further deterioration in the physical environment. For example, these include the documented health effects along noisy streets. If a person is already in a pressurised social and/or financial situation, the noise has a greater negative impact. The same exposure can lead to different effects.

The more segregated housing is, the more important it becomes for the city to be able to offer meeting places and opportunities to meet other groups and other lifestyles. This becomes particularly important in areas with high overcrowding, where the meeting place can offer an alternative to the home and also contribute to increased solidarity. It is important for people to have places both in their local area and in other parts of the city where they can meet and be together. This means everything from squares, parks and beaches to concert halls, cinemas, shops, cafés, libraries and sports facilities.

Unequal conditions are reflected not only in unequal health but also in unequal social spheres. There are residential areas in Malmö where it is normal not to finish school with a pass grade, not to have work, to be subject to threats of violence, for there to be litter and vandalism, etc.

Graffiti can be a sign of a lack of safety and care, and can be part of an area’s negative normality

The Idea Store concept from London is an example of a structural measure with the aim of using local libraries to improve the level of knowledge and social situation of residents.

4. **What’s the problem**

G. Dahlgren 'Strategier för en bättre och jämlik hälsa i Malmö' (Strategies for better, equal health in Malmö), 8 May 2012
By overlapping phenomena such as local libraries and major routes and comparing them with age groups, it is possible to gain an idea of how well positioned libraries are.
5. What’s not the problem

When housing segregation is studied and analysed, it is usually done by mapping the geographical pattern that these indicators reveal. In terms of the health indicators, we can see, for example, that average life expectancy is higher in Limhamn than in Kirseberg. The problem is not that there is anything specific in this district that harms residents’ health. It is more that a person’s or a family’s financial and other resources determine where they are able to live and that health covaries with these financial resources. The housing market functions as a sorting mechanism, and people with poor health and limited choice largely end up in Kirseberg and a number of other similar areas.

In a similar way, the problem does not lie at individual level. Moving individuals to different areas does not improve results. Measures that are able to influence geographical health distribution must primarily be taken at structural level and must largely be purely administrative/political, general and holistic.
6. What urban planning cannot influence

Urban planning and the physical design of the city are unable, of course, to improve social factors on their own. However good a preschool playground is or however safely children travel to school, it is still parents and educationists who can exert the most impact on the conditions in which children grow up. However many companies are given the right conditions in which to start up by urban planning, other forces still determine whether people are employable. The physical measures must, of course, go hand in hand with and facilitate other support measures.

Swedish television sends program for children live. It’s an example how urban environment can support creative activities.
7. Possible objectives

To allow the Commission’s proposals to be followed up, it is necessary to have clear objectives. From the point of view of urban planning, there are no obvious indicators showing that health inequality becomes less unequal on account of the design of the environment. Reduced overcrowding, where it is possible to specify a value that must be met at a certain time, may be a target that can be measured and followed up. As trust in others is also influenced by the design of areas, trust objectives may be designed according to the studies conducted by Region Skåne. It may be difficult to find true indicators of quality green areas, but a reasonable measuring tool may be the proportion of green area per resident in a residential area. It is important to report outcomes in comparison with the entire city. It is not enough for a value to show positive trends if the rest of the city has improved even more in percentage terms so that the differences have increased in practice.
8. Examples of urban planning measures

Below are examples of measures that urban planning can initiate and be part of. They are grouped under the headings mentioned in chapter two. Each heading first has a general explanation, which is followed by a list of some examples for clarification. The names in parentheses are commissioners who support the argument in their background reports.

8.1 Reduce segregation between residential areas

Overcome barriers – good public transport – equal conditions

A segregated city has roads, business areas and other elements that constitute barriers and limit people’s opportunities to travel within the urban environment. Overcoming barriers improves the potential for favourable patterns of movement, increased solidarity and expanded social spheres (Bunar, Lindström et al., Molin, Stigendal).

