

# STAD

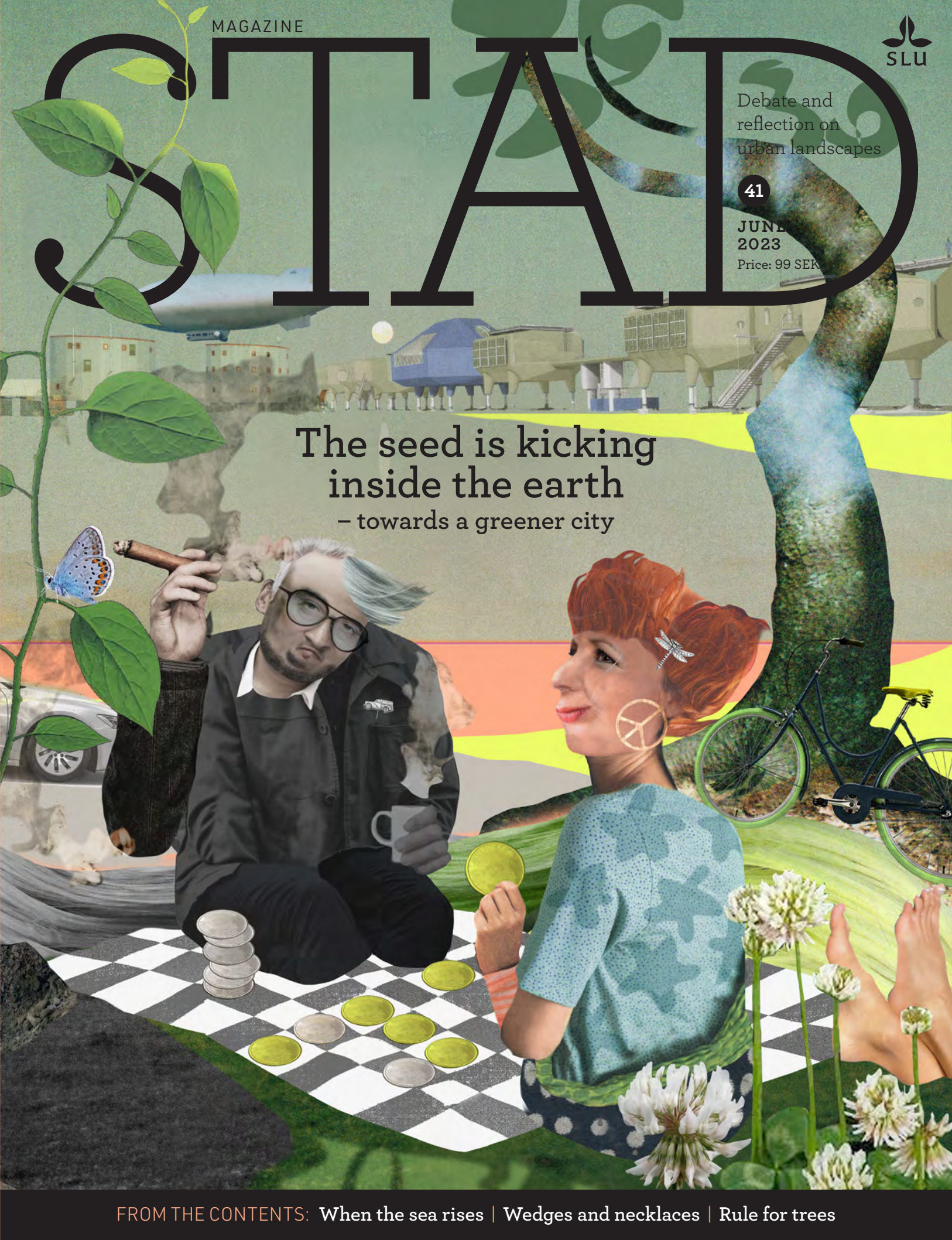
Debate and reflection on urban landscapes

41

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MAGAZINE

# STAD

## The STAD magazine – debate and reflection on urban landscapes

captures trends, reflects developments and highlights research and practice for sustainable urban development. The STAD magazine is published by SLU Movium Think Tank, which works with urban development issues and is based at SLU.

[movium.slu.se](http://movium.slu.se)

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The stanza that forms the title of our theme issue, *The seed is kicking inside the earth*, is taken from the poem *Solitary Swedish Houses*, by Tomas Tranströmer, in the poetry collection *Secrets on the Way*, 1958.



## We produce STAD

The STAD magazine is one of SLU Movium Think Tank's profile products. Movium acts according to the motto: urban nature – human city. Research, planning, design and management of urban landscapes are at the centre of our work. The starting point is to see the outdoor environment as a vital resource in the creation of attractive and sustainable cities.





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# The trees and the rain

“**There’s a tree** walking around in the rain”, writes the poet Tomas Tranströmer in his poem *The Tree and the Sky*; it has an errand – it gathers life out of the rain. With groundwater up to their knees, small solitary trees stand on the quiet beach meadow on the southern tip of Öland, stretching their thorny grey and yet bare branches towards the pale sky. Winged lapwings chirp loudly as they swoop across the field. I am far beyond the city this time. It gives me perspective on life. Sometimes you have to change track to see where the journey is taking you and to be able to identify the conditions under which you live, to grasp what has become self-evident.

