

Observations on Kungsgatan - A summary

Introduction

Planning has always been a field divided. Planning can be visionary, a public good, reformist and a socially progressive activity [...] Yet planning is structurally accompanied by a more sinister dark side [...] - Natalie Osborne (emphases added by me). A concrete example of this, the two sides of the same coin within the field of planning, is the concept of “Smart city”, an approach growing popular in recent years.

The project team tasked me with observing the inhabitants of Kungsgatan and a Workshop that was part of the living lab, through the lens of intersectional feminism and power dynamics, to try and ensure the inclusivity of the project. Furthermore, I was to compare the results of the former observations with the latter workshop in terms of what voices went unrepresented and why that is, as well as come up with suggestions on what could be done differently next time.

Aim and research questions

The objective is to examine and reflect on, using intersectional perspectives, the Living Lab project at Kungsgatan in Norrköping. This will be achieved by answering the following research questions:

- Who uses Kungsgatan and who turned up for the workshop? Specifically, which voices were represented and missing, why is that and what could be done differently in the future?
- What is Kungsgatan like through the eyes of an observer?

Method

The observations on Kungsgatan would take place during 3 different times of day, at least once during the weekend, at 3 different locations and would last for 90 minutes each, see table 1 below. During the observations, I would observe the traffic, the people present at the location and my experiences and thoughts regarding the location and observations during the 90 minutes. The type of traffic, such as lorries or personal cars was noted and the people categorized based upon intersectional perspectives on what is influenced by power structures. These were:

- perceived age
- perceived binary gender
- whether they were visibly coded as racialized

It was also noted whether the people were using some kind of disability aid, had a stroller, were cycling or using some other kind of mode of transport apart from the previously mentioned vehicles, see table 2 and 3 below for the sheets used to tally data.

Table 1. Time, date and location for the 6 observations at Kungsgatan.

	Skvallertorget	Realgymnasium	Near the police station
07:00-08:30			24 Augusti
11:30-13:00	20 Augusti	24 Augusti	29 Augusti
16:00-17:30		26 Augusti	
20:15-21:30	26 Augusti		

The first observation was conducted as a pilot to try out the method and create room for improvement. As previously mentioned traffic as well as people were to be observed simultaneously, which proved impossible due to the high amount of movement. It was instead decided to observe the traffic during the first 10 minutes of the observation. Furthermore some minor changes to the format of data collection was made.

I participated in the workshop together with the other participants and conducted my observation in the meantime, which was summarized in a table identical to the one used for people in the observations on Kungsgatan. The people that were part of the project team were left out of the data.

Results

Due to the scope of the results I have decided to only present the summarized tables for all observations, excluding the first observation since the method wasn't refined yet, instead of each individually.

Observations

Table 2. Data from all of the 5 observations, individuals on bikes are in parenthesis

	White Man	White Women	Non-white Man	Non-white Women
Preschool	4 (1)	-	5 (2)	-
High school	211 (10)	210 (7)	111 (14)	49
University	180 (44)	225 (66)	82 (32)	69 (8)
30-45	189 (79)	210 (86)	77 (30)	39 (14)
45-65	112 (33)	51(23)	15 (10)	10 (1)
65 +	16 (2)	16(1)	5	-
Total	712 (169)	712 (183)	295 (88)	167 (23)

Over 5 observations I observed and noted 2349 persons of which 1886 were walking and 463 were cycling. In total there was exactly the same amount of white men and women walking and the difference in cycling was less than 20. Non-white men were 295 walking and 88 cycling, while women were 167 walking and 23 cycling. The non-white group constitutes about 24 per cent of the total amount of people observed and 33 per cent of these were women, contrasting this in the white group women were 46 per cent.

Overall, based on the results, there is a lack of 65+ and preschool-aged people in all categories. Non-white women are the lowest in number in all age brackets. High school, university-aged and 30-45 are the highest in number across all categories.

