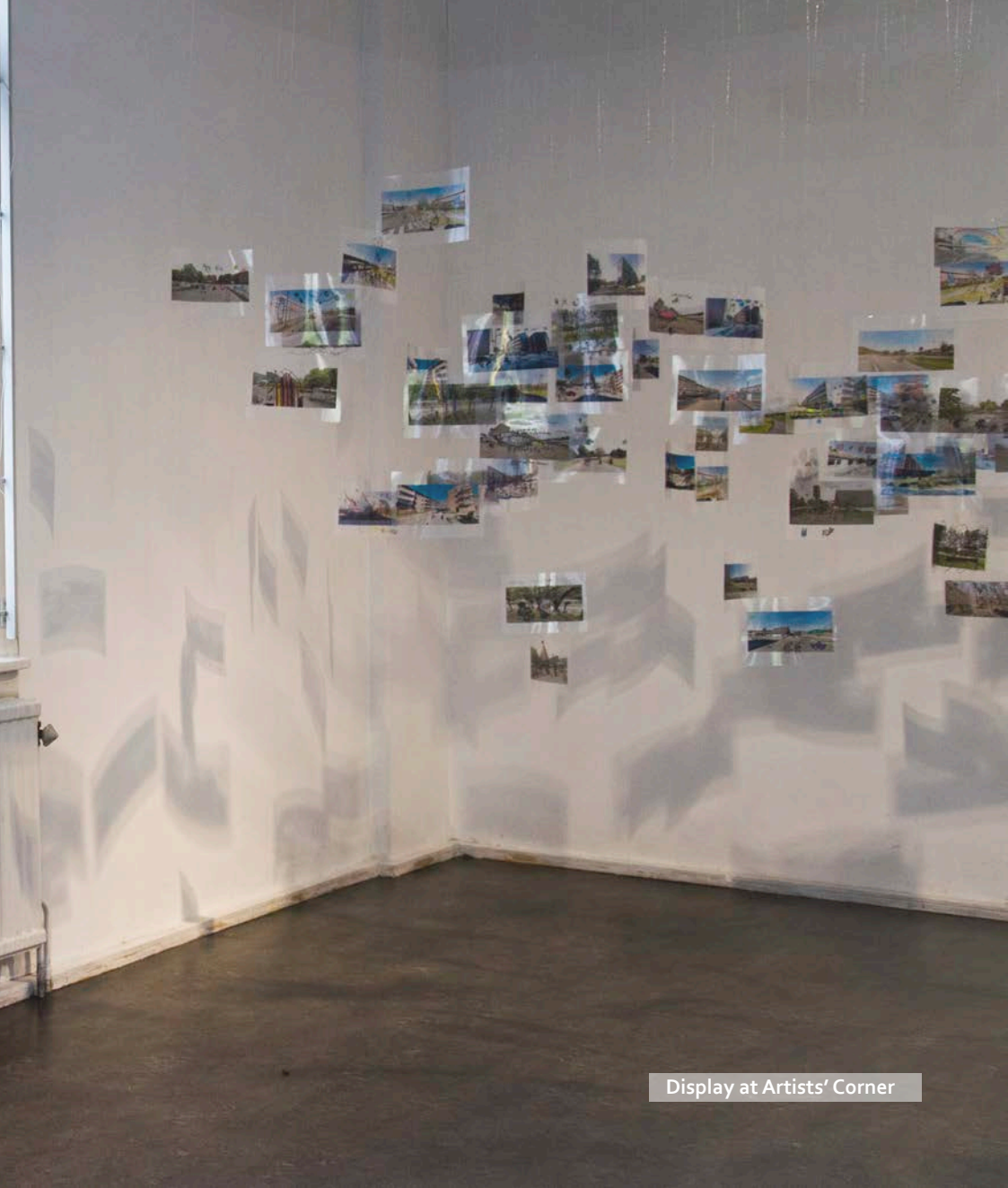
A Monument Of The City To Build

Phase 1 : January - August 2021

Projekt by:
Reyhaneh Mirjahni
Azadeh Zaghi



Display at Artists' Corner

This text is an articulation of our process in phase one that is presented along the exhibition at Floras Rike in July-August 2021. The text is part of the final publication that is being developed as the project goes on.

