Malmö's cultural sound zone: how city marketing compares to lived realities

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Urban Studies: Master's (Two-Year) Thesis

Supervisor: Pål Brunnström

Spring Semester 2024

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Summary:

This thesis examines the marketing of Malmö's *kulturljudzon* (cultural sound zone) in the context of recent neoliberal planning practices in the city, with a focus on how the experiences of do-it-yourself (DIY) cultural actors compare to the *kulturljudzon*'s promotion and how they navigate relationships with municipal and economic representatives. Culture's heightened role in current urban planning processes globally has transformed how participants in the cultural scenes of cities experience their environments, making it necessary to understand the ways that this has occurred in Malmö. Two qualitative methods, a functional documentary analysis of public texts about the *kulturljudzon* and a thematic qualitative text analysis of interviews with cultural actors, a property owner, and municipal employees are utilized to explore the manner in which the *kulturljudzon* has been marketed, how this marketing compares and differs to perspectives found within Malmö's music scene, and the lived realities of DIY musicians and organizers in connection to the *kulturljudzon*. The analysis has revealed that the *kulturljudzon* has been presented as being a result of collaborative, participatory, and bottom-up planning processes, at times where culture and business are said to have shared interests, and promoted a means for the city to grow its attractiveness. Additionally, once interviews were incorporated, DIY cultural actors expressed their limitations in the *kulturljudzon*, such as the pressure to produce profit from their work, their difficulties in finding and keeping rental spaces, and the feeling that the municipality cared about the symbolism of the *kulturljudzon* and what it meant for the city's economy more than the substance of the culture within it. Interviews with a property owner and municipal employees deepened this discussion by providing insight as to the roles that different types of values play in their decision-making, their relationships to culture and cultural actors, and their goals for the *kulturljudzon*, its surrounding neighborhood, and Malmö as a whole. The data revealed sharp differences in power and alignments of stakeholders in this area, with the municipality and property manager combining their interests more readily than either were able to align with the cultural actors interviewed. The results of this study have implications for future research that prioritizes perspectives from urban DIY music scene members and cultural actors in understanding urban transformations, as this research can highlight shortcomings and misguidedness in planning processes. Further, this study exemplifies a need for planning officials to educate themselves on DIY cultural practices if they wish to create truly informed and participatory policies that promote all levels of cultural production and expression in their cities.

Key words:

Neoliberal urban planning; cultural planning; DIY music; participatory planning; city marketing; cultural clusters; bottom up planning; art entrepreneurialism.

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I. Introduction:

The loss of major manufacturing industries has marked a shift in the way that cities identify and organize themselves. No longer a shipbuilding hub, Malmö, Sweden's third-largest city, has served as a pronounced example of intentional restructuring with other avenues in sight for growing its stature, such as innovative infrastructure and spectacular urban planning projects (Baeten 2012, p. 22; Listerborn 2017, pp. 14-15). A relatively recent example, Sweden's first *kulturljudzon*, or "cultural sound zone," promises the prioritization and development of culture in an area of fast-growing Malmö, where everything else seems to be turning into housing. However, within a few years of its introduction, debates and editorials highlighting culture, particularly culture oriented away from commercial gain, and its precarity prevail, arguing in part that private property owners and a municipality with its sights set on money and attention are to blame for roadblocks that cultural actors navigate in the city (Johansson, Mahdi, and Skans 2024; Katsler et al. 2024). One may ask why these discussions are so prevalent and necessary in a city that recently introduced protections for culture in one of its neighborhood plans. Grounded in critical urban theory and do-it-yourself (DIY) ideology, this thesis aims to use document analysis and interviews to explore the *kulturljudzon*, beginning with its introduction in 2021 to the way that it is experienced by DIY musicians and organizers in 2024, placing the branding of the area and municipal and economic perspectives alongside cultural actors' lived realities. The findings from this study are expected to contribute to the academic field that examines the interplay between urban cultural planning and local underground and DIY music scenes, as well as to the local debates about culture's role in Malmö. By centering the perspectives of cultural actors, this study seeks to explore how they navigate their experiences in a neighborhood whose present image is built on their creative legacy.

a. Background and context

In response to the transformations that began in deindustrializing Swedish cities, the "K-society" (*K-samhället*) was introduced by Åke Andersson in the 1980s. Based on the idea that knowledge, communication systems, creative resources, art, and cultural capital, all of which begin with the letter "K" in Swedish, contribute together to develop an economically balanced society, this concept was both prescriptive and speculative in nature. Andersson also stated that his idea was in reaction to what he considered simplified terms, such as "post-industrial society" and "knowledge society," and asserted that matters pertinent to economy, society, and culture all take place in "an infrastructural arena" (Andersson 2008, p. 96; Listerborn 2017, p. 14). This model notably inspired Malmö's Social Democratic city council chairman from 1994 to 2013, Ilmar Reepalu (2013), who reflected that he saw the K-society as a way to invest in infrastructures that would create wealth and were oriented to the future, rather than "desperately chasing large and mature industries," which he considered "a fairly hopeless pursuit marked by the values of the past." The city saw the construction of some of Malmö's modern-day architectural and infrastructural markers, including the Öresund bridge to Denmark, the university now known as Malmö University, and the reconstructed waterfront neighborhood of The Western Harbor, including the 53-story Turning Torso building, during his term (Listerborn 2017, pp. 14-15; Reepalu 2013). These developments generated buzz for the city and allowed it to begin

reshaping its identity and cementing its place as an interesting, dynamic, and growing hub for the service economy and its workers, now connected to mainland Europe by the bridge. Concepts invoking creativity, knowledge, and innovation were placed at the forefront of this new-and-improved Malmö. However, many of these projects and the accompanying visions and justifications behind them have been critiqued as signs of neoliberal planning processes at play, such as marketing the city at a competitive level with a goal of attracting wealth, and evidence of the municipality's prioritization of a progressive and competitive economy above its commitment to ensure equitable opportunities and outcomes for its residents (Baeten 2012; Holgersen & Baeten 2016; Listerborn 2017).

During much of this time, Sofielund, an eastern neighborhood of Malmö characterized by its industrial status, stood on the periphery from many positive conversations about creativity in Malmö. This is not to erase what was actually occurring in the area, which was home to plenty of cultural life, from underground music clubs, to rehearsal rooms and studios, to meeting spaces for cultural associations. While some industry has remained, such as the Pågen and Stadex enterprises, the empty spaces left by industry that closed or moved their operations provided the opportunity for cultural actors to rehearse, produce, organize, and perform in the area. Migrant populations notably made use of former industrial buildings for purposes both economic and cultural, with workshops, garages, worship centers, and retail shops peppered throughout the area (Foroughanfar 2022, p. 17). While some of the area's institutions were formal, others existed at a more grassroots, self-organized level, and were not permitted or licensed by the city. In at least partial reaction to Sofielund's main street, Norra Grängesbergsgatan, being a hub for underground and DIY music activities, or independent and self-organized forms of music practice not belonging to the cultural or commercial mainstream, it was designated the center of Malmö's illegal club (*svartklubb*) activity by police in 1999, and "easily Malmö's coolest street" (*lätt Malmös coolaste gata*) by area blogger Oskar Ponnert in the 2000s (Höök 2010; Nilsson 2010). Sofielund has long been characterized by a level of concern from authorities and of adventure from Malmö residents seeking out its cultural offerings, explored further in a subsequent section. However, answers to the question of what to do about Sofielund have in recent years been sought out as part of a team effort. In 2017, an initiative called "Safer Malmö" (*Tryggare Malmö*) was launched. Safer Malmö, under the coordination of Malmö's environmental agency, combines the efforts of the police, the tax agency, and employment agency, among others, to put a stop to illegal activities within the city. Reports have continued to be published through 2023 (Tryggare Malmö 2024). Safer Malmö's first annual report was published in 2018 and detailed both Norra Grängesbergsgatan and illegal clubs as two of its focus areas, along with other concentrations such as massage parlors and unauthorized housing. The 2018 report states that nine illegal venues had been investigated since the project's beginning, and that several of those had been shut down. In 2020, the police reported that the number of these former spaces had climbed to around 15 in the time since the effort began (Irebring 2020a; Tryggare Malmö 2018). Malmö residents saw the number of underground cultural spaces in the city dwindle, and thus were left with fewer options to share and experience alternative forms of music outside of larger and legitimized clubs.

Soon after these spaces began to vanish, Sofielund's *kulturljudzon* (see Appendix A for a map) was announced in the municipality's 2021 neighborhood plan and was intended to address a number of

conflicting issues in the growing Malmö. The industrial operations of Pågen and Stadex necessitated neighbors tolerating a degree of noise, as did the cultural activities that contributed to the area's legacy. At the same time, Malmö's climbing population and resulting densification mean that more housing is being constructed around the city, though would not be suitable in a noisy area, resulting in a need to prioritize (Hansson 2023). The *kulturljudzon* is described in the neighborhood plan as being an area where music and other noise associated with culture may exist up to 85 decibels, measured outdoors, equaling 25 decibels inside neighboring homes, in tandem with the sound already coming from industry and transportation. No new housing plans are to be added within a distance of 100 meters from the zone. There is a strong emphasis on the area's musical and broader cultural heritage in the plan, which is currently set to be in place until the year 2040 (Malmö stad 2021, pp. 3-6; Strand 2023). The implementation of the *kulturljudzon* made headlines in news outlets, both Swedish and international, as the first of its kind in Sweden, suggesting that the idea can travel and be put into place in other cities (Hansson 2023; Iolov 2021). This set the stage for the *kulturljudzon* to be another of Malmö's noteworthy projects, bringing up echoes of Andersson's K-society and the retired Reepalu's prior implementations in its blend of innovative planning and attention to culture.

b. Problem statement

Malmö's recent history suggests that the municipality has incorporated concepts of creativity and culture into its planning practices and goals of economic development, resulting in a number of spectacular projects and at times drawing a critical eye toward how neoliberal urban planning tactics are involved. The *kulturljudzon* can be considered a relatively recent instance of one of these projects. However, city residents have simultaneously experienced a reduction in their ability to experience forms of cultural life, particularly music, in spaces that the municipality had not approved. If aspects of culture have been mobilized by the municipality in pursuit of economic growth, while others are considered extraneous, then more must be known about the manner that this mobilization and exclusion has been done in the example of the *kulturljudzon*. Additionally, the perspectives of those who have created and participated in culture that was targeted or shut down rather than promoted in this pursuit should be studied. The purpose of this study is to determine how ideas of creativity and culture are instrumentalized in the promotion of the *kulturljudzon* and to explore how the outlooks and realities of cultural actors who have participated in DIY and underground music life may differ from those of the municipality. If such differences are found, this study seeks to explore some of the challenges present in producing music in this manner in the *kulturljudzon*. Through analyzing written texts about the *kulturljudzon* and conducting interviews with some of these cultural actors, as well as municipal employees and an area property owner, this thesis seeks to answer three questions:

1) How is the *kulturljudzon* marketed in public communications released by the city of Malmö or associated institutions?

2) How do these communications compare to and differ from perspectives on the *kulturljudzon* found within Malmö's music scene?

3) What are the lived realities of DIY musicians and organizers in connection to the *kulturljudzon*?

This thesis is structured as follows: section two provides a brief overview of relevant literature pertaining to neoliberal planning practices in Malmö, how musical undergrounds interact with neoliberal planning when studied in other deindustrializing Western cities, and the emerging commodification of culture locally in Sofielund. Section three describes the selected research methodologies, how these were chosen in relation to the research problem and questions, and details how the data was gathered and analyzed, including reflections on the process and my own position within it. Section four details the theoretical framework central to this thesis and explains how these concepts relate to the core of the study. Section five presents the object of study, or key components and institutions of Sofielund that appear in the subsequent presentation and analysis of the data in section six, which is broken up into two larger subsections. Finally, section seven offers concluding remarks and a discussion of the study's findings in a broader context.

II. Collection of previous research

This thesis draws upon a rich network of literature that provides a background understanding to this topic and has informed the selection of theoretical framework and the arguments later used in data analysis.

a. Neoliberal planning and Malmö

To introduce neoliberal planning as a concept, Baeten (2017, p. 105) emphasizes that its accompanying strategies are often not represented as "a clear break from a previous regime in planning," but rather blended incrementally with structures already in place. Popularized globally in the 1970s and 1980s by a retreat of the government's influence on economic matters, but characterized in the present age by the public sector taking an active role in boosting a city's competitiveness and attractiveness, the motivations and principles for neoliberal planning strategies to appeal to investors and desirable future residents are often not discussed in explicit terms (Baeten 2017, pp. 107-108). Examples of these strategies can include city marketing, appeal to and attraction of the creative class, use of public-private partnerships (PPPs) in development, and implementation of spectacular urban development projects (UDPs) as a tool to "establish or radically renew city districts" (Baeten 2017, pp. 109-110). Many of these characteristic tactics have been observed and documented in Malmö. In another work, Baeten (2012, pp. 21-22) describes Malmö's Western Harbor development of the early 2000s as the city's first UDP, "a spectacular development of housing and offices, symbolically built on former shipyard grounds," beginning as a housing neighborhood built for an international design exposition. Baeten (2012, p. 38) also explains how this project, contested by some residents at its time, set the stage for further neoliberal planning to become more normalized in the case of the subsequent Hyllie UDP in southern Malmö that began work in 2007. The creation of Hyllie also represented an instance of urban development to a large extent going without debate or challenge, and instead generally enjoying the praise and support of the media. This normalization of buzzworthy UDPs in Malmö combined with the assertion that the governing attitudes of neoliberal planning are often

difficult for the public to parse can lead to instances of the city's later projects escaping critical examination. Thus, neoliberal planning can continue its gradual and incremental incorporation, and the prioritization of the municipality's economic growth can become more normalized.