The city is a construction, one that is fantastic in many ways, and rather destructive in others. It can, however, evoke such wonderment, that man is constantly creating his living environment, wherever he is. But there are no cities, Per G Berg, professor in landscape architecture at SLU, once said in a seminar. That’s something I have never forgotten. What did he mean?

**Well, what he meant** was that cities are places where we people flock together in one place because we want to live together. If people move out, these places will die. So a city is a collection of people, of life, alive for as long as life goes on. Which means you may believe

that the researchers forgot about life other than people in cities – plants and animals. Per G Berg and his colleagues had not forgotten, quite the reverse: when they talked about densification, they were not talking about building tightly-packed houses, but finding the balance between density and space, which is a challenge in urban design. They called this *functional densification*, where buildings and nature – that is, people and nature – live in harmony.

The barren chalky landscape of southern Öland is anything but flattering. It doesn’t appeal in the least to anyone. It is self-sufficient on its own terms. A tiny stone house stands on its own out in the middle of the waterlogged ground, beside it a plastic container glows in turquoise. It brings to mind a place, a landscape abandoned by people.

And then I think about Chernobyl, as depicted in the *Climate Propagandas* video study by artist Jonas Staal, which was recently shown at Moderna Museet Malmö (Museum of Modern Art in Malmö). In it, the camera passes over green canopies of trees that frame abandoned high-rise buildings. There is no one there – it is no longer a city. That is to say: there are no people here. But life goes on. The place has been reclaimed and repopulated by what the voiceover calls *fellow non-human workers*; a fox comes pawing over rubble and pebbles, and a horse, and a bird of prey feeds its young high up in the ruins...

**Can human** and non-human comrades cooperate in this abandoned socialist society, asks an increasingly inaudible voice in the video study – indefinable sounds hiss and rumble, the human voice disappears under a carpet of noise – she is clearly not dominant here, however much she talks. But she asks herself in the subtitle: Is there a lesson to be learned here about the destructiveness of a life that utilises total exploitation for personal gain? Do we sense a paradigm shift? Do we now have an opportunity to repair an ecosystem where we all share the same space, where man and nature are part of the same unit and not a dichotomy?

The poet Tomas Tranströmer speaks again, this time from his poem *The Crossing Place*:

*For a thousand years, in the earth deep under traffic  
the unborn forest quietly waits.*

TITTI OLSSON, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, STAD MAGAZINE



ILLUSTRATION: KAROLINA LILLEQUIST



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THEME:

# The seed is kicking inside the earth

Important keywords for someone who creates a well-designed living environment are: "beautiful", "sustainable" and "inclusive". But how is the path to a greener city depicted? What policy documents are there and how well can they support the transition to a sustainable city?

ILLUSTRATOR: KAROLINA LILLIEQUIST







# Wedges, fingers, necklaces and belts

Creating more greenery in the city is by no means something new. Caroline Dahl is looking for historical precedents to promote more nature in urban development.

CAROLINE DAHL

## READ MORE

Region Stockholm. (2012). *När, vad och hur? Svaga Samband i Stockholmsregionens gröna kilar*. Rapport 5:2012

Andersson, Stig L. (2021). *Like an Oarsman: Moving Forward, Looking Backwards Towards the Past*. I *Green Visions: Greenspace Planning and Design in Nordic Cities*. Stockholm: Nordregion.

COPI15 in Montreal closed at the end of last year with an agreement on a new global framework for biodiversity. The framework is known as the *Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework*. The agreement was reached against the background of the drastic decline in biodiversity worldwide.

The agreement documents state that 25 per cent of the animal and plant species studied are under threat. This means that around one million species face the threat of extinction if measures are not taken to reduce the impact of factors that contribute to the decline in biodiversity. Five direct factors with a negative impact on biodiversity are highlighted in descending order of impact: changes in land and water use, exploitation of organisms - such as overfishing, pollution and invasive species.

### Impact of urban development

Urban development contributes to these factors in various ways but is also affected by them. At the same time, there are growing levels of knowledge as well as demand for further knowledge in urban ecology and biodiversity in urban contexts. Changed approaches to the relationship between the built environment and the green environment can

»If we look back in history, there are many well-known examples.



»*The agreement documents state that 25 per cent of the animal and plant species studied are under threat.*

be identified. International agreements certainly contribute to changes in approach, and there are several current initiatives at European level that contribute to this, but are also so radical that they are controversial.

One of these is the *Nature Restoration Law*, which was presented to the European Commission in June last year. The aim is to repair the majority of the 80% of Europe's habitats currently in poor condition and to reintroduce nature into all types of ecosystems, from forests and farmland to marine, freshwater and urban ecosystems. Measures listed in the proposal include feralisation, reforestation, greening of cities and infrastructure, as well as reducing pollution to allow nature to recover.