Table 3, traffic on Kungsgatan during 10-minute count from observation 2-6

Bus	3	Electrical kickboard	12
Cars	499	Truck	9
Moped	14	"Färdtjänst"	-
Emergency Vehicle	2	Stroller	9
Taxi	8	Walker	2
Van	61	Wheelchair	1
Bicycle	49	Mobility scooter	-

In total, I observed 595 vehicles (bikes excluded) of which cars were the overwhelming majority, being 84 per cent of the total. There were 12 electrical kickboards, 9 strollers, 2 walkers and 1 wheelchair.

Taking into account both tables, vehicles excluded, 80 percent of people were walking, 19 per cent cycling and the last percentage contains the electrical kickboards, strollers and mobility aids.

My Perception of Kungsgatan

Kungsgatan, based on my observations, is a highly trafficked street with a lot going on. Vehicles traverse the street constantly and are therefore the focal point, which drowns out the movements and possibilities of the other inhabitants. A concrete example is Skvallertorget where cars and people are supposed to cooperate but in reality, it is more of a conflict zone between pedestrians and cars where both parties get in each other's way. Because of the cars dominating the ambience Kungsgatan functions more as a transport stretch than a space. The pedestrians' movements reflect this by always being on their way to a destination rather than inhabiting it.

The Workshop

The workshop at Linköping University Campus Norrköping, which is connected to Kungsgatan, was held on 26 September 14:00-16:00. Participants that attended the whole workshop were noted in the sheet below.

Tabel 4, data over participants from the workshop

	White Men	White Women	Non-white Men	Non-white Women
Preschool	-	1*	-	-
High school	-	-	-	-
University	1	-	-	1

30-45	1	1*	-	-
45-65	-	1	-	-
65 +	-	1	-	-
Total	2	4	0	1

*Participated together and were part of the same family

In total there was 7 participants, research team members excluded, of which there were no non-white men, no high school-aged people, no elderly men and no people with visible disabilities. White women were the category with the most attendants.

Analysis

The study was limited in various ways which will be discussed here. Observation as a scientific method in itself has limitations, such as you are only able to access information from your senses (mostly vision) and from an outside perspective. In this case, it meant that only aspects which were visible could be taken into consideration and from my observation/coding. Socioeconomic background, non-visible disabilities and gender, for example, are impossible to observe but are factors that may affect people's movements. Non-binary people or transpersons were therefore excluded which need to be noted. The observations were conducted by me and therefore it is my experience and perspective that are reflected. I looked at people and coded them from the outside, a process that is highly subjective and based on my previous experiences and possibly prejudices towards individual persons and groups. The same goes for Kungsgatan, another person would most likely have other impressions of the street.

People tend to engage with people of whom they share common ground with, such as white people with other white people and women with women. This makes the way the workshop attendants were connected to the research group problematic as the research group could influence the results of the workshop, if said group is not representative of the inhabitants of Kungsgatan.

There is a stunning difference between the attendance of the workshop and the users of Kungsgatan, for example men did not attend the workshop at all, while being about 50 per cent of the target audience. Some other groups that did not attend; elderly people could be explained by Covid-19 since they are classified as a group at risk or possibly the lack accessible information that was provided through the use of the internet. High school-aged people were observed in large numbers at Kungsgatan, but there was not one in attendance. Their interest in Kungsgatan is more fleeting than other groups as they might only inhabit the street during school hours while living in some other location.

Not all of the reasons for the differences, between the observed inhabitants of Kungsgatan and the attendance at the workshop, can be explained or even spotted by intersectionality,

human beings are more complex than we can even comprehend and you should not blindly trust the statistics nor build your life upon them. Until now we have assumed that one person attending from a specific group means that the group is represented, this couldn't be farther from the truth, the groups aren't monolithic, no two members have to be the exact same and will not have the exact same experiences and opinions. To have a truly representative workshop there needs to be higher attendance from all groups, not just the ones without any attendants.

Conclusion

Many people set foot on Kungsgatan every day, some using cars or other vehicles while others walk or cycle. It is a busy street with many different stores and services.

At Kungsgatan there are a high number of people, with most people being white men and women and a lower amount non-white men and women. Usually they are high school, university or middle-age people. The elderly and pre school children were not seen as much. The workshop was attended by a small number of people that mostly represented white women.

Contact Details

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