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Spatial resilience and urban planning: Addressing the interdependence of urban retail areas

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ABSTRACT

In this article we look at examples of three predominant kinds of Swedish retail places – the pedestrianised city centre, the neighbourhood centre and the regional shopping mall – all of which play important (winning or losing) roles in contemporary retail development. This investigation is based on an empirical study of the Malmö region (in southern Sweden) and the findings suggest that the different retail areas are developing independently following the logic of their own business. They have failed to relate their business to the retailscape of the urban region. We also develop *spatial resilience* as a concept that can be used to acknowledge the interdependence of different retail areas in discussions of urban and regional planning. We argue that more fluid or associative means of stabilisation seem to be overlooked in the present strategies for retail resilience, leaving more classical network stabilization as the only means of choice.

Introduction

The latest decades of retail transformation and restructuring have shifted the issue of retail resilience to the fore (Urban-net, 2010; Wrigley & Dolega, 2011). Some retail areas are expanding in unforeseen ways whereas others are declining and disappear (Boverket., 2004; Franzèn, 2004; Kärrholm & Nylund, 2011). Questions concerning how to manage these kinds of retail transformations in a sustainable manner are becoming increasingly urgent. Otherwise, the risk is that we will end up with large populations becoming car dependent, with in-efficient land use, or even with vast brownfields as large mono-functional retail areas are closed down. Is it possible to plan for a resilient retail trade and what would that imply? In this article we try to deal with some of these issues through an empirical analysis of the management and transformation of three different types of retail areas in the region of Malmö, Sweden, investigating these places in terms of retail resilience. The investigation focuses especially on the various strategies of retail development that have been applied at these places, and goes on to discuss their interdependence. By developing the concept of spatial resilience (Nyström & Folke, 2001) through a discussion of spatial topologies as introduced by Law and Mol (2001), we comment upon the quite locally oriented strategies of spatial stabilisation that seem to be applied at all three places.

The concept of resilience and spatial resilience

The concept of resilience was introduced as a descriptive term by the theoretical ecologist Holling in 1973 (Holling (1973), for a discussion on resilience definitions see, for example, Brand & Jax, 2007). It has been greatly used in e.g. environmental studies (Folke, 2006), disaster studies (Campanella, 2006), and human geography (Adger, 2000), and it is also an important concept in psychiatry and developmental psychology where it is used to describe how people cope with stress and adversity (Waller, 2001). In general, resilience is often taken to mean the degree to which a certain system is able to tolerate financial, ecological, social and/or cultural change before reorganising around a new set of structures and processes. Holling distinguished between an engineering approach to resilience, interested in maintaining efficiency (how fast is a return to the normal possible?), and an ecological approach (for how long can we go on without losing our way of functioning?). In most strands of research a more ecological approach to resilience, discussing resilience in an eco-systemic context, has been the stronger (Cumming, 2011).

In this text we use an ecological approach to discuss urban retail and its role in urban planning. The resilience of an urban retail system is defined here as the ability of different types of retailing, on different scales, to adapt to changes, crises or shocks, challenging the system's equilibrium, without failing to perform its functions sustainably.[1] This approach includes and affirms that the world is

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[1] This definition is used by the "Replacis" research group, see Urban-net, 2010, p. 32.

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in constant flux. It argues for a non-equilibrium conception of resilience that does not take an interest in the ability to return to a kind of original state (as an engineering approach would). Instead, it takes an interest in the possibility of adapting to external or internal processes not by keeping still, but rather by "staying 'in the game'" (Pickett, Cadenasso, & Grove, 2004, p. 374).

In order to make sense of the concept of retail resilience, however, it has to be dealt with in its urban context. The aim of planning is never to suboptimize certain aspects (or the survival of certain retail areas at all costs). Retail resilience must be seen as one aspect of the planning of a resilient urban landscape. One hypothesis of this text is thus that for urban retail to be resilient, it also needs to take part of a resilient and sustainable urban system. The retail system needs to respond sustainably to the needs, wants and desires of different users, consumers and investors. It also needs to be part of a resilient space. Retail always takes place somewhere, it has a spatial form and context, and from the perspective of planning (used in this text) it is important for it to be part of a structure enabling resilient everyday life. In order to address these issues more directly we need to readdress the concept of resilience from a more spatial perspective.

Several decades after the introduction of the concept of resilience, the notion of spatial resilience was introduced (Cumming, 2011). The first to address the question of spatial resilience were probably Nyström and Folke in the article "Spatial resilience and coral reefs" (2001). Their definition takes spatial resilience to include processes outside a specific ecosystem:

> Spatial resilience is the dynamic capacity to cope with disturbance and thresholds on spatial scales larger than individual ecosystems. (Nyström & Folke, 2001, p. 407).

Spatial resilience thus draws on other scales than the ones set by the investigated system, indicating that it is the resilience of a landscape rather than of a specific unit that is of interest (Peterson, 2002). Spatial resilience connotes issues such as spatial variation, fragmentation, integration, connectivity and scale of a certain time–space continuum (see Cumming (2011) for a more elaborate discussion of these aspects).