#### **Sparking debate**

The proposal's provisions to the effect that no net loss of green spaces will be allowed in cities from and including 2030, and that green spaces will increase by five per cent by 2050, have sparked debate in Sweden. The debate focuses on the fact that Swedish cities and urban areas already contain comparatively large green spaces and that increasing these will therefore not provide added value - or even be possible in terms of surface area. In addition to these measures, there are also proposals that all European cities and suburbs should maintain a tree canopy cover of at least ten per cent and that there should be a net increase in green spaces integrated into buildings and infrastructure. →



The relationship between the built and the green areas has long been a constant tug-of-war. The debate often focuses on quantitative demands for space. It would be desirable and urgent to extend the discussion to include form and structural aspects, both conceptual and functional. If we look back in history, there are many well-known examples. London's green belt, which was launched in 1919, is one of the most well-known, along with Boston's *Emerald Necklace* which was launched at the end of the 19th century.

### Green ring

However, it wasn't until 1935 that the idea of a green ring around London was formally enshrined as a way of preventing further urban development. The Greater London Plan of 1945 proposed four different rings: one for the inner city, one for the suburbs, a green belt, and a further ring outside it, a rural ring. In 1945, it was proposed that the green belt should be almost one mile wide. As time went on, it became increasingly specified, but also controversial in terms of whether the land could be better used for densification.

Unlike London, the purpose of Boston's 'Emerald Necklace' was not to limit urban sprawl. The intention was to link a number of parks and green spaces into a single coherent green structure. At the centre of this linear park system is *The Muddy River*, which actually consists of a system of ponds. This system was designed by the American landscape designer and architect Frederick Law Olmsted. The aim was to collect water from wetlands and transform the river into a public space with shaped and planted banks.

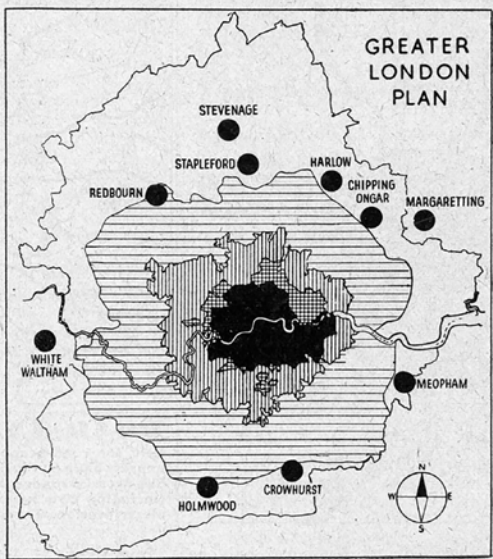
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### Green wedges

On the home front, Stockholm's green wedges have been a concept in regional planning since at least the 1960s. There are currently ten distinct wedges that consist of large contiguous areas with several high values. Region Stockholm emphasises the cultural and historical values in particular as being essential to take into consideration. The wedges consist of wedge areas, green value cores and vague, green connections where the width of the wedges is 500 metres or less, and where various planning situations - such as intersections with infrastructure and urban development structure, or alongside water - mean that they risk being further reduced.

More internationally and architecturally recognised is Copenhagen's Finger Plan, which was created as early as 1947 on the initiative of the Danish Urban Planning Laboratory. Possibly to be seen as a model or inspiration for Stockholm, the plan outlines a spatial development based on the relationship between urban development along public transport routes and the preservation or creation of green structures in between. At the →



Different solutions in different cities to find the balance between the built environment and the nature in the city.

»*In 1945, it was proposed that the green belt should be almost one mile wide.*

time of its creation, the Finger Plan was a strong conceptual stand against other urban development ideals that also appeared at the time, such as Ebenezer Howard's satellite garden cities as well as more linear urban development models inspired by Ivan Leonidov's ribbon city.

#### **Common challenge**

A common spatial challenge for both Stockholm's wedges and Copenhagen's Finger Plan is when and how transverse routes should and need to be developed. These inevitably break the green contexts and distribution corridors for both flora and fauna that the concepts initially had.

Another challenge is highlighted by the Danish landscape architect Stig L. Andersson, founder of the SLA office, in a book on green structure planning in the Nordic countries that was published in 2021. According to Stig L. Andersson, today's green spaces are lacking in terms of quality and location because they are not located in the vicinity of where people move around on a daily basis. He considers that the concepts need to be updated so that they are not only based on quantitative values but also include qualitative and aesthetic values.

In brief, Andersson's proposal to meet the challenges is to 'forest' the green spaces of the Finger Plan and to create nature trails in existing urban development in order to increase everyday access to green spaces. In order to succeed in this, Andersson believes that a completely new understanding of nature and type of nature are needed, nature that is designed by people and that actively utilises the inherent ability of nature to shape and develop itself.

#### **Sustainable solutions**

These four concepts for the relationship between the built environment and nature may need to be updated, but they have also stood the test of time even in the face of changing urban design ideals. One likely reason for this is that they are all based on a clear idea that is both spatial and structural.

Design and architecture have the ability to resolve contradictions that at first glance seem incompatible. This ability comes from the training of the architect and designer in qualitative visual thinking, as well as the use of the tool that only the environmental design disciplines have – the materialisation of the balance in spatial structure.

The proposal in the *Nature Restoration Law* may have its shortcomings, but it also calls for landscape architects, architects and designers to step forward and show what form the integrated solutions that are needed to increase the proportion of green space in cities may take. A challenge that can hardly be difficult to accept! ●



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# Rule for trees breaks around the world

How is it that the 3-30-300 rule has had such a huge breakthrough and had an outreach superior to research? STAD called on its author to explain.

