Part III

Imaginative and Poetic Spaces, Readers, and Audiences
8 A Performative Mode of Writing Place
Out and About the Rosenlund Park, Stockholm, 2008–2010
Katja Grillner

It might have been my first encounter. Going for a walk together in a rather melancholic mood. Early spring, still cold, but a pale sun to warm you up just a little. Deciding, for some reason, to cross Götgatan, leaving behind the robust turn-of-the-nineteenth-century urban fabric, five to six storey buildings, moderately decorated, the streets and proper side-walks. The space we walked into then, just five years ago, does not exist any more. Now we happen to live just across from that entrance point. We can imagine watching our historical selves from the window of our present home passing by just seventy-five meters away.

A PERFORMATIVE MODE OF WRITING PLACE

This chapter suggests a performative mode of writing that engages in and activates specific spaces, here a particular park, through different forms of self-reflexive engagement. As an author (critic, researcher) I am looking in particular at the role of memory and everyday appropriation in place perception, using my own experience as a primary source. I am attempting to capture an essentially distracted mode of spatial perception, arguing that in such a mode there lie important keys to understanding and knowing a particular place. This knowledge is often left aside in critical or historical accounts, where much effort goes into providing a distanced, and as far as possible, neutral and factual representation. The critical tools we have for representing spatial and artifactual physical realities in their immediate relation to use and experience in research are very limited. As soon as one stops to focus in, or climbs up to get an overview, one has stepped outside of practice or use. This is the principal challenge explored in this chapter.

Performative modes of writing in academia have a long history with multiple lines of development and sources of inspiration, as the present volume assembled in relation to feminist academic writing will no doubt
show (cf. Bränström, Öhman and Livholts 2007; Lykke 2010). For all disciplines dealing with relational research ‘objects’, objects that can by no means be ultimately fixed or exhaustively accounted for, and toward which the researcher has to take up a reflexive position, it is crucial to challenge the available formats of research representation (Grillner 2005b; Hughes 2006; Grillner and Hughes 2009). In architectural theory, a contemporary lineage of feminist modes of experimental textual engagement in critical spatialities can be said to emanate from writers such as Jennifer Bloomer, Katherine Ingraham, Karen Burns, Meaghan Morris, and in the last decade Jane Rendell, Naomi Stead, Katarina Bonnevier, and several others (Burns 2010; Stead 2010; Rendell 2010). The exploration of questions of critical representation and phenomenological challenges to architecture as a material and poetic practice calls for alternative forms of writing as well as visualizing architecture, a project which is urgent and on-going, but which can also trace its history back at least to the fifteenth century (Pérez-Gomez 1992; Winton 2005; Frascari, Hale, and Starkey 2007).

My own practice is tightly interwoven with both groups of architectural writers just mentioned, having taken this particular academic challenge so far as to present my PhD dissertation in fictional form (Grillner 2000), an experiment with situated dialogue and discourse that has since been followed up in Katarina Bonnevier’s PhD dissertation, which I supervised (Bonnevier 2007). In previous publications concerning criticality in distraction, I have in particular drawn on notions of distracted perception, hapticity, and tactility developed from Walter Benjamin and by extension Riegl (Grillner 2005a; 2007). This chapter focuses on the phenomenological implications of this account, specifically, and its mode of operation in relation to writing place from a more general epistemological perspective. Key references are Sara Ahmed’s work on queer phenomenology, and Iris Marion Young’s earlier work, which both help to loosen up, in productive ways, the stern intentionality of the phenomenological tradition (Ahmed 2006; Young 2005/1980). Further, an epistemological critique will be developed in relation to Donna Haraway’s notion of ‘situated knowledges’ and Rosi Braidotti’s notion of ‘nomadic subjects’ (Haraway 1988, Braidotti 1994).

Figure 8.1 Rosenlund Park. Photo by Katja Grillner.
The specific site, Rosenlund Park, influences the structure of this text, its narrative and its lines of argument. Interwoven with that structure runs an associative line of critical discussion creating a rhythm of showing and telling. That is, this text does something, it performs, and for the reader this shows directly what is at stake, while at the same time the text engages in a self-reflexive mode which also has its logic and structure determining the text. In previous essays I have engaged in similar studies in relation to places with which I have a long-term autobiographical relationship (another park, a summer house; Grillner 2007; 2008). This time I am exploring my current immediate surroundings, toward which I have a shorter history. We have now lived in the vicinity of Rosenlund Park for three years. It is the everyday route to day-care and the closest playground.

ADAZLING BRIGHT OVER-EXPOSURE

Back to that first encounter: I remember a dazzling bright over-exposure. It might in fact have been tax-declaration day—that is why we had crossed the street. The tax-authority building from 1959, designed by the architect Paul Hedquist, is eighty-four meters high. In 2007 this building was converted from tax-authority offices to student housing. It still towers unchallenged over Södermalm. It is not a particularly beautiful building. Rather it is a typical but crude, international-style, high-rise variation. Until recently it was framed on the ground by an extensive open space proportionate to its height. Åsötorget, the name of the square, was considered a cold and windy, unfriendly space. On this day in 2005, Åsötorget was still in place, and it was bright and hazy.

We entered a park, passed a series of gravelly playgrounds and found ourselves in a green picnic-universe. Still it was not yet the right season. The surrounding buildings were light concrete slabs. I had never been here before. 1960s optimistic urbanism—children everywhere, no traffic anywhere near, artificial hillocks, and a tall spidery climbing net. Little did we know that this would be our very own neighborhood park in a couple of years’ time. That the yellow building we passed on our way through was our future son’s future day-care. But the memory of the place remained.