Utilizing a definition of neoliberal planning as patterns wherein the state acts akin to the private sector, and focusing more specifically on instances of urban competition and city branding, Listerborn (2017, pp. 11-12) states that Malmö's attempts to communicate itself as a "knowledge city," a term often used in tandem with the "creative city," has manifested both in a verbal branding and a partial reconceptualizing and restructuring of the city's physical space. While the *kulturljudzon*'s introduction has not thus far resulted in much, if any, change to the area's built environment, it involves restructuring in the sense of altering what is permitted within its borders and communicating new intentions for the area. Additionally, Listerborn (2017, p. 17) contextualizes neoliberal urban development in Malmö's history as a strongly Social Democratic city, stating that welfare policy administration remains, yet neoliberal planning emphasizes market-based solutions to problems of social and economic inequalities. This results in a desire to promote projects as being economically or socially sustainable. Projects are marketed by the city of Malmö through, among other avenues, its membership in the Nordic City Network, a think tank that focuses on the creative and entrepreneurial development of Nordic cities (Listerborn 2017, p. 25). Employing Albrechts's (2006, p. 1160, cited in Listerborn 2017, p. 12) concept of "visioning," or "a conscious and purposive action to represent values and meanings for the future to which a particular place is committed," Listerborn asserts that the creation of a city brand, with all its sustainable features, through visioning involves "creating 'stories of identity.'" This is exemplified in the visioning and promotion of the "4th urban environment" in Malmö, wherein the "second space" (workplace) and the "third space" (public spaces) are nebulously blended through the built environment to attract and facilitate the lives of an urban creative class, otherwise known as highly educated workers in the knowledge and creative economies (Listerborn 2017, p. 20). While the *kulturljudzon* does not represent an instance of this 4th urban environment, the ideas presented in this article, specifically those of visioning and of the "traveling flagship concept," or novel plans that can be promoted and marketed to other cities, remain relevant to this study.

Other scholars have also outlined how neoliberal planning tactics can emerge and appear in a city with a tradition of welfare provision. At times, neoliberal planning tactics can be justified and promoted through the idea that a city's economic regeneration benefits everyone living there, by means of job creation, increased opportunities, or a higher quality of life. A guiding assumption is that attracting investors and influential, wealthy individuals raises the city's potential prospects, the latter by choosing to live in Malmö, pay local taxes, and locate their businesses within the city. Placing the creep of Malmö's neoliberal planning strategies in the context of the city's reputation for unrest and poverty, Holgerson and Baeten (2016, pp. 1180-1181) argue that any success won from spectacular and attention-getting projects has failed to "trickle down" to poorer residents, who have instead experienced increased polarization. Additionally, Holgerson and Baeten (2016, pp. 1177) demonstrate through interviews that developers consider Malmö an advantageous place to conduct their work, as their collaborations and relationships with the municipality have been strong. This led the authors to

suggest that Malmö is favored by developers not only due to the skill and competence of planning personnel, but to their priorities being in alignment with developers' goals in a further entanglement of political and economic actors. Locally to Sofielund, this can be mirrored in the establishment of the Real Estate Owners BID, or "business improvement district," later adapted to "housing, integration, and participation" in its Swedish translation, Sofielund (*Fastighetsägare BID Sofielund*) in 2014, in which property owners partner with the municipality in development efforts (Fastighetsägare BID Sofielund n.d.). The work of Holgerson and Baeten, in combination with Listerborn's articulation of visioning's role in city planning, brings up questions in Malmö's current context of whether cultural opportunity, promoted and prioritized in the creation of the *kulturljudzon*, can trickle down to include culture at lower levels of economic significance, which, like poor residents of Malmö, has been problematized.

b. The intersection of neoliberal planning with urban DIY music scenes

Grassroots and DIY music activities, though at times produced and performed in underground and sub-legal settings as in the case of Sofielund, can be utilized by municipalities in the planning process. Music is a means for cities to brand and market themselves on the basis of culture, and this has been researched and reported on in other cities. Speaking to the case of the Mile End neighborhood in Montréal, Canada, an area with strong rock-based musical roots, Straw (2019, pp. 21-22) described how international attention and becoming a known cultural hub affected that very character, with much musical activity eventually leaving for other parts of the city. After it was investigated and publicized by the *New York Times* and other outlets, Straw (2019, pp. 21-21) stated that interest in the neighborhood "exploded" and that imagery related to music in the area was hard to come by in this press coverage, and that they rather focused on cafés and restaurants, and other, more visual markers of culture. Going further, Straw (2019, p. 25) states that "increasingly, musical activity is represented (or displaced) by the signifiers of urban lifestyle, which organize themselves into at least two sets. One consists of the forms of material culture that fill the spaces of hipster bohemianism. The other set of signifiers collaborates to convey an image of public sociability." Thus, through the promotion of urban music scenes in the pursuit of a spectacle, the music itself is no longer the focal point. Rather, the music can be reduced to an aesthetic and utilized to promote other potentially profitable and attractive aspects of urban life, or as Straw (2019, p. 26) states, become "instrumentalized within the self-promotion campaigns of cities and their neighbourhoods." For commercial music forms that are entrenched in and benefit from a city's economic livelihood, their co-optation may not provide such a threat. However, for musical undergrounds and subcultures, this can bring forth several problems.

Illustrating this in Hamburg, Germany, Kuchar (2015, p. 548) explains that neoliberal urban planning tactics related to music scenes, such as music-related city marketing and the undertaking of music-based flagship projects, has caused tension with these scenes and even hindered their development. Also a harbor city with a government that has prioritized image and economic performance in the recent decades, Hamburg dedicated a number of interventions to its creative growth and promotion. Hamburg's communities of musicians expressed that social and cultural capital were of particular importance to their processes, and were found through socializing and exchange with local

networks, such as those existing in neighborhoods with a high concentration of musicians and related activities (Kuchar 2015, p. 552). Partially through a process of "structural revalorization," or redevelopment of an area's infrastructures, the geographies of Hamburg's music scene changed. A lack of affordable rehearsal spaces and housing in areas formerly rife with musical activity was reported, and increasing expectations for smaller venues to afford their operation costs and remain profitable, thus closing, negatively affected performance opportunities within the scene. In spite of these changes, musicians reported a strong sense of identification with their local scene and their city, and largely attempted to stay in Hamburg as they struggled against development efforts, illustrating the existing ties between culture and space, as well as the ways that urban musicians' lives are bound to municipal processes, actors, and modes of governance (Kuchar 2015, pp. 552-553). While musicians, artists, and other cultural actors mobilized in a network to voice their demands, it remains unclear whether any concessions they have won from the municipality were a result of pressure or based on conviction, making it difficult to differentiate between true top-down or bottom-up processes. Kuchar (2015, pp. 554-555) asks what local governments actually know about cultural scenes, and urges a distinction between two different types of "creativity:" one artistic in value, and one based more in ideas of innovation and economic resources.

c. Culture and commodification on Norra Grängesbergsgatan

After discussing the convergence of neoliberal planning processes and local music scenes, more information about how this plays out in Malmö, and more specifically in the Sofielund neighborhood, is needed. Foroughanfar (2022, pp. 17-19) has extensively researched the main avenue of Norra Grängesbergsgatan and the dualities in its perception; while in its recent history the street has been associated with undesirable and illegal activity that must be monitored and stopped, the transforming city has plans for its future and can utilize the "branding and exoticisation" of the street in this process. Related to the consumption of music, this is exemplified presently in the annual NGBG (abbreviation for Norra Grängesbergsgatan) street festival as one of the area's flagship attractions and the formerly illegal club Plan B, which has received investments from its property owner and a seat at the metaphorical planning table, which includes collaboration opportunities with other economic actors and the municipality (Foroughanfar 2022, p. 139). An instance of music's instrumentalization in municipal efforts toward economic growth emerges locally in Sofielund, paralleling what Straw (2019) noted in his study. Though Foroughanfar discusses the creation of the *kulturljudzon* in the cited work, it was published within a year of the approval of the Sofielund neighborhood plan. Thus, there is a need for continued study of the *kulturljudzon* with the passage of time and the inclusion of additional data to find out more how the shape of musical life in the area changes. However, this thesis aligns closely with Foroughanfar's (2022, p. 126) proposed questions of "*what* and *whose* 'culture' is valued and pursued in the efforts of 'developing' the street" (emphasis Foroughanfar's own).

d. Other influencing research

Understanding the assertions made in these prior research examples and the questions that they raise is crucial for any researcher who wishes to study music-based (sub)culture and cultural sites in their

urban contexts, and they provide some necessary overviews of both phenomena that have been observed in other deindustrializing cities and are specific to the case of Malmö. While not cited in this work, a prior collaborative research project that my colleague Alice Porsfelt and I began in the spring of 2023 has also informed some of my thoughts and initial inspirations for this thesis. At the time that the project began, both Alice and I had recently moved to Malmö and had experience in our previous cities' DIY music scenes. Seeking to understand which urban processes have shaped and in turn been affected by underground music in Malmö through interviews and archival research resulted in our fanzine, titled *You bend it and you tend it and you do as you want! An oral histories zine about DIY music in Malmö*[1]. Among other interview questions, part of our process for data gathering for the fanzine involved asking informants about their perspectives on the *kulturljudzon*. Our work has continued in the form of an exhibition entitled *Svartklubb* at the Malmö City Archives and an accompanying public workshop series. Undertaking much of this work and participating in conversations in the months prior to and during my thesis research has inevitably impacted the ways that I consider DIY and grassroots music in Malmö, and has expanded my existing perspective that was formed by attending events in similar scenes in my prior cities of residence.

[1]Though the fanzine has since been updated, the first edition is available here: https://wpmu.mau.se/studentexhibitions-us/wp-content/uploads/sites/49/2023/06/Goodrich-Porsfelt-final-submission-zine-making-urban-studies-1.pdf

III. Research design and methods

With the understanding that my questions sought to investigate what I saw as a research gap with missing perspectives, and that not all of the information I was looking for existed already in a published format, conducting qualitative research with an open-ended, exploratory approach was the most appropriate choice to gain a full picture of what these absent viewpoints were (Creswell 2007, p. 40). To answer parts of the questions, I needed to include texts that were used to communicate about the *kulturljudzon*. To answer the other parts required investigating musicians and organizers' attitudes toward the *kulturljudzon* and their experiences within it, as well as others involved in decision-making in the area. Musical undergrounds are often marked by some level of opacity, which can be necessary for their survival in societies where some of their activity has been criminalized. Pointed perspectives from Malmö's underground musicians and organizers were present, which my previous research projects confirmed, but they weren't widely available in the results of other studies. Additionally important to consider is that the *kulturljudzon* is less than three years old at the time of this thesis's completion. The *kulturljudzon* is young, and while critical examination of it has not been absent from prior research, particularly in the form of other thesis projects by other students, I have not encountered an attempt to gather and center the outlooks from DIY and grassroots musical actors in connection to it. Thus, I needed to gather some data of my own to thoroughly and properly investigate my questions.

a. Data set I: public documents

To select my initial text documents to be included in research, I focused on those that introduced, explained, and promoted the *kulturljudzon* from the perspective of the municipality, or an individual or

institution with a strong connection to the municipality. My second parameter was that these texts be public documents, or those in which the general public makes up all or at least part of the text's target audience. The first choice was the 2021 Sofielund neighborhood plan that provides an updated direction for the area, outlines the *kulturljudzon*, and explains the municipality's goals for the neighborhood's future (Malmö stad 2021). The other was the *Noisy Neighbours* exhibition, created by think tank Center for Studies in Land Use (*Centrum för studier av markanvändning*) in collaboration with several artists, hosted at the city's Form/Design Center from September 2023 until January 2024. This document outlines the motivations and planning process of the *kulturljudzon*, with attention given to the survey findings and reports that influenced it. I visited this exhibition twice and documented its contents through photos and notetaking. The Form/Design center has a number of public and private collaborators, though a brief summary on its website describes itself as operated by a non-profit organization, supported by funding from the Ministry of Culture, Malmö municipality, the region of Skåne, and the Swedish Arts Council (Form/Design Center n.d.).

Some of the included text is written in Swedish, a language that I have not yet mastered but have some competence in reading. When necessary for comprehension and a thorough presentation of the data, lines from these texts have been translated into English, although there is always the possibility that words or phrases selected in Swedish have not been translated with full accuracy into English. I have attempted to mitigate this by thoroughly consulting the SAOL dictionary and asking sources for clarification when unsure. Throughout the whole of this text, I have also included some instances of original Swedish phrases and titles, both for the sake of clarity and ease of access, so that readers seeking additional information can complete searches for institutions, articles, and websites. Information does not appear as readily in searches when the original language is obscured.

I selected a simplified version of functional documentary analysis as my research method for these texts, with the understanding that there was a very small total amount of texts included in this step of my research and that the discussion would later be deepened by conducting interviews in the next step. Both texts fit under Coffey's (2014, p. 367) definition of a "document," and both are considered formal, with the neighborhood plan included as a straightforward "official record," and the exhibition included as an example of "data or evidence of the ways in which individuals, groups, social settings, institutions and organizations represent and account for themselves." This documentary analysis aims to go beyond merely reading and interpreting quotations, "but also include developing an understanding of the ways in which documents are authored, produced, used, and consumed," thus making it appropriate for analyzing quotations in the greater context of how cities envision and brand their strategies to, in turn, market themselves. Documents, to varying degrees, persuade, and functional analysis can be used to explore the ways in which documents do "work" (Coffey, 2014, pp. 368-373). In this process, source texts were read through and data was selected and categorized through an initial coding process, later refined, and then applied for analysis through the lens of what "work" the data was doing in the document to promote the *kulturljudzon*.

b. Data set II: semi-structured interviews

As one of my research questions was to compare perspectives and another was to explore "lived realities," I chose to complete qualitative interviews as part of my research process. I am not a musician or cultural actor in the Sofielund area, nor had I lived in Malmö at the time that the *kulturljudzon* was introduced, so I found semi-structured interviewing of participants to be the best fit for my exploratory approach. That way, I would utilize an interview guide with prepared questions, but I allowed informants some flexibility in the direction of the interview, encouraging them to expand on their answers where necessary, and following up to gain clarification (Bryman 2016, p. 468). I wanted their perspectives and actual experiences to shape the data I gathered, rather than allowing my own preconceptions and biases to overshadow it.

