



SOFO IN STOCKHOLM

PLACEMAKING IN THE AGE OF HIPSTER URBANISM

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The transformation of cities through gentrification and the commodification of culture and green space are central problems in Urban Studies. This thesis investigated how cities like Stockholm can move forward from this gentrification. The perspective of relational placemaking was taken, as this can occur both top-down via actions of urban planners and bottom-up by the organization of local residents. The SoFo neighbourhood on the island of Södermalm in central Stockholm is a rich example of gentrification and hipster urbanism. This research investigates the meaning of SoFo today, over 20 years after it was first named. The analysis was organized using the relational placemaking framework of Pierce and colleagues. To summarize, the problem or conflict was gentrification and this was illustrated for SoFo using data. Gentrification occurred after 2001 and the rapid rise in property value, a 20% turnover of people and the Swedish middle class demographics each confirm the gentrification noted by others. With this problem established, the place frame of the current identity of SoFo was what the actors interacted around and what was considered as the response to gentrification. The initial placemaking of SoFo rested on a strong identity that was both radical and carefree and respondents tended to look back with nostalgia to the 90s when the area was the centre of the Stockholm music scene. The brand of SoFo was mainly produced grassroots through local residents and businesses without specific top-down actions from the city government. The two actors explored were *real estate* and *small businesses*. Real estate could encourage gentrification through the discourse in the ads and selective marketing to wealthy gentrifiers that appreciated quality and could afford it. Looking at final sale prices from a behavioural perspective, people were willing to pay for living in SoFo and paid more to be near areas like Nytorget with its liveliness. However, realtors claimed that SoFo also offers relaxation or peace and quiet, which rebrands away from the established carefree identity. Looking then at the small businesses, evidence was provided that indicated a strategy against gentrification. Many businesses focused on small scale handicraft or providing places for their friends and local community. Some were even not interested in a profitable business plan and acted on purpose to make their place uncool, to avoid attracting trendy hipsters that would displace their clientele. Small businesses were also rebranding SoFo, expressing that the carefree and relaxed identity is there if one looks away from trendy Nytorget. The defensive strategy of the small businesses was subtle and unusual and led the author to the following, somewhat informal analogy: SoFo is playing dead until the bear of gentrification moves on to another neighbourhood. This strategy understands the interconnectivity of trendy, authentic shops, raised rents and gentrification.

Keywords: critical urban theory, gentrification, grassroots, housing, place, placemaking, small business

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INTRODUCTION AIM AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Stockholm: the Capital of Scandinavia is one of the first things a visitor notices upon arrival at Arlanda Airport and this bold form of urban branding that began in 2005 (Lucarelli, 2018) emphasizes the importance of this capital city for Sweden. Its setting on a series of islands and the omnipresence of water makes the city unique in many ways. Like most cities, Stockholm has shifted towards a post-industrial knowledge-based economy which leads to a cluster of head offices, finance, high-tech companies and the need for face-to-face meetings together with culture, experiences and services (Millard-Ball, 2000; Wind & Hedman, 2018). These strong pull factors towards Stockholm could be both positive and negative. While the spatial aspects of Stockholm have remained fairly constant over the last 20 years, the author has observed other changes in the city. More specialty shops and ‘exotic’ restaurants have opened and parks have changed from alcohol consumption spots to places where young families go to relax. The island of Södermalm has followed these changes with the opening of chain stores on pedestrianized Götgatan and a Starbucks, the American symbol of gentrification (Zukin, 2009). Many would equate these changes with the process of gentrification of city centres or the amenity preferences of the ‘creative class’ (Florida, 2011).

Smaller businesses have moved away from Götgatan, particularly to the cluster known as SoFo, for its location south of Folkungagatan. Creatives and hipsters are attracted to the ‘edgy’ or ‘gritty’ discourse used to describe areas that might be run down and moving into these areas is often a case of affordability at first (Zukin, 2009). Hipsters may then open their own businesses to specifically cater to the ironic consumption patterns of other hipsters looking for retro goods and working-class aesthetics, handmade crafts and specialty foods (Schiermer, 2014). This pattern of development is called **hipster urbanism** (Hubbard, 2016) which also includes grassroots approaches like pocket parks, bike lanes and public art (Douglas, 2014). Local residents may also organize together and use vacant land for agriculture and sustainable food production (Håkansson, 2018; Zukin, 2009). These acts of placemaking made largely by the middle-class can greatly improve conditions in a neighbourhood and help to build a sense of community and place (Håkansson, 2018). However, the increase in consumption of products from hipster urbanism neighbourhoods also favours the gentrification process as the new business generated through social media reports of trends ultimately increase land value in the area (Hubbard, 2016). The generation of profit from culture, art and grassroots movements indicates the need to find new items to commodify in order to support capitalist growth and remain competitive on the global market (Harvey, 2002; Peck & Tickell, 2002). And yet these actions also help to create the sense of community and livable neighbourhoods that urban planners are trying to achieve (Montgomery, 2013; Hubbard, 2016).

Problem Statement

Critical Urban Theory approaches the struggle against commodification of cities in the name of capitalist growth (Brenner, 2011) and this topic is central to Urban Studies. While central and as mentioned previously, this struggle is a dynamic process that may start out positive only to be commodified at a later point (Harvey, 2002; Zukin, 2009; Hubbard, 2016). Often, studies illustrate the gentrification process in larger cities like New York or London so it is important to contribute with research in the Swedish context. Unlike American cities, gentrification in Stockholm began in affluent suburbs (Hedin et al., 2012) and has since spread across all of the central areas (Andersson & Turner, 2014). The overall aim of this thesis is to investigate how cities like Stockholm can move forward from this gentrification. The perspective of relational placemaking was taken, as this can

occur both top-down through the actions of urban planners and bottom-up by the organization of local residents. Relational placemaking also conceptualizes place as a process which is dynamic and which changes according to the actors involved (Pierce et al., 2011).

Research Questions

The SoFo neighbourhood on the island of Södermalm in central Stockholm is a rich example of gentrification and hipster urbanism. This research investigates the meaning of SoFo today, over 20 years after the name was first coined, and it is organized around the following research question:

RQ. What is the current meaning of SoFo created by the placemaking efforts of different actors and how do these interact with respect to the gentrification process?

The analysis follows the four steps for investigating relational placemaking (see Theory section) proposed by Pierce and colleagues (2011). Gentrification is first visualized followed by a description of the initial placemaking of SoFo. Then, the impact of two actors, *real estate* and *small businesses* is assessed in relation to the ongoing gentrification process.

Since the aim of this thesis is to investigate struggles against gentrification in present day SoFo, a brief introduction to the concept of gentrification is necessary. **Gentrification** was originally defined as the renovation of working-class housing in the inner cities by the middle class (Smith, 1979), but this has been considered too reductionist (Clark, 2005). An alternative is to view gentrification as a non-specific process of capital accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2006). Clark (2005) defines gentrification as a process that changes the population of land users whereby new users have a higher socioeconomic status than displaced users, in combination with capital reinvestment and changes in the built environment. This more general definition recognizes that gentrification can occur anywhere and at any time. Gentrification is closely linked with the shift towards neoliberalism where changes in governance allow private investors to redevelop larger city areas and sharp increases in city-centre land value spread the wave of gentrification towards the near suburbs (Smith, 2002). This can continue and middle-class residents may be displaced by the upper class in a process called super-gentrification (Lees, 2003). Clark (2005) suggests the *commodification of space* and *polarized power relations* as two primary causes of gentrification. Everything is at risk for commodification, including housing (Millard-Ball, 2002) and cultural or artistic activities (Harvey, 2002), so long as there is a potential for investment. The power relations and conquests of gentrification have been compared to colonialism (Clark, 2005) in that displaced residents are often forced to move (Smith, 2002) and that this process can lead to a sense of loss and even violent protest (Scannell & Gifford, 2014). However, gentrification is not only connected to inner-city neighbourhoods, as illustrated in a study of the three largest Swedish cities where gentrification actually started in the suburban areas (Hedin et al., 2012). From 1986 to 2001, super-gentrification in Stockholm occurred in the affluent suburbs Bromma, Danderyd, Lidingö and Saltsjöbaden while inner city areas like Södermalm remained medium or low income (Hedin et al., 2012).

The pace of gentrification depends on a supply of **gentrifiers** and the ability of these to obtain housing (Millard-Ball, 2000). But the question of who these gentrifiers are is also complex and context dependent. Some examples include well-educated university graduates (Glaeser, 2011), members of the creative class (Florida, 2011), people searching for authentic experiences (Zukin, 2009), the bourgeois bohème or *bobo* (Saint-Paul, 2018) or the hipster (Schiermer, 2014). Regardless of the category or title given to this group, it is generally understood that they are part of a social upgrading process of the neighbourhood with increases in income and education (Andersson & Turner, 2014). Clark (2005) refers to this group as the ‘vagrant sovereign’, citing *the dominance of vision over sight* as another primary cause of gentrification. These sovereigns are willing to pay more to realize their dreams and visions in that particular place (Clark, 2005).

Sweden, and Stockholm in particular, represents both an exceptional and an extreme case of gentrification. Millard-Ball (2000) first explains this in relation to the ‘gap’ theories in gentrification research. **Consumption-side theories** consider the demand of the gentrifiers and in this research new middle classes emerge and drive the gentrification. On the other hand, **production-side theories** look at how a supply of housing can be created in order to be consumed by the gentrifiers. The location of this demand could be a result of the **rent or value gap**, which is the difference between total rent collected now and the potential rent that could be collected at higher land values. In Sweden, the value gap is considered to be a more prominent driver of gentrification via the conversion from rental tenure type into cooperative ownership (Millard-Ball, 2000). To understand

this, a brief discussion of the changes in Swedish housing policy is necessary. The *Folkhem* model of state housing launched at the Stockholm Exhibition in 1930 was synonymous with the Social Democratic party (Grundström & Molina, 2016). Housing was a state responsibility and, through subsidies and organization, *Folkhem* was able to raise the standard of dilapidated housing and solve the housing shortage in the 1970s. In order to ensure that housing would remain affordable for all, the Social Democrats passed a *rent control* law in 1978 to prevent landlords from raising rents without negotiation (Grundström & Molina, 2016). However, this eventually caused the value gap in Stockholm as the market value or willingness to pay for central apartments could be double the actual rent collected under rent control (Millard-Ball, 2000). When the Moderate party came to power in 1991 they nullified policies preventing the commodification of housing and essentially deregulated the market, leading to profit-driven strategies in the rental market, greater segregation and a housing shortage due to less new construction, since this was no longer subsidized (Hedin et al., 2012). Another part of this deregulation made it possible for city governments to sell off their public housing (Grundström & Molina, 2016) or convert them from rental to *cooperative ownership*. Buildings were sold to the current tenants at a price reflective of the rent they were paying, but the actual market value of that apartment was much higher due to location and increasing demand (Millard-Ball, 2000). This process was a good deal for those that could get a mortgage, as housing represents the largest part of personal wealth in Sweden and the constant increase in prices provides a financial security compared to those that rent their homes (Wind & Hedman, 2018).

In Stockholm this ultimately accelerated the gentrification process as residents were more likely to sell their apartment quite soon after conversion to cooperative ownership and take the profit created by the value gap (Millard-Ball, 2002). By 2010 only 7% of apartments in central Stockholm were public rental while from 1990 to 2010 the proportion of cooperative ownership apartments increased from 26% to 62% (Andersson & Turner, 2014). As previously mentioned, most of Södermalm was considered low or medium income in 2001 (Hedin et al., 2012), indicating an extremely rapid process of change which previous research equates with gentrification. Swedish research continues to study these changes in tenure types, particularly from the policy perspective that tenure mix will lead to socially mixed communities with opportunities for all (Caesar & Kopsch 2018; Wimark et al., 2020).

How can we move forward when gentrification has so dramatically changed cities like Stockholm? Visualization of the results of gentrification (Florida, 2017) can draw attention to the existence of the problem but visualization alone does not offer any solution. To move forward, one could argue that researchers have started to theorize more broadly in terms of behavioural aspects and preferences of where people want to live. Some propose a continuation of suburban development (Kotkin, 2016) while others think that more happiness and a sense of community would result from shorter commutes and more central living (Montgomery, 2013). Both of these examples require dramatic changes in the spatial planning and organization of existing cities but it is questionable whether these would counteract gentrification. A classic example is the High Line elevated park in New York which is the kind of happiness-promoting urban design called for by Montgomery (2013). But this local improvement also increased land value, thereby contributing to the continued gentrification process (Littke et al., 2016).

An alternative approach is to directly **protest** against gentrification. In the late 1960s new social movements protested against the renewal of working-class areas of inner cities (Franzen, 2005) and collective actions fought against the destructive force of modernism (Jacobs, 1961). But these movements were not specifically focused on gentrification (Franzen, 2005) and instead called for claims of a right to the city (Mayer, 2011). In Sweden, protests were far more subtle, as outlined in

a case study of Södermalm by Franzen (2005) summarized as follows. Södermalm had a very large working-class area with its own culture and very strong place image and identity. The spirit of Södermalm was a blend of being radical and having a carefree view on life. Population declined in the 50s and 60s as families moved to the suburbs and they were replaced by students, artists and immigrants that liked the less expensive properties and did not mind the lower standards. In the late 60s, grassroots social movements began to form and these were particularly strong in left wing and radical areas like Södermalm. Still, actions were not as radical as in other parts of the world and they often worked from inside the existing political system. For example, *Hyresgästföreningen* is an organization working for the rights of tenants that became particularly strong in Södermalm. According to Swedish law, all rent increases must be negotiated in a dialogue with this organization. Often the legitimate position and established power of this organization could be used to influence changes associated with gentrification. For example, they protested against luxury renovations which would allow landlords to raise rent, citing the high standard of building quality that the *Folkhem* model had produced. *Hyresgästföreningen* also supported those that occupied the Mullvaden block near Mariatorget to fight against its demolition and replacement with luxury apartments. Another occupation occurred in 1978 at Järnet, a building on Erstagatan in the northeast corner of SoFo. In this case, tenants illustrated how badly they were being treated through street theatre but this building was also demolished and rebuilt. Despite support from *Hyresgästföreningen* in these actions, gentrification was not stopped. Sometimes they even encouraged tenants to convert to cooperative ownership in order to block luxury upgrades, but these residents could eventually sell and contribute to further gentrification (Franzen, 2005). The strong identity associated with Södermalm and SoFo may provide a way to struggle against gentrification, even subtly, since residents may be very interested in maintaining the radical and carefree atmosphere. Inclusion of the local residents in the shaping of their place is also a key aspect of many theoretical and practical approaches to city planning and urban design (Jacobs, 1961; Montgomery, 2013; Sennett, 2018). This placemaking is introduced next.