In urban planning and design, discussions on sustainability ranging from the scale of the urban development down to the scale and design of single artefacts seem to have focused mostly on materialities and solid forms and structures. Typically, discussions have focused on aspects such as compact cities, densities, or the possibility of reusing, recycling artefacts (as in Jenks and Dempsey (2005) on cities, or McDonough and Braungart (2002) on the design of artefacts). However, many of the challenges in urban planning and design involve spatial issues – and so spaces as well as materialities need to be addressed. From a spatial point of view, the concept of resilient spaces or a resilient city bears resemblances to the architectural concept of flexibility. Flexibility was much liked by the structuralist architects and planners (from the 1950s and onwards), and came to be used both as a way of extending a functionalist paradigm by adding the notion of time, or as a way of criticising functional determinism (Forty, 2000, p. 146). As a concept, flexibility was often used to denote the possibility of changing the built structure in different ways (movable walls, etc.), and was later updated by Hertzberger as the related concept of polyvalence (Hertzberger, 2001). Polyvalence, according to Hertzberger, indicates a form that can be put to different uses without changing form itself, and polyvalences possess: "the ability to adapt themselves to diversity and change while retaining their identity" (Hertzberger, 2001, p. 148). Hertzberger's concept of polyvalence thus seem to be very similar to spatial resilience, and perhaps, from a perspective of urban planning and design, it would be possible to follow Hertzberger and define spatial resilience simply as the ability of spaces to cope with diversity and change while retaining their identity, bearing in mind that spaces are always related and dependent on spaces other than themselves.

Thus spatial resilience indicates the possibility of different usages, adaptations, affordances and even changes without changing identity altogether and becoming something other than itself. A resilient space thus connotes a kind of loose space, (Franck & Stevens, 2007) created through objects rich in associations, objects that can be mobilised in all sorts of different situations.

Three different types of retail places in Malmö

The transformation of Swedish retail types during the last century has involved the retailisation of city centres, the birth and death of department stores, massive expansion of pedestrian precincts, the proliferation of big box landscapes, suburban shopping malls and the decline of neighbourhood centres. The escalation of consumption, which began in the 1950s and picked up speed in the 1990s is of course problematic from a perspective of sustainable development. In spite of growing criticism of the logic of constant growth of wealth and GDP as a measure of success (Jackson, 2009), retail has become an ever-more important part of what constitutes the ongoing transformation of urban life in recent decades.

In Sweden, the Malmö region and the county of Skåne is one of the best areas for the study of retail transformation. Malmö is Sweden's third largest city (with some 300,000 inhabitants in 2011), and it is also one of Sweden's best examples of a post-industrial city transforming into a neo-liberal and expanding regional centre (cf. Baeten, 2011). The transformation of Malmö has been quite rapid and is not unlike similar processes in other European cities. In terms of retailisation, this includes the expansion of malls on the outskirts of the city, a decline of retail in the local squares of the city districts, and pedestrianisation of the inner city with new outdoor restaurants, city festivals, events and extensive renovations of the city centre. Malmö is also the largest city in the rapidly expanding Swedish region of Skåne (this expansion is partly due to better connections to Copenhagen and the on-going construction of the Öresund-region.

In this article, we compare the retail strategies and use of three different types of retail areas (see Fig. 1). We conducted observation studies, questionnaire surveys and interviews in three locations in the Malmö region. The locations selected represent three different types of shopping environments and include (1) the main pedestrian street in Malmö centre (focusing on the part from Gustav Adolfs torg to Triangeln), (2) the suburban square Nydala, and (3) the regional shopping mall Burlöv centre (see Table 1 for a comparison).

The studies were conducted in 2009–2010 and include observation studies, questionnaires given to users, short interviews with retailers in the areas, and a few longer interviews with key actors. The main aim of the observation studies and the questionnaires was to map structural differences between the places, whereas the interviews were more focused on investigating possible problems in the places (what works well and less well in terms of management, sales and attractiveness), as well as strategies for the future. The empirical material is not large enough to be truly representative, but was used to give indications of different specificities, and to provide material for the conceptual development in the second part of the paper.[2] The observation studies were carried out during October and November 2009, always between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m., and included statistical estimations, photos, counting of

[2] The empirical study is presented more thoroughly in Kärrholm, Nylund, and Prieto de la Fuente (2011).