The project is funded by Göteborg Stad in collaboration with Blåstället Konsthall, Hammarkullsskolan, Dômen konstskola, Navet Bergsjön, Göteborgs botaniska trädgård, Allas Ateljé, Konstepidemin and Kulturrådet..

Göteborg
July 2021

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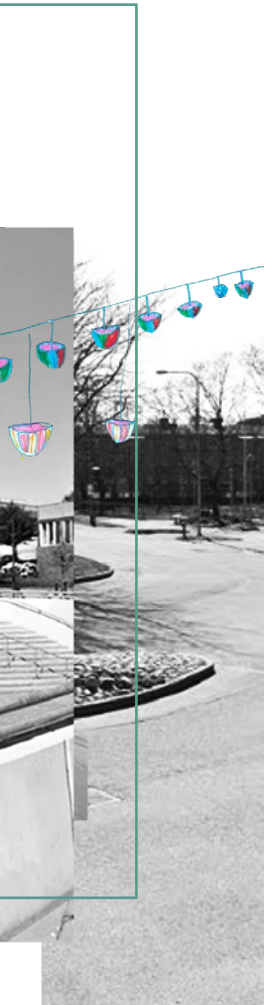
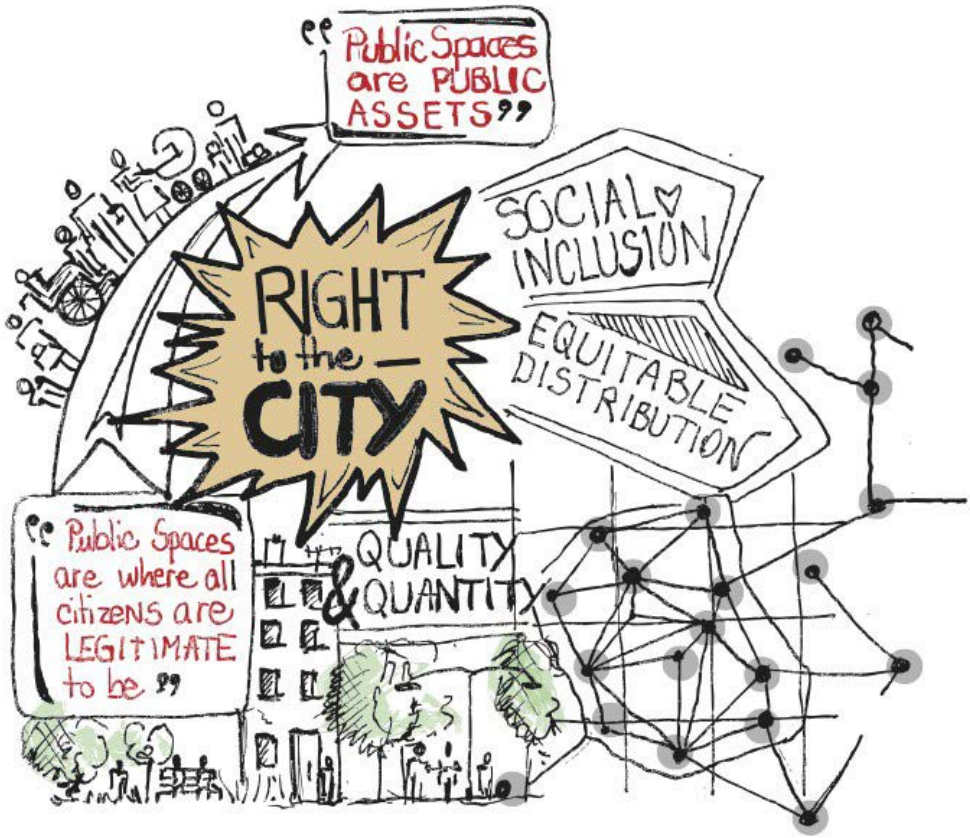
PROJEKT DESCRIPTION



A Monument Of The City To Build is a process-driven social engaged artistic project, initiated by Azadeh E Zaghi and Reyhaneh Mirjahani, presenting the concept of the "right to the city", public space, residentship right and responsibility through the series of pedagogical processes events and discussions and the exhibition format. The project aims to engage the residents of Gothenburg via similar content, placing an emphasis on dialogical meetings, and to understand the differences of response, engagement, and conversation around the right to the city. This approach is pursued in an effort to stand against the marginalisation of Gothenburg.