Including a balance of backgrounds and positions was important to me, so I approached potential informants with different orientations within and adjacent to Malmö's music scene, placing the Sofielund area in the foreground. I considered not only cultural actors and musicians important, but also those who have influence in the geographical and political landscape of the *kulturljudzon*. Municipal employees create and enforce the laws that govern the area and create cultural initiatives for the neighborhood, and property managers and landlords are the gatekeepers to the spaces in which people can practice, perform, and listen to music. I considered people from these positions to be vital players in a musician's ecosystem. It is also important to weigh and disclose my own position as a researcher in this process, as it could have a biasing effect. I am not a musician, but I am connected with several in my own social network, and regularly attend shows in the city, though I am not a member of any cultural associations. Having completed prior research on the city's underground and DIY music scene history, I have met additional musicians and organizers within this sphere. Thus, most of the cultural actors included in this study were chosen from a pool of people that I already know. I did not previously know any of the informants from the other categories, and the first contact with each of those informants was me introducing myself via email. Further details of this are provided below. However, all of the informants were provided with an information letter detailing the intent of this study, written consent was collected at each interview, and everyone was given the option to choose between having their interview recorded or having written notes taken instead. Ethical considerations and GDPR were carefully discussed and planned for with this project's supervisor.

While not every person who was initially approached agreed to participate, in the end, I conducted semi-structured interviews with nine different informants, all in English, during the period of March 12 through April 4 of this year. The longest interview was 64 minutes, and the shortest was 30 minutes. I created interview guides to adhere to prior to the interviews, with some questions differing depending on the position that the informant was included to represent. The breakdown of my informant categories, and who was interviewed with which perspectives in mind, is as follows:

- Three informants (identified as 1, 5, and 6) are involved in Malmö's music scene, either as musicians or organizers, with connections to the Sofielund area. Some currently rent rehearsal spaces in the neighborhood, and all three had performed at or organized underground shows in the area before the introduction of the *kulturljudzon*. The informants in this group are not members of the NGBG association, and I found it important to include them in a separate

category from those involved in Sofielund cultural association life. All three informants in this group were selected from my pre-existing social network.

- Two informants (identified as 2 and 3) were involved in music and cultural association life to various degrees in Sofielund, and both were members of the NGBG association at the time of their interviews. One of these informants came from my social network, and the other I met for the first time at our interview.
- One informant (identified as 4) works for a property management company that owns or manages a portion of buildings in the area. I did not know this informant previously, and we met for the first time at our interview.
- Three informants (identified as 7, 8, and 9) were employees of Malmö municipality. Two of the three had been members of the working or steering group for the 2021 Sofielund neighborhood plan. I met all three of these informants for the first time at our interviews.

Maintaining the confidentiality of those who gave their time and thoughts to this study is vital. For that reason, these categories are distinct but have been purposely left somewhat vague in their descriptions. The intention behind completing these interviews and selecting these informants was not to provide exhaustive or representative results, nor can the data gathered relay an accurate picture of how everyone experiences the *kulturljudzon*, discussed further in the next subsection on limitations. Rather, I wanted to compile perspectives from at least one individual belonging to one of these four represented groups to explore how these points of view could overlap or intersect.

While more detail will be provided later (see: Presenting the object of study), it is important to note that after I had started this study, but one week before interviews began, *Sydsvenskan* newspaper published an article announcing that the NGBG association had been told that the contract for their clubhouse at Annelundsgården, owned by Stadex but managed by a third party company, would not be renewed after its expiration on March 31. The stated plan was that area club Plan B would instead be organizing concerts during summer 2024 on the property. The article's headline describes the relationship between the association, the property owner, and Malmö municipality as "infected" (Gillberg 2024a). The topic came up in the news, in social media feeds, and in conversations around the city. Thus, these interviews came at a difficult time for some informants. My task was to relate the gathered data to this study's theoretical framework rather than to view this process as "reporting the news" or relaying multiple sides of this one story.

The data from the conducted interviews was analyzed through a thematic qualitative text analysis approach that identified patterns within (Kuckartz 2014). After interview data was gathered and transcribed, I began to organize it into themes using a rather inductive process, guiding the categorization by questions such as:

1. What category is the informant speaking as a member of?
2. Who are they speaking in relation to, if anyone?
3. Within this, what phenomena are they describing?

4. If other people have been interviewed from this group, do they also describe this phenomenon? Do they have a similar outlook, or does it differ?

After this initial process, categories were reassessed and changed where appropriate before analysis began (see Appendix B for a diagram of the process).

c. Limitations

While this study aims to contribute a significant level of insight relating to local city marketing processes and the treatment of cultural practices that are considered extraneous to Malmö's economic growth, some limitations need to be considered. While some of these have already been mentioned in this section, they have been placed together here. This study's first limitation is that the amount of data sources, two written texts and nine interviews, is relatively small. I believe that these numbers are proportional to the four months allotted to this process, but it does hinder the ability to generalize any findings or extrapolate them to larger groups. Three municipal employees cannot speak to the whole of the municipality, nor can selected data from one property manager and five cultural actors be extended accurately to cover all of the nuances likely present within these categories. Another is the aforementioned biasing effect that my own position can have, as well as my existing relationships to some informants. Significant efforts have thus been made to base the direction of analysis firmly in the realm of previous literature and applicable theoretical concepts. Finally, as a relative newcomer and foreign arrival to Malmö, there are likely to be many more details and nuances within Sofielund, Malmö, and Sweden's history that are beyond my grasp at this time and were not included in the process of completing this research. Underground music history exists largely outside of formal institutional publication, with stories and perspectives rather shared more internally within communities. Even beyond this, there are likely countless news articles, academic publications, blog posts, and other forms of communication that may add contributing information to make up this mosaic of the studied area that have not been encountered, much less considered and included. While disclosing these limitations is important, this thesis provides some significant preliminary exploration of its research questions and can play a role in the continued research of municipal cultural planning and musical undergrounds both within Malmö and elsewhere.

IV. Selected theoretical framework

As this study relates to grassroots cultural life and planning in the city, a theoretical frame made up of concepts pertaining to DIY practices and ideology, as well as how these are impacted in planning processes, is necessary. These concepts will be utilized in analyzing the data gathered from the documents and interviews in section six.

Central to this study is a clear understanding of what DIY, a term at times used interchangeably with "grassroots," music entails, though it can be a notoriously murky concept. Definitions vary, but according to Bennett and Guerra (2019, p. 1), "do-it-yourself (DIY) culture describes a form of cultural practice that is often pitched against more mainstream, mass-produced and commodified forms of

cultural production." Musically, this can entail anything from producing and distributing music on small, independent labels to organizing and operating performances that tend to be smaller in scale and lower in cost, rather than making use of popular music infrastructures such as arenas or larger nightclubs. Venues can be warehouses, homes, galleries, or abandoned buildings, among many others (Easthope 2020, p. 6) Money can be made from operations, but profits are largely not considered a main goal. Operating outside of the commercial mainstream allows DIY music forms to be more affordable and accessible to produce and consume, at times making it a "sanctuary" for people of social and economic marginalization, or those "rejected by institutional and mainstream spaces" (Easthope 2020, p. 3). In Sweden, serving alcoholic beverages at a venue requires that the venue have a permit, be registered as a food establishment, and pay fees for supervision and inspection (Verksamt n.d.). DIY music venues, sometimes spaces that are not legally operating as such, bypass the costs and bureaucracy associated with this registration, as they can be prohibitive and require a profit-seeking model. DIY shows often attract members of the public seeking alternative cultural experiences outside of their area's more commercial offerings. Thus, the availability of DIY performance venues affects consumers in addition to the musicians themselves, who also must consider production spaces in their ecosystems. It can also be read as an issue of equity within the city, with some residents' opportunities to participate in culture affected depending on what they can afford or where they can be offered entry and welcome. Regarding illegality, this attracts the attention of law enforcement and other regulatory authorities, and can subject DIY music performances to some level of stigma in society (Easthope 2020, pp. 4-5). This is mirrored in the case of Sofielund and its duality: deemed problematic by authorities and targeted for intervention, yet also celebrated for some degree of gritty hipness, its purported dangers interpreted as "cool." While some have used the term "DIY" interchangeably with "punk" due to the popularity of DIY aesthetics and ethics in the punk movement, DIY music scenes exist on a global scale and across a span of genres, including hip-hop, dance, and others and cannot be categorized into their own sound (Bennet & Guerra 2019, pp. 8-9). These scenes have increasingly become bound and intertwined with urban processes, landscapes, and modes of governance, particularly in cities that utilize neoliberal planning tactics and employ culture as a branding tool (Bennett & Guerra 2019; Kuchar 2015; Straw 2019). In light of this phenomenon, Bennett and Guerra (2019, pp. 9-12) declared that "more than anything, DIY serves as a counter-force to neoliberalism" and stated that the two concepts exist in tension with one another, even though "deindustrialization in the 'Global North' has further contributed to the prevalence of DIY discourses in music and associated forms of cultural practice." Citing Bey (1991, p. 405, cited in Straw 2019, pp. 23-24), Straw asserts that the commodification of urban culture and subculture related to common neoliberal planning practices can turn them into further spectacles, thus increasing their surveillance and regulation. This can in turn negatively affect the cultural lives of those that do exist on the margins with a lack of ability or even desire to involve themselves in more commercial scenes. However, DIY as a concept has an inherent value independent of its opposing forces. One example of this would be that DIY music scenes often rely on voluntary and sub-professional labor in their operations, and barriers are minimized or altogether absent between artist and audience, creating unique opportunities for participation and their own methods of pedagogies and learning, forming what has been called a collective creative network (Bennett & Guerra 2019, p. 14; Woods 2023). Thus, just as DIY music is comparatively more accessible to play and consume, there are opportunities to involve oneself in scene

operations with lowered professional barriers, allowing one to become "part of the scene" in multiple ways, such as picking up a new instrument or learning the operations of lighting, sound systems, or show organization. Additional values have been cited in relation to DIY scenes, particularly present in their associated means of socialization, diminished reliance on large corporations and media outlets, and relationships to political action (Bennett & Guerra 2019, pp. 12-13). Thus, the first adapted concept that makes up the theoretical frame of this study is that *DIY music practices exist in opposition to neoliberalism but have their own inherent personal, social, and cultural value*.

Further, to answer the question of how artists can create and sustain themselves in a capitalistic society, Essig (2022, pp. 4-5) proposes the ouroboros, or serpent feeding on its own tail, as a metaphorical suggestion. Within this, the art and artist are placed at the head of the serpent, and money is the tail from which they eat. The body in between, what leads the head to its tail, are innovation and entrepreneurship. Through constructing their art as a product meant for wider consumption, artists can turn their work into money, which they then use to sustain and grow their practices, thus creating more art in the next turn of the cycle. In producing this metaphor, Essig (2022, pp. 14-15) includes DIY artists in consideration, and highlights DIY communities' "alternative economies based in collaboration, cooperation, barter, and the trading of social capital." However, Essig (2022, pp. 15-16) goes on to assert that DIY artists are still market actors, even if the intentions with which they enter the market may differ, and that the suggested ouroboros metaphor and "entrepreneurial behavior" applies even to their cases, wherein artists as a general group "create or recognize opportunities to get their work out into the world, to connect it meaningfully to its audience(s)." Though Essig positions her framework in the interest of artists sustaining and growing their own practices, as well as those of their community members, it speaks to the hegemony of market interests and relies on assumptions that 1) market interests will always dominate and dwarf artistic values, on the DIY level and the commercial level and 2) that DIY artist communities and scenes cannot grow, much less sustain themselves, under capitalism, positing growth as a goal of their practices. Though the targeting of underground music spaces in Sofielund as Malmö embraces neoliberal planning strategies makes it tempting to embrace these assumptions, Bennett and Guerra (2019, pp. 9-10) remind that DIY music practices have not only continued to survive in the last 50 years since their explosion in the 1970s, but have also spread on a global scale. Following this, the next guiding concept is the proposed *emancipation of DIY music practices, in both their potential and their expectations, from the dominant economic frameworks they oppose*. They are not equal in ideology or scale, and the commodification of DIY practices by larger economic forces does not necessarily mean that these practices should be altered to follow along.

Additional theoretical framework is needed to consider the politics and geography of the *kulturljudzon* and Sofielund as a whole. For this, one begins with the interpretation of Sofielund as a "cultural cluster," blending "cultural functions and activities, from production to presentation and consumption… grouped together in a great variety of spatial forms," often located in formal industrial areas and including other elements of entertainment and leisure (Mommaas 2004, pp. 507-508). Related to music, present in Sofielund currently are rehearsal spaces for music production, an annual street festival, and the legally operating club Plan B that hosts concerts, gigs, and other social events. For other nearby leisure offerings, there is a climbing gym, a small movie theater, a roller derby league,

and a graffiti space, among other institutions. Regarding the formation of cultural clusters, Mommaas (2004, p. 508) offers three ways that they typically develop: "Sometimes, the projects have started their career as 'ploaps', places left over after planning, subsequently taken over by informal groups of cultural producers who turn them into alternative cultural sites. Sometimes, the cultural clusters began their existence in the minds of cultural managers, searching for ways to strengthen the market position of their amenities within a more competitive cultural and leisure market. In other cases, the projects came to life on the drawing board of urban planners, looking for ways to revitalise urban quarters or to strengthen the local 'creative economy.'" With perspectives from musical actors, property managers, and municipal employees, the discussion will include reflections on whose visions are being enacted as the *kulturljudzon* develops, and whose ideas are being realized. While cultural neighborhoods had previously developed more autonomously, with residents involved in art and culture shaping the communities around their activities, municipalities have now shifted to taking a more active role in the planning of these spaces with economic considerations in mind. This is complicated by an increasing popularity in "bohemian" or "alternative" lifestyle aesthetics and cultural consumption. Mommaas (2004, pp. 508-509) asks whether culture is being stimulated and supported by this type of planning, or whether it is instead being exploited. After asserting that some cultural clusters develop from a bottom-up approach, led by cultural producers and actors, and that some develop in a top-down manner, with municipal and economic interests in the driver's seat, Mommaas (2004, pp. 515-516) determined that none of the five areas he studied in the Netherlands fit neatly into either box at the extreme ends. Rather, this lends itself to the notion that planners and stakeholders in cultural clusters are in more complex relationships with each other. Instead of linear relationships, figures looking more like constellations or webs appear. From this, another concept emerges: *Cultural, municipal, and economic stakeholders can have both overlapping and opposing interests in a cultural cluster, and play roles together in its development*.