In cultural geography, **placemaking** is how a cultural group conveys its beliefs, memories, values and identity on a particular geographic space (Lew, 2017). For the Project for Public Spaces, placemaking is a collective process of *reinventing* public spaces and a strengthening of connections between people and place (PPS, 2016). However, before considering the effects of placemaking on gentrification, an introduction to the concept place itself is necessary. Agnew defines **place** according to the dimensions *location*, the geographical coordinates in the world, *locale*, the materialities of the urban form and the *sense of place*, or emotional attachment that people have to it (in Cresswell, 2014). Further research tried to distinguish place from space. For Tuan (1974), **space** is something that allows movement while **place** is a pause when we slow down or stop. One problem is that space and place may be used interchangeably in the literature or even in the opposite way. For example, de Certeau considered **place** as a positional reference point which becomes **space** following interaction with individuals (Hunter, 2009). The idea that space is produced through social processes follows Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*:

...each living body is space and has its space; it produces itself in space and also it produces that space. (Lefebvre 1991, pg 170)

In part, this takes the *phenomenological* approach to the definition of place (Cresswell, 2014) and includes Lefebvre's 'lived experience' by which the body perceives space through sensory processes (Simonsen, 2005). This also considers *social constructivist* approaches to place in that our social actions occur on a background of the underlying processes of capitalism, the patriarchy and discrimination by class or race (Cresswell, 2014). In summary, the conceptualization of space or place depends on the approach of the given research discipline. To bring together these diverse

concepts, Heynen (2013) suggests the use of three thought models or categories. **Space as receptor** views space as a neutral container or background against which social activities occur. **Space as instrument**, however, approaches the ability of space to impose new behaviours on its users through planning or political power. **Space as stage** combines the first two models, viewing space as the stage where social life unfolds over time under the modifying influence of social forces and urban form.

There is also an element of attachment to place if we define this as a “meaningful location” (Cresswell, 2014). Theories of place attachment consider who defines the place as meaningful and how this occurs through site-specific processes and actions (Seamon, 2013; Scannell & Gifford, 2014). Bowlby defines *attachment* as a formation of intimate emotional bonds with someone, and notes that this bonding is a basic part of human nature that promotes survival (Giuliani, 2003). Research also began to connect the concept of attachment with place, especially with *topophilia*. Tuan made distinctions between the *sense of place* and *rootedness*. A sense of place is formed through actions of placemaking, including the creation of place narratives and new social practices on site while rootedness is a product of living in the place for a long time and becoming very familiar with the place and its routines (Tuan, 1977). Some argue that rootedness is no longer possible and that all place attachment occurs through sense of place (Giuliani, 2003). This is explained by observations that the average family moves more frequently compared to previous generations, thus preventing a long-term connection from developing. A *sense of belonging* to the place we live is also a component of place attachment which also implies an interest in the local community or a *sense of community* (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). In a *community of place*, members become connected out of geographical proximity, for example through social connections made in local shops or cafés and through social interaction in the street (Nasar & Julian, 1995).

With this understanding of place and our attachment to place, it is now possible to consider placemaking and how this could struggle against the process of gentrification. In relation to Stockholm and Södermalm in particular, research on the use of placemaking in relation to the gentrification is rare. It is possible that more examples could be identified through interviewing local residents. Based on available knowledge, the only published account of a prolonged occupation and prevention of gentrification is the old factory building called **Kapsylen**, just outside of SoFo a block north of Folkungagatan. This cooperative is still a culture centre and meeting place for artists and other creative disciplines (Franzen, 2005). It is possible that more such cases exist, but the difficulty in finding these suggests a research gap which this thesis addresses.

The naming of Stockholm as the Capital of Scandinavia is a type of placemaking called **place branding**. This top-down strategy likely began as a response to the name ‘Wonderful Copenhagen’ but it follows a general strategy of regionalization which identifies and advertises local features for the global audience (Lucarelli, 2018; Lucarelli & Cassel, 2019), in a process considered to be a part of neoliberalism in general (Sager, 2011). The widespread use of this to attract tourism, investment and the creative class (Florida, 2011) has been criticized and compared to ‘cargo cults’ in that cities would build and wait for people and money to flow into the city (Peck, 2005). One could assume that all top-down place branding efforts would support and accelerate the gentrification process, but this would be an oversimplification of the concept itself (Medway et al., 2015). Based on marketing theory, those working with place branding should first observe the *place identity* and the *place perceptions* of the area and then develop a *place brand* which allows the users to efficiently achieve the social or economic goals set by the identity and perception (Zenker, 2011). This is not unlike the grassroots urban farming initiatives started by local residents which form an environmentally-conscious *brand* for the community (Håkansson, 2018). Some propose a reclaiming of the place branding concept from political forces through the use of participatory place branding which

involves the local residents (Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015). Like placemaking and place itself, place branding is an ongoing process which may be better captured by the term **place reputation** (Bell, 2016). Reputation also brings visitors in but if their expectations for the place as expressed through place branding do not meet the reality of the experience, reputation decreases and the place brand suffers (Bell, 2016).

Top-down place branding will likely support the process of gentrification but grassroots branding based on identity and reputation may form a 'counter brand' actually against gentrification. However, this is not always the case as grassroots initiatives are often viewed with a positivity bias in that they represent the views and desires of the locals. A case study from London found that these grassroots initiatives instead became an integral part of ongoing gentrification (Håkansson, 2018). The **Business Improvement District** or BID model from the United States is in part grassroots as it takes into account the local context and works to maintain the existing place identity (Ward, 2007). However, the BID model is criticized for the way it exerts a control on public space in order to preserve it for a predominantly white middle class clientele (Zukin, 2009; Ward, 2007). But some BIDs may actually be counteracting gentrification, as suggested by campaigns to 'Keep Austin Weird' (Romero, 2018) or 'Keep Portland Weird' (Fowler & Derrick, 2018). An interesting study of whether craft breweries in Portland caused or followed gentrification expressed the complexity of possible grassroots placemaking efforts and the role of the media in the distribution of the identity of Portland's gentrifying neighbourhoods (Walker & Miller, 2019). But media is not necessarily portraying the reality of the city, as expressed by the TV show *Portlandia*, a satire illustrating all of the quirky things that hipsters do in Portland which fails to acknowledge the culture of any minority group in the city (Fowler & Derrick, 2018). A similar show was created by Swedish Channel 5 to poke fun at SoFo and the quirky interests of its hipsters (Thomsen, 2013). The registration of a trademark of the word *SoFo* by Channel 5's owners SBS Discovery TV sparked a debate over the fact that media had bought the rights to a neighbourhood (Tronarp & Lind, 2015). Ambivalence to gentrification is also a form of response. For example, street artists in Austin are both aware of the displacement that neighbourhood change causes but also welcome new development as construction brings them new canvases and more visibility through the population increases (Romero, 2018). To summarize, grassroots initiatives are a key part of relational placemaking as they form through the perspectives of the locals actually using the place. But local initiatives, such as the invention of the **loft** by artists in SoHo as a response to the characteristics of available industrial building spaces, can also drive the process of investment in creative or innovative ideas and further fuel the gentrification changes (Shkuda, 2015).

Structure of the thesis

This design of this thesis is mixed-method and these will first be described, followed by an introduction to the relevant theories *right to the city*, *place* and *relational placemaking*. The analysis is based on the research framework for relational placemaking of Pierce and colleagues (2011) which is used frequently in studies of placemaking (e.g. Foo et al, 2014). The gentrification of SoFo is first demonstrated with data. Then, the initial placemaking of SoFo itself (the place frame) is described and analyzed with respect to top-down and grassroots perspectives. Finally, the relative roles of two actors, *real estate* and *small businesses* are considered in terms of effects on the continued process of gentrification.

METHOD

The research design was mixed-method using both quantitative and qualitative methods and primary and secondary data depending on the section. Methods were selected according to the type of data and what these data were meant to illustrate in terms of the research question.

Description of the gentrification of SoFo

To illustrate the change in **property values**, average apartment prices (price per m²) were downloaded from Svensk Mäklarstatistik (www.maklarstatistik.se) for several districts in central Stockholm and central Gothenburg and Malmö for comparison. **Demographic data** from SCB presented in quadrants (Statistik på ruta) was selected instead of SAMS (small area market statistics; Andersson & Turner, 2014) data in order to more closely define SoFo spatially. Using QGIS, quadrants approximately representing SoFo were selected and merged to combine attributes and data into a single value for each year. The two years were then compared using a bar chart in LibreOffice. **Moving and displacement** are difficult to measure and there are data privacy issues in terms of identifying where individuals are moving. The Stockholm Statistical Yearbooks from 2004-2020 contain a wealth of interesting data compiled by the Stockholm Office of Research and Statistics and Sweco (Stockholm Stad, 2004-2020). SoFo is not an official district but it is made up of a part of Katarina and Sofia (Figure 4). Katarina contains most of the key places in SoFo while Sofia also includes Hammarby Sjöstad, a whole new development created in this time period. To look at moving in and out of the district it would be problematic to include Sofia as the net flow of people has been inwards to the newly-built housing. Therefore, only the Katarina district was chosen for this particular question. Net population flows were collected from the yearbooks along with data on the number of rental apartments and condominiums, as an index of the privatization process. To further understand whether displacement had occurred, election results for 2014 and 2018 were collected from the data.val.se website for the 12 districts approximately representing SoFo (according to the vector layer of election districts). An attempt to verify these trends was made through contact with several political parties.

Maps were made with the GIS technique using the software QGIS. Vector layers for Stockholm or SoFo were extracted using the online tool from SLU and all map data is copyright Lantmäteriet. During the data selection, demographic information from Statistisk Centralbyrå (SCB) was included. Specific mapping types or analytical tools are described with their respective maps during the analysis.

Initial placemaking and place branding

Information on initial **placemaking** and evidence of the **place branding** of SoFo was collected by searching for relevant articles from newspapers and media sources online, plus through the official tourism information provided by Stockholm Tourism (Visit Stockholm). The purpose of this was to assess the current use of SoFo and the extent of top-down placemaking. In all cases, emails and requests for interviews were sent to ask specific questions about the meaning of the quantitative data. Response rate was very low but it was possible to collect some supporting qualitative data.

The current meaning of SoFo created by placemaking efforts

To capture the meaning of SoFo emerging from current placemaking efforts, secondary data was collected from the internet and analyzed using qualitative methods. The two main actors were *Real*

Estate and *Small Businesses*. Each of these have a different underlying agenda but all mention SoFo, so this analysis looks into the SoFo that each are creating through words and images. The advantage of this method is the availability of a large sample size specifically related to SoFo and the ability to reach saturation in terms of themes (Bryman, 2008). Bias is assumed as the sources were chosen based on voices that each have differing agenda, with the goal of understanding where these voices have commonalities. A third actor or voice, *Social Media*, was included as a representation of the combined view of all actors. However, since this media form was mostly used by business owners, analysis of social media became a second step in the interpretation of the *Small Businesses* actor. Originally, spontaneous interviews using a short questionnaire (see Appendix 1) were planned to include a 4th voice representing the meaning of SoFo according to the local residents. This was not possible because the coronavirus prevented site visits and altered the normal public life that could have been captured by observational methodology.

NVivo v12 was used to organize the text and image data and facilitate the coding process. Descriptive coding was chosen as this method is appropriate for comparing themes in data of different types (Saldana, 2013). All text-based data were read over initially in order to get a rough idea of the relevant codes. Coding started with these relevant codes but whenever a new code emerged from the data the coding process was repeated (starting again from the first sample) until no new codes emerged and all samples were coded. Codes were then arranged in new categories named in 'gerund' form (Saldana, 2014) in order to approach a theme or the grounded theory stated in the complete texts (Bryant, 2014). Some codes represented manifest content (e.g. Building Age) while others represented latent content (e.g. Local Pride) that emerged from interpreting what the manifest text was trying to communicate. In other words, this analysis was not content analysis, as the goal was to find the overall meaning or message conveyed (Nobel & Mitchell, 2016; Prior, 2014).

Placemaking supporting the gentrification process

For the *Real Estate* actor, the text from the 46 apartments currently (February 2020) for sale in SoFo were extracted from the Hemnet website (www.hemnet.se). Only the description section was included, as these contained details about the apartment, immediate area and nearby amenities. Analysis of this could indicate what a buyer can expect out of moving to SoFo, and the subsequent placemaking message associated with this.

An increase in land value supports the gentrification process and an analysis of where people want to live and how much they are willing to pay to live there is important to understand whether placemaking is a part of this. Because of the current coronavirus situation it was not possible to survey local residents in person so a way to measure this indirectly was needed. Using Data Science methods it was possible to collect exact location data on 3644 apartment sales transactions in SoFo. Given the shortage of apartments in central Stockholm and open bidding process, it is possible to use the final sale prices as a measure of willingness to pay for a given apartment in a specific location. These data used to be easily available using an API to access the database on the Booli server, but this option is no longer available. Final sale prices are still available by searching the booli.se website. The parameters necessary (e.g. coordinates, size, price) are visible in the source HTML document and because of this it is possible to scrape the data and put it into spreadsheet form. There are debates about whether webscraping like this is legal (Waterman, 2020) but since this is academic research the information will be used on similar terms as the GIS data. Comparatively speaking, Google Maps gives a list of place reviews but the HTML source code only gives references to the content, under expectation that people will buy this information. This has not yet been done with Booli data, so final sale price data from 2012 to 2020 were saved into a single HTML file.

A program was written in R to extract parameters from the HTML file. The code also ‘cleaned’ the data (e.g. removing commas and extra text, changing language) before saving the result in CSV format which could be imported into LibreOffice. Overall, 3644 final sale prices were extracted this way and following normalization based on year and number of rooms (see Analysis) a very large data set could be used to suggest where people wanted to live in SoFo. Latitude and longitude coordinates were also scraped so the CSV file could be imported into QGIS over the SoFo map layers, allowing for heatmap analysis weighted for price per m².

Placemaking antagonistic to the gentrification process

The actor *Small Businesses* was assessed by collecting the 5 SoFo Stories magazines published on the www.sofo-stockholm.se website. This included 20 individual stories about the local businesses. A qualitative analysis was performed as described previously. The Social Media voice, which is a combination of all voices, was assessed by searching for photos posted under the hashtag #sofo using the Instagram app and screencapturing the photos. Before capture, images were checked to make sure they were about SoFo in Stockholm and not South Forks (New York) or Australia. After this check, 51 photos from the top list and the latest 127 photos posted (1 week in February) were collected and analyzed.

Images were analyzed in greater detail but the purpose of finding the meaning of SoFo was the same as text-based sources. The meaning of an image is constructed in three sites, when it was produced, within the image itself and after in the context of how it is viewed by audiences (Rose, 2001). Each site also has 3 modalities to consider (Keats, 2009). *Technological* involves items that enhance our vision and determine form, meaning and effect, *compositional* includes image aspects such as colour or positioning (e.g. level, from above), and *social* includes the economic, political and social practices through which the image is viewed and produced.

To further search for signs of a struggle against gentrification and to understand the meaning of SoFo and its further creation, in depth interviews were performed with local businesses or residents. The interview guide for these deep interviews is provided in Appendix 2, but this was modified as necessary depending on the respondent and their answers. No in-person interviews could be performed so these occurred over the phone or by email. In total, responses from 9 people were received and these were either directly quoted or used to understand or interpret the relevant data. Respondents represented real estate, politics and the government, urban planners, small business owners and residents.