KOLBJÖRN GUWALLIUS

The 3-30-300 rule for trees in cities is gaining more influence. But critics argue that it is simplified and risks being used incorrectly for greenwashing. STAD asked its author Cecil Konijnendijk, director of Nature Based Solutions Institute. He agrees with the criticism – while defending the rule.

Cecil Konijnendijk is a Doctor of Science in forest policy and economics and has long been researching nature-based solutions in cities. For 25 years, he has said “No” each time he has been asked about a simple guideline for trees in cities. There are no universal solutions for how densely a city should be populated with trees.

– Eventually, I concluded that something had to be done. There is always the question about how much it can be simplified, but I believe that I can stand by this because of the research and because of what we know about how important it is to have trees nearby, he argues.

## From the dwelling

The 3-30-300 rule implies that people should be able to see three trees from their own apartment or house, that there should be 30 per cent tree canopy in every neighbourhood and that nobody should have more than 300 metres to some kind of green area.

– I came up with the rule after reading an Australian scientific article about the huge increase in health benefits that came with a canopy of 30 per cent. I talked to one of the researchers, who said that whatever you study – sleep, mental health, birth weight – you can conclude that 30 per cent canopy gives a distinct effect.

Previous research has pointed out a connection between good health and less than 300 metres between a person’s residence and a green area. Cecil Konijnendijk thought that the numbers looked good together at the same time as they were based on evidence.

– It was a little random, a coincidence. →







»*The rule has, in a short period of time, made a huge breakthrough and is used in cities across the world.*

The three is a little ricketier. Researchers have shown benefits of living close to greenery, but there is a lack of evidence suggesting that exactly three trees visible from someone's dwelling should make the difference. It is also harder to measure the impact. Things like how far away the trees can stand, how small they may be, how much of them you can see, or whether you have to walk up to a window to see them, are not addressed by the 3-30-300 rule.

#### **Communicative reasons**

Cecil Konijnendijk chose the number three for communicative reasons. The most important thing is that people have greenery around them that they can see without too much effort.

– I always point out that that's not based on evidence. Naturally, it's not exactly three trees. But more research is on the way, suggesting a connection between health benefits and the ability to see trees from your home. In Barcelona, for instance, it has been possible to see during lockdown that those who could see trees from their dwellings had better mental health.

The rule has, in a short period of time, made a huge breakthrough and is used in cities across the world. In Sweden, Malmö municipality recently announced that it will be included in the comprehensive plan.

– It is a question about climate and the environment as well as quality of life. We are a large but also densely built city surrounded by arable land and half of Malmö's area is sea. Since our main strategy for expansion is through densification, we need to think about how we can simultaneously create a greener city, says Stefana Hoti (Green Party), municipal government commissioner for city development and chairman of the city planning committee. →



*»It was a little random, a coincidence.*

#### **Little green space**

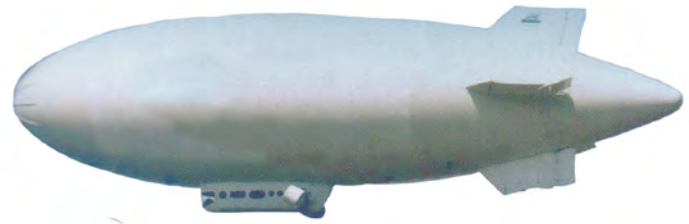
Malmö has little green space per capita and an average tree canopy of only eleven per cent. This means that achieving the goal is a long way off. But Stefana Hoti thinks they can reach it.

– The prerequisites are good. In part, it's a question about speeding up and prioritising greenery. When we build something new, we must think in every direction about what we can add.

She highlights that there is also the issue of equity. Today, Malmö's more affluent areas are also the ones with the most greenery. Poorer parts of the city risk additional suffering from, for example, heat waves.

#### **How can the rule be implemented in areas that are already densely built?**

– Many of the tree plantings are now done in the city environment where it's already built up. We move street parking spaces to mobility houses and to shared mobility, thus freeing up space for greenery.



### **Can Malmö implement the rule strictly or do you need to adapt it?**

– Above all, we need to look at the 300 rule. The model assumes a different type of city than Malmö. We need to investigate what that means with the conditions in Malmö, whether it's about neighbourhood parks or some other kind of greenery, says Stefana Hoti.

Cecil Konijnendijk believes that the success for the 3-30-300 rule is dependent on the combination of scientific evidence and that it is easy to explain and remember. In some languages, the words “three” and “tree” has a certain proximity that gives the rule even more impact.

– There was a demand for guidelines that could be easily communicated and understood by everyone, not just the professional experts. It also mattered that there was some foundation in evidence, he tells.

The rule is not tied to a certificate, and it doesn't cost anything to use it. But creating a simple rule that is completely let loose can also bring complications. Critical voices have been raised that the simplifications may do damage when the rule is used by politicians who want to stand out as capable while lacking sound knowledge.

Anna Maria Pálsdóttir is a docent in environmental psychology at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. She researches environments beneficial for people's health. According to her, the 3-30-300 rule is too much of a slogan. She calls for more thought-out ways of communicating knowledge about nature and health.