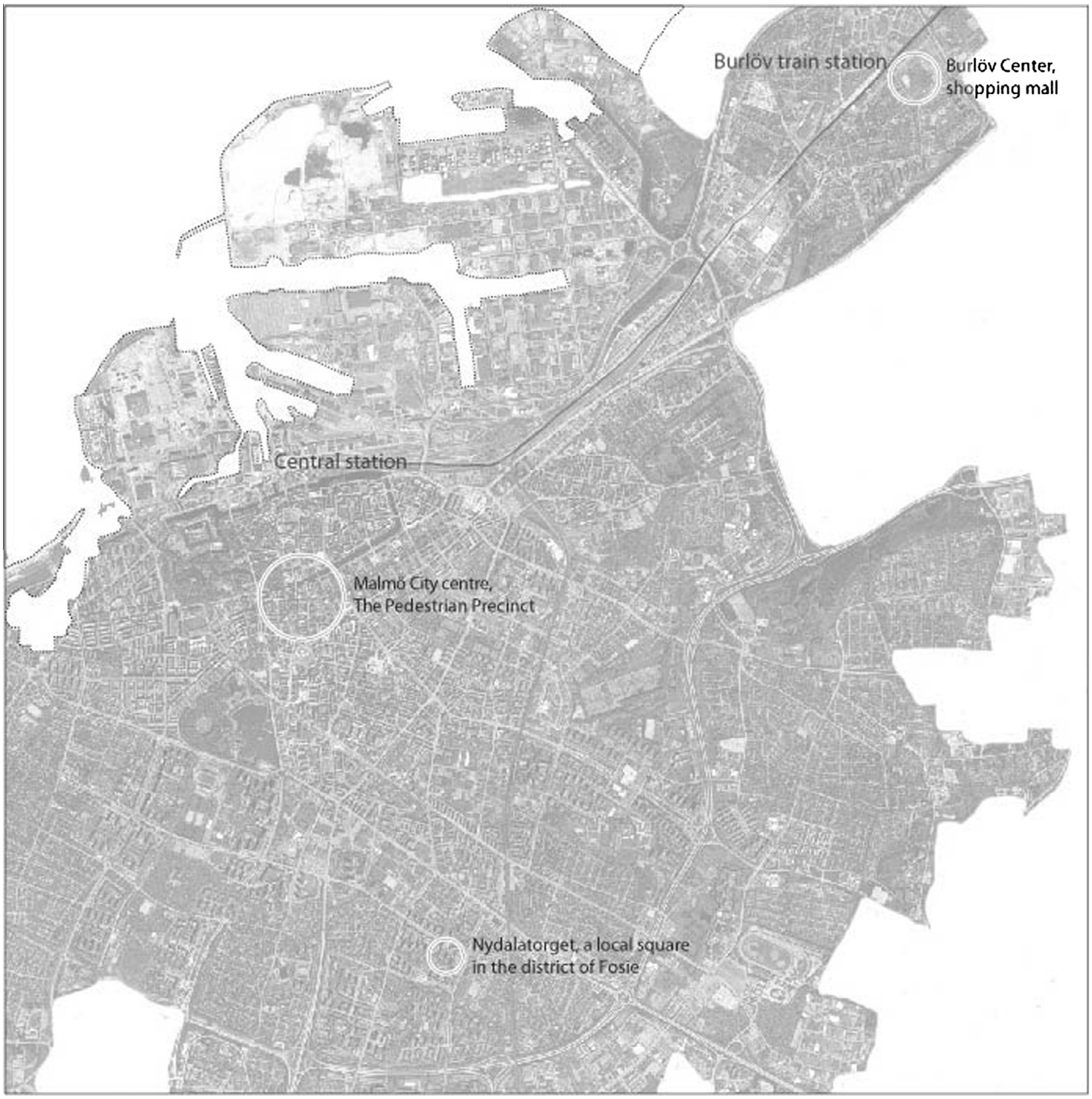

Fig. 1. Malmö.

Table 1
Comparison of the three retail areas (2009).

	Burlöv	Nydala	Pedestrian precinct
Type	Regional shopping centre	Local neighbourhood centre	Centrally located pedestrian precinct
Total number of stores and restaurants	71	15	120
Shop vacancies (nr)	4% (3)	21% (4)	6% (8)
Restaurants	10% (7)	20% (3)	16% (19)
Chain stores	90% (64)	33% (5)	61% (73)
Opening hours			
Weekdays	10.00–20.00	10.00–18.00	10.00–18.00/19.00
Saturdays	10.00–17.00	10.00–14.00	10.00–14.00/17.00
Sundays	11.00–17.00	Closed	10.00–16.00 (or closed)

people, estimation of age groups, notes on the different kinds of activities taking place, etc. The questionnaire studies with users were conducted during late November and early December 2009 in the afternoon at all sites (19 at Burlöv, 21 at Nydala and 20 at the Pedestrian precinct). The questionnaires were handed out to people passing by at the three different places. People seemed most busy at the pedestrian precinct where the pace is higher, and the empirical researcher was often turned down even before contact could be established. At Nydala, the situation was radically different. Here, people often took the initiative and were willing to have longer discussions.

Two kinds of interviews were conducted: longer recorded interviews of about 1 h each with some of the key actors at each place: the director of Burlöv shopping centre, representatives of the municipality and the from the public housing company MKB (owning the buildings at Nydala), and a representative of the retailer's organisation Citysamverkan of Malmö city. Second, 57 short structured interviews were conducted with shop owners or retailers in their stores, where the answers were noted by the interviewer during the interview (25 at Burlöv centre, 22 at the pedestrian precinct and 10 at Nydala). The retailers were encouraged to reflect on structural changes over time, customers, competition, problems within business and location, as well as on strategies for the future. These interviews were conducted during September and October 2010.

Burlöv centre

Burlöv centre is a regional shopping centre with 71 stores and restaurants in Burlöv municipality, 3 min by train from Malmö Central station. The municipality has 17,000 inhabitants, and the shopping centre is located in Burlöv, often considered to be a part of Malmö (although administratively it is not). Located close to the local train station, along the road to the smaller city of Lund, the centre has good connections to regional and local public transport (Fig. 2).

Burlöv centre, built in 1971, is a shopping mall of the old generation with a standard mall outline with four entrances, a food court, circulation spaces and a large grocery store (Coop) acting as the main mall anchor. Burlöv has managed to keep sales at a good and steady level, and after a recent refurbishment (2004–2006) it ranked second in terms of turn-over increase in the region (Säljinspiration AB, 2009, p. 5). In terms of customer satisfaction, Burlöv was also ranked as 20 out of 118 Swedish malls all over the country (Säljinspiration, 2009).

Burlöv centre is a place where customers mostly arrive by car (85%), tend to visit the centre once a week, and where each stay on average lasts for only 1–2 h. Customers come regularly every week. The typical customer uses Burlöv centre as a convenient place to buy ordinary consumer products and groceries, and not as an arena for gatherings and events (see Table 2).

