THESIS REFLECTION

This thesis project is a highly personal project. I have been trying to find a way of combining a social and political commitment and theory with being an architect.

My initial thoughts were to do interventions, workshops and to construct something 1:1 with other participants in Hovsjö or Södertälje, but I quickly had to abandon that idea. Which was good in retrospect. This decision came out of a few obstacles and thoughts I faced - the obvious one - I didn’t have 1 million SEK, or not even 5000 SEK to spend on materials for building something. I also wanted this thesis to have a written and theoretical background or basis. Which somehow meant that I couldn’t spend all the time in Hovjsö. Furthermore, to do a more activist project then what I have done now, would be more towards what I wanted, but maybe not something that would fit into the framework for what a thesis project at a school of architecture has to be. And finally, to design a participatory project from the drawing desk in the studio wasn’t anything I wanted to do, because this would mean that I would have had to simulate a process which would be absurd.
I still see this project as an activist project in the sense that I’m trying to realize it, and not going through official channels when creating it. The knowledge production in this project has been big, I now have an understanding of what it means to work with the creation of vision plans from both a political standpoint, as well as from architects and consultants views, form a municipal housing manager company’s point and from residents perspectives. It has been difficult to position myself when working within existing power structures; should I listen only to the architects working in the area? Should I listen mostly to the CEO of the managerial company? Or should I totally disregard them and only listen to the residents? Top-down? Bottom-up? I have learned a lot about participation and the different views one can have on that. I do believe that participation is the key. And not only a trend amongst inner city residents in major metropolis areas in the world. But the role of the architect must be to propose something, in my opinion. It would be almost be cowardly otherwise.

It was very important to have a close contact with reality. Which I believe I achieved. But that might also have been the most challenging part in this thesis project. To constantly call, email and have a relation to the budget. Having to change the project when realizing that things wasn’t covered by the budget, or impossible to construct but at the same time keep and develop my architectural ideas and spatial concept. But at the same time, this has also been the most fun part. When the project turned into something that could (hopefully will) be implemented. The knowledge about my work methods, how to create a project and how to best go about meeting involved parties and so on has been extremely valuable.

In my thesis booklet I set out to do 2 projects. One in a “conventional” spatially segregated area, like the ones that we normally think of - the excluded ones that is segregated by coercion. And another project in areas that in some ways are equally segregated - the (mostly) middle class white villa areas. The ones that are segregated by choice. But a decision to not do this was made early on as well, the shear work load of that project wasn’t possible within 100 days. Furthermore, to forcefully place
housing and activities in areas isn’t something I believe in. And finally, I thought that this type of project would mean that I had to draw new city parts or something like that, and I really wanted to make a smaller scaled project that I could control.

The design process were fragmented and wide in the beginning. I made a lot of analysis of the area and sketches of buildings and functions to find an architectural response to the problems with the public spaces I found.

In the end, I decided to do the installation. To work with smaller rooms and to think about what a space is. And what a place is. What is the relation to the context? The social values? And it was also an investigation to see if something as simple as a sphere, a plant, could create something with architectural value. I believe this installation would have an effect on the area. And not just in a visual way. I do believe that by planting something that requires maintenance and care you say that this place is important. Adding the steel sphere says something about the space and place as well, to imagine what the future could be.

And maybe most importantly, I wanted to create something fun, and having fun doing it. Which I have.