Though the interests represented in a cultural cluster can be varied and relate to each other in complex ways, that is not to assume that each stakeholder in the cultural, political, and economic sectors brings with them the same amount of power and bargaining capacity. If the convergence of political and economic interests associated with neoliberal urban planning strategies results in allegiance between these stakeholder groups, this can create an increased, shared power. To discuss the comparatively smaller amount of power held by DIY cultural actors, as opposed to the political power of the municipality and the economic power of property owners, arguments rooted in gentrification have at times been used. One basis for these arguments is that the commodification of alternative cultures and lifestyles, attractive as they can be to consumers, can cause the populations of cultural clusters and their economic landscapes to change as rent prices in their neighborhoods climb (Zukin & Braslow 2011, cited in Gainza 2016, pp. 954-955). However, Gainza (2016, p. 955) instead argued for analyses outside of gentrification-related concepts, stating that "culture-led transformations go beyond changes in the built environment and social class replacement to affect community relations and collective identity" and that more attention should be paid to contradictions within these transformations than to assessing a final outcome. Embracing Gainza's argument is twofold: one, with the *kulturljudzon* still quite young at the time of this study, it may be too soon to confidently detect early gentrification processes as a direct result of its creation and make claims about its outcomes. Two, with the

categorical positions represented by my informant pool, there is a larger potential to instead focus on their perspectives of relations between groups in the area. To investigate residential and economic displacement in the area caused by gentrification in a complete manner would likely require a larger project at a later date, as Gainza (2016, p. 962) emphasized that "gentrification is a multifaceted process that goes beyond class replacement to embrace changes in the built environment, social relations, commercial activities and consumption patterns." Paralleling Mommaas's assertion that relationships between stakeholders in cultural clusters are complex, Gainza (2016, p. 953) stressed exploring the "symbolic representation of space and the 'right to the neighborhood.'" This "right to the neighborhood" is a scaling-down of Lefebvre's (1968) well-known "right to the city" concept, wherein rights and the ability to self-determine are won through political struggle in an aim to displace powerful and monied groups' influence on the lives of inhabitants. In this framework, "urban managers," or state and capitalist powers, are redundant, and inhabitants alone are capable of determining their own environments (Purcell 2014). I propose a related concept to guide the discussion that centers the musicians, artists, and organizers responsible for producing the cultural aspects of the zone: *the right to the cultural cluster*. In negotiating and wrestling for the right to self-determine in an area steeped in grassroots, underground, and DIY music practices, and understanding the values produced by those forms of culture, who do cultural actors engage in that struggle against, and what forms of power are represented?

V. Presenting the object of study

Below are details of some of Sofielund and the *kulturljudzon*'s component parts and institutions that are key for understanding the subsequent data discussion and analysis. Some of these have been marked by controversy and spark strong emotions for some, though their brief descriptions are meant to be informative, relatively neutral and based on public, easily accessible information.

a. The kulturljudzon

Accepted by the city planning board in September 2021 and including parts of Norra Grängesbergsgatan, Kopparbergsgatan, and Gullängsparken streets within its perimeters, the plan for the *kulturljudzon* states that "music and other cultural sounds can boom in symbiosis with industry and transport noise," with consideration given to maintain appropriate indoor noise levels for nearby homes and schools (Malmö stad 2021, p. 4). The plan also describes the potential for an increased level of safety in the area, with a related goal for more people utilizing and moving within the zone on nights and weekends. A disclaimer of sorts is provided in the plan, that using the *kulturljudzon* and its higher noise allowances does not mean that activities will not be supervised and monitored, with consequences still possible for violations (Malmö stad 2021, pp. 12-13). Both recurring indoor events and recurring outdoor events are deemed feasible within the zone, provided that larger outdoor events remain in the central part, while smaller events are considered suitable for the outer parts. The plan also allows for temporary cultural events a few times a year, provided that permission is obtained from the police and the municipal authorities (Malmö stad 2021, pp. 24-25). The plan also specifies that a guidance memo has been created in order for organizers to understand their risks and responsibilities

while hosting an event in order to minimize complaints and legal consequences (Malmö stad 2021, p. 33).

Outside of the immediate focus of this thesis but included for context, there are other stakeholders outside of those interviewed. Pågen had communicated an intention to remain at their premises and expand production, but permission was stalled due to plans to build homes nearby. However, the stipulation that no new housing be built within 100 meters of the *kulturljudzon* put a stop to the plans of MKB, Malmö's municipal-owned housing company, to build 1000 new housing units in the Kampen district, which MKB owns but is included in the zone. MKB stated that they were uninvolved in the 2021 neighborhood plan's creation. However, following a communicated political consensus to strengthen the area's cultural profile, there are ongoing plans and discussions for the city to buy the land back from MKB (Strand 2023; Thomasson & Gillberg 2021). The land's future ownership and use is uncertain at this time, but signifies a further contestation of the area.

b. Association (förening) life

The *förening* is a concept for which I have found no tidy definition for in English, though "association" has been used in this thesis. These associations come in different forms, for example sports clubs, cultural groups, or those with a social mission basis. Associations can also be economic in basis, such as housing or tenancy organizations, or community-based, with a responsibility to care for shared facilities (Boren 2023). The discussion will focus on cultural associations, particularly two, with historic and current presences in Sofielund.

The first is Kontrapunkt, an association that was started in 2009 and paused its operations in 2020 (Fritze 2020; Wester 2019). Kontrapunkt provided social services in the form of a food bank and public kitchen, accommodations for refugees, and a warming house for the homeless, and hosted cultural events (Wester 2019). A still-active Facebook page for the association describes itself as "a solidarity center and cultural space in Malmö." A note published by the page in 2020, "Summary of Kontrapunkt's situation right now" (*Sammanfattning av Kontrapunkts situation just nu*), describes accusations against the association of benefits fraud, unlawful work operations, and arranging sham marriages, among others, and details the association's response (Kontrapunkt 2020). This summary and the subsequent discussion will provide no further details or investigation of these accusations. However, Kontrapunkt's existence on Norra Grängesbergsgatan provides some context for association history and turbulence in the area. In 2018, the association moved out of their premises after a lawsuit with the property owner (Wester 2019). An earlier Facebook post published on the association page in 2016, called "Call to the grassroots" (*Uppmaning till gräsrötterna*), responds to the arrangement of the first NGBG street festival, an event that still occurs annually. The post describes the festival as marketed as grassroots yet run by city officials and property owners, stating that the municipality utilizes cultural life "as a tool in its plan to remake Malmö," without caring for the area's present cultural life, instead erasing it and deeming the area unsafe. The post also cautions against the long-term development plans for the neighborhood, advocating instead for sustainable development with a basis in grassroots initiatives and solidarity practices (Kontrapunkt 2016).

Another area cultural association relevant to this study is the NGBG association, not to be confused with the NGBG street festival, though their work has overlapped. Started in 2019, the NGBG association has helped with organization of the festival, and its website also states its commitment to "defend cultural expression" and "create new opportunities" on Norra Grängesbergsgatan and in the Sofielund and Annelund neighborhoods (NGBG n.d.). The association has regularly hosted events such as music performances and stand-up comedy gigs. At the time of writing, the website has not been updated since the association had to vacate its premises at Annelundsgården on March 31, and describes the clubhouse's café, music room, maker space, and classroom. There are also links to information about the festival, the *kulturljudzon*, and how to participate, with association membership costing 100 Swedish crowns per year and access to its space and resources included. Though partially funded and supported by the municipality and other councils and institutions, open and relatively affordable membership processes lend themselves to a more grassroots representation of culture and cultural actors in the association. Regarding the *kulturljudzon*, the website states that those "who like noise" love the *kulturljudzon*, and includes intentions to "build the inner city of the future in Malmö's geographical center and cultural heart" (NGBG n.d.). Their removal from the Annelundsgården property and more conflict involving other area actors was reported in March (Gillberg 2024b).

c. The NGBG street festival

Started in 2016 by an initiative from Malmö municipality and BID - Sofielund, the annual festival has evolved in recent years to become one of the biggest events in the city. In 2023, there were 37 music stages on Norra Grängesbergsgatan and its side streets, with attendance reportedly as high as 50,000 people (Gillberg 2024b). The NGBG association website describes the festival as "12 hours showcasing the neighborhood's boundless creativity" (NGBG n.d.). However, as detailed above, the street festival has been contested since before its debut.

d. Plan B club

Plan B is now the most notable and only dedicated, licensed music venue within the *kulturljudzon*, though it has roots in the area's more DIY-oriented past. Described in a 2018 *Sydsvenskan* article entitled "The rock club that will save the street" (*Rockklubben som ska rädda gatan*), the venue began in 2015 as a membership club, categorized as illegal. At that time, the founders' concerns with becoming a legal venue regarded opening hours, security requirements, and alcohol sales permits. However, the club's popularity, attracting visitors and acts from within and outside of Sweden, and potential for further value creation in the area won it the otherwise unlikely support of its landlord and city officials. It also represented a desire within Malmö to consume music in a less formal manner. At the time of the 2018 article, the club's future was uncertain, with founder Carlo Emme cautioning that changes to the feeling of the club could affect its popularity (Gillberg 2018). Plan B was eventually shut down by authorities in 2018, but reopened legally with the required steps in 2019, obtaining an alcohol permit, security guards, and undergoing renovations of a new location on Norra Grängesbergsgatan. Emme stated in a 2020 article that opening as a legally accepted venue meant

subjecting the club to control, but otherwise the club operated the same (Irebring 2020b). After the *kulturljudzon* was announced, Emme stated that it was "fantastic" and could improve chances of Plan B's future expansion (Thomasson & Gillberg 2021).

VI. Data presentation and analysis

This section presents the gathered data and explains how it relates to the study's research questions, prior literature, and theoretical concepts. First, themes from the two selected documents, the Sofielund neighborhood plan of 2021 and the *Noisy Neighbours* exhibition of 2023-2024, will be integrated with each other and preliminarily explored. Photos of cited text from the exhibition will be included in the appendices (see Appendices C, D, and E). At times, the two documents align in argument, while they differ at others. Following this, themes that emerged from the nine interviews will be added to deepen the discussion by presenting a broader range of perspectives. The data will most commonly be presented in the form of quotes for authenticity, though summarizing and paraphrasing may at times be used for brevity and/or clarity. To improve the readability of this section, quotations longer than three lines have been indented, while those that are shorter remain in the text's body.

a. Themes from written communications

i. Marketing: a cooperative and unconventional process

Examining both documents presented in this section has illuminated the function of building credibility in the *kulturljudzon*'s establishment. One theme that has emerged in how the Sofielund neighborhood program, and by inclusion the *kulturljudzon*, is communicated is that its creation process was cooperative and participatory, and thus out of the norm. The plan stated early:

> "A continued development of existing community networks has been prioritized. There has been room for the actors' own initiatives in an established 'participation culture.' It has led to unexpected features and experiences in an environment that cannot be found anywhere else in Malmö" (Malmö stad 2021, p. 4).

Through highlighting the participatory and exploratory processes for this planning, a break is made between prior processes and accepted forms of planning, and the creative and innovative nature of the *kulturljudzon* can be introduced. Simultaneously, its roots in the area's already-existing structures lend a degree of credibility to an exploratory project. The assertion that the neighborhood plan created an environment unique to the rest of the city allows the *kulturljudzon* to be introduced as a flagship, or pioneering and signature product, of the city. The exhibition continued this, calling the process "open and explorative planning practices that challenge the politics of land use and real estate speculation" (Centrum för studier av markanvändning, et al., 2023-2024). As the municipality's planning practices have drawn previous critiques for being too market-oriented, to place the practices involved in creating the *kulturljudzon* at a distance can allow the municipality a chance to minimize initial opposition and perhaps build trust. By calling existing frameworks into question, the project's unconventionality can

be highlighted and demonstrate that it is not based on the status quo to which Malmö residents may have grown accustomed. The neighborhood plan further stated that "co-creation, sharing and sustainable urban planning based on a 'bottom-up perspective' are watchwords for the area's culture of participation. Participatory culture has an important social aspect that creates a cohesive, safe and lively district" (Malmö stad 2021, p. 18). This brings up Mommaas's (2004, pp. 515-516) assertions and conundrum, that cultural clusters can emerge in loosely top-down or bottom-up fashions, but that he has struggled to find clear-cut, determined examples of either in his studies. Rather than codifying the will of residents, municipal or economic interests alone, the development of cultural clusters tends to involve more three-dimensional networks of relationships. Thus, though a clear direction of participation in the *kulturljudzon*'s existence is attractively communicated, where initiatives are followed from the bottom to their implementation at the top, it may be difficult to follow that line in reality. Kuchar's (2015, p. 555) study of Hamburg also carries a reminder that even processes that are "bottom-up" in name may not carry the accompanying values of the "bottom" with them, but rather won as concessions from the pressure of optics. This will be revisited in later sections, where participation and engagement opportunities of other actors are further explored.

ii. Marketing: entwined goals for culture, leisure, and business

Another early introduction in the neighborhood plan was the multifaceted goal that by 2040, Sofielund will be "Malmö's most significant and dynamic cultural, leisure, and business life center," with ensuring more jobs in the area the first listed key process in this work (Malmö stad 2021, p. 3). This links culture to economic prosperity and job creation, tying them together in the municipality's desired success for the neighborhood. However, culture and business don't always share the same intentions or enjoy the same benefits of economic growth. In Essig's (2022, pp. 4-5) ouroboros, capitalizing on one's art for profit feeds the creation of more art, netting positive outcomes for all involved parties. In Straw's (2019, p. 26) assessment, the commodification of some cultural practices and the use of them as a promotional tool can render its producers threatened and vulnerable. But the communication that emphasizes making use of what is already in the neighborhood, or "existing community networks" of business and cultural life, stated that this will benefit the neighborhood's character as well as its involved actors' personal economies, exemplified in a target picture for 2040:

> "The majority of buildings and premises still bear traces of the characteristic industrial environment, which constitutes a quality while giving the area its own identity. The planning area is in constant change, buildings and premises are reused and adapted for new functions. The large industrial buildings give the area a particularly great flexibility in meeting the tenants' needs and enable continued low rents. The rent level is still one of the most important establishment factors" (Malmö stad 2021, p. 6).