The pedestrian precinct

The pedestrianisation of Malmö city centre started in 1978 and has expanded continually since then (Kärrholm, 2008). Malmö inner city centre has, in total, some 44.000 inhabitants (2009). Most of the households are small (households of 1–2 people account for 88% of the population). The pedestrian precinct is centred on a north–south axis going from Stortorget in the north to Triangeln in the south (Fig. 3). The regional attraction of the area was supported by the opening of the metro station at Triangeln (on the line Malmö to Copenhagen) in December 2010. In this study, we primarily focused on the southern and busiest part of the precinct. The commercial city centre of Malmö has been quite steady in terms of sales since the 1970s (although recently there also seems to be a trend towards more cafés and restaurants, and fewer shops, cf. Malmö stad, 2008). The retail area focuses foremost on fashion and clothes, while grocery stores have been in steady decline in this area during the last decades. Although the city centre as a whole probably has more than 600 shops, the main axis studied in this article comprises about 120 shops and restaurants, more than half of which are chain stores.

Customers on the pedestrian street seem to visit the place several times a week. Almost half seemed willing to participate in events held at the pedestrian precinct, and most people tended to stay longer here than the visitors to Burlöv or Nydala (see Table 2).

Nydala square

Nydala square is a typical suburban centre from the 1960s, located in the residential area of Nydala, in the city district Fosie in Malmö (Fig. 4). Fosie has about 40,500 inhabitants. The residential area of Nydala is connected to Malmö city centre by buses (about 20 min to Triangeln) and cycle paths. The square is surrounded by 15 small shops, supermarkets and municipal service functions either located in one-storey buildings or on the ground level of the eight or thirteen story high residential buildings. The dwellings around the square are mostly rentals, owned and managed by MKB, Malmö's municipal housing company.

Most of the users of Nydala square are local inhabitants. In the questionnaires, a majority of the respondents stated that they live at walking distance from the square and that they normally visit the square everyday, some several times a day (see Table 2).

Fig. 2. Burlöv centre (photo by Paulina Prieto de la Fuente).

Table 2
Some differences according to the user questionnaires (2009 tendencies only).

	Burlöv	Nydala	Pedestrian precinct
General frequency of visits	Every week	Daily	Several times a week
Average duration for one stay	1–2 h	Less than an hour	More than 2 h
People willing to participate in happenings at the area	5%	60%	45%
What people missed most in the area	Specific stores	Benches	Green space
Most popular activities	Shopping and buying groceries	Walking and buying groceries	Visiting cafés and shopping
Most common means of transport to area	Car (85%)	Walking (65%)	Public transport (40%)
Best three things about the place[a]	Parking facilities, accessibility, opening hours	Accessibility, staff, lighting	Accessibility, atmosphere, variety of goods
Worst three things about the place (in order)	Unattractive environment, sound, prices	Unattractive environment, prices, cleaning	Staff, parking facilities, unattractive environment

[a] The questionnaire listed different categories to rate, including: accessibility, variety of goods, opening hours, atmosphere, prices, attractive/unattractive environment, parking facilities, staff, lighting, cleaning, mix of stores and sound/music.

Fig. 3. Pedestrian precinct, Malmö. (photo by Paulina Prieto de la Fuente).

Retail improvement strategies and urban transformation

These three retail areas are very different in terms of use and structure (see Tables 1–3), but they all work actively with the improvement and renewal of retail strategies. In 2004–2006 a major refurbishment of the Burlöv centre took place in order to attract new customers. While the driving force behind the refurbishment was to create "Skåne's best mall" and increase the share of young customers (Säljinspiration, 2009, p. 3), today the more modest ambition is to increase and keep the local customers. In an interview conducted with the director of Burlöv shopping centre M. Thuresson in November 2009, Thuresson expressed the new strategy as follows:

> When our owners were rebuilding the centre in 2004–2006 their ambition was also to vitalize the centre with younger customers, and several new chains moved in, for example Jack & Jones, Bik Bok, etc., but we soon recognised that these shops did not work…Today our catchment area is seen as the local customers from Burlöv, Lomma, Bjärred, Dalby and parts of Malmö and Lund too. If you draw a circle around Burlöv, Lomma and parts of Malmö/Lund will be included, and this is our primary area… In other words, the main target group is the homeowners living nearby…These are families with younger children, they live nearby and that's why we have chosen them. (Interview with M. Thuresson, our translation).

While several of the interviewed retailers pointed out the shopping mall Nova Lund (mostly focused on fashion) as the main competitor, the director strongly opposed this, underlining that in cases where the customers go elsewhere, they mainly go to Jägersro centre, situated about 12 km from Burlöv:

> We do not have the trend-sensitive young people of around 25, therefore Nova can have them, and that might also be the reason why we do not consider ourselves competitors of Nova, because Nova has customers we do not have. (Interview with M. Thuresson, our translation).

As a means of strengthening the identity of Burlöv centre, the owners initiated the project "Burlöv centre school", financed by the EU with the intention of teaching shop owners and employees about what Burlöv centre stands for. Management courses for shop owners, sales courses and after work meetings for the employees are some of the activities arranged within the framework of this

Fig. 4. Nydala square, Malmö (photo by Paulina Prieto de la Fuente).

Table 3
Some differences according to the interviews done with retailers (2010).