Reliability of sources and bias

Reliability of the secondary data collected was adequate in terms of the aim of understanding the message conveyed by texts and images. Sources probably underwent some type of editing before publishing and this raised the quality. Other data, such as real estate prices or statistics, were prepared by legitimate organizations or departments of the city government that stand behind these official reports. It was also possible to reach saturation since the entire population of texts could be collected, rather than a subset or sample (Bryman, 2008).

Bias was a part of the design of this study as the voices have an inherent bias towards their respect field. For example, real estate ads will be bias towards selling for profit and the discourse will support this goal. Starting from this bias, commonalities could be studied between these biased sources. However, bias was a more critical issue in the collection of primary data on the meaning of SoFo and the definition of its identity. Response bias led to the inclusion of data only from those

that responded and found this topic interesting enough to spend time answering. Generally the respondents had more of a pride for the SoFo area, which is a bias towards positive place attachment. Bias also tended to report middle-class aspirations rather than a view of the entire population living in or using the SoFo facilities. Random sampling on site would have reduced this response bias but, again, this was not possible due to travel advisories resulting from coronavirus.

Limitations and ethical consideration

Several limitations were inherent to the choice of such a broad and complex problem like gentrification and how placemaking can move beyond it. Even without the travel restrictions from the coronavirus, there would not have been enough time to gain a complete understanding of the true meaning of SoFo and its identity. This might be learned through ethnography and a study of behaviour and public life throughout the year. Different methodologies would have allowed a triangulation by multiple sources. Placemaking resulting from place attachment could have been demonstrated through spontaneous interviews with locals during a site visit. An initial short interview guide is provided in Appendix 1 which would be further developed based on the types of responses. An additional aspect of place attachment could have been found through ethnography and the use of rhythmanalysis (Lefebvre, 2004) or place-ballet observations (Seamon, 2013; Cresswell, 2014) and to discover ordinary uses (Bendiner-Viani, 2013; Percec, 2010) of public spaces in SoFo. Contact was also made with a guide that offers tours of SoFo and taking the tour and discussing the locations they chose to highlight after the walk would have served as a pilot for the use of the go-along technique (Kusenbach, 2003). Several additional candidates for go-alongs were identified but because of the coronavirus and the inability to make any site visits, none of these methods could be used. A combination of go-along (Kusenbach, 2003), visual (Pink, 2011) and sensory ethnography (Pink, 2012) could have explained the spirit or soul of Södermalm that so many mention. Instead, the author had to rely on personal experience of the SoFo area over the years, and a site visit in December 2019 which was mostly meant as screening to see whether SoFo would still make an interesting thesis topic.

There are ethical considerations as this project does try to understand individual behaviour and actions with respect to ordinary life. Interview material is anonymous but it has still been divided into categories to represent the different viewpoints. The low response rate for each of these creates a problem, as it could theoretically be possible to trace the answer back to the source. But respondents agreed to these terms before and efforts were made to maintain anonymity.

The coronavirus pandemic created a serious moral dilemma for this thesis. Social distancing has dramatically changed the lives of everyone, especially small business owners like those in SoFo. It felt wrong to continue with attempts to make contact with these owners, especially when the questions were potentially sensitive if business was collapsing. Outcomes were therefore followed using secondary data in the form of social media posts made after public health recommendations of social distancing. Some contacts were still made by email but ethical considerations were made.

Since the aim of this thesis is to investigate how cities can move forward from gentrification, several theoretical concepts are needed to structure the analysis. The critical urban theory literature describes the struggles against gentrification but this thesis considers placemaking as a form of action rather than direct rebellion. As such, the *right to the city* conceptualizes what placemaking is actually directed towards. Additionally, an introduction to the theoretical concept of *place* is necessary as previous research on gentrification can take opposing perspectives on the meaning of place now and in the future. Finally, a theory of *relational placemaking* is provided which structures the research and helps to answer the research question.

Gentrification

Critical urban theory refers to left-oriented literature and rejects previous views on labour, the technocratic and market-driven theories of urban growth. It proposes that a more democratic and socially-inclusive form of urban development exists but it is currently suppressed by institutional practices and beliefs (Brenner, 2011). For some, the goal of critical urban theory is to claim the **Right to the City** as described by Lefebvre (Marcuse, 2009) and this involves a critique of both ideology and power (Brenner, 2011). The writing style has a strong component of activism and this may explain why it has been used in many recent social movements and struggles against urban development (Mayer, 2011; Schmid, 2011). This could be understood from a definition cited in Marcuse (2009, pg 189).

...the right to the city is like a cry and a demand.

The interpretation of Marcuse (2009) first looks at who is claiming their right, and suggests categories like the *excluded*, the *working class*, the *small business owners*, the *gentry* or the *establishment intelligentsia* (creative class). From an economic perspective, the **cry** would then come from the most marginalized groups such as the excluded and the working class, but also from underpaid members of the other groups. The demand requires a more cultural categorization. The **demand** for the right to the city comes from the *directly oppressed* according to ethnicity, gender or lifestyle. The **aspiration** to make a demand for the right to the city comes from the *alienated*, which includes many young people, artists and the intelligentsia who rebel against the current system for not satisfying their needs (Marcuse, 2009).

What these groups are claiming their right to is more complex and would also depend on what we mean by **city**. According to Schmid (2011), Lefebvre's further work after right to the city led more towards the idea of the urban, not the city. The concept of **the urban** is a response to the widespread industrialization and urbanization processes in the 1960s and is based on the three concepts of *mediation*, *centrality* and *difference*. Schmid (2011) summarizes these as follows. **Mediation** views the urban as a level between the *private level* containing homes and where everyday life is lived and the *global level* containing the market, governments and ideologies. The *urban* then serves as a mediating level between the private and global. Complete urbanization has eroded or fragmented this mediating *urban* level. The threat of the loss of mediation led Lefebvre to discuss the urban in terms of **centrality**. This does not mean geographical centre and centrality can occur anywhere. What happens at this focal point is a convergence of objects and people which supports encounters, communication and unexpected situations. The urban at this point is a meeting place for **differences**. The urban simultaneously includes a diversity of values and beliefs depending on ethnic and social groups which may actively confront each other and undergo transformation or

remain in the background as a representation of the difference. The **urban** is therefore a place where differences encounter and explore each other and either cancel out or recognize each other. It is this informal intertwining of everyday social life that defines the city for Lefebvre. The **right to the city** is therefore referring to a possibility of achieving this new reality and a constant struggle to actually produce and reproduce this through action (Schmid, 2011). When viewed in this way, the right to the city can be claimed by anyone and this claim could be dramatic and visible in the form of social movements (Mayer, 2011) or subtle and small-scale. These **appropriations** of space act against the increasing **domination** and commodification of space by capitalist investment (Schmid, 2011). This view of the urban concurs more with the **progressive** perspective of space introduced in the next section.

Placemaking

While there are guidebooks on how to make a place (PPS, 2016), these tend to undermine the complexity of the concept of **place** itself. Cresswell (2014) proposes two categories to group theoretical approaches to place. The **reactionary** perspective defines place as something representing a closed and immobile connection which invokes a *sense of belonging* and excludes those from outside (Cresswell, 2014). This includes the research of Harvey, Relph and to some extent Zukin. In contrast, **progressive** theories of place are more phenomenological and define place as the coming together of bodies, objects and flows (Cresswell, 2014) or as a gathering of things, thoughts and memories (Escobar, 2001). Progressive theories see place as an event or performance rather than a fixed thing that is rooted in some idea of the authentic (Cresswell, 2014). This view includes the research of Massey. It would be convenient to select one of these and focus primarily on this theory. However, gentrification research is often strongly linked to a given concept of place so both sides need to be considered.

The **reactionary** perspective began to discuss the *erosion of place* already in the 1970s as increased mobility, mass communication and global commerce brought the same experiences to every place in the world (Cresswell, 2014). Relph discusses how people find it harder to connect to a place, and those that are insiders tend to have an *authentic* attitude and understanding of their places. This predicted a growing feeling of *placelessness* in which people can no longer have authentic relationships to a place because they will never be insiders (Relph, 1976). This quest for authentic experiences is considered as a reason why gentrifiers move to new areas but this movement also contributes to the loss of ‘authentic’ aspects of the neighbourhood itself (Zukin, 2009). Another actor in the mobile world is the *cosmopolitan*, an often wealthy world traveller seeking exotic experiences or products to bring back to their local community (Cresswell, 2014). According to the reactionary view, the more these new experiences are brought in, the more a place becomes a *non-place*.

Urban Studies literature frequently contains detailed descriptions of local neighbourhoods, perhaps the home of the author (Jacobs, 1961; Sennett, 2018). The gated community example in Harvey’s book chapter “From space to place and back again” exemplifies the reactionary view. Place becomes a point of permanence in the flow of space and time and this fixed entity is in conflict with *capital* which is mobile in the globalized world (Harvey, 1996). This global flow of capital leads to an increased pursuit of local heritage or authenticity which attempts to differentiate a local place from others but this ultimately leads to boundaries and definitions of who belongs in places (Harvey, 1996). The following summarizes the **reactionary** perspective (Cresswell, 2014):

1. A close connection between place and a single identity
2. The desire to demonstrate how place is authentically rooted in history
3. A need for boundaries around places to separate these from the outside

The call for a more **progressive** view of place came in the 1994 book *Space, Place, and Gender* (Massey, 1994). Massey begins with a critical view of the reactionary perspective which is summarized as follows (Cresswell, 2014). First, Harvey's perspective on the flow of capital advocates that this singular force must be somehow resisted, but this neglects flows that relate to race and gender. Massey suggests how these flows are subject to power geometries in that some are able to travel and take advantage of the globalization while others must remain immobile or are displaced and forced into migration. Massey's second critique concerns the constant search for heritage and of *rootedness* in relation to history. Nationalist tendencies and colonialism are given as examples of the negative side of the definition of local identities. The third critique concerns boundaries, which simply emphasize the *exclusivity* of places that close down and defend against the outside. To move forward from this, a **progressive** view of place was proposed, and summarized as follows (Cresswell, 2014):

1. Place as a process
2. Place as defined by the outside
3. Place as the site of multiple histories and identities
4. Places become unique through interaction with other places

Massey begins with a portrayal of Kilburn in north London and the diversity of both people and activities (Massey, 1994) is quite similar to neighbourhoods described in Jacobs (1961) or Sennett (2018). This example illustrates the previous points and is summarized as follows (Massey, 1994). If places form through social interactions, these must be able to change and develop over time. Places must be processes, not static units. Places also do not require a fixed boundary but instead can be defined according to permeable edges where activities of Place A gradually switch over to those of Place B. Places also do not have a single identity, rather, they contain a wide range of identities in constant struggle as a response to the *throwntogetherness* of people. Finally, places are unique because they represent the response to the mix of social identities in that place *now and in the future*, not an ideal view of identity from the past (Massey, 1994).

Relational placemaking in practice

Massey's progressive theory of place has been criticized for its lack of specificity (Cresswell, 2014) and methodology (Pierce et al., 2011) but its influence can be seen in public life study approaches (Gehl & Svarre, 2013). Using Massey as a starting point, Pierce and colleagues (2011) proposed **relational placemaking** as a way to integrate the geographical concepts of *place, politics* and *networks*. **Places** are viewed as 'temporary constellations' or bundles of space-time trajectories. The rationale for the use of bundling is as follows. First, places are made up of a diversity of parts or raw materials such as urban form, individuals, groups and businesses. Second, bundling happens when people select various raw materials according to underlying social processes. Third, these bundles are positioned according to social and political forces (**place framing**) in order to reach a consensus. Fourth, these bundles change over time as the people that made them continue to change (Pierce et al., 2011).

This theory can then be used to structure research studies on relational placemaking using the following four steps (Pierce et al., 2011):

1. Identify a conflict to investigate
2. Identify and explore place frames which emerge as bundles of perspectives on the conflict
3. Identify key actors that form competing place frames or stand between the sides
4. Unpack and question the bundles that inform the viewpoints of the actors on the conflict

This method starts by identifying the conflict and not the place itself, allowing a focus on the *political* aspects of the issue. The *network* perspective is provided through the focus on two actor types. The first type of actors actually produce or reproduce the place framing while the second have the power to choose or mix the place frames available (Pierce et al., 2011).

The analysis in this thesis was structured based on the four steps above. Additionally, findings were discussed in relation to the previously mentioned theoretical concepts of right to the city and place when appropriate. This structure may appear as reductionist or oversimplified but it is used as a way to organize the complexity of interconnected theories and concepts in a cohesive and understandable way.

PRESENTATION OF OBJECT OF STUDY

Stockholm was previously known as the “Beauty on Water” (Lucarelli, 2018) and this is understandable given its location on a series of islands (Figure 1). Södermalm, the large island at the southern end of the centre, has characteristics that distinguish it from the rest of central Stockholm and its business core Norrmalm-Stockholm City. Södermalm sits at a higher elevation, and while this provides great views of the Stockholm skyline the hill forms an obstacle that must be scaled from Gamla Stan. Stations on the green and red line of the subway system provide adequate connectivity but some parts of eastern Södermalm remain somewhat isolated.

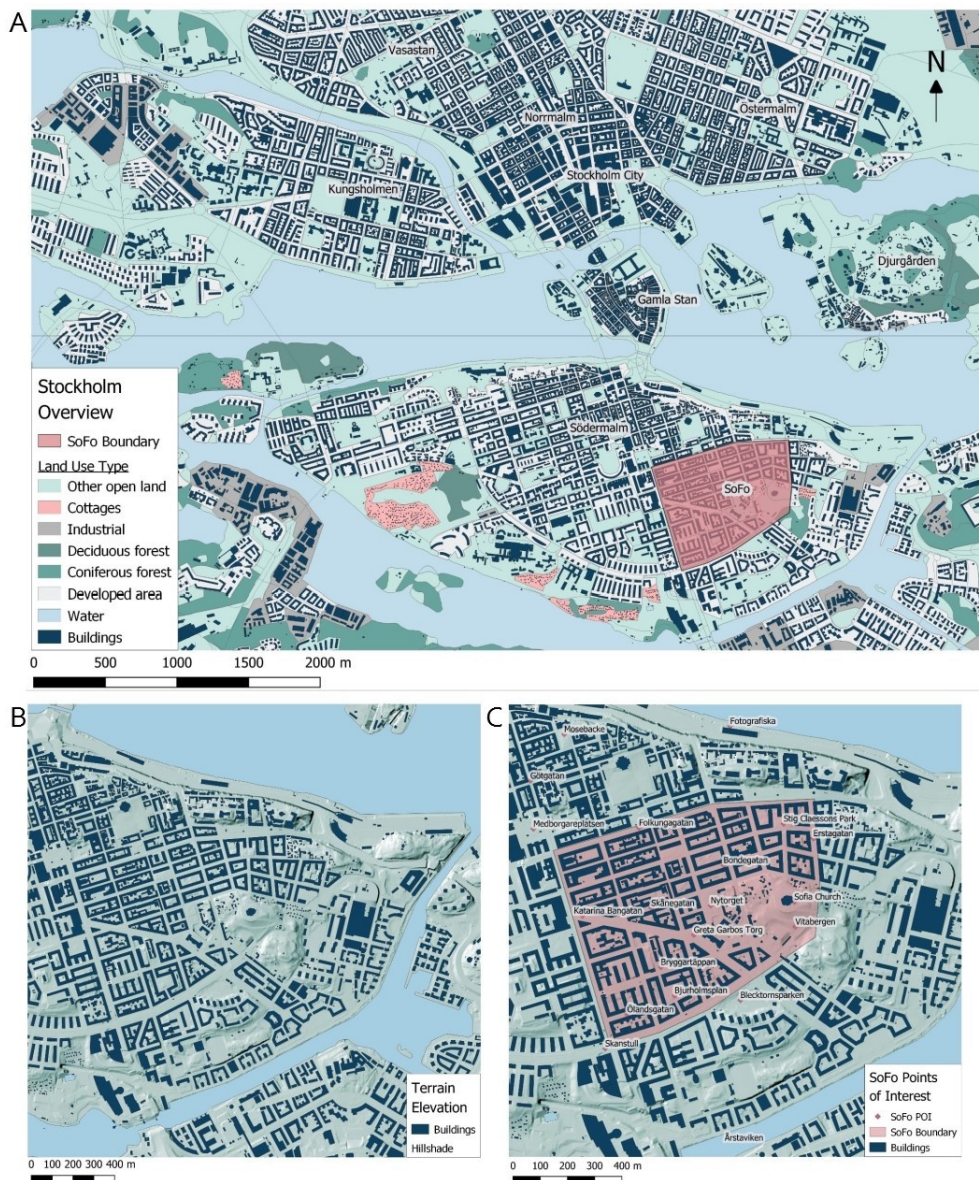


Figure 1: Overview of Stockholm and the location of the SoFo district in Södermalm. A) Central Stockholm and its districts. Södermalm is the large island in the southern end of the centre. B) Hillshade map showing the terrain elevation in eastern Södermalm in relation to the built environment. C) Boundary of the SoFo district within eastern Södermalm including various points of interest relevant for the following analysis.