This functions to profess a commitment to the area's versatility for tenants, including those who may be priced out of other neighborhoods with higher rents. This can include artists, but it can also include small associations and businesses, or tenants intending to establish startup operations. It becomes increasingly unclear in reading the plan what type of future tenants are to be encouraged. The plan

specifies that it is intended to be "a place for newly established, capital-poor cultural producers in need of reasonable rents" and that "according to the entrepreneurs, access to premises with reasonable rent is the single most important factor for continued dynamic business growth" (Malmö stad 2021, pp. 4-6). This is not to suggest that planning for cultural growth and for business to flourish cannot exist in separate parallels, or that cultural businesses do not exist. However, the overlap of the two and an emphasis on entrepreneurship, inherently economic, leads to a muddying of communicated priorities and confusion about what non-commercial cultural forms should expect. Text from *Noisy Neighbours* addresses this complexity in the rest of the city:

> "Outside the zone, independent art and cultural spaces are disappearing from the city at an alarming rate. Long-standing ecosystems of independent culture are broken down - often as a consequence of new and more lucrative real estate development. Places that are seen as less valuable must be 'refined' into something new and better. To bring about a change, it is required that all actors who want to protect Malmö's independent art and culture take their responsibility. If we allow the current development to continue, cultural space and therefore Malmö's conditions to be a city with a rich cultural life, will continue to be dismantled" (Centrum för studier av markanvändning, et al. 2023-2024).

This passage excludes the *kulturljudzon* from its critique and does not appear to consider that the same forces responsible for this breakdown of independent cultural ecosystems can also exist within the zone. One must also question whether it is truly the responsibility of those who care about culture to protect it from economic interests, when those interests themselves can be critiqued and regulated instead of treated as an inevitability. An exodus of cultural activity has in fact been observed in other cities that pursue profits, and at times resulted in instances where independent artists have lost the fight over the right to the neighborhood or the cultural cluster (Gainza 2016; Kuchar 2015; Straw 2019). The danger of placing culture in tandem with business, as done in the neighborhood plan, is that independent culture that has little or nothing to do with the economic growth of the city can become displaced or swallowed in situations where money speaks the loudest. This creates scenarios in which cultural production is urged to mimic prevailing economic values, though many subcultural forms have their own distinct values and benefits that can be lost in this process (Bennett & Guerra 2019, pp. 12-13; Essig 2020 pp. 15-16). In these situations, cultural actors are made to ask whether they should forfeit the enjoyment of their own values just to survive in an altered, and perhaps diminished, form. The need for a cultural practice to mimic a business could prolong its survival, but in a system that values profit and economic potential over artistic or creative values, a future is not guaranteed. Perhaps it is the factors creating this type of system that deserve closer critique.

iii. Marketing: the value of attractiveness

A planned rise in Malmö's attractiveness and overall value is also communicated in connection to the *kulturljudzon*. In some cases, the attractiveness of otherwise stigmatized operations in the area is acknowledged:

> "Several premises in the area are used by tenants with time-limited building permits, such as a restaurant, theater and music bars, or even by illegal businesses without building permits. For some of the illegal activities, these are activities that are not compatible with the detailed plans' limitation to industrial purposes. At the same time, some of these temporary activities contribute to attraction values for the city" (Malmö stad 2021, p. 8).

While it is unclear exactly what these attractive temporary activities are and how many of them are counted, as they are not specified, the target image for 2040 outlines an intention that these activities receive permanent building plans and support, provided they add value to the area (Malmö stad 2021, p. 8). In what Foroughanfar (2022, pp. 17-19) asserted was the "exotisation" of the area, where something problematic or "dirty" can be used as an asset to prove the area's coolness, some behaviors can be tolerated or even elevated provided they serve the municipality with a greater purpose that outweighs their perceived downsides. The whole of the neighborhood plan uses brief descriptions and highlights many additional considerations for the area, such as traffic and environmental regulations, and thus it is unreasonable to expect that every statement be thoroughly explained, with all nuances accounted for. However, what this added value should contain, as well as details about how city attractiveness benefits Malmö residents, is not specified. Some additional passages in the plan that also mention attractiveness place it in tandem with notions of equality (Malmö stad 2021, p. 27). While equality for Malmö residents is an inherent value and a social good, relying on attractive planning to trickle down to all levels of society and result in greater social or economic outcomes has not worked in the city's recent history (Holgerson & Baeten 2016, pp. 1180-1181). With unclear motivations for boosting attractiveness and the values that activities should add remaining vague, it can't be assumed that these values are purely or at all economic in nature, and concluding such would be ungenerous. However, what it risks is creating vague standards and moving goalposts for how area actors can demonstrate their value and potentially receive the support that would allow them to become lasting institutions, thus minimizing their risk of shutdown and dismantlement communicated in *Noisy Neighbours*. The exhibition also discusses what happens when neighborhoods become attractive. Regarding Sofielund, a text passage displayed in *Noisy Neighbours* argued that developers buying land in the area due to its rising profile and lobbying for residential development opportunities are a threat to culture, and that the planning of the *kulturljudzon* may prevent those threats from being realized (Centrum för studier av markanvändning, et al., 2023-2024). However, keeping the area safe from housing developers may not be enough to preserve Sofielund's cultural environment. In the case of Hamburg, the municipal interventions in neighborhoods were not specific to housing. Instead, they related to "creative industries," and included a concert hall and a consulting agency supporting creative entrepreneurs. However, the result was still disruptive to the city's cultural ecosystems, resulting in increased living expenses and more cultural spaces shuttering (Kuchar 2015, pp. 552-553). To use the ouroboros metaphor, placing the tail of the serpent near its mouth does not mean that it will flourish (Essig, 2022, pp. 4-5). Instead, some cultural practices may be diminished, others may move, and others may change form. If these practices in fact contribute to an area's attractiveness, their alteration or disappearance puts their ability to be instrumentalized for an image of hipness at risk.

b. Themes from conducted interviews

i. Communication of DIY values

Emergent in interviews with informants from Malmö's grassroots and DIY music scene was their tendency to express DIY-based values and communicate their oppositions to municipal control and influence, with the *kulturljudzon* seen as an extension of that power. Discussing government influence on cultural operations and the tension between the two, one informant states that regarding the *kulturljudzon*, "you can't do that [legislation] with culture, because that's not the meaning. The meaning is to be a reflection or a voice against something, I think," later expanding to state:

> "These clubs or places that I've been involved with, it pops up somewhere, you're not told, oh here you can put some graffiti, you have a wall here. Just do it there. That's not what we were planning, that was not the point with graffiti when it started. It was something completely different. And it feels a little bit the same with the small venues that just pop up in an art studio, and wherever… it wasn't supposed to be a club from the start, but we can do it there. We feel like it, we just want to. And it should be like that. And that's a way to take away that spirit, with having [the *kulturljudzon*] there" (Informant 1 2024).

These ideas particularly reflect DIY forms of music, where the distance between artists and more commercial forms of music can be as intentional as it can be circumstantial. Some do not have opportunities in the mainstream, and some simply do not want to align themselves or their art with more profit-based initiatives. For Informant 3 (2024), the thought process behind whether to collaborate with legitimized spaces was driven by principle, stating that "for a super ideologically DIY underground kind of thing, I guess there's always the question of if we're selling out, if we're being true to ourselves. Those are the opportunities that are definitely getting lost." In this view, the reasons for not following money are clear, in spite of the benefits that doing so could otherwise provide. It would negate the purpose of the art in the first place, with the motivation, and perhaps the joy of creating it, lost. Describing the *kulturljudzon,* another informant stated that they were skeptical, but not outright dismissive:

> "I remember when they started talking about the sound zone, like that was something… I was critically positive, maybe I could say. But it also felt like a way of the city rebranding itself or that it may be put to use to some other interests than the musicians themselves… That's sort of the never-ending contradiction in a sense, when something sounds pretty good, then in practice there are other interests and entities and individuals and actors involved that may want to profit from it or that type of thing" (Informant 6 2024).

As DIY culture has been subject to commodification in studies of other cities, cultural actors exercising a level of cautiousness about their potential appropriation for financial motive is to be expected (Kuchar 2015; Straw 2019). Here there are also differentiations to be made between the production and consumption of culture. Though both processes can be uplifted, the value and benefits of each should be considered separately. The production of culture, involving its creation and practice

alone or in group settings, has creative value to artists, and perhaps elements of social value. Culture can also be produced and expressed by artists through performance, while consumed by an audience. Consumption of culture has its own set of values, such as entertainment value or social value, but centers the perspective of the consumer rather than that of the artist. While audiences and consumers play an important role, even in DIY and less commercial forms of music, processes that prioritize the consumer can occur at the expense of the artist (Straw 2019). One informant expands:

> "Normally, we'd be looking to do what would have been done by the working class 100 years ago in order to preserve and present their cultural artifacts... and you do that by just asking the community to provide the entertainment, not bringing in people from outdoors to say 'Hey, we have this culture! You should pay to see our culture!' It's the production that's more important than the consumption of it" (Informant 2 2024).

Here, "working class" can be interpreted more as "grassroots artists," meaning those that create and connect in a city's smaller, community-based networks rather than artists who work on a more professional level and are imported by galleries and clubs to display their work. Through travel, they share their work to be consumed by residents of a city, but do not produce their work in that city or participate as a member in its social networks through pedagogies and skill sharing (Bennett & Guerra 2019 pp. 12-13). Regardless of whether production or consumption is more important, consumption lends itself more easily to external commodification processes, as it involves audiences as revenue sources, with the looming potential of the money they spend on culture. Smaller music scenes are left vulnerable to the aspects of that consumption that can be monetized (Straw 2019, p. 25).

ii. Lived realities: intersections with economic players

Some informants also expressed a further tension that occurs when cultural and economic interests act together in their constellation-like webs. Using Plan B as an example, some had mixed feelings on what the venue's licensing meant for DIY culture in the city, and how it may affect their own creative lives. Communicating this, an informant called Plan B's compliance with their landlord an example of them being "like the model kid on the block, getting a haircut and a job and all that," and saidthat it was tough to envision collaborating with them presently (Informant 3 2024). Another expanded:

> "I remember the struggles in the early days of Plan B, like when the city tried to shut them down. And it felt like the compromise of maybe commercializing the venue in a way and expanding it, which was good for the rumor of the city I suppose, and their way of surviving in a way also. So I can't say that I can judge [Plan B] about it, but of course I sort of miss the old as well. It's the contradiction again of operating a venue in a sort of neoliberal context as well. It's sort of 'grow or die,' basically. That's how it works in that type of economy, I guess, otherwise you will need support, which doesn't exist that much anymore, to be able to get around without having to grow and profit" (Informant 6 2024).

The question of what compromise does for Easthope's (2020, p. 3) definition of DIY scenes as a "sanctuary" that provides affordability and accessibility to artists and audiences looms, as does Emme's prior concerns about subjecting Plan B to external control (Irebring 2020b). "Grow or die" sums up Essig's (2022, pp. 4-5) ouroboros metaphor neatly: in current systems, without feeding on economic power and entrepreneurial methods, artists can't maintain their practices. Remaining is the potential for conflict between holding on tightly to DIY values or perhaps choosing to make concessions in the interest of culture's long-term survival and an augmented level of power in complex local negotiations, where an operation's economic value can provide it more strength. Though Plan B's embrace provides a blueprint of sorts for how venues and organizers can gain the loyalty of landlords and municipal employees, informants remain cautious. Others find it difficult to get a foot in the door, so to speak, with a supportive landlord, regardless of how low rent prices are communicated in the neighborhood plan (Malmö stad 2021, p. 6). One described their experience of seeking a suitable space to rent in the area:

> "It wasn't straightforward, but it was like 'you can't be more than 40 people there. If you're more than 40, like 41, you will be fined 500,000 kronor.' One, that approach feels like okay, I don't think you want us there. And also, the things he said were only negative things, and that's another way of saying I don't want any club here. He was friendly, he wasn't like other landlords I've met, but we kind of gave up because we really felt like you can't get a better connection without directly knowing a landlord" (Informant 1 2024)

If the path to legitimacy requires acceptance and advocacy from those with the larger share of political and economic power, such as landlords, difficulty securing a venue can make the rest of the path seem nearly impossible. However, it should be noted that not everyone desires this legitimacy to begin with. Informant 1 (2024), for example, also stated that "smaller acts need smaller venues, independent venues" and that formality can cause a venue's atmosphere to die. However, healthy DIY scenes requiring a level of self sufficiency doesn't mean that some members' opportunities to contribute to the desired social, cultural, and even economic vibrancy of Sofielund, per the neighborhood plan, should be minimized. A power inequity is visible in this relationship, wherein regardless of a venue organizer's ambitions, some find it difficult to even begin with a locale, in this sense hindering a more basic level of participation in the area, not to mention their acquisition of the right to the cultural cluster. But the issue is more complicated than only being granted a space at the beginning, as described by Informant 3 (2024), who discussed not only the NGBG association being kicked out of their location, but also at least three other small groups renting from other landlords in the area meeting a similar fate "within the past few months now." Hard as gaining a rental agreement may be, not all of those who have managed to do so have enjoyed security. Regardless of whether cultural actors, economic players, or planners have all contributed to the development of the *kulturljudzon*'s area, Mommaas's (2004, pp. 508-509) question of whether culture is being supported or exploited remains. If the only available option for artists is to use their work to feed external interests, and otherwise they cannot begin or sustain their practices, they are not being supported in this environment, and their role in the area's relational web is smaller.