	Burlöv	Nydala	Pedestrian precinct
Mainly regular customers	60%	50%	23%
Mainly stray customers	4%	0%	5%
Both stray and regular customers	36%	50%	72%
Staff experience in retail (in average)	9 years	18 years	8 years
Staff age			
20–29	56%	10%	50%
30–29	24%	20%	27%
40–49	16%	20%	18%
50–59	4%	20%	0%
60–69	0%	30%	5%

project. Several of the retailers in our interviews referred to the EU project as a positive initiative, and some maintained that thanks to this project they had learnt the value of referring customers to other shops in Burlöv centre, instead of directing them to chain shops situated in other competing shopping centres as they had previously done.

According to Burlöv centre's own poll, people do not come to a shopping mall in order to be entertained, instead they choose those shopping malls that can offer a good range and a convenient environment. One of the problems Burlöv centre has to face, according to the director, is that many potential customers in the local area still associate Burlöv centre with being as it was before the refurbishment, "old, dull, dark and quite boring". Therefore a recent market strategy has been to go out and meet potential customers instead of just doing campaigns at the centre. A special target group has been people living in the nearby municipality of Lomma.

> The reason that we have chosen people in Lomma as a target group is that Lomma is situated only 5 min from here. Forty percent of the population of Lomma do their shopping here, which means that another 60% are potential customers. (Interview with M. Thuresson, our translation).

Marketing campaigns have also been run at the Malmö city festival, with the main message being that Burlöv centre as opposed to Malmö city, has 1600 free parking spaces.

Citysamverkan is the retail trade association of the pedestrian precinct, and its members are some 400 shops in Malmö city centre (one third of *Citysamverkan*), 35 commercial property owners (one third) and the city of Malmö (one third). Each of these partners invests around 140,000 Euro every year (figures from 2007). *Citysamverkan* does project based work, runs its own marketing campaigns, plans events, organises signage systems for easier parking and better accessibility for pedestrians, works for a safer city centre and has educational projects through what they call "The City Academy" (*Cityakademin*). *Citysamverkan* also strives for fewer chain stores, trying to keep these at no more than 50% of the total stores, in order to keep the area more personal and original in its approach.

According to the managing director of *Citysamverkan*, some retailers have started to complain about the large city festival, *Malmöfestivalen* (inaugurated in 1985), since it results in a loss in profits. Instead smaller happenings such as the Easter egg competition with artists and children, or window display contests at Christmas, seem to be favoured.[3] The *Citysamverkan* activity most favoured by the retailers is probably the large marketing campaigns launched by *Citysamverkan*, which attracts, for example, Danish people from the Copenhagen area, with slogans such as "Malmö. Denmark's best Shopping Centre" or "Malmö is open when Denmark is closed", combined with prolonged opening hours (campaigning in Denmark on Danish holidays, and when Danish stores are closed). According to *Citysamverkan's* own enquiry to retailers most of the retailers in the pedestrian precinct were interested in attracting

[3] P. Sandin, *Citysamverkan*, 12 Sept 2009.

Danish shoppers and tourists and found them to be an increasing part of their total number of customers. Most of the retailers seem very positive about the association and some consider it essential if the pedestrian precinct is to be able to compete with large outlying shopping malls (Malmö city., 2008).

The strategies of the individual retailers (according to our interviews) seem to focus on good, personal service and a good knowledge of the products and retail area of the specific store. *Citysamverkan* (through the City Academy) also helps with this, trying to raise the status and competence of retailers through education about food allergies, etc. Like at Burlöv centre, the average staff age is quite young (see Table 3). This might be one of the reasons why both these retail areas focus on staff education.

At Nydala, the public housing company MKB owns all rental housing in the area, including business localities, and their explicit goal is to increase the attractiveness of the district. One of the means of doing so is the beautification of the parks and squares in the neighbourshood. But MKB also takes responsibility for the service level in the area, and has developed a special rent policy for retailers. All rents are negotiable, and the strategy is that the small retailers have a lower rent level during the first years until the business is profitable, after which rents are increased in line with the profits earned. Furthermore, for the last 8 years, MKB has given financial support to Nydala café, situated on the square, which is driven voluntary, and functions as a social meeting place for many of the inhabitants, especially the elderly.[4] MKB arranges regular meetings for all the retailers in the area, where different kinds of public arrangements with a potential of attracting people from the neighbourhood are discussed.

The location of the head office of MKB on Nydala square might also be seen as part of a co-localisation strategy, where public offices have been used in order to consolidate the businesses and service opportunities on the square. The same holds true for the "Citizens' Office", which is part of the Fosie district administration and offers information and assistance to the inhabitants in the area. According to one of the employees, B. Ahldin, the office has developed into an important meeting place.

> A lot of people who are out of work, or who work on irregular schedules, come here. At a Citizens' Office you can borrow a computer with internet for free...you can apply for jobs, write your CV or just chat with your friends from all over the world.. Our impression is that many lonely people come here. They want to talk with us, and use us as dialogue partners. Some of them come every day just to talk about the weather, others want to discuss the headlines in the newspapers, everyday affairs. In that sense the Citizens' Office contributes to counteracting isolation, people have a place to visit. (Interview with B. Ahldin 2009, our translation).

While the MKB office and the "Citizens' Office" are open only during daytime, the Residential Care Office is also open in the evenings and therefore contributes to giving the square a sense of liveliness and security after ordinary closing hours. The four active associations that are housed in MKB owned facilities on the square, with different target groups from age 7 to 80 years, also contribute to ensuring that there are people in the area at all hours.