In the 18th century Södermalm had some of the city's largest factories and a few of the wooden working-class cottages can still be found (Andersson, 1998). Södermalm has always been considered a working-class district as a result of the large working class population and labour movement activities (Franzen, 2005). The Lindhagen plan first presented in 1866 had the goal of bringing light and parks to Stockholm while converting the centre to a grid pattern with wider tree-lined boulevards meeting at points. To meet the needs of industrialization from the 1880s, new apartment blocks were built throughout the city with architectural style following the decade of construction. While walking through eastern Södermalm, which contains the SoFo district, it is possible to find evidence of these street patterns and building styles. But there is no evidence of a uniform plan or style that can be seen in most parts of Vasastan or the newer functionalist and modernist developments in the suburbs (Andersson, 1998).

The area of SoFo is punctuated by the large hill at Vitabergsparken and two very visible churches, Katarina and Sofia. The historic buildings and small park at Nytorget form a natural centre for the grid pattern, which is broken up by the diagonal street Katarina Bangatan. Skånegatan contains a large number of restaurants with small shops scattered along Bondegatan and the cross streets around Nytorget. Main roads form the perimeter of the area, resulting in a rather quiet area despite the central location. Local events include Nytorgsfest, Stockholm Hippie Festival, open air Park Theatre shows, the photo exhibit Planket, a farmers market and SoFo Night.

The following analysis is arranged according to Pierce and colleague's steps (2011) for investigating relational placemaking. The conflict for study is *gentrification* and the first section provides evidence for this in SoFo. The place frame of interest is the current *identity of SoFo* and the second section accounts for the initial naming of SoFo and the relation of this to the past and present place branding practice. The key actors are *real estate* and *small businesses* and these are presented as individual sections which suggest the direction of their influence on gentrification, either promoting or inhibiting. The conflict and struggle between these is discussed throughout.

Description of the gentrification of SoFo

The gentrification of central Stockholm and Södermalm is frequently discussed (Millard-Ball, 2000; Franzen, 2005; Andersson & Turner, 2014) and yet a quantitative study defined most of Södermalm as medium or low income up to 2001 (Hedin, 2012). It was therefore necessary to visualize the gentrification process first in order to discuss the response to this via placemaking. Data were selected according to the changes associated with gentrification in previous research (Clark, 2005). The available open online data that could illustrate these changes were property values, demographic data and net moving data on the district level.

Rising property values

Property values have risen dramatically in all parts of central Stockholm since 2005 (Figure 2). Södermalm followed Kungsholmen at a slightly lower level than Vasastan and Östermalm but it was not possible to test this statistically with the available data. The steepest increase was observed between 2013 and 2016 and this trend could also be seen in Gothenburg and Malmö. Stockholm prices reached a maximum in 2017 and this may be due to the introduction of the requirement to pay off 50% of mortgages (*amorteringskrav*) by the government (Regeringen, 2016) or the availability of newly-built central apartments (Persson, 2018). The almost doubling of price per m² in 15 years suggests a central Stockholm that is both desirable and expensive, but inherently exclusive to parts of the population.

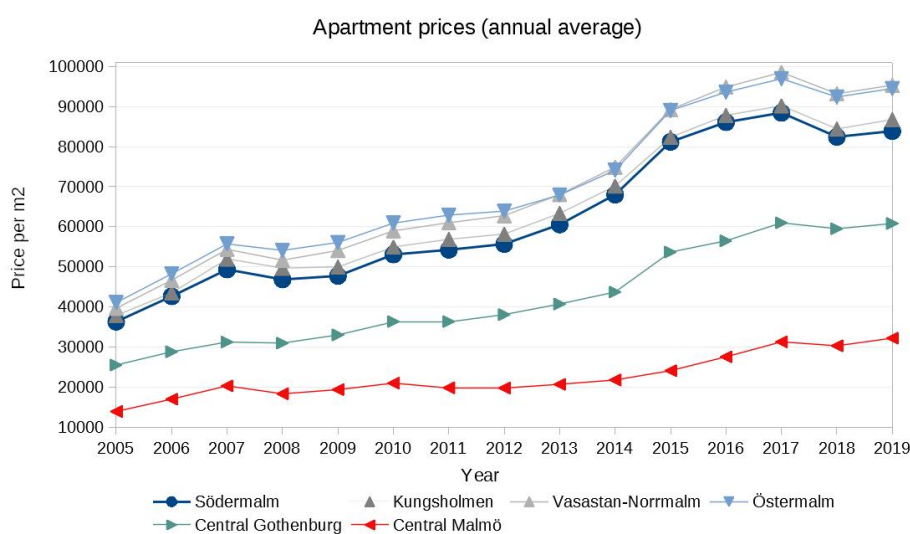


Figure 2: Average price per m² for apartments in districts of central Stockholm and, for comparison, Gothenburg and Malmö. Prices rose sharply in all districts and this trend was not specific for Södermalm.

Demographics in SoFo

Gentrification suggests a decrease in demographic diversity in a neighbourhood (Clark, 2005). Selecting quadrants for SoFo and available SCB data for multiple years, the demographic changes could be investigated (Figure 3). Data in the bar graphs did not always include the same years since the goal was to select the two time points farthest apart in the available data (e.g. 2012 vs 2017 or 2013 vs 2019). Consistent factors included the predominance of Age Group 25-44, *Swedish* descent, and *Single* civil status. *Graduate-school level* education was predominant in 2013 but this increased slightly to 2019. Greatest changes were observed in levels of disposable income, with a substantial increase in the *High income* category from 2012 to 2017, suggesting a super-gentrification process (Lees, 2003; Hedin et al., 2012) during the steepest property price increase after 2013.

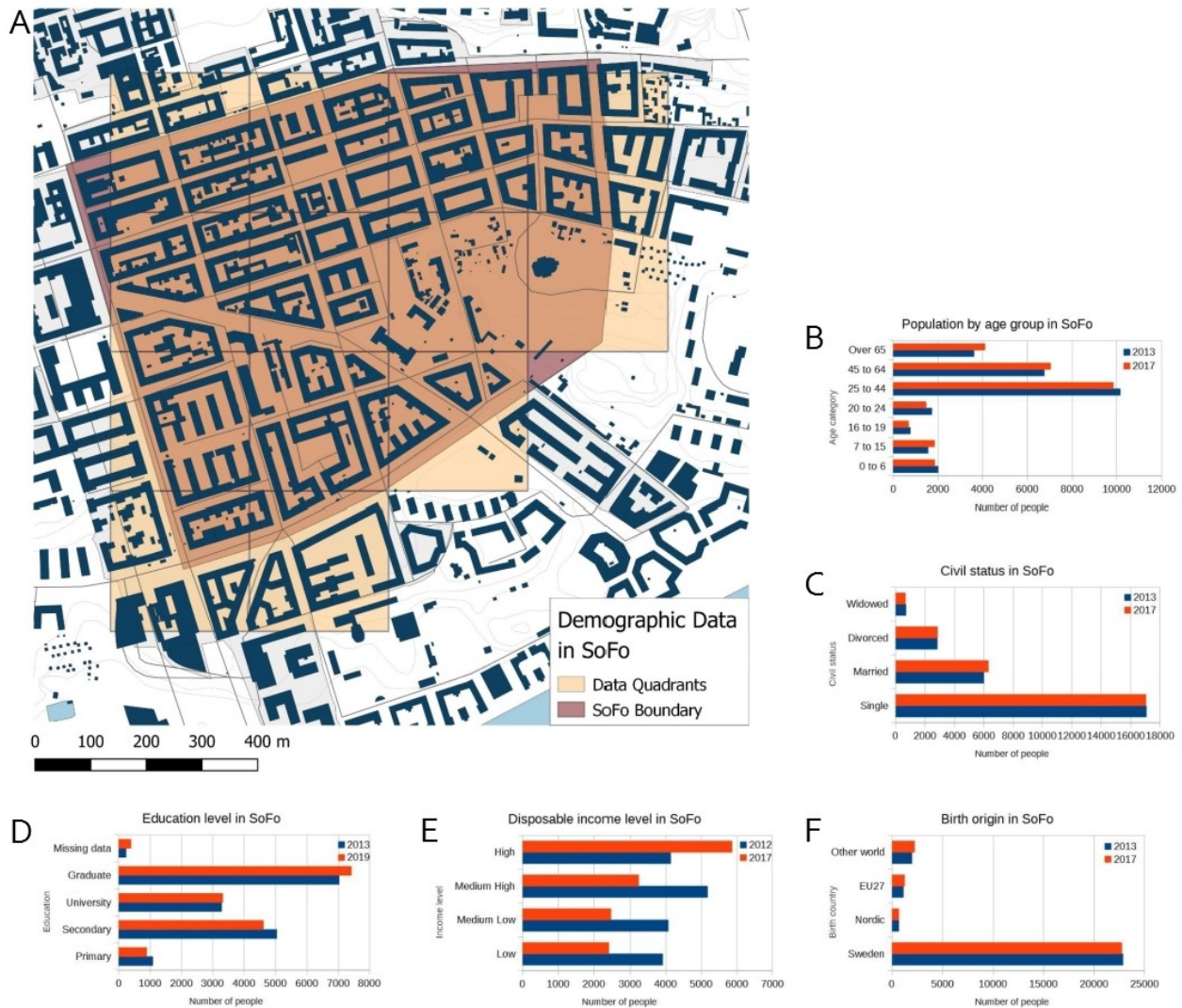


Figure 3: Demographic characteristics of the SoFo district. A) Data quadrants merged in order to roughly estimate the population of SoFo. B) Population was predominantly aged 25-44. C) Most of SoFo residents were single. C) The population was very educated, with almost half at graduate (above MSc) level and above. D) Disposable income was evenly distributed across categories in 2012 but was predominantly *High* in 2017. E) Most residents in SoFo were born in Sweden.

Moving and displacement

Another characteristic of gentrification is the displacement of the working class in favour of the gentrifiers (Smith, 1979). Mapping this in SoFo is complicated since available data on moving is not connected to the individual's demographic characteristics. But it is possible to observe patterns using net flux data in the Stockholm Statistical Yearbooks (Stockholm Stad, 2004-2020). The Katarina district was selected as this includes the key parts of SoFo without the effects of the large-scale new Hammarby Sjöstad construction included in the southern part of Sofia (Figure 4). New developments always have a net influx as they were previously empty. But this considerable influx would conceal a possible outflux or displacement from the existing neighbourhood as a result of gentrification.

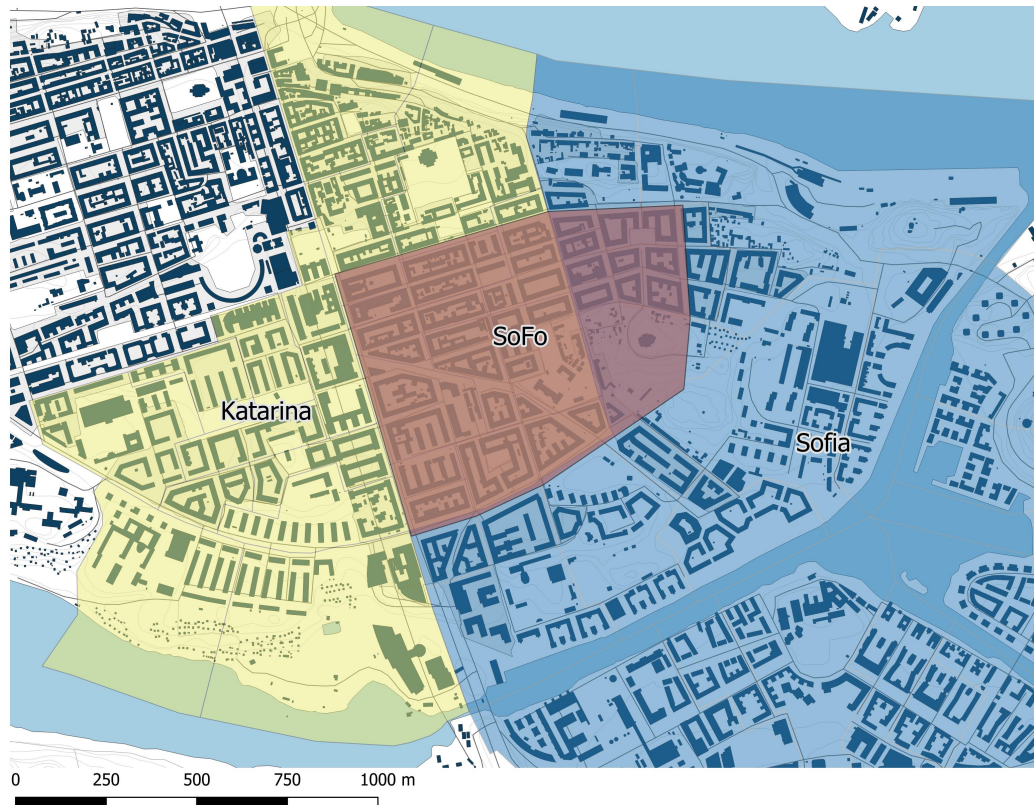


Figure 4: Official city districts of Katarina and Sofia in relation to SoFo. Since Sofia includes the large new development of Hammarby Sjöstad (southeast corner), only the Katarina district was included in the moving and displacement analysis.