iii. Lived realities: diverging experiences of the municipality

Some informants reported experiencing difficulty with municipal employees, while for others, the city of Malmö was a vague presence, and they did not discuss how they interacted directly with representatives. Clear differences in the data and level of engagement appear, depending on whether the informant had been a member of the NGBG association. As the association collaborates with the municipality, interactions between the two entities have been common and the NGBG association's website expresses support for the municipality's plans. Although this collaboration exists, informants from the association still express loyalty to grassroots cultural values. One described their experience with working with the municipality on the annual street festival, and mixed signals that emerged following the non-renewal of their clubhouse contract:

> "[We] put on an event, and of course [the city] came to our event to have their picture taken. But that's always a surprise to me, you know. When we're doing the festival, we're talking a 12-hour period where they're like 'Oh yeah, let's go grassroots! Here's the fun thing! Do your chaos organization, weird things that you do.' And it works out well, but when we get the opportunity to do it 365 days a year, all of a sudden it's dangerous because it's not a monoculture, it's whoever turns up here" (Informant 2 2024)

Using the word "dangerous" provides an opportunity to assess what danger is present. In Sofielund's history, an example of what happens when cultural actors disagree with the municipality's goals and use their platform to organize and communicate their opposition lies in the case of Kontrapunkt (Kontrapunkt 2016). Whether this dissent turns into danger for the municipality is debatable, as even contested and criticized projects can be completed and normalize further development (Baeten 2012, p. 38). Informant 2 (2024) also stated that they felt the municipality had demonstrated more allegiance to economic players than to grassroots cultural actors, relaying that "there's a thing where they're doing outreach, they're looking for dialogue, but they end up in dialogue with the landlords, because they find the grassroots messy, disloyal in some way, though I disagree." This description conflicts with municipal assertions that plans for the area have been formed in a representative and participatory manner (Malmö stad 2021, p. 4). This is said not to attempt to reveal a deception, but perhaps a difference in interpretation influenced by disparate power shares. When one holds a higher proportion of power, it's perhaps easier to feel that even small instances of sharing that influence is generous and benefits smaller actors greater than it does. On the flipside, individuals and groups in more marginal positions may begrudge what happens in their surroundings without their input. Another informant expanded on the loss of the clubhouse, stating that the association feels "excluded" and that "there must have been discussions and meetings that we didn't attend, since we got such conflicting information within a pretty short period of time" (Informant 3 2024). It also becomes necessary to discern the plans made in 2021 from the area's events and development after, and acknowledge that what is communicated in the plan does not guarantee later adherence in all practices. However, this can lead to disappointment and disillusionment from those that feel dismissed. Speaking to this, Informant 3 (2024) further expanded that they didn't realize that the *kulturljudzon* "would be so economically driven in that sense, that it was supposed to be profitable noise." Placing this against the backdrop of

Plan B's rise, one can understand a property owner's incentives when it comes to economic value, but it can be difficult to navigate a situation in which the city also follows those incentives. Expanding on this, Informant 3 (2024) stated:

> "We thought that this *kulturljudzon*, that [it] would entail an effort on the *kommun* level, at least to try to make sure that there will be a diversity, like that this is not gonna be an entertainment hub in that sense, where we will only have one kind of output… that there would be diversity, that it would truly be something that would benefit everyone."

This relates to assertions that processes bottom-up in name, such as the *kulturljudzon*, can be difficult to assess as being truly bottom-up. Rather, power negotiations are complex and unequal, and values beyond true participation may be prioritized, such as attention and profit (Mommaas 2004; Kuchar 2015). Other cultural actors who were not involved with the association did not report high levels of interaction with the municipality. One stated that they recall presenting an idea to someone who worked for the city, but that "it just didn't feel right and it didn't lead anywhere," describing the *kulturljudzon* as "a way to say that we care about alternative culture, but it's just a symbolic thing" (Informant 1 2024). This symbolism became a common assertion among cultural actors interviewed who were not involved in association life, but had their own ties to the neighborhood, which further calls to question the notion that this plan represented the will of the "bottom." Another communicated an impression that the city's relationship to the *kulturljudzon* was more image-based in nature than rooted in substance, that Malmö was "a bit too proud about it," continuing to state that "it's cool that we can make noise, but [are] there actually any people here actually making noise or making any music? Not really, like one place" (Informant 5 2024). In this sense, while some appreciation is extended to the *kulturljudzon*'s creation, feelings of alienation are more clearly demonstrated. Without a larger diversity of cultural venues in the area, the *kulturljudzon* is regarded more as an empty gesture. Others also noted an emerging lack of variety in the area as it has developed and Plan B's status as the only legal club in the neighborhood: "I think the transparency in the issue is difficult, but it's still visible that it was a very particular change in what happened to the street, and especially like once a year this big thing [Gatufest] happened and then otherwise it's rehearsal spaces and car washes and Plan B" (Informant 6 2024). While Informants 1, 5, and 6 indicated that they have attended and played at cultural events in Sofielund, the development and planning of the area seem to have had the effect, in these instances, of creating a feeling of distance, the valley between DIY cultural actors and the municipality widening. This expressed disenfranchisement contradicts the degree of participation and bottom-up activity in the *kulturljudzon* that had been enthusiastically communicated by other sources.

iv. Perspectives from a property owner

Property owners can act as gatekeepers of sorts in cultural neighborhoods, renting out the physical spaces in which musicians and organizers rehearse, record, perform, and arrange shows. In this capacity, they are a key part of a cultural actor's urban ecosystem. They can provide or deny access, they can raise or lower barriers, and they can allow for a continued financial relationship or terminate it depending on what risks, liabilities, or infractions may be present. However, a gatekeeper's place is

often more complicated than merely opening or closing a door based on a single directive or motivation. Informant 4 (2024) explained their affinity for Sofielund:

> "As a businessperson, I want to make money. That's one of the goals, but now this area has turned into more than that because I've been here so long, and there's a rule in property that you should never get married to your bricks. But it's not the bricks, it's the dynamics of the area that's unique and it's fun."

However, when one's primary relationship to a cultural cluster is as a financial stakeholder, economics can take priority in situations where they're either threatened or given an opportunity to grow. As economic actors in a time in which municipalities and financial stakeholders have increased their reliance on culture and creative production to bolster their outcomes, relationships, viewpoints, and priorities can be thorny (Mommaas 2004, pp. 515-516). At the same time, the power differentiation between property owner and creative tenant is clear. Regarding their properties and how cultural actors can ensure opportunity and longevity in accessing them, Informant 4 (2024) expressed:

> "I would be interested to see more if the culture can see to add so much value to the area that nobody wants them to move. I mean, that's what it basically boils down to. If there are things that are adding so much value, but then we come to the question, okay, value again. Are they adding value to themselves and their artistic creations or are they adding value to the community that is, this we cannot be without? That I would like to see. I don't want to kick anybody out, we don't want to do that. And I say to employees, make yourself so we can't get rid of you. Add so much value that we can never get rid of that person. That's how you keep your job, and that's how you keep your place, I would say."

This mirrors the already uncertain values communicated in the neighborhood plan, and underscores the warning expressed in *Noisy Neighbours* that institutions incapable of demonstrating their value to entities with more financial power risk vanishing (Centrum för studier av markanvändning, et al. 2023-2024; Malmö stad 2021, p. 8). However, at another point, Informant 4 (2024) detailed their definition of value to encompass property and monetary values, but also human values and cultural values, with interpersonal values cited as the most important. While this being placed above economic values may provide a level of connection to cultural actors who don't prioritize economic performance, other conflicts emerged. Informant 4 (2024) described an aversion to those who create polarization and social disruption in the area, and how that relates to opportunities for associations in an area with recent conflicts involving grassroots groups. They added that "when you have grassroots development, you have conflict, which is a part of it. It's a part of their job to create conflict and see where things itch, but it's also my choice to do whatever I want to do and to deal with what I want to do," indicating that involvement with conflict closes their door. Recent events have resulted in this property owner changing their procedures when renting to associations. They stated that after Kontrapunkt, their company did not want to rent to associations, and has thus raised the rental requirements for associations (Informant 4 2024). Communicated in this is a requirement for cultural actors who engage in association life to be socially and politically agreeable to those that they rent from, in addition to

more commonplace expectations like following laws and paying rent. Although Kontrapunkt was political in mission, hosting cultural events secondarily, this can have ramifications even to organizations where culture is the primary focus, such as NGBG. DIY cultural practices oppose dominant economic structures, expressing their own values as they relate to society, economics, and politics (Bennett & Guerra 2019). If conflict emerges as a result of this tension, access to a space can be jeopardized, giving cultural actors a smaller share of the area's power distribution. In this sense, the barriers are higher for cultural actors than even those created by laws and rent levels, further distorting the web of relations with stakeholders and diminishing their power when negotiating or expressing their self-determination in a space where culture is said to have a collaborative role. Echoing Essig's (2022, pp. 4-5) ouroboros metaphor, Informant 4 (2024) proposed a means for artists and cultural actors to preserve their roles: "be art entrepreneurs. I mean, you have your heads, you have your minds, you can create whatever you want." This exemplifies another communicated overlap between art production and entrepreneurship, wherein artists have an economic metaphor imposed over their creative opportunities and are implored to consider how they can be sold. Further, in discussing municipal plans and relations, Informant 4 (2024) communicated relatively positive attitudes. Regarding the *kulturljudzon*, they stated:

> "I know a lot of people don't really know what it means, and they misinterpret it in many ways, they think whoa, we have a *kulturljudzon*, now we can do whatever we want. Nothing has changed, only the name of the *översiktsplan*, that it's a kulturljudzon. And what that means is, I'm not really sure that anybody knows what it means. Because I think it's a way for the city to say that we would like this to become our artistic center, but then we have rules and regulations… and the rules and regulations say that *miljölagstiftningen* [environmental regulations] trumps everything, and we can't breach that. So we still have to abide by all the rules and regulations that we had to abide by before the kulturljudzon, but it is a way for the city to point that relax, this can continue out here, this development. We see that it is adding value to the city, otherwise they wouldn't have done it. Our goal is to make this a destination point in Malmö that people want to, or have to, come and visit, just like I want to go and visit industrial areas wherever I travel because that's the only thing that brings value to me."

With this, Informant 4 described a different perspective from cultural actors in reference to the *kulturljudzon*, expressing its symbolism and its potential in a positive light rather than the emptiness communicated by some cultural actors previously. One possible interpretation is that, from the economic perspective, there is simply more hope to be found than from the grassroots cultural outlook, where informants have seen few available opportunities for their involvement. After all, it is not smaller cultural actors who benefit from Sofielund or Malmö becoming a destination if that status was granted through the deprioritization and disenfranchisement of these actors in the first place. As mirrored in examples from other cities, their opportunities for practice can shrink, causing some to cease their practice in the area that their image was lent to (Kuchar 2015; Straw 2019).

v. Perspectives from municipal employees

This subsection highlights the statements that employees of Malmö municipality shared during their interviews. The city is a huge employer, and it is relevant to note that each included informant is employed by a different department from the others. Two of them participated in the working or steering group for the 2021 Sofielund neighborhood plan, while the other is employed in a cultural capacity. Explaining the process in which the *kulturljudzon* was conceived, one informant stated:

> "In Sofielund we have a couple of industries that have a permit to be there for forever, and they have also a permit to make some noise, which means that we have to keep housing at a distance. And that's why this part, apart from Sofielund, being sort of this Norra Grängesbergsgatan and this sort of hub for legal and illegal activities, but also a lot of cultural initiatives, that this could be an interesting place to work with mixing industries and culture" (Informant 8 2024).

Within this mention of the illegal activities that contributed to the area's rise, the exoticization of the neighborhood and the instrumentalizing of its underground cultural scene are invoked (Foroughanfar 2022; Straw 2019). Another informant calls it "the gray zone," and refers to collaboration with cultural actors as not "standing with our white gloves in our white economy and [saying], well, we can't. Sometimes you need to get a bit dirty if you're going to do something with the soil and you have to reach out and kind of communicate" (Informant 7 2024). This once again describes a participatory process, wherein communication even with actors perceived as a bit unscrupulous is a two-way street, even as prior informants described feeling excluded (Mommaas 2004, pp. 515-516). The illegal activities serve a purpose in the vision of the neighborhood and contribute to its buzz, but the protections and options for sustainment offered to those that create the activities depend on the further attraction value that they provide (Malmö stad 2021, p. 8). Regarding who planners are trying to attract, one informant described the presently few investors in the area, and what more investment can offer the neighborhood:

> "But somebody has to do it, assess the risk of doing investing in this area. So I don't know how many brave, crazy people that we have out there. They are not phoning me with a very… there's no frequent calls from those kind of people saying, hey, I have a lot of money, where should I spend it? I have a lot of people that have a lot of ideas, and that's super fun. But sometimes it's frustrating because money and means are required somehow to be able to set it up. You know ventilation, fire alarms, emergency exits, all the investments you have to do to follow all the rules" (Informant 7 2024).

With this, the ouroboros and entrepreneurship are less explicitly invoked as a means of sustaining artistic practice, but they are still present. After all, without external investment, it is stated that cultural actors who bring their ideas to the municipality are not presented with an avenue forward. But with other examples of commercializing alternative musical practices leading to problems for those scenes, it's not simply a matter of "grow or die." One can take the option to grow, and still die in the form of shutdowns or having to move their activities if deemed not profitable enough (Kuchar 2015; Straw 2019). Another informant described attractiveness and Malmö's reputation in international terms:

> "Culture attracts culture, so we also get the opportunity to have interesting artists, interesting different cultural meetings here in Malmö. Due to that, in May, after Eurovision, we're going to have a big summit with the biggest culture organization in Europe, Culture Action Europe, and they have chosen Malmö due to that. They are interested to look at how we look at culture when planning the city, because it's a really big question all over Europe and a big question for us also. So that also says something about that. Well, I spoke with [someone], but she said that Malmö is one of the cities that pop up when [they] discuss it. So apparently we also have an international reputation. That said, we have a lot to learn and there's a lot still to do, but we are working on the subject in a progressive way which also attracts international attention" (Informant 9 2024).