Despite the above-mentioned initiatives taken to strengthen Nydala square, not least by co-localisation of public activities with commercial ones, Nydala commercial centre is under a great deal of pressure. More than 20% of the retail facilities are empty. The centre has undergone major changes since the 1960s and 1970s when it still was a fully-fledged service centre with several different kinds of shops. It has become a centre in decline, which was brought up by most of the customers and retailers as well as by representatives for the public administration in our investigation. The most important factor for the survival of at least some shops on Nydala square seems to be immigrant ownership. When competition from the surrounding commercial centres made the shops less profitable, several of them closed down. New immigrant families, however, were able to re-open a few of the shops. The shopkeepers on Nydala square are, however, quite old and according to our retailer interviews some of them are retired, and do not think their shops give enough profits to live on without their pensions (see Table 3). There is no guarantee that second generation immigrants will be equally willing to stick to businesses that do not secure a decent living standard. New measures are therefore needed in order to uphold the service standard on the square.

The public authorities are well aware of the situation, and initiatives have therefore been taken by the Malmö city planning office and the district administration in Fosie during the last few years in order to develop a long term strategy for the area (Malmö stad, 2010). The goal is to use changes in the physical structure as a lever for a socially, economically and ecologically sustainable development in the district of Fosie. Densification of the area has been suggested, with new housing as well as workplaces, in order to increase diversity. With the purpose of attracting visitors from the whole city, new and better transport connections to the overall city structure are suggested, with extended cycle paths and a new city tram line, as well as new city functions, such as a botanical garden and educational institutions. Nydala will also be strengthened with new and better transportation connections with the other squares in the area, a project that will hopefully attract new customers (Malmö stad, 2010). Extended forms of citizens' participations have been used in the development of the planning document, and local citizens were given a voice both in terms of problem definitions and suggesting solutions.

Retail planning in splendid isolation?

The three retail areas studied represent different parts of an interdependent network of retail areas. These areas show different problems in terms of diversity of users and retailers, blend of activities, etc. None of the places is used by (or perhaps even accessible to) all groups, but they supplement each other in terms of accessibility, affordance, opening hours, etc. Our empirical study seems to suggest that the ongoing retail strategies of all three places include attempts to improve the connections and associations to new customers. The Burlöv interventions, for instance, aimed at attracting customers from the more well-to-do suburbs through campaigns and happenings, e.g. at Lomma beach. This interconnectedness was also the aim of *Citysamverkan* with their campaign directed towards new Danish customers from the Copenhagen area, and of MKB at Nydala with their plans to pull together a series of adjacent local squares in the city district of Fosie.

At a more general level, however, both the retail strategies implemented, and the amenities that the users missed seem to follow the logic of the already existing approaches of each particular retail place. The users' questionnaires suggest that what people wanted at all the three places were more of the things already present, rather than new things.[5] The retail strategies also seemed more focused on 'getting the place to work', than on introducing something new. It is true that Burlöv in the context of their refurbishment, tried to reach a new segment of customers, but this strategy failed and was quickly abandoned. Perhaps, this failure was also

[4] Interview with B. Ahldin & N. Papac, the Citizens' Office, November 3, 2009, and with Z. Altundal, SöM Fosie, and Stellan Westerberg, Malmö Urban Planning Office, November 19, 2009.

[5] There might, of course, be different reasons for this 'lack of vision', having to do with the way in which the questionnaires were distributed, for example.

used to justify the more cautious attitude of their recent strategies. Sometimes the new retail strategies involved efforts to attract visitors from new places, but these strategies were aimed at the segment of customers already favoured by the specific retail areas: Burlöv wanted to attract more suburban families from the adjacent municipalities, *Citysamverkan* wanted to attract new young fashion shoppers from another large city, and Nydala wanted to attract new local groups from adjacent neighbourhoods. Thus the retail strategies of the different areas did not try to supplement the place with new kinds of groups or activities but rather continued the same kind of logic and identity already established, leading to further polarisation of the different kinds of retail areas in the region.

Strong, efficient retail organisations seemed to play an important part in the development, especially of Burlöv centre and the pedestrian precinct. In Nydala, something like a retail organisation now seems to be evolving (through MKB). Although these retail organisations play an important role in the development of a profitable and thus, at least from a financial viewpoint, resilient urban retail structure, it also seems important to promote and enhance the interrelationship between the different retail sites rather than polarising them further. While both Burlöv centre and the city centre seem to have managed both to hold and strengthen their competitive positions, Nydala square seems to be among the losers in terms of retail. This development is a problem since Nydala represents a type of place with less affluent users, more diverse retailers, and to some extent a better blend of retail with other important urban activities relating to civil society. A problem of large commercial areas such as the pedestrian precinct or large shopping malls such as Burlöv is that shopping seems to be dominant at the expense of other urban activities, creating shopping territories. In fact, the specialisation goes even further. Burlöv seem to be strengthening its position as a classical mall, attracting suburban customers with good parking facilities, cheap goods and a large cooperative food store anchor (Coop). The pedestrian precinct has developed more along the lines of entertainment retail with a diversity of stores, cafés restaurants and events. Both of these retail areas have been quite successful through the years, but as their strategies become more specialised, they may also face greater problems during a recession or an economic crisis. Wrigley and Dolega for example, have recently shown that the most resilient retail centres are characterised by both large food store anchors and diversity (Wrigley & Dolega, 2011, p. 2354 f.), rather than by one or the other.