Through a method of pedagogical artistic integration, this project intends to empower the residents to be part of the ongoing discussion on the "right to the city" and to see themselves capable of demanding a better environment for themselves, for those around them and for their city Gothenburg, by speaking their stories and reflecting on their lived experience in the city, while translating this exploration into a collaborative artwork.



The illustration is from www.learning.uclg.org

Purcell, M., "Excavating Lefebvre: The right to the city and its urban politics of the inhabitant", *GeoJournal 58*, pp. 99-108, 2002.

Harvey, D., "The Right to the City", *New Left Review 53*, pp. 23-40, 2008.

RIGHT TO THE CITY

In recent years the "right to the city" has become a more and more fascinating slogan when we talk about urban space and its inhabitants. As an alternative to liberalism idea of urban space, the right to the city originated by Henri Lefebvre put forwards a "radical restructuring of social, political and economic relations" in the city (Purcell, 2002) and it has turned into a standing point for social movements, academic circles and cultural organizations to foster and open-ended vision of urban politics.

The right to the city aims to reorient decision-making away from the state and towards the production of urban space, restructuring the power relations which underline urban space and transferring control from capital and the state over to urban inhabitants. The right to the city revolves around the production of urban space so it is by and for those who live in the city, who contribute to the body of urban lived experience and lived space. To lead the empowerment go to those who inhabit the city.

To challenge the space created by urban neoliberalism we approach urban space as a common space of living, rather than individual liberty. As it is clearly explained by David Harvey, "the right to the city is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights" (Harvey, 2008).

Conversation and pedagogical event with Dômen konstskola

ARTISTIC METHOD AND METHODOLOGY

As mentioned above, in the past few years, the notion of "the right to the city" entered public discussion and has been one of the main topics between civil rights activists, scholars, and City Hall officials in different countries. Although the discussion has been mainly held in capitals, it has majorly influenced activists in other cities, especially here in Gothenburg. In our research, we noticed young adults and children are not directly involved, or part of these conversations in any of the relevant institutions or organisations, especially not the children who are from marginalized areas through the recent year's gentrification.

In this project, as an action-based socially engaged art project, we have created a space for participating young adults and children to talk together about the space around us, to document it and to reproduce it in relation to our needs and the needs of the people who live with us. These conversations are facilitated in a critical manner to foster the knowledge of critical thinking in young actors of the society and also to discuss their rights along with their responsibilities. This is intended by creating a space for the participants to be introduced to both the discourse around the right to the city and to the tools of critical thinking and discussion in order to create their own idea of the city, suitable for everyone.

Moreover, as the right to the city is fundamentally intertwined with the struggle for democracy in the urban public realm, the project maintains a strong focus on one of the main basic elements of democracy, which is active participation of the people, as residents, in politics and civic life. Through the conversation about the right to the city, we have created a space where children and young adults could understand the meaning of "participation" and could exercise it while realising the responsibility they have as residents within this discourse to get one step closer to our ideal democratic space. To empower the participating children to exercise democratic discourse, the project has provided a space where they can practice one of the most important skills a citizen needs: critical thinking.

For this purpose, the main artistic material in the pedagogical events are photos gathered from street view in Google maps. The reason is to have the photos from a neutral point of view and different angles to choose randomly with the same quality and aesthetic. Through pedagogical artistic integration, the participants are invited to intervene in the photos and create their own image, after the discussion facilitated by us.

pedagogical event at Hammarkullsskolan

EVENTS

E1 Pedagogical event at Hammarkullsskolan

January 2021 - Hammarkullen, Gothenburg

At Hammarkullen, in collaboration with Blå Stället Konsthall, we held five pedagogical activities/workshops for children aged between seven to nine. Giving an introduction about Gothenburg and its different regions and neighbourhoods, we initiated a discussion about what we see around us in the public space, what we think of the city and how we perceive our relation to and with the city. In this conversation, we discuss the positive and negative effects of this public space for ourselves, and for other inhabitants. This was pursued by ordinary conversation around what would they like to add or remove to their city, how do they feel about Gothenburg, and what would they like their city to look like that would suit everyone around them.