The municipality has been paying attention to how its concepts can be marketed to other cities in recent years (Listerborn 2017). Innovative concepts serve not only the communities and actors that they're intended for, they also provide the city with recognition by external networks that can also contribute to investment, the fruits of which are uncertain for cultural growth at all levels, even as they are purported to be a universal benefit. The intention for policy to result in a trickle-down effect can be present without any further action to ensure that redistribution happens (Holgerson & Baeten 2016, pp. 1180-1181). This is also complicated by DIY music practices' opposition to and distance from the larger, commercial music practices that are more likely to be considered in such cultural summits. Further, another emergent theme was an admission that the *kulturljudzon* as of now is still more symbolic than substantive in nature, as indicated by cultural actors. Informant 9 (2024) acknowledged the area's symbolism, but stated that it communicates a potential:

> "I guess the next thing is to see what does it mean practically and how can it evolve, what can it be in the future, so it doesn't end up being a zone that is just written on a map. That we can also fill it with a purpose that we want to fill it with. So that's the next step, but at the moment it's a big symbolic statement."

While an intention to expand the area's cultural offerings is there, the effects of the current void has been communicated the most strongly by informants who have produced culture in the area, seen venues close or transform, and are now presented with no or few options. They are not presently benefiting from this symbolic act. Informant 7 (2024) stated: "In many cases as many things, it's a piece of paper, but at least it's a piece of paper that kind of supports a movement, that we can use that piece of paper to support the things we want to do." Through the process of visioning, the municipality can establish a values-based identity, even if those on which the identity is based find it empty (Listerborn 2017, p. 12). It's been established that the communicated "support" is supposed to come from investors, but also that investors in the area are few. Cultural actors are thus placed in a difficult position when it comes to municipal priorities: they are used as a marketing tool to investors, but investment remains low, and if or when investment comes, it does not provide their operations with any more security. Thus, the symbolic nature of the *kulturljudzon* can provide the municipality with

some leverage for its reputation, but cultural actors cannot produce or perform without physical space and opportunity.

vi. Power relations in the right to the cultural cluster

In these interviews, distinct discussions of power emerged as some informants attempted to communicate who aligns with who in the constellation of the neighborhood. Informant 7 (2024) described an ideal process wherein everyone plays an equal role: “My idea from working kind of the gray area, talking about sustainable urban development, like the social sustainability was the three-legged stool, something where things were balancing between all sectors.” However, for there to be a true balance, all sectors must be equally prioritized with equal bargaining power. And when the municipality’s interests align with economic powers, the two together represent a larger share in negotiations, and cultural actors can play important roles depending on how neatly their activities fit with the city’s economic goals (Moommaas 2004, pp. 508-509). Even when the municipality would like to extend itself more in the direction of cultural production, there are limits, as stated by Informant 7 (2024):

> “It's the sum of all people coming and saying, hey, can I perform? Can you help me with this? Can you help me with that? Yeah, I will do that at the best of my abilities. I will try to help you to do you, that's been my role facilitating other people's… I need a space where I can show my art, I need whatever. Okay, let's see what I can do to help people, but eventually they have to manage their own. I can perhaps open some doors or whatever I can do, but eventually there's often two other people [that have] to agree, somebody who owns a building, and you sign a contract, you get consent from somebody else to do what you want to do… Then I leave somehow, because then my work is done, because I can't go too far, because then I'm in the middle of stuff.”

Within this structure, the municipality is placed in between cultural actors and economic actors, such as landlords. But without using their close relationships to some economic actors to advocate for cultural producers, this position is stunted in its ability to move grassroots culture forward. In light of this dilemma, some cultural actors communicated ideas of alliances in the area. Informant 2 (2024) stated that “all the people here are tenants, they’re not the owners of the buildings, and they have far more in common with each other than they do with the people that own the buildings or with local government.” Other activities in the area, such as small retail operations that rent storefronts, are seen as opportunities to consolidate bargaining power against the dominating structures of the municipality and landlords, who rely on these tenants to generate income and attractiveness. In other perspectives, sights are set on striking alliances with those with a greater share of power, such as the industrial businesses, deemed so valuable to the city’s economy that they partially inspired the *kulturljudzon* to begin with. Informant 3 (2024) stated that “I do think [the industrial players] are our allies, because they’re the ones that want to make noise together with us, so we have the shared interest,” and described a friendly relationship with Stadex, who owns their former clubhouse. By aligning with physical industry, which has retained some importance even as the municipality has set its sights on

knowledge-based economies, cultural actors can possibly amplify their voices and change their position within the area's constellation. This could perhaps be different than entering an entrepreneurial relationship with "cultural industries," who they could be bound to by a shared interest in culture but ultimately have differing priorities from if they do not wish to commercialize their work. However, even with aligning with a different type of economic actor, economic powers are not made redundant as they are in Lefebvre's (1968) vision for the right to the city, and cultural actors can again be made vulnerable to exploitation by groups that have differing end goals (Mommaas 2004, pp. 508-509). Thus, there aren't really safe avenues for which cultural actors can augment their power by relying on economic players. In negotiating the right to the cultural cluster, cultural actors must find a means of harnessing enough power that they can stand on their own. Hopes for accomplishing this, and the extent that this is considered possible, differ. Informant 2 (2024) communicated a degree of optimism that the groups involved in these power conflicts can pursue a resolution:

> "[A city is] a place where many cultures meet and produce new cultures, new hybrids, and it's what it's supposed to do, and anything that stops that is wrong, but slightly inevitable. People do fight, but conflict's not the end of the world if you know why there's a conflict, and eventually there will be a new balance."

This view affirms the inherent tensions that exist between the cultural grassroots and the economically-driven interests of property owners and the municipality, yet it also expresses a willingness to sit at the table and negotiate. Others are not so optimistic, as expressed by Informant 3 (2024) when they stated that "we're gonna be pushed above ground, but we're also gonna be pushed out of the city," and asked "why fight with the authorities in Malmö if they don't give a [expletive] and are not interested in this type of culture?" This is not an indication that they intend to leave the negotiation table altogether. Rather, it may be that this struggle continues, but without Malmö residents being able to enjoy sharing and consuming alternative cultural forms within the city. Informant 3 (2024) expanded to say that "all kinds of art, fine art, ugly art, good art, bad art, you know, it has the same right to be here and we're not going to stop fighting for that. But right now it's looking like we're going to do it outside of Malmö. And that's a crying shame." If grassroots cultural actors choose to move their practices outside of Sofielund, and even Malmö, their legacy may remain, but they will take with them the activities that contributed to the attractiveness of the area, acknowledged as such by the municipality (Malmö stad, 2021, p. 8). While a continued decrease in illegal activity on the street may not initially represent such a threat to a municipality that has had that same goal for several years, a reputation built on the "coolness" and allure of alternative cultural forms will continue to slip away, and perhaps gain further notice and critique. Other cultural clusters may form in Malmö, or elsewhere in the region, with the vision for Sofielund as a cultural epicenter damaged and its "collective identity" that helped to birth the *kulturljudzon* altered (Gainza, 2016, p. 955). Thus, though feelings of alienation and distance from the area have been expressed by some cultural actors, the potential magnitude of the power that they could wield in negotiating their right to the cultural cluster is sizable.

VII. Conclusions and discussion

This thesis began by highlighting the *kulturljudzon* against a backdrop of Malmö's changing urban planning processes of the last few decades, placing it in the context of neoliberal planning practices, the interplay of these practices with urban DIY cultural scenes, and the ongoing commodification of Sofielund's activities. Background research revealed a need to to examine the marketing of the *kulturljudzon*, and to get a sense of the opportunities and obstacles involved in navigating it from the perspective of DIY and grassroots cultural actors. Through gathering and analyzing data from two documents promoting the *kulturljudzon*, as well as with nine individuals, including DIY musicians and organizers, cultural association members, a property manager, and three municipal employees, answers have been found to the three questions posed at the beginning of this process: how the *kulturljudzon* is marketed in public communications, how those compare to and differ from perspectives on the *kulturljudzon* in Malmö's music scene, and what the lived realities of DIY musicians and organizers are in connection to the *kulturljudzon*.

This study found that the *kulturljudzon* has been promoted in both documents as a result of participation and bottom-up planning, seeking credibility as a clear break from and a challenge to the establishment. The Sofielund neighborhood plan clearly links business to culture and presents the two as having shared interests and priorities that are thoughtfully planned for and considered. The *Noisy Neighbours* exhibition breaks from this to warn that seductive economic development has dangerous consequences to independent culture, but exempts the *kulturljudzon* from this concern. The neighborhood plan also discusses the *kulturljudzon* as a means to add attractiveness to the city, with opportunities for activities that add value to be supported. The exhibition acknowledges that a city's rising profile can negatively impact its culture, but positions the *kulturljudzon*'s implementation as a means to protect against that risk. In answering questions two and three, interviews revealed a broader range of stories from those with involvement in Malmö's music scene, wherein cultural actors have not reported much participatory involvement or feeling that their will is being represented, as they described being excluded by a municipality that prefers to communicate with property owners and being denied entry to spaces by landlords. To many of these informants, the *kulturljudzon* is a symbol that lacks substance. The interviewed property manager reported hesitance and unwillingness to collaborate with some cultural actors, instead turning an eye toward value creation and the future destination status of the neighborhood. Informants from the municipality communicated their inclusion and consideration of even underground cultural actors, yet also described a need for private investment and a desire to attract attention to Malmö through culture. Some municipal informants shared the notion of the *kulturljudzon* as a symbol, but communicated it positively, as an affirmation of values and an avenue for support. Thus, the lived realities of DIY musicians and organizers in the *kulturljudzon* paint a picture of struggle and disappointment as they make sense of how they can participate in the area without capital or a clear means of providing profit to others. In negotiating the right to the cultural cluster, the shared power of municipal and economic actors dwarfs that of those within Malmö's DIY and grassroots music scenes, even as those scenes have been utilized to draw interest to the area to begin with. In spite of their unhappiness with the perceived need to "grow or die," they have chosen to do neither and to instead continue to hold and express DIY-based values as they wrestle with what Sofielund's development entails for their practices.

The results of this study cannot be applied universally, but they must be considered in a broader view. As the cultural planning practices of municipalities become higher in profile and instrumentalized in their larger branding, they are further normalized and their processes can be repeated elsewhere in the city or the world. This study exemplifies the importance of considering the perspectives of local cultural practitioners in how these planning practices originate and are enacted in their neighborhoods and has further implications for future research and policy around cultural urban planning. The first is that additional studies on alternative cultural practice from an urban studies lens are needed to further examine how a variety of municipalities and their grassroots and DIY music scenes interact. Which urban transformations have affected these scenes, and how have these scenes shaped the city around them? Problems that appear within need to be highlighted, and perhaps more importantly, successful instances of cultural producers being integrated into planning must be studied and published. DIY musicians, organizers, and other producers, as well as city residents that enjoy their offerings, know why their work is important and the social, political, and artistic values inherent within. Yet, their inability or unwillingness to provide a large enough profit to economic and municipal actors has led to the full potential of these values not being realized in Malmö. Thus, those involved in cultural planning must be educated on the basics of DIY cultural practice, know their city's scenes, and consider all levels of cultural production, from the grassroots scale upward, in planning. Doing so could be the missing step in taking the *kulturljudzon* from being a symbolic statement, a piece of paper, to representing more of the qualities presented in its marketing. Regulations regarding music venue operations and safety laws exist, but municipalities can expand assistance efforts to help those who want to operate a venue do so in a compliant manner. Regulations that do not contribute to public safety can be reconsidered and revised as involved parties see fit. However, this requires some fundamental understanding. A successful integration of DIY cultural actors into planning means divorcing their activities from a profit-driven model and granting them the level of self-sufficiency that they require to make and share music on their own terms. It also requires a cognizance that the tensions that are bound to exist between these actors and the governing political and economic authorities do not necessitate the destruction of cultural practices. Rather, the perspectives provided by a healthy DIY scene can lead to compromise, new ideas, and the creation of a city where cultural production and consumption opportunities offer something to everyone.

VIII. References

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In the author's possession:

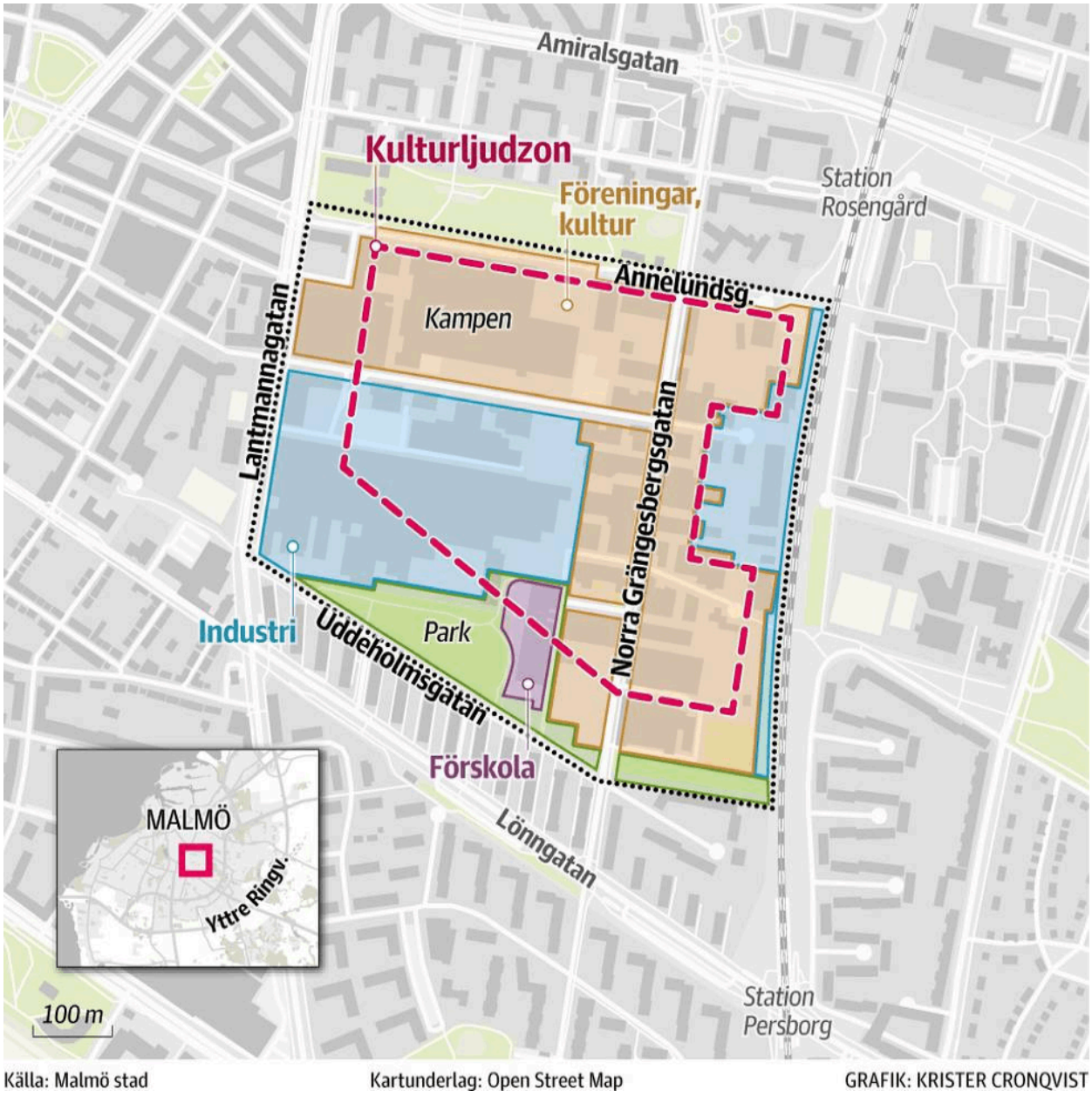
Informant 1 (2024), musician/organizer. Interview 12 March.