The Net Birth (Births – Deaths) was consistently around +200 per year (200 more deaths than births) while the Moving Net (number moving in – number moving out) fluctuated over time. The Moving Net pattern could be further divided according to where they were moving from (Figure 5). A positive number indicates a net movement from the place to Katarina district while a negative number indicates outflow. The influx from people outside of Sweden was steady throughout time while the influx from other regions in Sweden was highest from 2007 to 2010. The outflow from Katarina district to other parts of Stockholm City fluctuated across time, with largest amount in 2014. By totaling these flows, an overall population flux diagram visualized the changes from 2002 to 2018 (Figure 5). Assuming that people are only included once in these data (i.e. they do not move back and forth), 18% of original Katarina residents moved to other parts of Stockholm while 21% moved in from other parts of Sweden and internationally. This suggests a turnover of people but it cannot demonstrate displacement.

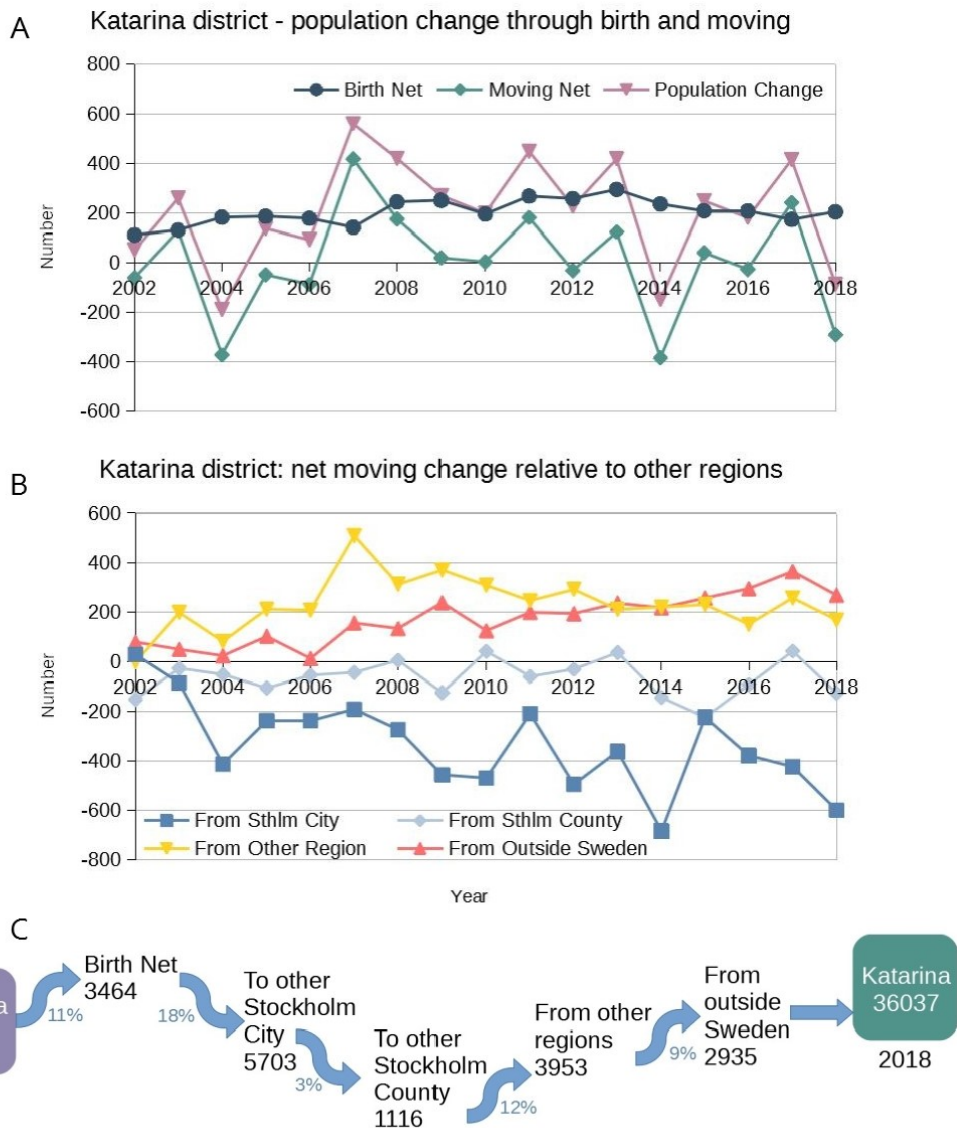


Figure 5: Population analysis 2002-2018 for the Katarina district which contains most of SoFo. A) Growth from Birth Net remained constant. Changes in population were therefore a result of Net Moving in or out. B). The net flow of people was positive (moving in) from outside Sweden and other parts of Sweden. The net flow was negative (moving out) in relation to other parts of Stockholm. C) Summary of the total changes, suggesting a net outflow of 21% of the original population to other parts of Stockholm.

In 2008 the number of public-owned rental apartments in Katarina dropped by 1957 and based on the similar increase in cooperative ownership apartments a tenure conversion process was likely (Stockholm Stad, 2011). This was visible in the net moving data (Figure 5B) with a net movement of approximately 500 people to other parts of Stockholm in 2009 and 2010. Even though this net movement correlated in time with a privatization action that could displace residents, it cannot prove causality. Using a similar approach, one can question the outflow of almost 700 people in 2013 when there were no changes in the number of rental apartments (Stockholm Stad, 2015). Another problem is that these values represent the net in one direction or another. If 1000 people moved in and 1000 people moved out, the net would be 0 and this very significant displacement process would be missed. This also does not take into account the volatile subletting market in that many are forced to move quite often as landlords typically offer short term contracts. These data could also reflect changing lifestyles with aging in that young often choose central locations with a

move to the suburbs later if they start a family (Millard-Ball, 2002). Despite the limitations, statistics on moving did suggest a turnover of at least 20% of the people living in Katarina between 2002 and 2018.

Some perspectives on displacement could be deduced from election patterns (Figure 6) and these were verified in a conversation with Vänsterpartiet. Working class populations have typically supported left wing labour parties like the Social Democrats, but this has changed in Stockholm.

...so it was unusual how the Moderate party, primarily, swept through Stockholm in the elections 2006, 2010 and even 2014. In the election 2010 and 2014 also the Environmental party had a very strong election in large portions of Stockholm and in 2014 even the Feminist Initiative party took many progressive electorate votes. On the left wing instead, we have become the major alternative to the Social Democrats who are those that lost their uniquely strong position in many areas. (Original Swedish text provided in Notes)¹

- Politician #1

By saying that the Moderate party swept across Stockholm, the respondent is using the same ‘wave’ discourse as gentrification (Hedin et al., 2012). But this could also be a reflection of the end of politics (Swyngedouw, 2010) and a further move towards individualism and the stalemate that the 2018 election caused. However, changes were happening in SoFo.

Large parts of the southern suburbs are today also what Södermalm was before. Majorna in Gothenburg and Möllan in Malmö are in many ways very similar areas, but today it is maybe even more so Hägersten, Årsta, Bagarmossen, Kärrtorp, Hökarängen and Gubbängen, for example, that are Stockholm’s Möllan and Majorna.²

- Politician #1

Districts Majorna and Möllan are comparable to SoFo and have also been discussed in terms of gentrification. What was interesting about this quote was the transformation of areas just south of Södermalm/SoFo and the verification of this by growing membership numbers for Vänsterpartiet in the same areas. It would appear that some movement has taken place in terms of political beliefs, and perhaps this indicates displacement from SoFo and central Stockholm towards the near southern suburbs. But again this cannot prove a displacement because it is possible that people change their political views and vote differently.

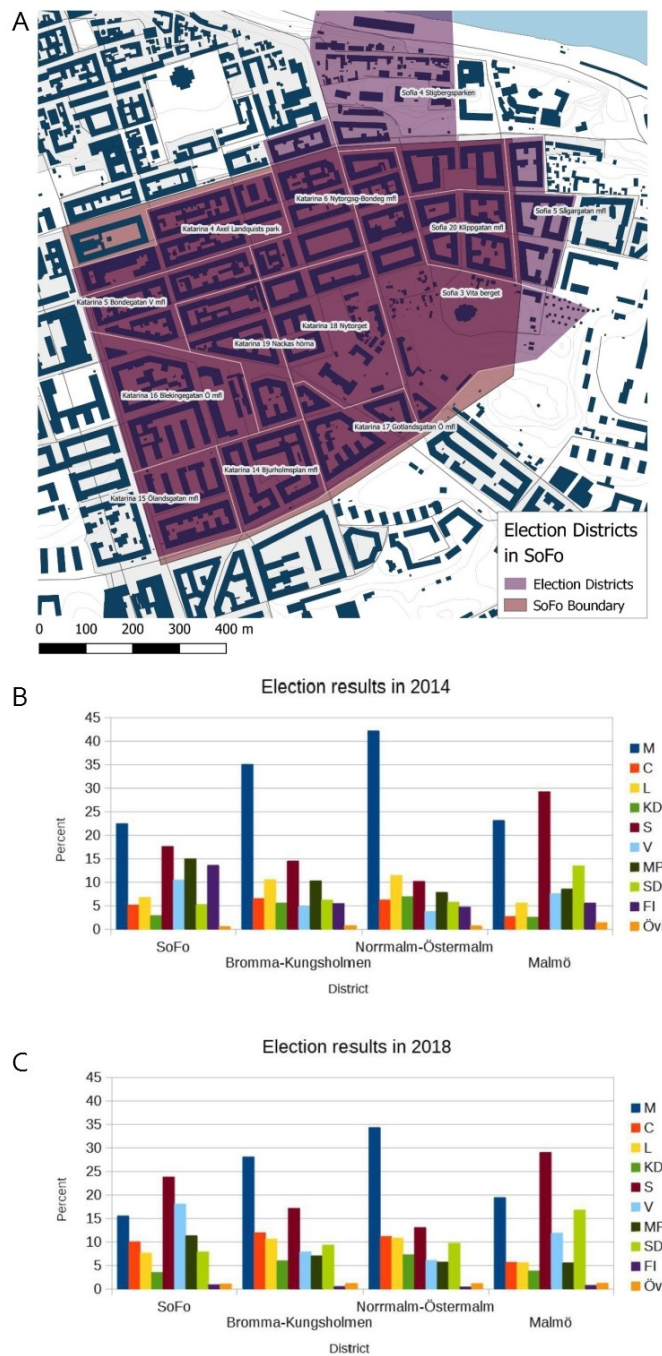


Figure 6: Election results for the SoFo district at the last two elections. A) Official election districts merged in order to conclude the pattern for SoFo. B and C) Election results in 2014 and 2018 for SoFo compared to two other central districts in Stockholm and to Malmö. SoFo voted more to the left. m = Moderat, c = Centerpartiet, l = Liberalerna, kd = Kristdemokraterna, s = Socialdemokrat, v = Vänsterpartiet, mp = Miljöpartiet, sd = Sverigedemokraterna, fi = Feministisk Initiativ, övr = other

In summary, both property prices and disposable incomes rose sharply since the naming of SoFo in 1998. This, together with evidence suggesting a displacement or at least a high turnover of people strongly supports the view that SoFo is gentrified, with a possible super-gentrification over the last 5 years. With this conflict established, relational placemaking can now be presented and analyzed.

Initial placemaking and place branding

Moving to the second step of investigating relational placemaking, the place frame of interest to understand the conflict of gentrification is the current identity of SoFo. The following accounts for the initial naming (placemaking) of the district and explores the branding efforts over time. SoFo corresponds to geographical boundaries (South of Folkungagatan) but it is made up of parts of the official Stockholm districts of Katarina and Sofia (Figure 4). It should also be noted that SoFo itself is growing, as some sites labeled on the official SoFo Map are outside of the boundary presented in Figure 1 (SoFo Företagarförening, 2019).

In 1998 three local business owners came up with the name SoFo, partially as a joke, based on their love of New York and its SoHo (Saas, 2016). The story is as follows, according to one respondent.

[SoFo] was conceived over a couple of bottles of red wine on wet night, and they kind of laughed about it, and thought it was a fun joke, but it kinda stuck...they had no idea how to communicate this fantastic trendy district, they had no professional training and no ad campaign or nothing and what they did was basically used it as a name for...this SoFo business community idea, they were about 5 or 6 shops to begin with, and then they became 15 maybe 20.

- Business owner #1

This did not suggest a coordinated attempt at place branding (Zenker, 2011), but the growth of this over time indicated a development of place reputation (Bell, 2016). To understand how Stockholm works with branding and the recognition of SoFo as a place, contacts were made with several at the Stockholm tourism organization called Visit Stockholm.

*SoFo was named at the end of the 1990s and Visit Stockholm started to publicize SoFo in the beginning of the 2000s, approximately 2003 or something...do not have an exact date.*³

- Tourist Information Officer #1

This confirms the newspaper sources (Saas, 2016) while emphasizing the lack of place branding strategy from both the city and the locals. In a feature article, Vogue Magazine called the area one of the world's 15 coolest neighbourhoods (Remsen, 2014). Interestingly, the article called it Södermalm and not SoFo, although most of the businesses they recommended were in SoFo. Whether this is a result of trademark disputes with SBS Discovery TV (Tronarp & Lind, 2015) is unclear, but many businesses have used the 2014 Vogue article as an endorsement of SoFo. To determine the impact of this article on tourism, I asked Visit Stockholm whether they noticed an increase in the number of people asking about SoFo or could see an increase in the number of clicks to the SoFo section of their website.

*We don't measure questions so we have no data/statistics concerning queries on or interest for SoFo in numbers. SoFo is often included when we write about Stockholm as a tourist city and because of this there are also many that already know about SoFo when they come, and therefore they want to visit the area.*⁴

- Tourist Information Officer #1

This response was surprising, as it is quite easy to extract click data from websites and the company responsible for the website would surely have access to these data. However, there may still be some type of branding strategy as they include a **Guide to SoFo** on the tourism website. When

asked about the selection of sites and whether businesses paid to be in this Guide, the following was provided:

If you mean the Guide to SoFo on our website then no, they do not pay to be mentioned there. Everything which is published on our website is the choice of our editors.

- Tourist Information Officer #2

It was not clear who the editors were or what their particular expertise or connection to SoFo was, but likely their selections were a combination of trends and messages from local businesses and social media. Overall, the evidence did not suggest a clear top-down branding strategy for SoFo by the city government. In the absence of a strong top-down branding, the identity of a place can instead be shaped by local groups in relation to other places (Massey, 1994). Many sources suggested a development of this identity over a much longer period, and that it existed before the name SoFo was given.

It was...basically Skånegatan that was the centre of attention, the centre of stuff that happened because we had a couple of really cool places there, uh, bars that kinda found big enough spaces to actually do something in. And the bar that actually put the area on the map was Hannas Krog, but this was back in 89, 90 somewhere...her concept was very different from what Stockholm was about then and what it still is today. There was a live stage and she only hired people from Gävle, and she didn't care at all if they were trained or anything, what she wanted was some sort of genuine vibe. In a way that sort of epitomizes the whole idea around SoFo, as some kind of genuine vibe that goes far beyond trendiness. The concept of SoFo being a trendy neighbourhood is weird for me. It is genuine and very personal, very natural and relaxed as compared to quite a lot of the areas around Stockholm.