While children were doing their intervention into the spaces in the pictures given to them from the city, we talked with them individually about their work and wrote down their story. Although the children chose to work both on the photos from city center and their neighbourhood, some of their stories were surprisingly about how the violence in their neighbourhood public living space has been represented by the media, and some uncover the deep segregation that is ongoing in some neighbourhoods ofGothenburg and how it is being imposed to their inhabitants.

pedagogical event at Hammarkullsskolan

E2 Display at Artists' Corner

May 2021 - Konstepidemin, Gothenburg

At Artists' Corner in Konstepidemin, for the first time we put on display part of the ongoing research process of the project, by presenting the material we gathered from Hammarkullsskolan to be the base for the conversation with the broader public and from different parts of the city, as well as other artists in Konstepidemin . This decision was made to use the venue in Konstepidemin (as a whitecube in the center of city) to not only present the work of children from Hammarkullen, but also to present their thoughts, opinions and perceptions of the city and the neighbourhood they live in.

During the display, we were present in the venue, motivating the public to be part of the discussion and also inviting them to have their own intervention in the photos from the city. In this process, more adults participated in the conversation about the project and their thoughts on "the right to the city". It was interesting to see most of the photo interventions were about the changes in the appearance of the city, mainly in the city center.

Display at Artists' Corner

Display at Artists' Corner

E3 Conversation and pedagogical event with Dômen konstskola

May 2021 - Konstepidemin, Gothenburg

During the display at Artists' Corner, two groups of students from Dômen konstskola visited the space and participated in the pedagogical workshop we prepared. At first, we had a conversation about the concept of "the right to the city". Later they were invited to use the same method and intervene in the photos of the city, focusing on what they do demand from their city, and what their responsibility is to their city through artistic and urban design. The result of their work was decided to be presented in the exhibition at Floras Rika.

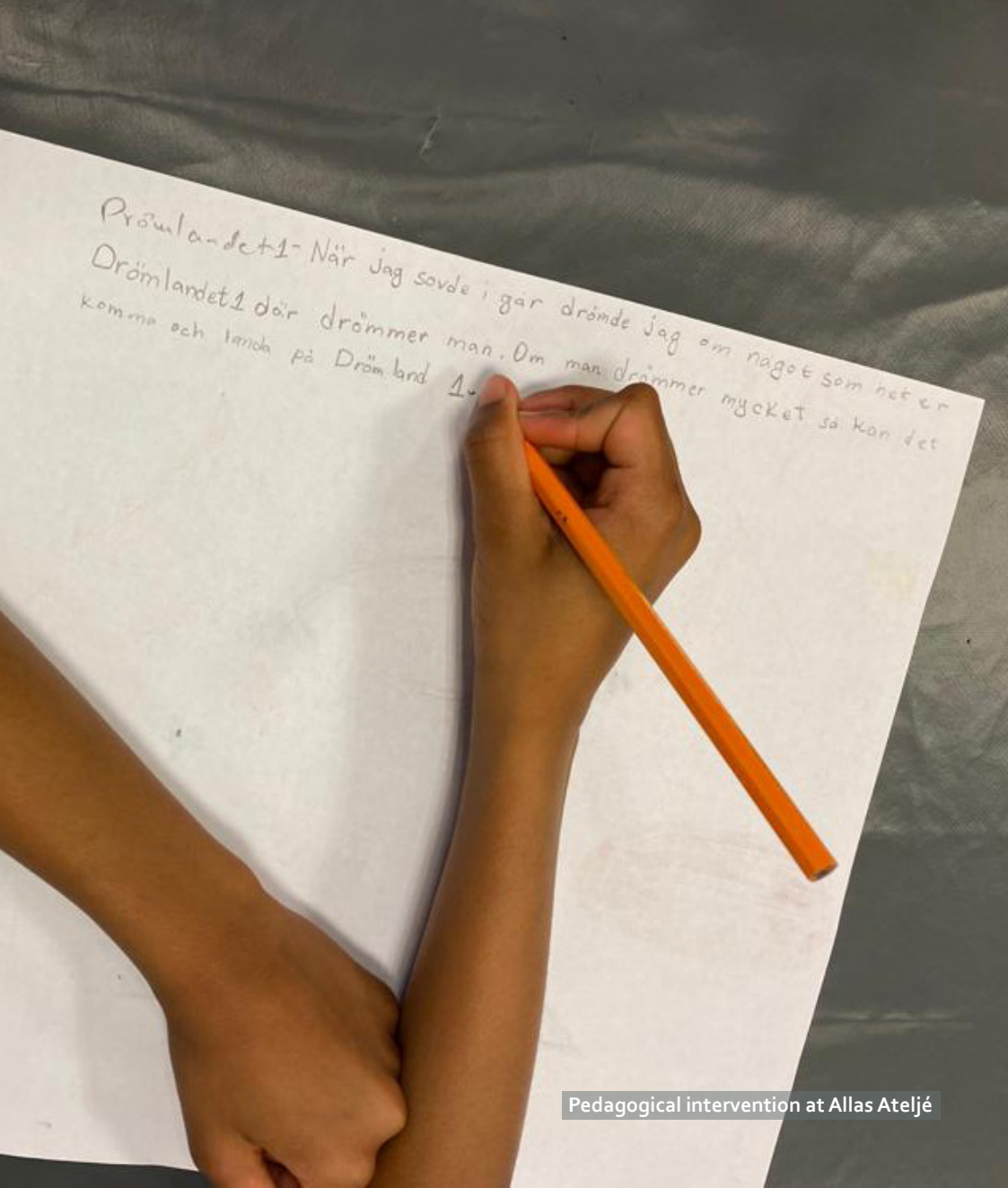
Conversation and pedagogical event with Dômen konstskola