– It's too much marketing and selling. They beat the big drum and make a simple thing of a complex matter. But I understand his frustration over the fact that researchers don't reach out with our common vocabulary, she says.

Anna Maria Pálsdóttir takes the distance to a green area as an example. If a policy maker measures on a map, they might not take into consideration whether there is a motorway between the dwellings and the green area that affects the recreational gain, even if it's 300 metres as the crow flies.

– Regrettably, the idea has taken off and ended up with people who aren't trained in relevant knowledge or science and don't understand what's behind the numbers. I'm in favour of finding ways to communicate research and knowledge, but there's a risk that people with no knowledge turn it into something completely different. →

»*They beat the big drum and make a simple thing of a complex matter.*

**Can't you just see it as an inspiration?**

– Definitely, when it's put forward by professionals who have the in-depth knowledge. Otherwise, it easily only becomes a slogan for combating the climate crisis or improving people's health. The same solutions don't work everywhere, and it can't be certain that it is executed in a good way, says Anna Maria Pálsdóttir.

Cecil Konijnendijk partially agrees with the criticism.

– It is of course correct. When I write or give presentations, I always point out that it's a guideline to be used carefully, in context and together with other guidelines and principles, he says.

Despite the remarks, he thinks that the benefits outweigh the shortcomings.

– The most important thing is to realise the importance of having trees and greenery nearby. Otherwise, we risk losing quite a lot of greenery in our cities.

**Is there a risk that the rule is being abused?**

– Yes, but I have deliberately said that I don't want to oversee it. I've said that it may be used and made clear how it is to be used, and then we can have a dialogue about that. I believe it's a good thing that it sparks discussions about trees in cities. An example of how the rule has developed further is that some people have added a 3.000 step at the end. One proposal was that people should have access to 3.000 square metres of wild nature, another one that the canopy volume should be at least 3.000 cubic metres.

– Both are interesting. You can't only see canopy as two-dimensional since it's the volume that provides the ecosystem services. It's great that people think further, it's good as long as there's a discussion going on and they argue for why they do what they do.

**Do you see an obvious 3.000 step yourself?**

– The idea of wild nature is good. It could be a small forest or siting an area of wild nature within a housing area, says Cecil Konijnendijk. ●

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# Vague wording creates diffuse framework

Sweden is a white patch on the European Urban Agenda. Why is that? STAD poses this question to the research institute RISE, which has summarised the state of knowledge for the Government.

KOLBJÖRN GUWALLIUS

**A**msterdam 2016. Ministers with responsibility for urban issues meet during the Dutch presidency. They conclude an agreement on an 'Urban Agenda' for the EU, the Pact of Amsterdam. Since then, a number of so-called partnership programmes have been implemented to tackle urban challenges. But in 2023, Sweden is still a white patch on the programme map, and the Pact doesn't even have a name in Swedish. Perhaps the Amsterdam Agreement may work.

Ahead of the Swedish presidency of the EU, the research institute RISE was commissioned by Formas to conduct interviews and draw up a report on the Urban Agenda. Its task was to investigate how different actors within the EU perceive the Urban Agenda, and what can be done to drive the work forward.

One of the report's authors, Jessica Andersson, a planning architect and project manager for sustainable urban development at RISE, notes that awareness in Sweden of the agenda is low. As a country, we also have a comparatively

passive approach to it.

– It's something of a Swedish tradition to back into these kinds of collaborations. This applies to European issues in general, but also specifically to urban issues, she says.

## Framework for collaboration

The Urban Agenda is a framework for collaboration on urban challenges, but there are different opinions about what it means. The wording is open to interpretation. Collaboration under the Agenda takes place at several levels – not inter-governmental, but between countries, regions and cities.

It began with recognition that cities face common challenges that are difficult to meet on their own, or can be alleviated by collaboration and knowledge sharing. There was also a view that urban issues are often forgotten in the EU. The agenda is driven forward by the various partnerships, which can range from everything from air quality and urban greening to housing shortages and poverty.





All EU countries have been involved in partnership programmes at national level with the exception of Sweden, Denmark and Austria. Three Swedish cities have participated so far. Malmö, in a programme on urban mobility; Helsingborg, on digital transition; and Gothenburg, on energy transition.

### Three pillars

The Urban Agenda is based on three pillars: more efficient and coherent implementation of policies; support in finding funding; and improved state of knowledge and knowledge sharing on urban issues.

Jessica Andersson's interviewees for the report perceived the agenda as urgent and worthwhile, despite it also being perceived as slightly vague in terms of its outline.

– Everyone agrees that the urban challenges are large, complicated and extremely complex. Work is therefore needed on the complexity, as well as addressing it, at both EU and national level. This is where the Urban Agenda is very good.

**Do you detect a gap between the fact that everyone seems to understand the importance of the agenda while not really agreeing on what contribution it should make?**

– I think there is a gap that it is important for Member States to recognise. It is only by addressing that gap that we can help to reduce it.

### Time-limited partnerships

One criticism of the Urban Agenda is that the partnerships to date have been of limited duration and there has been no natural continuation of them, despite the challenges often being continuous.