Example: Overcoming barriers, creating connections and contexts

Barriers can be removed to create interconnecting areas by changing roads into city streets and giving pedestrians, cyclists and public transport better conditions and connections. Continuous, clear routes are something that can contribute to overcoming barriers. The Rosengård route with its mixed use buildings is a good example of how an existing route was enhanced with peripheral activities to achieve a clearer connection to the central parts of the city. Examples of other barriers that can be overcome are Lorensborgsgatan at Kroksbäck and Amiralsgatan at Kontinentalan.
Example: Converting roads into city streets with additional buildings

Small additional buildings in existing areas have an effect, but in the very long term. One measure that could produce faster results would be to act on a larger scale, for example by converting parts of Inre Ringvägen into a city street and linking together the surrounding areas with new buildings. The measures improve opportunities for contact between suburbs and could, in particular, benefit opportunities for cycling and walking. The result could be a more varied urban environment with richer content and more diversity, with housing of different types and with different forms of tenure, workplaces, recreation and, in particular, the opportunity for a new health-promoting park route. If the section between Pildammsvägen and Trelleborgsvägen were to be tackled first, for example, with a city street designed so that it did not favour through traffic, but instead had reduced traffic and improved cross contacts, Kulladal and Lindeborg, with their small-scale marginal development, could have an injection of businesses, services and approximately 1,500 new homes of various types and forms of tenure. Such a transformation of Inre Ringvägen would also, in the long term, allow Annetorpsvägen to be converted into a city street and Hyllie to merge with Kroksbäck and Holma.

Example: Improving public transport

An integrated city offers equal conditions, wherever you live. It does not mean that all areas can have all types of supply, but it does mean, for example, that residents in all areas must be able to take a bus or tram to other places without needing to wait too long or make too many changes. A well-developed transport network that favours public transport links the city together better and also contributes to healthy, environmental choices being made.

8.2 Improve trust, safety and social opportunities

Meetings – social spheres – break normality - integration

The design of the city can bring street life together and facilitate meetings between socially separated groups. Meeting places that are available to all free of charge contribute to increased social contact and may offer space to breathe to people living in overcrowded conditions and vulnerable people. Attractive institutions and other important destinations and magnets can be used to enhance districts’ individual characteristics and profiles. Safety and trust are promoted in part by streets, squares and public places being populated for many of the hours of the day and night. The city being navigable, a human scale, active ground floors and clear boundaries between private and public are some of the factors that contribute to trust, understanding and social contact (Bunar, Lindström et al., Albin et al., Stigendal, Elmståhl et al.).
Example: Creating more easily accessible meeting places
To expand individuals’ social spheres, the city can map classified meeting places and contribute to new places being established where they are needed most (see the above-mentioned map image). Areas with high overcrowding need a larger proportion of non-commercial meeting places to compensate for the situation at home. The model with area libraries with many more functions attached to them can be such a measure (see proposed action further down).

Example: Developing a small scale
Socially functioning districts often have networks of streets and spaces that are rich in experience and variation and demonstrate clear differences between private and public. This facilitates conflict-free contact with other people and other groups. The large-scale post-war residential areas can be improved considerably in these respects.

Example: Dimensioning public services according to demand
Recreation centres, sports facilities, health centres and other public services make important contributions to residents’ well-being. This is particularly important in areas in which the residents have limited resources and poor health. Supply in relation to the demographic situation can be mapped and compared so that deficiencies can be corrected.

Example: Urban gardening
In areas in which initiatives by residents show that there is a desire to have activities promoting the social and physical environment, such as community gardening, the City of Malmö can help by providing knowledge and space. The city can also offer gardening boxes above ground if it is not appropriate to have permanently cultivated areas.

8.3 Contribute to deliberate location of schools in good environments

Mixed catchment areas – a safe, educational environment

The earlier children meet children (and their parents) with backgrounds other than those they represent themselves, the greater the chance they have of seeing human diversity as positive and that we all have different circumstances.

The freedom to choose schools has meant that it is no longer as easy to plan for schools with pupils from different circumstances. However, it is still the case that each school has a catchment area that is prioritised, and only when local children have been given a place can other children be given a place. High-quality schools attract pupils and parents do not decide against them. Urban planning can make a positive contribution with appropriate locations for schools, good educational school environments, good accessibility to school and safe, green environments that provide space for play, physical activity and outdoor learning.

Example: Location of lower secondary schools
In a segregated city, it is important to give children and young people a wider view of what may be available to them in the future. One way may be not to spend all of primary and lower secondary school in the same residential area, where the adult world may reflect a narrow future, and instead have all lower secondary school pupils at schools in central locations. Another way is to place municipal schools and independent schools in the same location so that they share playgrounds and canteens, for example.