- Business owner #1

Hannas Krog in many ways defined the 1990s in Stockholm and was frequented by a long list of celebrities and musicians from that period (Gustafsson, 2019). This brought a lot of media attention to what would become SoFo. In this way, popular culture can serve as a form of placemaking by giving a larger audience a taste of what life is like in that area. Jay-Z mentions the hip hop community in a gritty part of Brooklyn away from the Williamsburg hipsters (Zukin, 2009 pg 54) and this action can be viewed as both place branding and placemaking. In fact, when Drake started referring to Toronto as 'the six' the media use of the slang form '6ix' brought far more attention to Toronto than official place branding efforts (Warren & Dinnie, 2017).

The identity of SoFo is partially determined by media reports and trends, which increases the risk for further gentrification (Walker & Miller, 2019; Zenker, 2011). But many seem to clutch onto the view of Södermalm as a radical and carefree neighbourhood (Franzen, 2005), suggesting a **reactionary** view of place. By constantly looking for the genuine feeling of the pre-gentrification 90s, SoFo is viewed as a fixed concept that should be preserved. However, the continual placemaking of SoFo by trendy magazines like *Vogue* and the comparison of its atmosphere to other parts of Stockholm is more in line with the **progressive** concept of place that is constantly changing and existing in relation to surrounding parts of Stockholm. The constant mention of a *unique SoFo atmosphere* is important for the following analyses of the struggle against gentrification.

Placemaking supporting the gentrification processes – real estate

The last two steps in relational placemaking research according to Pierce and colleagues (2011) are the identification of relevant actors and the unpacking of their interaction. Two actors were selected in order to understand relational placemaking in SoFo and their effects on gentrification. The first actor, *real estate*, was found to support gentrification, as described in the following analysis. Rising property prices have changed the circumstances in terms of who can actually move to SoFo and demographics data indicated an increasing proportion of residents with high income. Naturally, this will exclude many people from their right to centrality (Schmid, 2011) and it follows gentrification patterns in New York (Zukin, 2009). However, a key part of Zukin’s observations is the loss of authentic places through displacement of local family-run businesses by chains like Starbucks and H&M (Zukin, 2009). This has not yet occurred in SoFo (visit, Dec 2019).

Real estate advertising

In the 46 real estate ads analyzed, SoFo was mentioned 32 times and Södermalm 28 times, but ads were selected by specifically searching for SoFo on Hemnet. This suggested a possible competition between SoFo and Södermalm or is a reflection of the lack of specific branding of SoFo itself as discussed previously. As expected for real estate ads, location was important. The following places (frequency in brackets) were mentioned (Figure 1): Bjurholmsplan (2), Blecktornsparken (8), Greta Garbos Torg (2), Götgatan (6), Medborgareplatsen (10), Mosebacke (2), Nytorget (42), Skanstull (18), Vitaberg (26), Årstaviken (16). Proximity to Nytorget and parts of Vitabergsparken were mentioned in almost every ad, indicating the importance of these two places in the SoFo identity. Descriptive coding of the real estate ads identified 10 codes (frequencies in brackets) which were grouped into 4 categories as follows:

Categories (with descriptive codes)	Overall meaning
<p><u>Living with quality</u> Building Age (28) Quality / Luxury (46)</p>	<p>SoFo gives a central and high-quality living and provides a mix of lively and relaxing/cozy atmosphere.</p>
<p><u>Experiencing central Stockholm</u> Architectural Beauty (9) Proximity (60) View (37)</p>	
<p><u>Relaxing and living in coziness</u> Local Pride (8) ‘Mysig’ Atmosphere (58) Relax / Recovery (59)</p>	
<p><u>Having excitement and life</u> Lively (55) Social (53)</p>	

The real estate ads discussed location, light and layout potential but these can be considered standard discourse for properties and not specific to SoFo. Realtors often cited design features that were higher quality or luxurious in combination with views over roofs that are part of the distinct experience of living in central Stockholm. Interestingly, the ads seemed to equally mention the relaxed, cozy atmosphere and liveliness of SoFo, indicating a chance to get the best of both worlds.

Several realtors were contacted to ask about their process of narrative development and placemaking in their ads. However, none had the time to answer these questions. Therefore, based on available information the overall message of what SoFo means according to realtors was the following: **SoFo gives a central and high-quality living and provides a mix of lively and relaxing/cozy atmosphere.**

In the realtor's view of SoFo, Nytorget is the heart of liveliness and proximity to this is what purchasing an apartment will give. They are attempting to sell the right to the city, and particularly the right to centrality as Nytorget could be the site of interactions and surprises (Schmid, 2011). The buyers of this right, according to the ads, appreciate quality, luxurious design elements and to afford the asking price they are probably wealthy. Attracting the gentrifiers is part of consumption-side theories of gentrification (Millard-Bell, 2000) which involves supplying what hipster buyers are demanding (Hubbard, 2016). These ads, therefore, support the gentrification process by continuing to provide what gentrifiers ask for. However, the message is more confusing in terms of the promise of a 'mysig' cozy atmosphere and the opportunity for relaxation. The cozy atmosphere refers to the carefree and laidback identity that is strongly associated with SoFo and Södermalm overall (Franzen, 2005). Relaxation in the real estate ads was more about wellbeing and leisure activities like taking a walk in a local park or along the water. This was more about finding peace and quiet.

Where in SoFo do people want to live?

In order to understand more about the actual preferences of gentrifiers moving into SoFo analysis now shifts to the buyers themselves. This section investigates how much people are willing to pay in order to live in SoFo, while also observing where in SoFo the demand for housing lies. This will help to understand discrepancies in terms of whether the preference is for *relaxed* as in carefree or *relaxation* as in peace and quiet.

By extracting final sale price data for 3644 apartments from Booli.se, it was possible to investigate where people are moving to and how much they are willing to pay to live there. Like all of central Stockholm, SoFo is well connected to the transport network so proximity to subway stations is unlikely to affect price. If the goal was to live in the city or to invest in an apartment to sell or sublet, location is unlikely to play a large role and price per m² should be quite constant across SoFo. However, given the open bidding real estate system in Sweden (Andersson & Turner, 2014), higher demand for particular buildings or areas could result in hotspots of higher property values. The discourse in the real estate ads and frequent mention of quality and neighbourhood suggest that there will be hotspots. The following GIS analysis is a way to either confirm or refute this hypothesis with data.

The price per m² for apartments in SoFo increased over time and taking the average m² price per year (Figure 7A) produced trends similar to Figure 2. Time is therefore a confounder when asking whether place is a factor that determines price. To correct for this, a normalization factor was made by dividing the average m² price for each year by the average for 2012-13. Dividing all m² prices by these factors would adjust all prices back to those observed in 2012, as illustrated in Figure 7B. A second confounder in this dataset is the number of rooms in the apartment, as 1 room apartments had a higher price per m² compared to the larger sizes (Figure 7C). Again, a normalization factor in relation to the average m² price for an apartment with 3 or more rooms was used to adjust the data once again, resulting in a final set which was imported into QGIS for location analysis. Normalization for time and size reduces the effects of these variables on final sale price per m² and allows the use of all data rather than a smaller subset. There may still be other factors in the normalized values which influence price. However, normalized data more accurately represent the role of place in price than the raw data.

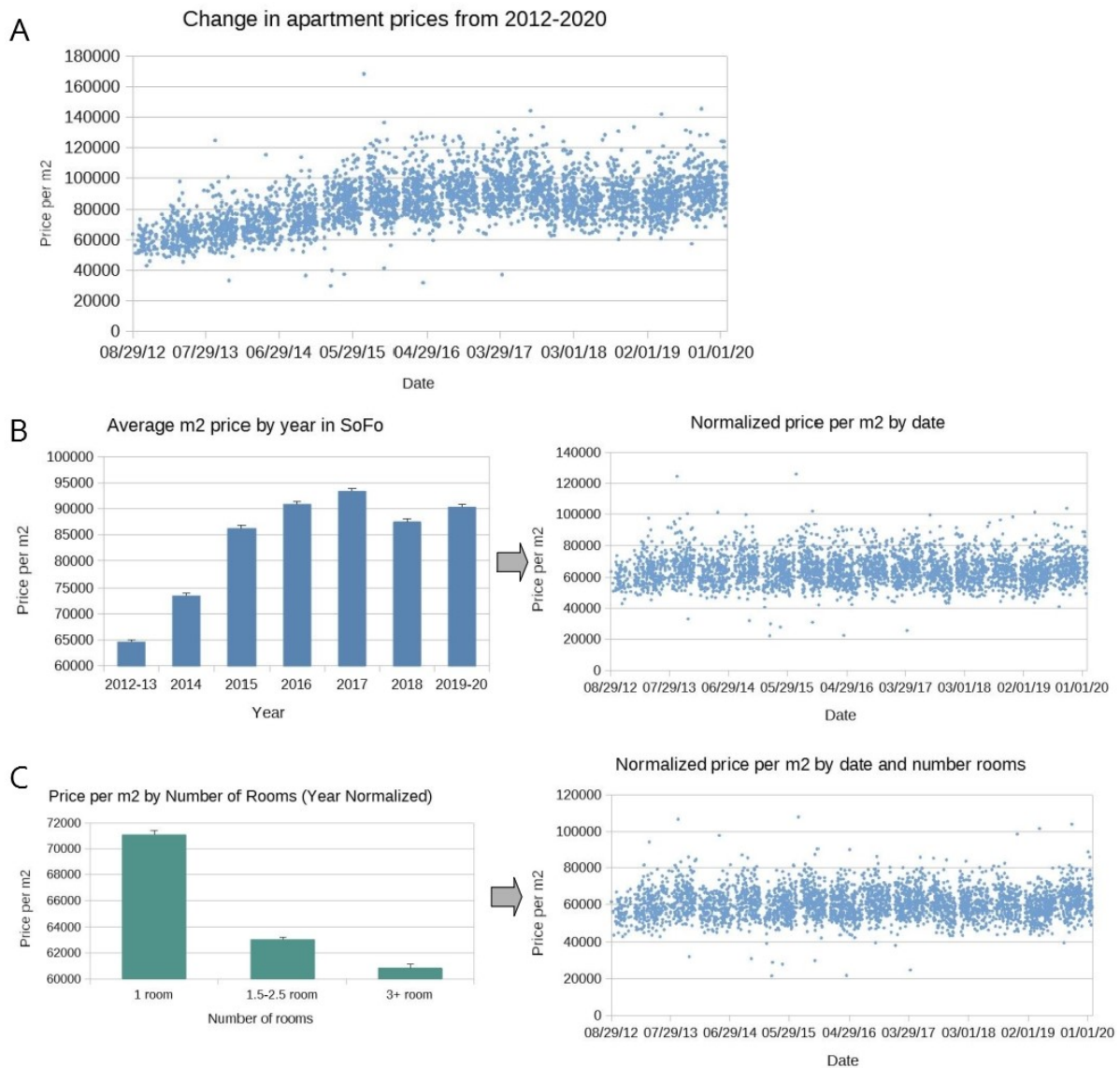


Figure 7: Price per m² for apartments from 2012 to 2020 in SoFo (n=3644). A) Raw data indicating the variation over time and at any given time. B) To correct for increase in m² price over time, data were normalized back to the average of the m² price in 2012. C) To correct for higher m² prices in smaller apartments, data were normalized to the average of the '3 or more room' category.

Sale prices by category were first divided into 4 equal quartiles (Figure 8A). For the remaining spatial analyses, a distance of 75 m was chosen as this represented the length of an average street block. Point cluster analysis of the normalized data set identified clusters (often buildings) with a high frequency of sales transactions (Figure 8B). This should be considered when interpreting the heatmaps. Even though these were weighted by 'm² price', a higher frequency of data in a given spot will also influence the heatmap. The 100 apartments with the highest normalized m² price were selected and a heatmap revealed points at Nytorget, Bjursholmsplan and the western end of Bondegatan (Figure 8C). To compare, a selection of the 100 apartments with lowest normalized m² price instead identified a spot on Bondegatan a block away from Nytorget and 3 spots in the southern end of SoFo (Figure 8D). In terms of these extremes, people were willing to pay the highest prices per m² in areas of SoFo like Nytorget, which is considered to offer the most in terms of liveliness and social opportunities. In other words, the right to centrality (Schmid, 2011).



Figure 8: Analysis of the willingness to pay more to live in particular parts of SoFo. A) Visualizing normalized m² price data by quartile did not reveal apparent patterns. B) Point cluster analysis revealed parts of SoFo with greater quantities of sales transactions. C) Hotspots for the 100 apartments with the highest m² price. D) Hotspots for the 100 apartments with lowest m² price.

Selecting the extremes in the data revealed a spatial pattern and a willingness to pay more for apartments in certain areas. Sorting the data according to apartment size could indicate preferences according to the type of residents (Figure 9A). The 1-1.5 room apartments were probably bought by singles or young couples. The highest m² prices for this group were in the northeastern corner of SoFo (Stig Claessons Park) and at Bryggartäppan (children’s playground) and Ölandsgatan (Figure 9B). The 2-2.5 room apartments were probably chosen by couples or families with small children. Highest m² prices in this size category were spread all over the district, with highest values again around Stig Claessons Park, Bryggartäppan and Ölandsgatan (Figure 9C). The largest apartments (3 rooms and above) could be the focus of larger families or older residents moving back to the city.

The pattern was most distinct here, with hotspots along eastern Bondegatan near Nytorget and Sofia Kyrka and the southern end of Södermannagatan (Figure 9D).