– Urban mobility doesn't stop being important after a three-year partnership, so why isn't the work an ongoing process? An *action plan* is drawn up, but what happens afterwards? This gives rise to frustration. You don't resolve challenges just because you have drawn up an action plan.

What can be achieved through a partnership programme is clearer to everyone who has actually been involved in one. →

– People who have been involved in one know what to expect. However, when the partnerships are over, some may feel that the intention or expectations have not been fulfilled. Local actors feel that they have dedicated time, energy and resources into making a contribution and may feel that they have not really got anything back, at least not something perceptible. They are unsure whether it has produced any results and many wonder what will happen next.

There are of course differences between the results of different partnerships. Some are described as more successful, others less so. The image people have is coloured by the context in which they participated.

#### **Stronger regions**

It is notable that participants in the partnerships created primarily include the larger and more resourceful regions and cities. Jessica Andersson finds that smaller municipalities often lack the resources or cannot prioritise participation. Many expect the effects of the partnership projects and the developed knowledge banks to ‘trickle down’ to smaller actors.


– The idea is that those who know the issues and made most progress will also stand on the barricades, and that this will pave the way for those who follow. In many cases, this can be a good approach, but it is not always certain to be the case. There is a lot of money and awareness-raising in the EU, and it may not always be the pioneers who need it most.

#### **Perhaps the larger cities don’t have the answers to everyone’s questions?**

– They don’t have the answers to everyone’s questions, and even they don’t have the resources to advocate on all issues. Perhaps they also don’t have *best practice* just because they are bigger. Not everything can be transferred to smaller municipalities or towns and cities in rural areas.

Keeping the Urban Agenda alive relies on it being driven forward by the EU’s rotating presidency. Despite an assessment being made ahead of Sweden’s nearly-completed six-month term, the issue is far down the Swedish agenda, which is dominated by responding to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. But Jessica Andersson believes that interest in the Urban Agenda could increase in Sweden in future.

– It definitely can. I think it would be valuable, especially if more interest was shown at national level in having our own domestic dialogue. You can forget about the EU for a short while if you want to. We have a strong tradition of rural policy in Sweden, but are probably afraid to have an urban policy, even though it is perhaps just as necessary. If we actively promote the importance of these issues at national level, it can also contribute to mutually beneficial dialogue with the local and regional levels. ●



»*There is a lot of money and awareness-raising in the EU, and it may not always be the pioneers who need it most.*

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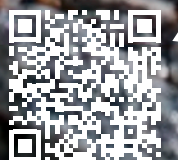


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## REFLEXION

# Three important keywords

“Sustainable”, “inclusive” and “beautiful” living environments are under the spotlight when Sweden holds the EU Presidency. Here, State Architect Helena Bjarnegård reflects on the meaning of these three concepts.

● **It is in our** living environments that we must address a number of converging societal challenges, such as climate change, reduced biodiversity, segregation and unequal public health. These challenges are complex and cannot be solved with technical tools alone; we can only achieve long-term sustainability from all perspectives and create living environments that are meaningful to us as humans when we integrate aesthetic, social and cultural values.

The words *sustainable*, *inclusive* and *beautiful* are the core values highlighted by the European Commission in the New European Bauhaus (NEB) initiative. The aim of the initiative is to link the European Green Deal with our living environments and experiences, and to demonstrate the need for creative and interdisciplinary processes in the green transition.

But what do these values mean? Here is my interpretation as State Architect at the Swedish National Board of Housing and as chair of the Council for Sustainable Cities.

## Sustainable

Sustainability is often interpreted as being strictly environmental sustainability. However, since the 1980s, sustainability has been defined as interactions between environmental, social and economic values. The preamble of the Swedish Planning and Building Act also emphasises that living environments should be sustainable in the long-term both for people in today’s society and for future generations. For me, sustainability is therefore about complex and interconnected perspectives.

A holistic and long-term approach is a must in order to identify solutions. A fundamental issue in connection with a sustainable living environment is to take better care of existing environments through good management and conversion instead of new construction when needs change. This is primarily about resource efficiency but also about respecting people’s history, stories and memories.

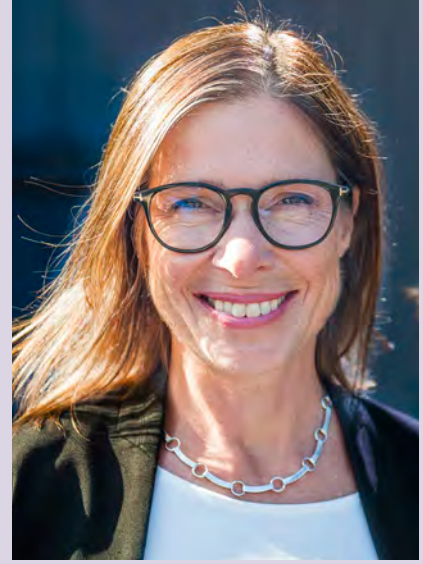


FOTO: HANNA FRANZEN, BOVERKET



### Inclusive

To feel part of a context and to be included in society are basic human needs. This is where very design of our shared living environments is important, as well as the opportunity to influence how places should develop. To include people who live in and around a place is one way of acquiring invaluable knowledge about how the environment works today and what dreams for the future these people hold. To translate what emerges from the process into a carefully designed place is much more difficult and requires skilled people with good design and empathy skills. The shared places need to be experienced as being inclusive and welcoming to everyone - including future generations, whose voices we cannot hear today.