8.4 Contribute to a sustainable, mixed, inclusive city

The mixed city – market forces – driving forces

A mixed city, with different functions side by side, contributes to diversity and reduces geographically related differences. The focus of the City of Malmö on densification provides good opportunities to add functions and housing types that are missing from certain areas. However, driving forces to finance additional buildings and changes to thoroughfares and other infrastructure is hard to find in areas that are in a vulnerable socioeconomic position. To encourage other operators to become involved, the city needs to show the way by, for example, investing in and supporting the transformation of (excessively large) streets, new thoroughfares, high-quality spaces and new businesses and institutions that can function as magnets. Cooperation is required between housing credit institutions (banks, etc.) and property owners, as well as support from the municipality and the state (Albin et al., Stigendal, Nilsson).
Example: Adding housing that overcomes differences
Many areas have just one type of housing, which leads to an unbalanced population mix. Areas with low status are often characterised by an unbalanced range of housing, in terms of size and design, forms of tenure and cost. When there are opportunities to build new housing, they should be used to increase variation in unbalanced areas and thus contribute to reducing differences. Overcrowding, in particular, can be remedied in part by adding larger dwelling units.

Example: Densifying, and increasing green areas
A mixed, dense city does not need to mean a city with less green area. Alexander Ståhle is an urban planning researcher and one of those who demonstrate that it is possible to combine densification with the retention of a green city. The example given later under method description provides a specific numerical example.

Example: Maintain the social ambitions of the urban planning vision
Malmö has an urban planning vision with clear ambitions for urban planning to contribute to more sustainable social and health development. During periods of recession and reduced construction, there is a great temptation to depart from social ambitions. However, this undermines credibility and also creates unfortunate precedents for better times. Therefore, it is important for the municipality to apply its social ambitions in a uniform, consistent manner.

Example: Rewarding construction companies and developers that assume social responsibility and promote local involvement
The municipality should prepare a policy for rewarding developers and construction companies that assume social responsibility, for example by involving the local environment in the planning and design of a new development, engage young people in the construction and contribute in other ways, with their own innovative ideas, to enhancing social sustainability.

BEFORE:
Areas with just one type of rented housing without outdoor space...

AFTER:
…can be supplemented with low-rise dwelling units with gardens and owner-occupied flats.
8.5 Contribute to new economic and strategic structures

A new way of thinking

Short-term, narrow thinking works against well thought-out, long-term urban planning. Increased cooperation is required between the city’s departments, with the business community and with government agencies to act on the basis of a holistic, collaborative approach (Nilsson).

Example: Developing new economic models

Feasible urban planning investments are usually assessed according to their profitability in terms of municipal and national economics. However, such investments may be justified even if they do not appear to be profitable in a traditional economic calculation. Investments that lead to better social development and, in the long term, reduce social costs, can lead to significant savings for the municipality and it is necessary to find ways of financing them. New economic models that facilitate this type of long-term investment should be developed.

8.6 Make use of people’s experience and knowledge

It is important for future physical initiatives to be part of a well thought-out programme that is characterised by a holistic approach and for the programme to be subject to broad-based dialogue with citizens. A relevant example in Malmö is the ongoing development of Rosengård, where physical measures are of great importance and planned as part of a more general development programme. One advantage of allowing physical measures to be included in social development programmes is that they are highly visible. They show residents and the environment that something is happening, that investments are being made and work is being done locally and in the wider area. It is something that can be demonstrated.

Example: Making use of the planning process to promote increased local involvement

Sweden’s rules on consultation and exhibitions in connection with the development of physical plans can be utilised more actively to promote local involvement and participation in the planning processes. The municipality has the opportunity to take further initiatives with the same aim. Methods that involve opportunities for residents to assume greater responsibility for their area should be prioritised. Good examples of self-administration can be found in the district of Holma, among others.

Example: Local initiatives

Better preparedness by the city for when citizens themselves want to exert influence on their immediate environment would be desirable. Power over your own everyday life and immediate environment is an important determinant of health. Initiatives that come from groups also mean an opportunity to reinforce local cohesion, ownership and responsibility.

Good examples of self-administration can be found in the district of Holma.
CONCLUSION: OBJECTIVE – MEANS – METHOD
Reasonable objectives and reasonable measures for Malmö can be established based on a summary of what urban planning and the physical environment can contribute to reducing health inequality. As health inequality is often linked to geographical residential areas and the conditions in which children grow up there, housing and its environment are proposed as the place where initial measures can be applied. The social sphere can be influenced by influencing the conditions in the neighbourhood, as outlined in the above examples. The objective is to improve neighbourhoods and ensure that they are linked, mixed, interactive, safe, green and trust-filled and support a social community.