E4 Pedagogical intervention at Allas Ateljé

July 2021 - Bergsjön, Gothenburg

Through Kulturstråket in Bergsjön, at Allas Ateljé we held two pedagogical activities/workshops open to the public, specifically children and young adults in Bergsjön. As Kulturstråket is a project run between 2021-2023 in collaboration between Navet, civil society and property owners in Bergsjön and the city of Gothenburg, we have chosen this space to develop our project in this context.

Through this process, we created a space for children to reflect on the city and turn the city into a place for imagination by drawing on existing photos of the city of Gothenburg. Groups of children and young adults were introduced to the concept of "right to the city" and the same method as Hammarkullsskolan was done with them. The participants were very interested to do the photo interventions with the photos from different parts of the cities. The result of their work was decided to be presented in the exhibition at Floras Rika.



Pedagogical intervention at Allas Ateljé

E5 Exhibition at Floras Rike

July/August 2021 - Gothenburg Botanical Garden

At Floras Rika, we have gathered all the material from the photo interventions created in phase 1 of the project, and presented them in an exhibition format in one of the main attraction sites in Gothenburg. The photos are taken from the participants in the pedagogical events from Hammarkullsskolan, Dômen konstskola, Kulturstråket, Allas Ateljé and Konstepidemin.

By presenting all the photo interventions together, we intend to create a monument as a symbolic action to sew together the segregated areas and the city center. It is to present how our imagination of the city to build contains different perceptions of the public living space based on where we live and how our neighborhood is being presented by the media.

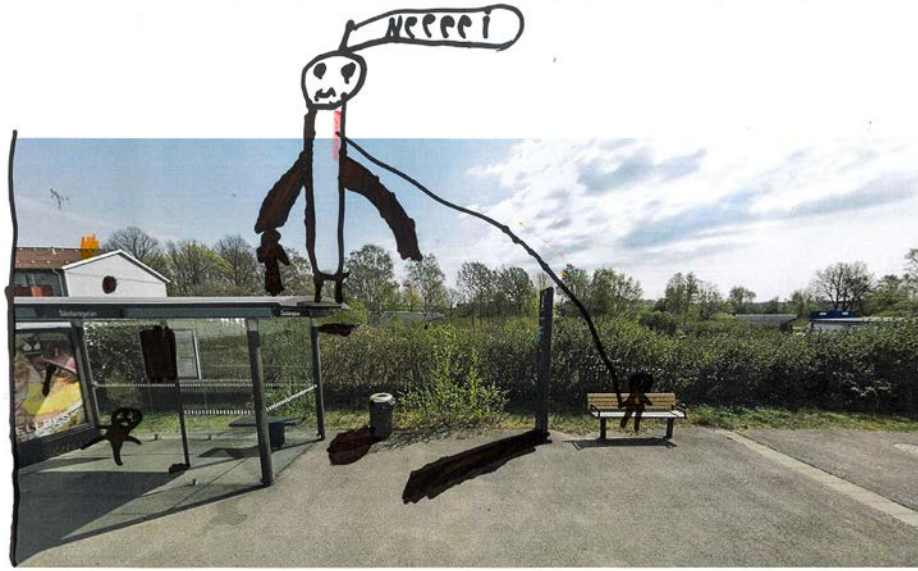
Parallel with the exhibition there is a DIY area in the venue for the public to create their own photo intervention to be added to the collection. In addition, there are two pedagogical public events, facilitated by us to have a discussion around the subject of "the right to the city" as well as creating some photo intervention collectively.