### Beautiful

For me, “beautiful” is a wonderful word that describes the attributes that make us feel good as human beings. Beauty is not measurable but is perceptible, and there is a strong link between our experience of places and long-term sustainability. For example, it is clear that places enjoyed by many people are better cared for, which leads to them lasting longer. We also know from research by environmental psychologists that green and pleasant environments make us feel good both physically and mentally. Creating beautiful places for us as humans is about creating long-term value from all perspectives of sustainability.

Sustainable, inclusive and beautiful is a very simple and concise summary of the content of several guidelines at national and international level that link our living environments with sustainable community development. The words

can be a guide to follow when developing environments at all scales. But it is not the words themselves that are important, but the implementation.

And this is no easy task. The best creatives, designers, experts, developers, thinkers and practitioners from a range of professions need to be invited into the process, together with the people who live and work around the places. Together we can raise the bar to ensure that the places developed are and continue to be sustainable, inclusive and beautiful. If we succeed in this, it will mean that we will have contributed to sustainable community development in general. Those among us who work in various ways to design the living environments of the future have a great responsibility. ●

HELENA BJARNEGÅRD

State Architect, Swedish National Board of Housing,  
Building and Planning

*»For me, beautiful is a wonderful word that describes the values that make us feel good as human beings.*



## RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

# How do we address the rising sea levels?

Lars Johansson is following a broad research project that aims to find flexible solutions for land use and to prevent disastrous consequences as the sea rises and erosion increases along Swedish coastlines.

LARS JOHANSSON



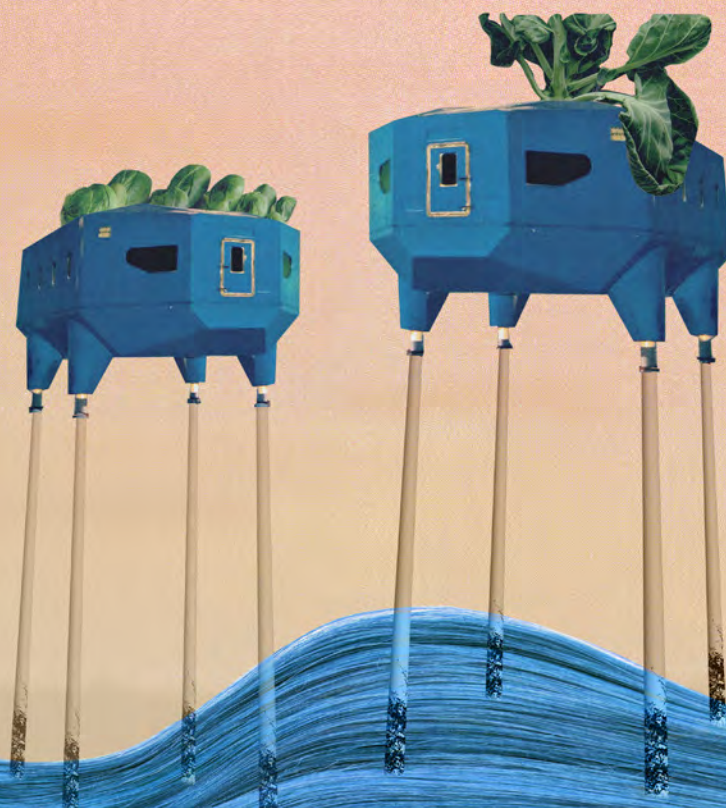
With decision-makers in mind, SMHI has a Swedish translation of the summary's main conclusions on its website. It is unequivocally the case that humans have warmed the climate system through greenhouse gas emissions, and it is clear that the consequences are great and that time is running out. Under the heading 'Adaptation Options and their Limits in a Warmer World', it states that losses and damage will increase as global warming continues. It will not be possible for either our own or natural systems to fully adapt. Furthermore, the authors write that 'maladaptation can be avoided by flexible, multi-sectoral, inclusive, long-term planning and implementation of adaptation actions'.

### **New research project**

SMHI is also taking part in a new interdisciplinary Formas-funded research project, *COALA, Coastal adaptation through flexible land use*, which is led by SGI and addresses these complex issues in Sweden. Researchers from KTH and SLU, as well as representatives from Kalmar County and Kalmar Municipality, are also taking part in the research project. The researchers examine how flexible planning, flexible land use and flexible functions in areas with increased risk of flooding can be a possible strategy for long-term adaptation of coastal areas when the sea level rises and erosion increases. The aim is to avoid poor adaptation, while taking future generations into consideration.

The project is led by SGI, with former project leader Gunnel Göransson handing over the role to Lisa van Well earlier this year. SGI's information page on the project reads as follows:

*The background is that many coastal cities are planning new waterfront developments to attract more municipal residents. The effects of climate change, such as flooding and erosion, are already a problem in many cases. In order to deal with such events, measures normally considered include various protection solutions, backshore nourishment, nature-based solutions or the adaptation of buildings. It is less common to consider solutions based on the gradual removal of risk structures and/or refraining from planning new development in risk-prone areas, which would also facilitate a dynamic and vibrant shoreline or a gradual change of land use. At the interface between protection and withdrawal, land could be used for purposes that can be relocated or abandoned when the impacts of climate change become too great and too costly to protect against. →*



»It will not be possible for either our own or natural systems to fully adapt.