One basic notion for a resilient retail space must also be to find a balance in the variety of retail and other activities (but maintaining a retail part strong enough not to decline and disappear). Retail must be considered an integral part of public urban spaces and everyday life. None of the three places studied were actually able to fully live up to this notion. One of the reasons, as found in the empirical material, was a bias towards certain scales of planning. The ongoing transformation of the Malmö region makes it clear that new forms of spatial events, territories, and places constantly evolve and disappear. In a time of societal transformation it thus becomes important to be more sensitive to the scales on which different societal affects occur (cf. Kärrholm, 2011). Planning might need to regroup around the spatial scales appropriate to the planning problem, rather than the ones pre-set by borders (like Fosie in the case of Nydala, and the city centre in the case of the pedestrian precinct). Organisation on the scale of a specific retail area was rapidly improving and becoming better organised in the cases we have studied. As these organisations become more efficient and different retail areas develop some self-sufficiency, other problems arise, for example at the regional level, problems that indeed challenge sustainable development. Civil society and social services should not be handled only on the local squares and retail should not be found only at large car-dependent regional retail areas, promoting a kind of non-sustainable shopping culture through the construction of large cathedrals of consumption (Ritzer, 2005). If new activities and groups are to be introduced so as to counterbalance the mono-functional trend of these areas, and if the local squares are not to continue their downward spiral, ways of managing better balance, counteracting the polarisation that the last decades of retail transformation seem to promote need to be found. This kind of development probably has to take the organisation at the level of the retail area seriously (as in the cases here studied), but, and equally importantly, this organisational stabilisation needs to be counter-balanced by a stronger and more efficient planning at other levels.

Spatial resilience and retail interdependence

Polyvalent or resilient spaces can be described, as implied above, in terms of fluidity or, to be more specific, fluid topology (De Laet & Mol, 2000; Law, 2002; Law & Mol, 2001). In his seminal article "Objects and Spaces", Law discusses three kinds of spatial topologies that can stabilise an object. First there are network objects as described in actor-network theory (Law, 2002, p. 91). Network objects are produced by the stabilised relations of a network of actors (that can be both human and/or non-human actors). These actors need to be connected to each other somehow, but they do not need to be situated in the same geographical place, and as long as the relations between the actors are intact, the object is kept stable. Second, there are Euclidean objects stabilised by a "constant set of orthogonal co-ordinates" (Law, 2002, p. 95). In this case, the actors need to be stabilised in their geometrical and geographical positions. Third, there are fluid objects. In a topological sense, fluid objects consist of a set of actors that all share a certain family resemblance. Fluid objects are never dependent on one aspect alone (an obligatory point of passage) in order to sustain their effect – each individual part of the object can be replaced. Spaces can change bit by bit by losing or gaining new actants but not in great leaps. Of course a point can be reached where a space can no longer be recognised, where too many objects have been replaced, or something too unfamiliar to the specific spatial identity at hand has been introduced (cf. Law, 2002), so that the association to the original space can no longer be made. The interesting thing about fluidity, however, is that the more different actors that can be connected to the sort, i.e. the more possible shapes and figures a certain fluid space can take on, the more moveable it becomes. The association to the space can (potentially) be made at more different places as the number of possible ways of constructing the space increases. Many everyday spaces such as climbing trees, bathing places, football pitches, thrive on this richness, i.e. they are easily associable to many different places, although these places could be constructed by a variety of different actors.

The branding and singularisation of a certain retail area such as the Burlöv centre or the pedestrian precinct of Malmö could be described as stabilisation within a network topology, i.e. the chain of actors prescribing the same use grows longer, the alignment of actors becomes more well-constructed and the network becomes fixed. The more one can describe an object as the effect of network stabilisation (Law, 2002; Law & Mol, 2001), the more predictable it becomes and the less we can enjoy the feeling of 'being surprised': all actants are there, firmly fixed in their positions and doing their job. Increasing fluidity would, instead, mean allowing for new associations and hybridity of the type by, for example, introducing elements that are not usually found at a mall like Burlöv centre, but that challenge its very identity (without breaking it). Such a strategy could both widen the connotations of 'mall' as a concept and/or be part of the production of a new building type. The important thing is that the new elements mobilised are not merely subordinated to a kind of 'mall logic' with the main aim of supporting shopping, but are allowed to have a more autonomous existence.

The retail strategies used in the studies of retail spaces above all seem to stabilise the different retail areas as a network, with the consequence that fluid stability decreases. From a perspective of spatial resilience this is problematic, as it is crucial for objects of spatial resilience to be constituted by a spatial stabilisation drawing on different kinds of spatial topologies (cf. Law 2002).