Informant 2 (2024), NGBG association member. Interview 13 March.

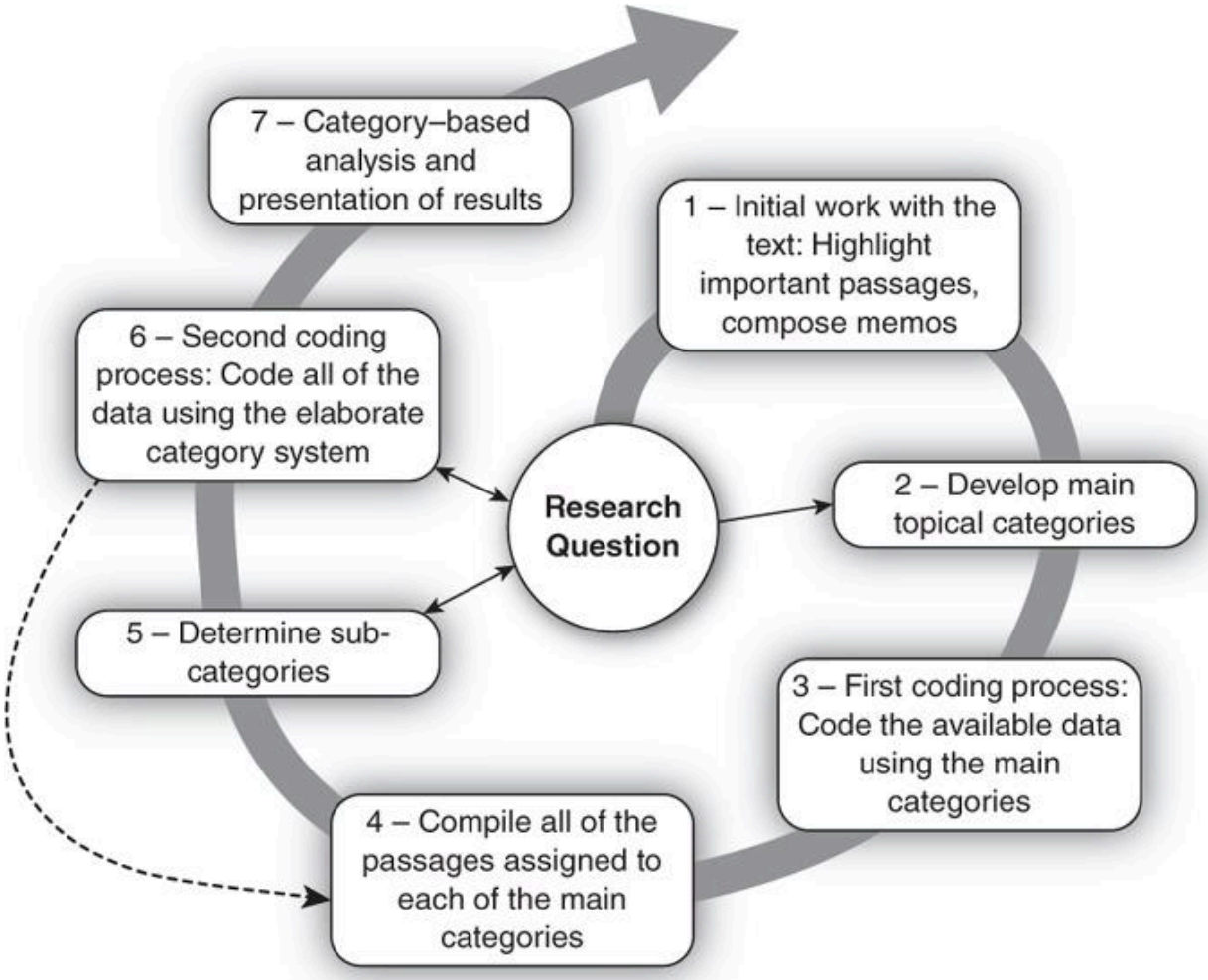
Informant 3 (2024), NGBG association member. Interview 14 March.
Informant 4 (2024), property owner. Interview 18 March.
Informant 5 (2024), musician/organizer. Interview 18 March.
Informant 6 (2024), musician/organizer. Interview 19 March.
Informant 7 (2024), municipal employee. Interview 19 March.
Informant 8 (2024), municipal employee. Interview 20 March.
Informant 9 (2024), municipal employee. Interview 4 April.

IX. Appendices

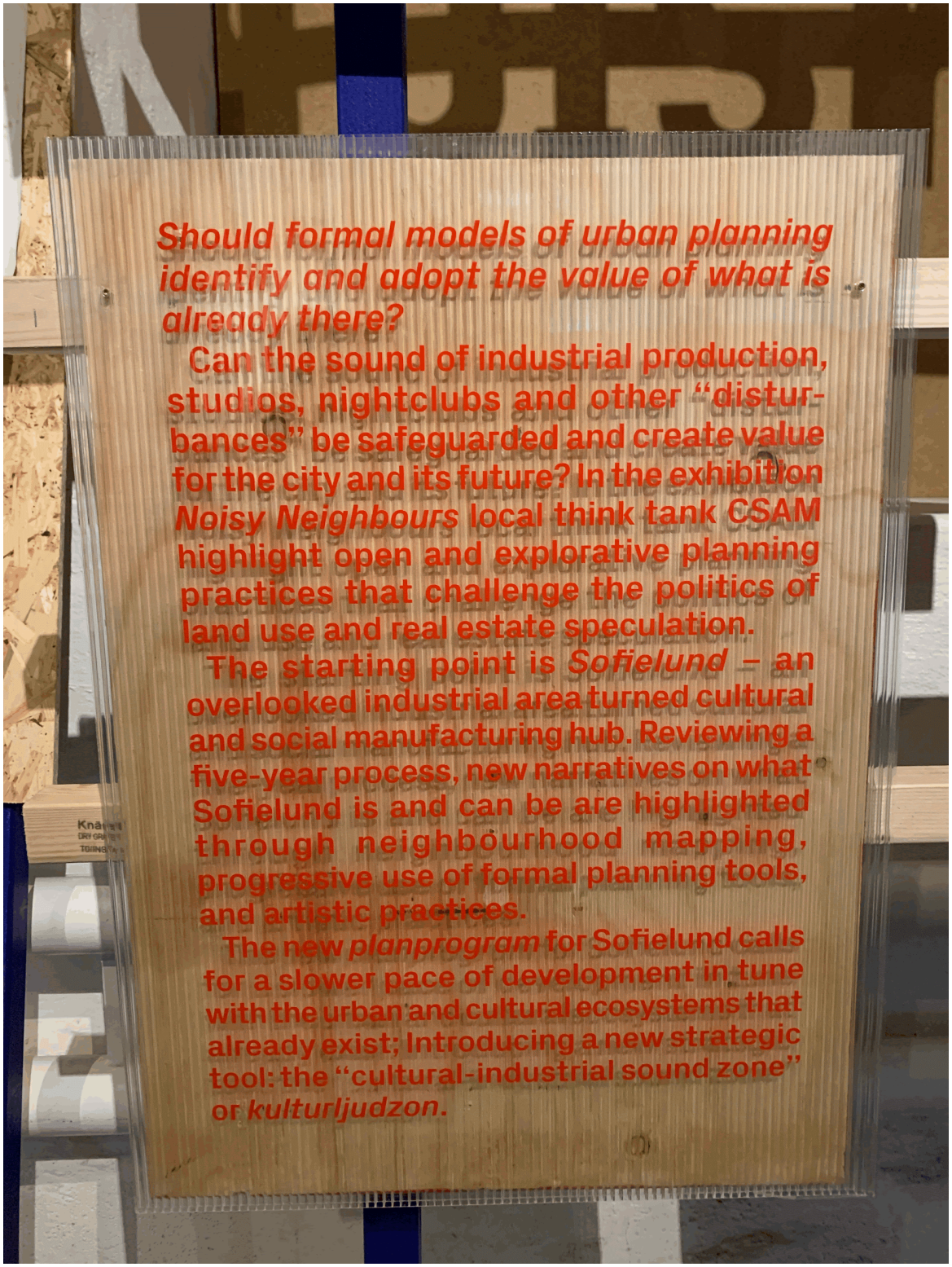
Appendix A. Map of the kulturljudzon. Source: NGBG association (ngbg.se).



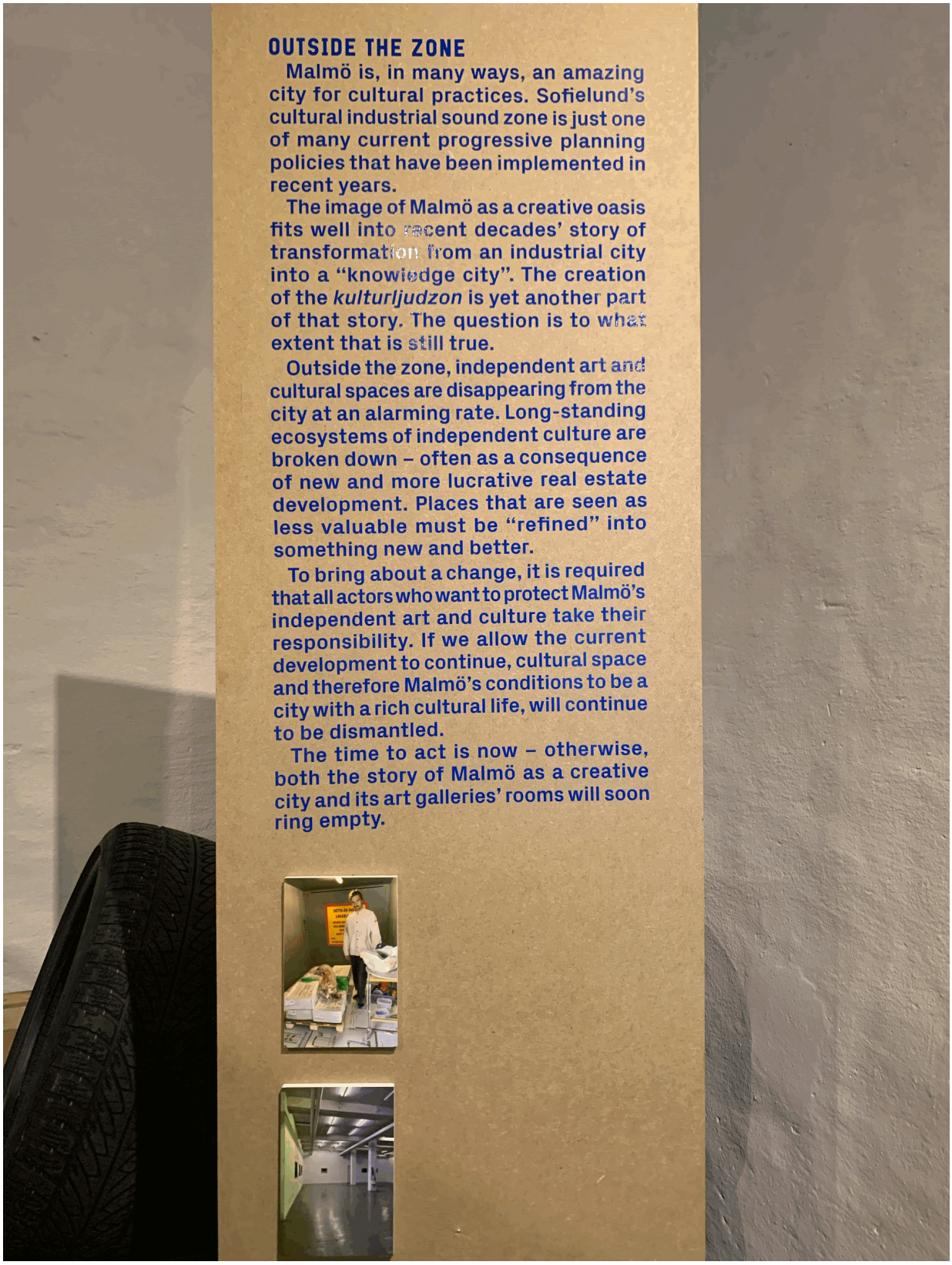
Appendix B. Diagram of the categorization process for thematic qualitative text analysis. Source: Kuckartz, U. (2014). Qualitative text analysis: A guide to methods, practice & using software.



Appendix C. Photo of written text from the *Noisy Neighbours* exhibition at Form/Design Center. Source: author's own photo.



Appendix D. Another photo of written text from *Noisy Neighbours*. Source: author's own photo.



Appendix E. More written text from *Noisy Neighbours*. Source: author's own photo.