MEANS – DENSIFY AND MIX
Stadsplaneringens medel att blanda och förtäta borde The means available to urban planning for mixing and densifying should also function when it comes to achieving a more socially equal city. However, although these two key words, mixed and densified, have been on the table for a long time, there are still no really good examples of results where unequal conditions have been improved. The reasons include conflicting interests, lack of financing for construction projects with social ambitions and a lack of long-term holistic planning. Another reason is that the development of society in general, with increasing income gaps, etc., tends to increase social and health differences so much that positive effects of planning initiatives are difficult to observe. Therefore, the fact that the effects of urban planning are difficult to ascertain does not mean that the means of urban planning are wrong. It means that there are obstructive mechanisms that must be overcome.

METHOD – HOLISTIC APPROACH AND EVALUATION
Under våren 2011 har stadsbyggnadskontoret låtit en During spring 2011, the Urban Planning Department commissioned a trainee to take a holistic approach to densification and its consequences for a large geographical area in Fosie. The study reported economic, social and environmental consequences and covers a wide area from the technical infrastructure to safe courtyards. Thanks to the holistic approach over a large area, the total green area has been increased, while 1,300 new homes and 1,700 new jobs are added. The green area per resident will remain the same after densification. The method, which is called the evaluation method, includes municipal operators, property owners and business owners. In the event that the project is implemented, there are good opportunities to make use of the experience and knowledge of residents as well.

Densification study in Fosie. The study is available at www.malmo.se/kommission under the heading Documents and reports.
10. Proposed action

10.1 General major physical initiative
By mapping meeting places compared with population density and demand, the city is able to contribute to new high-quality meeting places in strategic locations, following examples such as the UK Idea Store model. It was decided there to develop local libraries into places for growth. The ability of staff to meet the public and support them in their growth is prioritised over academic qualifications. In Malmö, this may be based on something other than a library. The priority is to achieve attractive meeting places with a uniform brand that offer a range of services that allow individuals with different circumstances to grow and boost their self-confidence. In London, Idea Store is widespread not only in socially disadvantaged areas. It also exists in the more prosperous Docklands area. Another example with the same underlying purpose is Toy Library from Udine in Italy, where both young and old come to borrow toys and play games.

Places for such activities must be chosen where there are good transport links and preferably where the meeting place as such can function as a bridge between districts. It is important for the buildings to have high architectural quality and to be properly exposed. In other words, the concept requires serious resources to achieve something that can match London’s Idea Stores or Udine’s Toy Libraries. The experience gained from these activities is very good.

10.2 Specific major physical initiative
Start an ambitious social development project for a large area in Malmö. Involve housing companies, residents, the business community, associations, etc. in addition to the municipal administrations. Have the operators focusing on the immediate environment of the housing propose initiatives for densification, mixed functions, demolition of barriers and reduction of the scale in the urban environment that can produce positive consequences for social inclusion, the economy, the environment and health. The evaluation method described earlier can be used to advantage here.

The project area should be located in a part of the city that needs positive development, has not received appreciable urban planning investments in recent decades and is in need of change. The project must be extensive enough that the changes implemented, in addition to the direct effects in the project area, must be able to produce ripple effects in the environment and start a positive development spiral in the district. The urban planning means reported, such as overcoming barriers, built-in social control, etc. must be applied.

The level of ambition of the project must correspond to the initiatives prior to Bo01 and the transformation of Västra Hamnen. The municipality must support the project by setting high objectives and investing in changes in infrastructure, etc. All types of operator that want to contribute to better social and health-related development must be welcome to become involved. A first step is to create a project organisation that permits innovation, experiments and departures from traditions, norms and routines.

A major part of a social renewal project of this type will involve physical changes. Neglected districts have large-scale features, uniformity, barriers and other elements that need to be remedied with physical measures. However, the aim should not be to ‘build away social problems’. It should be to take a holistic approach to an area to achieve more positive socioeconomic development with a combination of measures. The physical changes must be part of a more extensive strategy that also includes features such as employment in new corporate and organisational forms, education and training for groups that have no place in the standard educational system, new opportunities for families to save by investing in their homes, etc. As the project is established, good forces can be inspired to add new ideas and become involved in supplementary measures. The physical changes play a special role as they are visible to all and demonstrate that someone believes in the district and wants to invest there.

The key concept in the initiative must be broad collaboration with all operators involved.

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23 www.ideastore.co.uk
24 Creating New Public Space for Learning, Udine, Italy 2012
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The Commission for a socially sustainable Malmö is an independent commission. The City of Malmö has commissioned it to draw up objectives and strategies to reduce health differences. Read more at www.malmo.se/kommission and www.malmokommissionen.se