#### READ MORE

Read more about COALA on the SLU website: [slu.se](http://slu.se)

Read more about the CAMEL research project on the SGI website: [swedgeo.se](http://swedgeo.se)

Read more about Konstkiosk at [konstkiosk.se](http://konstkiosk.se)

#### Planned retreat

Curious about the research project, I arrange to meet with Professor Carola Wingren at SLU to find out more. She explains that the background to the COALA project is an earlier research project, CAMEL, on planned retreat as a possible climate adaptation strategy in Sweden. Within the project, an idea was launched called *Flexmark*, which is one of the starting points for the new research project.

*Flexmark* could be a concept in spatial planning and refers to land that can be used flexibly instead of laying a dead hand over an entire area that may become submerged in the medium or long term. Land that is no longer suitable for permanent buildings and housing, and societally important functions or infrastructure, could be used for purposes that can be changed, relocated or abandoned when the effects of climate change become too great and prohibitively costly to protect against.

Carola Wingren's role in the project is to highlight and visualise stories of a changing landscape. The plan is to collect and visualise stories from Kalmar residents about the landscape that will change, how it is valued, and the thoughts that people associate with a familiar and often loved landscape.

#### Supporting dialogue

Konstkiosk is participating in the project in order to support this dialogue. Konstkiosk is a project in the borderlands between art and architecture, initiated and organised by Peter Dacke and Christian Lundberg, among others. Konstkiosk's vision is formulated on its website and includes initiating discussions about the importance of public space together with citizens directly at street level.

Carola Winberg adds that an important starting point for the research project is the fact that coastal areas are still regarded as attractive environments and that many municipalities are planning new waterfront developments in order to attract new municipal residents. But instead, they need to rethink and innovate in order to cope with the fundamental societal change required to address climate change.

COALA will be carried out through what is known as a *living lab* method in both Kalmar County and

Kalmar Municipality in order to facilitate engagement and collaboration between researchers, decision-makers and citizens throughout the project. Carola Wingren's role in the project is an expression of this, where Konstkiosk



becomes a valuable base for her investigations as well as the communication between her and other researchers and the local population: What happens, for example, when the physical coastline shifts? So which areas have shoreline protection? Or rather: Where does the line of coastal protection go then?

#### **Finishing a master's course**

I talk to Carola Wingren the day before her master's course in landscape architecture is due for completion, in which she asked the students work on the same issues and along the same stretch of Kalmar coastline as the research project. During the ten-week course, the students participated in several different exercises and at the same time were given lectures by people involved in the research project.

Project manager of the COALA project, Lisa van Well, participated in the final presentation, together with several representatives from Kalmar Municipality: ecologists, planners, architects and landscape architects. The entire student group travelled on a study visit to the project area in Kalmar and to study →

*»The plan is to collect and visualise stories from Kalmar residents about the landscape that will change...*



different coastal areas affected by climate change. Carola Wingren describes how the students visited Skanör together with a coastal engineer from LTH.

It was a bright February day when they walked along the sea and studied how Vellinge Municipality works to protect against rising sea levels. The following day, Storm Otto hit, and the newspaper published a photograph from the same beach, showing a completely changed coastal landscape.

### **Instructive studies**

Carola Wingren is convinced that the students 'have learned a lot'. Their main task was to identify parts of the coast suitable for flexible solutions and then to choose a stretch of coastline to study in depth. Several of them work with the

coast as a physical line, others with rigid solutions, and some with memory, i.e. the history of the place and how it can disappear or nevertheless remain.

We go further into the studio where the students are due to present their projects, collected in a carefully designed paper box in A4 format relating to each project idea. We meet some of them who are noticeably enthusiastic about presenting their boxes. It is inspiring to see their projects. Carola Wingren hopes it will be possible to exhibit some of the works in the Konstkiösk this summer, and that some of the students will also be on site in the kiosk.

Why not take a trip to Kalmar this summer and visit Konstkiösk! Share your thoughts about the flexible coastal land use of the future in Sweden! ●





# Places Outside

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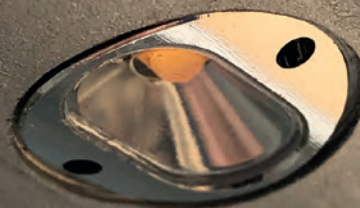
It's light where you need it,  
and nowhere else.

HLS is light where you need it, and nowhere else. With controlled light mounted on low height we are able to respect the darkness and the animals and insects that lives during the night.

Fox Belysning is the leading actor when it comes to lighting in handrails. With a patented technology, lighting is easily integrated into newly manufactured or existing handrails.

The picture above shows The Big Square in Eslöv, Sweden. Winner of the price "Landmärket 2021" that is awarded every year by the Swedish Architects. Fox Belysning delivered the lighting to the bridge in the square. 20 pieces of the asymmetrical HLS Snap, our most popular version.

Photo: Werner Nystrand



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