BUSTAVEN
HAR ORGANISERAR
VI ALLT
ARBETE
VI BESTÄMMER

Exhibition at Floras Rike

BOSTÄDER
HÄR ORGANISERAR
VI ALLT
ARBETE
SJÄLVSTÄNDIGT
HÄR BESTÄMMER
VI OSS FÖR ATT GÖRA ALLA
FACKFÖRENINGAR
MINDRE
TAFFLIGA
& FRI FRÅN
STATEN.
TILLSAMMANS
GRATIS
MAT
Här odlar vi
Mat till Allhåhheten

Drömland 1



"Superpowers in Sweden come from heaven to earth to save the children. The earth is Sweden, another Sweden."

- "My sister and I are going to fly to Sweden. A planet that is in space, where you are safe. "
- "but you already live in Sweden, here is Sweden."
- "no, this is not Sweden, this is Hammarkullen."

WHAT IS NEXT?

With the end of the exhibition at Floras Rika in July 2021, we will finish the phase 1 of our project to be able to rethink, reevaluate and reflect on the project since it started in January 2021. Through this artistic process, same as all process-based artistic projects, we have faced some challenges and objections around the subject of "the right to the city" as well as the segregation and gentrification here in gothenburg, which we are aiming to include in the discussions and pedagogical events in the next phase.

For us it has been very important to create a space to challenge and question the relationship between inhabitants and the city. Since the beginning, the project was formulated mainly for children and young adults and our goal has been to exercise democracy, responsibility, community participation and social demands. At this point we think we should expand our project beyond the targeted age to not foster another gap between different groups of the society.

We have some questions to think about, before starting the new phase, which we would like to share it with you:

- Ethically, how should we work with the violence presented in some of the photo interventions?

- In our pedagogical artistic method, what has been different when we worked with children, young adults and adults? How can we reduce the gap that exists between working in an art project with children, young adults and adults?

- Since discussion is one of our main methods in this project, how can we articulate and present the process that is happening in the pedagogical events/workshops in the exhibition space?

- What happens when we present the photo interventions from segregated areas in a white cube setting in the city center?

- Should we mention where each photo intervention is coming from, considering the directed representation of the segregated areas by the media, or should we generalize our participants as "children of Gothenburg"/"inhabitants of Gothenburg"?

- Should we only focus on the segregated areas and bring the voice of the marginalised into the city center?

- What can we take out from our observations from the pedagogical events? How can we apply some analytical methods?

"I want a circus in Hammarkullen. A candy machine and a toothpaste machine. We will brush our teeth after eating sweets and watching the circus."

Massa människor och fåglar

ABOUT ARTISTS

Azadeh E. Zaghi is educated in Critical Pedagogy and Project Management and holds an MFA in Fine Art from HDK-Valand. She is a visual artist and artistic pedagog based in Gothenburg. She often works with the topics of international relations, anti-racism, political economy, exceptionalism, and historical representation of trauma. Her projects take the form of performances, videos and installations, documentary films, as well as artistic educational social engagement projects in the public space. She is the founder of East In West FineArt and has been involved in all the projects initiated by the organization. Currently she is an artistic project leader at Naved, in Bergsjön.

www.azadehzaghi.com
azadeh.zaghi@gmail.com

Reyhaneh Mirjahani is an artist and artistic researcher based in Gothenburg. She holds an MFA in Fine Art from HDK-Valand, and a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Sculpture from University of Tehran. Her artistic practice is concerned with the idea of political agency, international relations, nationality and institutional critique through video, sculpture and participatory installations. She has collaborated with and exhibited in various organizations and institutions in Iran, Italy, Poland, UK, and Sweden. Moreover, for the past year she has been engaged with research and writing about social engaged art, physical presence and sensory experiences which have been published in critical journals in Iran, Sweden and the UK.

www.reyhanehmirjahani.com
rey.mirj@gmail.com