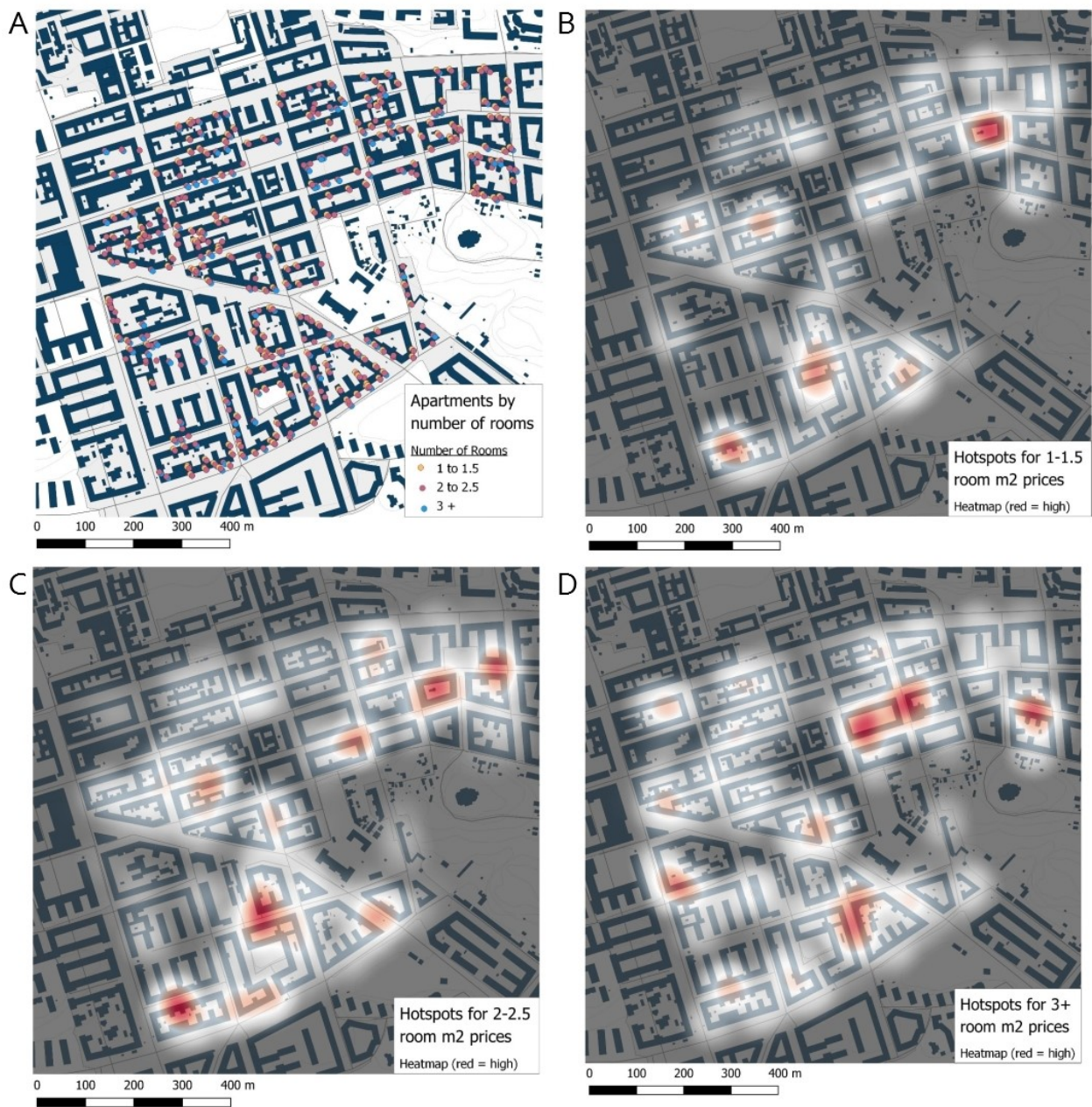


Figure 9: Analysis of preferred areas (hotspots) according to size of the apartment. A) Visualization of the sales transactions according to apartment size. B) Hotspots of higher m² price for 1 and 1.5 room apartments. C) Hotspots of higher m² price for 2 and 2.5 room apartments. D) Hotspots of higher m² price for apartments with 3 or more rooms.

Focusing first on the smallest apartments, one can hypothesize that young gentrifiers are interested in the city life associated with SoFo and would want to be close to this. However, Nytorget itself is very expensive and perhaps those living in the most sought after parts of SoFo are not selling apartments or moving at all. So how can one gain access to this neighbourhood? Viewed from the production-side theory of gentrification (Millard-Ball, 2000), the chance to find an apartment would be greater in areas with higher supply. The hotspot in the northeastern corner of Figure 9B is a

single building under the cooperative organization Brf Ljuset built in 1929 (www.ljuset.se). This part of SoFo was named NoVi by the *New York Times* for its location ‘north of Vitabergsparken’ and the cluster of small restaurants and shops (Williams, 2016). The 177 sales transactions in this building was the highest in SoFo and the board was contacted to try and understand this.

It's interesting that we stick out of some data! But it is not only on paper. Sofo is a fantastic place to live.

- Cooperative ownership board member #1

This board member was obviously a local resident, so the responses could also be interpreted in terms of a local pride for the area. This pride was noted in the majority of respondents, indicating the bias of asking local residents. Explanations for Brf Ljuset as an outlier included the following.

Brf Ljuset has 63% single room apartments. Smaller apartments are usually more expensive if you compare price per square meter.

- Cooperative ownership board member #1

This confirms what was already observed in the data, but this building was still a hotspot after data were normalized according to number of rooms. Another explanation could be the following.

There is a lot of moving in and moving out. E.g. if you move in as a single and meet somebody than you need to move. Lot of selling and buying makes us more present in the statistics, I guess.

- Cooperative ownership board member #1

This provides a plausible explanation for the discrepancy between the desire to live in the neighbourhood and the large number of apartment transactions. This also explains the similar hotspot pattern for 1-1.5 and 2-2.5 room apartments if two singles sell their apartments and buy a new one together in the same location or building. The high frequency of sales and the desire to remain in the same area may influence the bidding process and raise the prices further. The demand to live in SoFo and the low frequency of available apartments concentrates all buyers to buildings like Brf Ljuset where sales are common, thus increasing the number of bidders and the final price. In other words, the prices might not be connected to place or amenities, but rather the behavioural aspect that results from the desire to live in SoFo. By promoting the identity of SoFo, realtors feed the demand of the gentrifiers and ultimately increase the prices, increasing not only their own commission but the profit of the seller. This demand perpetuates the gentrification.

However, for the 2-2.5 and 3+ room apartments the story is not as clear and for both a more even distribution of hotspots was observed (Figure 9C and 9D). The hotspots at Bryggartäppan and Bjurholmsplan indicated a preference for areas with small parks, activities or lush gardens. It is known that land value also increases with such urban amenities (Littke et al., 2016; Hubbard, 2016; Håkansson, 2018) so this also supports the gentrification process. However, these areas are more associated with the *relaxation* notion of SoFo, in terms of peace and quiet, that was often mentioned in the analyzed real estate ads. The hotspots in the northeast corner are on streets with few stores (Google Maps) and could be expected to offer a more peaceful atmosphere. In the *New York Times* article which named this area NoVi, the quiet atmosphere is mentioned frequently (Williams, 2016). However, this placemaking has yet to become established and the area remains a part of SoFo.

Overall, the *real estate* actor contributes to the production of apartments to sell to feed the demand of the gentrifiers. Their discourse sells the right to centrality to a wealthy population, thus

supporting the process of gentrification. Preference is often dictated by proximity to areas like Nytorget, which offer the relaxed, cozy and carefree atmosphere often associated with the place identity of SoFo. However, relaxation is also offered, which could be considered as the opposite of lively and social public spaces.

Placemaking antagonistic to the gentrification process – small businesses

This section explores the placemaking activities of the *small businesses* actor in relation to the current identity of SoFo. While counter intuitive, the actions of this actor can be considered antagonistic to the gentrification process.

Placemaking through media

SoFo Företagarföreningen (business organization) was formed to coordinate activities and interests of local businesses (www.sofo-stockholm.se). This is not the same thing as a Business Improvement District since it only includes the small businesses themselves (Ward, 2007). Members pay a small fee and the organization annually produces the SoFo Map with names and locations of the member businesses. This group was contacted and a representative was interviewed, however this respondent also provided details that helped the interpretation of the texts in this section. SoFo Företagarföreningen produced 5 newspaper insets called SoFo Stories (<https://sofo-stockholm.se/sofo-stories/>) which in total contained 20 separate ‘stories’ in the form of short interviews with business owners. All of these stories were analyzed to understand the meaning of SoFo from the small business perspective. The messages conveyed in these texts resulted in 9 descriptive codes which were further grouped into 5 categories as follows:

Categories (with descriptive codes)	Overall meaning
<p><u>Beginning a new life</u> Date Opened (18) Reason (18)</p>	<p>SoFo provides authentic experiences and skilled handicraft and offers the chance to start over together with family and the local community.</p>
<p><u>Supporting local community and family</u> Advertising (11) Family (13) Local Pride (30)</p>	
<p><u>Living sustainable</u> Sustainability (8)</p>	
<p><u>Experiencing authenticity</u> Authentic (47) Trendy (23)</p>	
<p><u>Preserving skill and craft</u> Skill / Homemade (17)</p>	

Most SoFo Stories precisely mentioned when their business started. Many were started before SoFo existed while others were only a few years old. ‘Starting over’ was a recurring theme and many glorified the idea of quitting their old career and pursuing a new interest in the arts and crafts. Family and the local community were a part of this new endeavour and offering unique products or atmospheres mainly relied on word of mouth rather than widespread advertising. The overall meaning of SoFo according to local business owners was therefore the following: **SoFo provides authentic experiences and skilled handicraft and offers the chance to start over together with**

family and the local community. This concurs with the concept of the vagrant sovereign that has ambitions to fulfill their dreams (Clark, 2005) and the choice to do this in SoFo may be a reflection of the identity related to authentic experiences and handicraft. However, the strong connection to local pride, family and community appears to drive the opening of new businesses in SoFo, which would preserve the existing atmosphere rather than create something new and trendy.

Next, the merged view of SoFo is considered through an analysis of social media posts on Instagram. By using the hashtag #sofo anyone can associate their photo post with SoFo, assuming this hashtag only refers to this place. By April 2020 over 94000 have tagged #sofo but this included other areas like South Forks in New York. To compare, frequencies of other Stockholm hashtags included Södermalm (462000), Söder (138000), Vasastan (114000), Kungsträdgården (97500), Stureplan (59800) and Sergelstorg (25900) while some examples from Malmö are Västrahamnen (49500), Möllan (32000) and Lillatorg (22800). Therefore, SoFo was tagged often but not as much as other parts of Stockholm. Images were analyzed for *categorical-content* (Keats, 2009) into 20 descriptive codes and grouped into 6 categories as follows:

Categories (with descriptive codes)	Overall Meaning
<u>Living healthy</u> Fitness (3)	SoFo stands for healthy living and creative expression through socializing and trendy or authentic experiences.
<u>Living creatively</u> Architecture (9) Art (12) Craft / Jewellery (22) Design (32) Music (4)	
<u>Socializing</u> Dating (4) Family / Children (5) Friends (15) Nightlife (8)	
<u>Developing personal identity</u> Cycling (2) Flowers / Nature (11) Personal Street View (24) Personal Styling (9) Self Image (31) Street Art (6)	
<u>Experiencing authenticity</u> Food (34) Vintage (54)	
<u>Following trends</u> Fashion (41) Pets (8)	

Since anyone can use the hashtag #sofo, it is important to consider the source of the message and the power behind it. Four sources could be identified (frequency in brackets): SoFo Official account (3), Tourists (12), Locals (41) and Businesses (122). Therefore, businesses dominated the message

on this platform and yet the ‘Developing personal identity’ category were unique in style and message, mainly because they lacked commercial interest and were a display of personal creativity or self-image. Meeting friends and socializing were recurring themes in the pictures along with trends and design. Food and authentic experiences or products were commonly pictured by the local businesses and the styles were far from mass production-style marketing in that they often took a photo of the one-of-a-kind product they were selling. Despite the mixture in sources on social media, the following message was identified: **SoFo stands for healthy living and creative expression through socializing and trendy or authentic experiences.**

Social media tended to emphasize trends and authentic experiences more, but this may be a result of the differing frequency of the use of social media for marketing. The most visible actors often showed photos of their art or crafts, reflecting the more visual focus of their business. Few local residents or visitors tagged SoFo, which was surprising for an area depicted as trendy. One post by a French tourist called the area “*L’île de bobo*” which means *island of the bohemian-bourgeoisie*, a term used to describe a type of knowledge era or creative class hipster (Saint-Paul, 2018). A Finnish tourist using #sofo talked about trying to ‘fit in’, as if experiencing and becoming a part of the local SoFo scene was a goal of her visit. Two posts also could be interpreted as ‘hipster-bashing’, or teasing about the idea of the hipster. The mixture of business owners represented in the SoFo Stories certainly did contain some hipsters, but this was not the main message. Overall, SoFo Stories and Instagram posts under hashtag #sofo promoted authentic experiences and artistic handicraft but this was more subtle than expected for a district labeled as one of the coolest in the world (Remsen, 2014).

Placemaking through identity preservation

Franzen (2005) noted the very strong sense of identity in Södermalm, and asking interviewees about SoFo now often led to stories of a particular ‘soul’ or nostalgic references to the ‘original’ Södermalm before SoFo.

*Overall this concerns a reasonably well-educated population that likes equality and that society should work for the people...but there is also some sort of lifestyle factor that is quite strong and that is also recreated by the environment. It is like still a part of the soul and why many want to live in Söder...you cheer for Hammarby and you are left...this remains and is recreated.*⁵

- Politician #1

This quote captures the complexity of SoFo and its well-educated population that tries to create a particular atmosphere. This ideal could provide a model for a desired lifestyle that is performed in the gentrified place despite incompatibility with the current residents. In some cases the relaxed lifestyle resulted in conflict and exclusion, or a complete change in personality and behaviour.

SoFo and the people living in SoFo has got nothing to do with trendiness, hipsterism, nervousness around fashion or whatsoever, and that’s important to remember, I came to realize that SoFo actually changed people over a couple of years. They became more mellow and relaxed and cool, and these days there are really not much nervous fashion attitude amongst people living here. The ones that are sort of the hipsters, they don’t even live in Södermalm, they take the subway in to be at the cool spots.

- Business owner #1

While the motivation to ‘keep SoFo relaxed’ is similar to strategies in Austin (Romero, 2018) and Portland (Fowler & Derrick, 2018), there are some parts of SoFo where residents seem to have given up the struggle against gentrification.

The only place that’s really cool and trendy in SoFo is Nytorget. For some weird reason people take the subway in to sit at the fake lawn at Nytorget. No one from Södermalm is there, it is just people from outside. The people living on Södermalm, they very rarely go there.

- Business owner #1

The *real estate* actor portrays Nytorget as the heart of SoFo with all of the lively characteristics and chance for centrality. The local residents, often in line with the voice of the *small businesses* actor, claim that the real identity of SoFo has nothing to do with Nytorget. Perhaps it did before, but this rebranding is an illustration of the progressive view of place (Massey, 1994) which is dynamic and changes in relation to other places and trends in Stockholm. While subtle, this redefinition is a claim for a different SoFo than what is portrayed by pro-gentrification actors.

Placemaking through unique business models

Businesses also take a unique perspective in SoFo, and may not be particularly driven to make a profit.

For instance, Cissi och Selma on Bondegatan, where Cissi...she started wanting to have clothes in the 70s colour scheme and 70s vibe, there was nothing around, so she designed her own, and found fabric that was to her liking. So she modeled the company entirely out of her own taste for clothes. And I think in a way that is what is so special about the area in general...still, to this day there is not many shops or businesses that have started with a clear concept....which means an idea on how to attract as many customers as possible, to hook on a trend or whatever. Most...are like, someone having a weird idea.