In order to account for the interdependence of different retail spaces one needs to establish a mediator (Harman, 2009). Taking Graham Harman's definition of 'objects' as any kind of autonomous reality, material or abstract, temporary or stable (Harman, 2009), we could rephrase this as the need for a third object, an object that can hold the two (or more) objects together, as well as helping us get to know these two (or more) objects further. The proliferation of relational objects would also enhance the fluid stabilisation of retail spaces. The three predominant retail types discussed above could be seen as stabilised foremost through a network topology, primarily mobilising and incorporating actors in line with previous actors (as for example, just expanding the numbers of the same type of customers, or adding a new kind of event of the same sort). Burlöv centre is probably the most predictable environment of the three, and it is characterised by a stable network of actors including synchronised opening hours, guards, climate control, educated staff, etc. By acknowledging fluidity as a kind of spatial stabilisation, one might also open up for strategies that connect to new actors, previously 'other' than the original retail type. The interdependence of retail types must be produced through multi-scalar production of new 'objects'. It seems obvious that the three different retail spaces discussed above need to be connected through a third kind of 'object', such as stronger, adaptive regional retail planning (cf. Simmie & Martin, 2010). The proliferation of relations must, however, be done at different scales, where the fourth and fifth objects (and so on) might relate spaces on scales ranging from smaller places within different retail areas (flea markets, chain stores, playgrounds, etc.) to spaces beyond regional or even national borders (international associations, fair-trade, etc.).[6] This call for establishing new objects of relation should not be read as a claim for blurring everything into sameness, but as a plea to opening up for hybridisation of retail planning and retail areas by embracing new relations on different scales, and associations to spaces that cross the scales and types defined by network stabilisation. Such expansion would perhaps mainly need to counteract the current trend of retail mono-functionality and homogenisation by including spaces open to other kinds of uses than retail only, for example, public services or spaces available for civil society. The territorialisation of large areas should not be done with only one prominent function in sight (such as retail).[7] In the case of Nydala it might be trickier to increase fluidity, and one might even argue that there is a lack of network stabilisation for procuring a sufficient number of customers (there seems, for example, to be a shortage of stray customers at Nydala, see Table 3). One way of adding to Nydala, perhaps stabilising it both in terms fluidity and network, would be to develop the suggested educational institutions and botanical garden not just as local, but also as more regional attractions, thus hopefully adding to both the variety and the retail potential of the place. A more detailed account of how to increase fluid stability, as well as of how to balance it with network stability, remains for future studies.

Concluding remarks

This article began out with a study of three different kinds of predominant Swedish retail places – the pedestrianised city centre, the neighbourhood centre and the regional shopping mall – all three playing important (winning or losing) roles in the contemporary struggle of retail development. This investigation was based on an empirical study of the Malmö region (in the south of Sweden) and suggested that the different retail areas are developing independently following the logic of their own businesses, not relating their businesses to the retailscape of the urban region. In the ongoing work of municipal planners, retail organisations and individual retailers to achieve increased retail resilience, there seem to be no serious attempts to address the interaction between the different interdependent retail areas. Instead, there was a tendency towards strengthening planning efforts and regulations on the scale of the retail area. Furthermore, all three areas seemed to follow a trend towards spatial homogenisation and specialisation. The shopping mall and the pedestrian mall were doing well in terms of retail sales but tended to follow or simply adjust existing strategies rather than opening up for new groups or activities. The neighbourhood square had serious problems attracting customers, and the strategies seemed to aim at enhancing local attraction with new non-retail functions rather than finding ways of addressing people at the urban or regional scale.

We applied a perspective of *spatial resilience* as a way of better acknowledging the interdependence of different retail areas in discussions of urban and regional planning. Developing the concept of spatial resilience through the spatial topologies of John Law and Annemarie Mol, we suggested that spatial resilience needs to draw its stability from different kinds of spatial topologies, which, in turn, opens up for a discussion of the means by which different kinds of spatial stabilisations are achieved (a question that needs to be further investigated). Our argument here was that the retail areas studied in Malmö all seemed to develop strategies striving towards network stabilisation, while decreasing the spatial resilience that can be achieved through fluidity. Whereas network stabilisation becomes stronger through aligning actors in predictable positions, fluid stabilisation thrives on variety and the proliferation of new associations. One way of addressing more fluid stabilisation would thus be to develop a multi-scalar approach that produces relations between the different retail areas (as well as other retailers), invoking more hybrid spaces on scales from the individual shops to regions and beyond. This would also have to include the integration of other uses than retail, for example, public services, public transport or activities of civil society. The growing retail areas of today need new associations, perhaps even new building typologies, and the empirical study on which this article is based suggests that the most important things to integrate with the existing retail areas are regional planning and non-retail activities. The list could, of course, be made longer. Ultimately, what is needed is a more inclusive approach where urban planners and retail planners go beyond the stereotype of the already established retail type and, instead of fine-tuning its machinery, open up to inviting a much larger and more fluid set of actors into its midst. It is our belief that these efforts could benefit from further investigations into how different forms of spatial stabilisations may promote or counteract spatial resilience.

[6] Although we are focusing on the different scales of the urban landscape, it is imporatant to not lose sight of the global scale. Cumming formulates this well when he states that: "the larger the footprint, the greater the city's reliance on external production and absorption, and the less resilient it becomes to sudden changes in supply and demand systems" (Cumming, 2011, p. 26).

[7] In connection with such a multi-scalar approach it could also be argued that the traditional debate between the strands of a poly-centric or a mono-centric spatial organisation becomes obsolete. Every scale has its own affordances. It is thus not about finding the right balance between centralised and decentralised structures (where the poly-centric is favoured over the fragmented), as Cumming suggests (Cumming 2011, p. 197) but interconnectedness acted out on different scales. Even a poly-centric retail structure might run the risk of reproducing a certain scale hierarchy of retail to all the different nodes of the urban landscape.

Finally, following Harman (as well as the trajectory of actor network-theory), it might be suggested that the concept of object resilience acknowledging spatial, material and non-material entities without bias towards one or two of them, might be a fruitful way of taking the concept of spatial resilience one step further in a more multi-scalar direction, but such a development is beyond the scope of this article.

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