- Business owner #2

Many SoFo businesses are created by people that had a former career and wanted to do something new or creative. *Cissi och Selma* is an example of a small business created by women based on their desire for colourful clothes to wear as an alternative to the usual black. This was not a *weird idea* as suggested by the respondent above, it was simply what they wanted. I contacted this company to ask more about this process but they were unfortunately unable to participate. But it was possible to learn more through their website www.cissiochselma.se. The business started in 2007 and it has had three different locations on Bondegatan, suggesting a very strong connection to SoFo and a desire to be a part of its identity. The idea behind the colourful patterns is an empowerment issue, as their website suggests how women should dare to wear what they want regardless of the trends (<https://www.cissiochselma.se/sv/om-oss>). Sustainability is also a strong component of their business and many others in SoFo. *Cissi och Selma* is transparent about where their clothes are produced and regularly visits the factories to ensure fair wages and proper working conditions. While this is becoming more important in the chain stores also, this is a very visible part of the experience of SoFo. Small business owners feel strongly about these issues and these values and beliefs become a part of their business concept and a reflection of their own identity. Many stores provide personalized service which could only be obtained by actually visiting the store and experiencing its character. Unlike forces driving gentrification and the constant rise in land values, SoFo businesses may be more values-based and not have profit as their primary motivation.

We are already working 150% on our own business...we keep on trying to push that cart with the square wheel instead of inventing the round one. We have quite a big turnover of shops in the area...maybe 15% a year or something like that...maybe 30% of the ones that start new businesses actually make it...And we who hang on, we are used to not making money, we are used to really, you know, turning the dime in order to make ends meet...I'd say we are pretty near to the breaking point, actually, so if the whole concept of the trendy SoFo and the vast money that can be made from upping the rents and renting out to new businesses, I think that could be basically, if the rents go up about 20% I'd say maybe half of the shops will be emptied out within a year. It's tough now.

- Business owner #2

Starting a business without interest in profit is a rebellion against profit-oriented capitalism and attempts to commodify authentic experiences (Harvey, 2002). But this was often the reality of the small businesses in SoFo. It was clear in many SoFo Stories that the goal was more in creating something from their personal interest or creating a place where their friends could come and hang out. Of course this once again reminds of the vagrant sovereign (Clark, 2005) and few could actually afford the insecurity of living so close to the margin. The instability of this approach is mentioned as the respondent predicts the collapse of SoFo and the loss of its unique businesses with a 20% rent increase. Not all businesses are like this and the high turnover of new shops suggests a diversity and innovation that could shape the future of SoFo. But this could also facilitate the conversion to more profit-oriented strategies or entry of larger chain stores.

Placemaking through exclusion

In the reactionary theories of place, locals attempt to protect their territory and exclude those that do not belong (Cresswell, 2014). The creation of a unique environment for residents in SoFo does suggest exclusion.

My place doesn't got many Stockholmers as customers. We got Canadians, Scotsmen, French, Dutch, German and people from outside of Stockholm and of course the ones living really close by in the neighbourhood. But I don't have Stockholmers coming in from the suburbs to go to my place, because it's not cool enough. It's not trendy.

- Business owner #1

But the direction of this exclusion is unexpected. The repeated desire to not be trendy is explained by the following.

I've had 7 or 8 favourite bars that I've had to give up because they became trendy. And as soon as they become trendy you have a change in demography. People read about it and they think oh this is trendy, I gotta go there, which means they come there for the wrong reasons. The vibe is gone...within 2 years of becoming trendy they are out of business because no one went there anymore.

- Business owner #1

This referred to the gentrification process but also defines the rebellion against the gentrifiers themselves. When referring to his own business...

I want it to be good, but not too good. I want it to be cool but not too cool. What I wanted was a place that was stable, that maybe took longer to start off but had stability in itself... [people] coming there for the right reason, liking the place for the right reasons, for the reasons that I wanted them to like the place for. Not a trendy blogger...and I think that kind

of embraces the ideas behind SoFo as well...we want people to come to SoFo because they feel like this feels right, this feels nice, and I wanna come back because I get something here that I can't get anywhere else. And I don't want them to come looking for the new trendy outfit or whatever...that trendy outfit will move to another spot, maybe to KnivSöder, who knows?

- Business owner #1

While anyone can go to this café, it is most welcoming for those sharing the 'relaxed' identity of SoFo. The sense of community of pre-gentrified SoFo is therefore constantly recreated by its small business owners. SoFo businesses like this do not want to attract trendy hipsters as their patronage is considered transient and it displaces those that understand the true meaning of SoFo.

Placemaking as a struggle against gentrification

The respondents almost gave a mystical quality to the identity of SoFo, suggesting that there is something about SoFo that is unique if one discovers it. Ethnographic observational approaches and interviews with more local residents would have helped to uncover this 'secret' identity. However, it was not possible to capture this local voice due to insufficient data resulting from coronavirus travel restrictions, so it was only possible to speculate based on available data.

Many small businesses in SoFo do not 'behave' as one would expect from a capitalist definition of business and in this respect SoFo is not a BID. It is organized, but it probably does not *improve* business. The SoFo Företagarföreningen instead promotes the SoFo identity, which in relation to the analyzed SoFo Stories meant the ability to find things that you like, not things dictated by current trends. It meant the chance to meet friends and chill out and not have to worry about selfies or blog posts. It is the chance also to build a unique personal identity by buying vintage items and decorating at home the way one wants. All of these things, of course, keep the hipster happy (Schiermer, 2014; Hubbard, 2016) and once again we reach the struggle between commodification of what trends hipsters find and its effects on gentrification. But for the *small businesses* actor, evidence from respondents suggested an attempt to re-brand or even reclaim the identity of SoFo as a 'relaxed, cozy and carefree place' and to hide this from the trendy hipsters. No evidence could be found for a direct protest against gentrification, but avoidance of Nytorget may be a sign of attempting to ignore trendiness branding. While subtle, the message to the *real estate* actor from the *small businesses* actor is that they have missed the point of SoFo.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The aim of studying how neighbourhoods can use placemaking to move forward following gentrification is broad, complex and highly relevant for urban studies. This thesis was able to make a small contribution to this gap in the research field by using the relational placemaking framework of Pierce and colleagues (2011). To summarize, the problem or conflict was gentrification and this was illustrated for SoFo using data. Gentrification occurred after 2001 (Hedin et al., 2012) and the rapid rise in property value, a 20% turnover of people and the Swedish middle class demographics each confirm the gentrification noted by others (Andersson & Turner, 2014). The rise in disposable income suggested super-gentrification following 2013. With this problem established, the place frame of the current identity of SoFo was what the actors interacted around and what was considered as the response to gentrification. The initial placemaking of SoFo rested on a strong identity that was both radical and carefree (Franzen, 2005) and residents tended to look back with nostalgia to the 90s when the area was the centre of the Stockholm music scene. The brand of SoFo was mainly produced grassroots through local residents and businesses without specific top-down actions from the city government. The two actors explored were *real estate* and *small businesses*. Real estate could encourage gentrification through the discourse in the ads and selective marketing to wealthy gentrifiers that appreciated quality and could afford it (Zukin, 2009). Looking at final sale prices from a behavioural perspective, people were willing to pay for living in SoFo and paid more to be near areas like Nytorget with its liveliness. However, realtors claimed that SoFo also offers relaxation or peace and quiet, which rebrands away from the established carefree identity. Looking then at the small businesses, evidence was provided that indicated a strategy against gentrification. Many businesses focused on small scale handicraft or providing places for their friends and local community. Some were even not interested in a profitable business plan and acted on purpose to make their place uncool, to avoid attracting trendy hipsters that would displace their clientele. Small businesses were essentially rebranding SoFo, expressing that the carefree and relaxed identity is there if one looks away from trendy Nytorget. The defensive strategy of the small businesses was subtle and unusual. During the analysis of these data the author arrived at following, slightly informal, analogy: **SoFo is playing dead until the bear of gentrification moves on to another neighbourhood**. This strategy understands the interconnectivity of trendy, authentic shops, raised rents and gentrification (Littke et al., 2016; Håkansson, 2018; Hubbard, 2016; Zukin, 2009; Schiermer, 2014). If the area is no longer trendy, media will stop reporting on it and gentrifiers will not want to move there anymore.

The relational placemaking method based on Massey's progressive view of place was adequate for describing how placemaking from different actors in SoFo interacted with gentrification. There are some limitations since grassroots efforts like those of the *small businesses* in this study are assumed to be more positive (Håkansson, 2018) while top-down branding efforts are negative (Medway et al., 2015). The selection of only two voices also limited the complete understanding of two very complex processes, *gentrification* and *place*. However, treating both as processes was an important step away from reactionary views which interpret the flow of capital into stationary and fixed places (Harvey, 1996). This study would benefit from the inclusion of additional actors like *local residents*, *community organizations* like Hyresgästföreningen (Franzen, 2005), Södermalm district *politicians* and trend-seeking *hipsters*. Originally, ethnographic observational studies and go-alongs with locals were planned to understand local place rhythms and capture this elusive 'SoFo carefree and relaxed atmosphere' so often mentioned. Even without coronavirus travel restrictions, this would have been

very difficult in the allotted time of a single semester. As such, these interpretations are preliminary and perhaps too speculative.

Battling gentrification is a primary goal of critical urban theory (Brenner, 2011) and social movements in other countries have been far more aggressive in their claims for the right to the city (Mayer, 2011). Gentrification research on Stockholm has primarily focused on tenure type and the production of value gaps between regulated rents and the sale price possible if converted to cooperative ownership (Millard-Ball, 2000; Andersson & Turner, 2014; Wind & Hedman, 2018) and how mixed tenure is used politically to encourage socially-mixed communities (Caesar & Kopsch, 2018). But only Franzen (2005) discussed any possible resistance to gentrification, at least for Södermalm as a whole. Perhaps the data suggesting super-gentrification (Lees, 2003) is being interpreted as the ultimate end of the gentrification process now that virtually all of central Stockholm has been conquered by the wealthy. Perhaps the very subtle resistance observed in this study is evidence that the war is already lost and resistance is futile. The rebranding strategy used by the *real estate* actor to promote SoFo as a place for relaxation or peace and quiet technically does describe a community that has lost all of its liveliness and character.

I would rather propose that we hold on to some hope for SoFo and other districts undergoing gentrification, simply because there are many examples of grassroots initiatives that do improve our neighbourhoods (Montgomery, 2013) and represent the collective actions of local residents genuinely interested in placemaking (Håkansson, 2018). The playing dead strategy of SoFo and rebranding away from trendiness and towards a 'true' carefree and relaxed atmosphere is a way to slow gentrification down. All of the other prerequisites, including the demand for housing by gentrifiers and the lack of supply, are still present so 'playing dead' would not prevent gentrification. But perhaps SoFo might last a couple more years by following this unusual strategy. More attention is also needed in terms of being inclusive for all rather than an enclave for a select few. SoFo is readily accessible for all but its location a bit off from the public space of Medborgareplatsen does prevent spontaneous discoveries. The city could encourage more inclusive events like the farmers market or Parkteatern in Vitabergsparken to attract a more diverse group of people. This, however, is a major problem for all of central Stockholm as gentrification increases segregation via mobility of the gentrifiers, forcing the displaced to move farther away from the centre (Andersson & Turner, 2014; Wimark et al., 2020).

Many continue to mourn the loss of great places and watch lively communities decay into rows of high-rise condominiums and Starbucks. Of course SoFo used to be more lively and through a more coordinated effort one could work to 'Keep SoFo Weird'. But change is inevitable and places are renegotiated over time in relation to things happening in other places (Cresswell, 2014). Capitalism will continue to complicate urban studies and placemaking strategies and some places will ultimately be lost, simply due to lack of interest or local effort. In relation to parts of Östermalm or Vasastan, where gentrification was even more extreme, SoFo has managed quite well. Compared to New York's SoHo which inspired the name in the first place, I would argue that SoFo has preserved and maintained itself much better thanks to its mystical carefree and relaxed atmosphere.

This section contains the original versions of the quotes in Swedish. These were translated to English in the Analysis section for consistency in terms of language. The following texts were used to interpret the meaning, as some terms were not exactly equivalent in English.

1.

...så var det märkligt hur Moderaterna framförallt svepte genom Stockholm genom valen 2006, 2010 och även 2014. I valen 2010 och 2014 gjorde också Miljöpartiet mycket starka val i stora delar av Stockholm och 2014 var det även Feministiskt initiativ som tog många progressiva väljares röster...På vänsterkanten har istället vi blivit det stora alternativet till socialdemokraterna som är de som tappat sin unikt starka ställning i många områden.

2.

Stora delar av de södra förorterna är idag också det som Södermalm var förr...Majorna i Göteborg och Möllan i Malmö är ju på många sätt snarlika områden, men idag är det kanske ännu mer Hägersten, Årsta, Bagarmossen, Kärrtorp, Hökarängen och Gubbängen tex som är Stockholms Möllan och Majorna.

3.

SoFo myntades i slutet på 1990 talet och Visit Stockholm började att kommunicera SoFo i början på 2000 talet ca 2003 eller nåt har inget exakt datum.

4.

Vi mäter inte frågor så någon data/statistik har vi inte gällande förfrågningar eller intresse för SoFo i siffror...SoFo är som oftast med när det skrivs om Stockholm som turiststad och därmed är det också många som redan känner till SoFo när de kommer och därmed vill de besöka området.

5.

Överlag handlar det om en hyggligt välutbildad befolkning som gillar jämlikhet och att samhället ska fungera för folket...men det finns också någon slags livsstilsfaktor som är rätt stark och som nog också återskapas av omgivningen. Det är liksom fortfarande en del av själen och varför många vill bo på söder, man hejar på Hammarby och man är vänster, det finns kvar och återskapas.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Short/spontaneous interview guide

Interview Guide: Short interviews

This is a short interview that can be emailed to those that are too busy for a deep interview. It can also be used during my site visits as a spontaneous interview for locals or storekeepers I see.

Q1. Your friend is coming to visit SoFo. What should they see and where would you take them?

Q2. What makes SoFo unique compared to other neighbourhoods in Stockholm?

Q3. Describe any challenges (if any) that SoFo is currently facing.

Appendix 2: In depth semi-structured interview guide

Interview Guide: In depth interviews (in person or by phone)

This is a more in depth and semi-structured interview for in person and phone. The idea is to try and gain a better understanding of what SoFo means and how this has changed by gentrification and what are the goals for its future (and who will set these).

Q1. How long have you had some connection to SoFo? Do you live here now?

Q2. When did you first hear the term 'SoFo' and how did you react to this?

Q3. What was it like here previously? I understand that this area was a centre of the Swedish hip hop scene in the 1990s?

Q4. Many stores and restaurants in the area existed before 2000. Do you think this has helped to create a certain 'spirit' or reputation compared to the rest of Stockholm?

Q5. SoFo has been widely promoted as the most hip/cool district in Stockholm. How has this changed the area, its residents and its businesses? Was this branding needed?

Moving on to SoFo of today and the future...

Q6. Your friend is coming to visit SoFo. What should they see and where would you take them?

Q7. Many shops and restaurants in SoFo offer unique products, food or experiences, especially with a focus on the environment. Would you agree that this is a fair depiction of the SoFo of today?

Q8. One criticism of urban development is that it is exclusively meant for one group of people. Would you say there is a typical SoFo resident or visitor?

Q9. What is the story of SoFo Företagarförening? (It seems to have a gap of a few years.)

Q10. Can I ask you to describe any challenges that SoFo faces, and what are the plans for the future of the neighbourhood?

Q11. Finally, who else could I contact that could help me develop my understanding even more?

Thanks very much for your time!