This memory is emotionally charged. In my mind, even the weather changed as we walked those hundred and fifty meters. An initial sense of deep sadness, gloom, and aimlessness accompanied by the particular chill of an early spring day when you have dressed too lightly, transforms into a still melancholic, but rather nostalgic sense of happiness. The sun breaks through.

Remembering our first encounter with Rosenlund Park threw me back to early childhood. In his collection of essays, *The Remembered Film*, the artist and essayist, Victor Burgin, writes about the difficulties of distinguishing—in our memory—between places that we have actually experienced
and images of places we have constructed out of impressions from films and other media. We imagine places we remember through filmic filters and perhaps mistake the memory of a place we have experienced for a scene in a film we have never seen (Burgin 2004, 22).

In Gothenburg we lived in a typical 1960s apartment block neighborhood, Nordostpassagen. We had a balcony that was really a terrace. There I learned to bike. There was an expansive open courtyard between the long row of houses, no traffic. As I remember it, very little greenery but a pond into which one might venture out in a small inflatable boat. At least that is what we did one day. Some boys threw spiky chestnut shells at the boat, pricking a hole. (I thought the boat would sink.) My impression is that we were out there on our own, my sister and I. Possibly we were. The courtyard was huge, not enclosed, and we were just five and seven years old, but there was no traffic anywhere nearby. It might be that this happened just once, but my sense of happy adventurous independence as a five-year-old left a strong impression.

Discovering Rosenlund Park on that gloomy day evoked this particular place in myself. At least I thought so—a remembered place which shapes and determines my dreams and actions. But it is also a place of a particular generic type and aesthetic dating from the late 1960s. Variations of this place are found in and around all the bigger cities in Sweden, but are quite rare in inner-city Stockholm, where I grew up. Considering Burgin’s observation, that we cannot be certain that the places we remember are what we think they are, I hesitate for a second. I was hoping that my sense of nostalgic optimism had to do with actual memories, lived experiences. What if I am mixing them up? I do not really know. Places like these have not yet, in terms of their spatial characteristics and qualities, been exhausted by popular media representations. If anything, burning cars, graffiti covered walls and unsettling decay still feature in the media. But my architectural background provides me with alternative imagery: grand drawings of international housing schemes from the 1960s offering generous (but raw) pedestrian landscapes flicker by. Subtle traces of these visions can be found in many Swedish housing areas from the 1960s and early 1970s.

LAYERS OF TIME AND LIVED EXPERIENCE

This chapter moves between different layers of time and lived experience. At the outset we encounter the main site, Rosenlund Park, in 2005. The memories are my own, of the first encounter with this place, and the perspective is that of a still childless couple on a walk in an unfamiliar neighborhood which is not yet their own. From here, we make a brief excursion back to 1975 and my early childhood neighborhood in Gothenburg, Nordostpassagen. Then in the near present we will encounter myself and my then two- to three-year-old child in Rosenlund Park in 2008–2009. A
fourth layer is the current present, the writing subject now, and my now four-year-old child, biking independently around the park and kicking the football with strength and precision. Thus an autobiographically layered representation of Rosenlund Park is put into motion for a reading imagination, making this place another in rather specific terms (playing, caring, discovering, growing, everyday routine).

In her 1988 article, ‘Situated Knowledges’, Donna Haraway calls for a ‘doctrine of embodied objectivity’, where ‘objectivity turns out to be about particular and specific embodiment’. Feminist objectivity, she continues, ‘is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object’ (Haraway 1988, 581–583). Her call for a new ‘doctrine’ and engagement with notions of ‘objectivity’ is made in relation to the debate at the time about whether the postmodern radical epistemological critique in effect rendered feminist research useless in relation to political struggles for change. If feminist research could not make any significant claims about real conditions, of what value could that knowledge be? Haraway’s response here is that we need to move beyond those simple dichotomies and understand that empirical knowledge is objective even though it is always situated and embodied. With this view, it is possible to build up objective knowledge on real conditions and to act on this information. In this chapter, our concern is primarily with place. What does it mean to know a place, and who is expected to act on such knowledge? The autobiographical focus in this chapter positions myself, my child, our actions and interactions, as specific actors over time at a site where radical urban transformations are currently taking place.

In 2006, the Stockholm Municipality presented a program for renovation and redevelopment of Rosenlund Park (Stockholm City Planning Office 2006). This was one year after my first encounter with that site. In 2006 I was still not aware of the particular developments in the area. As I lived in another part of Stockholm, I was not locally engaged. A major reason for redeveloping Rosenlund Park is argued in the program to be the eradication of the nearby Åsötorget (mentioned above). That is, what had been a large public square was at the time being turned into a regular housing block (public space privatized). This housing block (where we live) is now, in 2010, almost completed. In response to these developments, the program argues, the park will have to serve an additional purpose and provide the new inhabitants with a representative space (a town square?). Because of this, a large and popular climbing structure has been demolished.

This program provides an interesting example of what kind of site-specific knowledge the city planning office considers to be significant in relation to a specific set of proposed alterations. The primary user groups addressed are: parents of smaller children playing in the park, school children, the strolling citizen, and the daily passers-by (on their way to work or school). Problematic uses discussed are drinking (by alcoholics), late night partying (by youth), and walking the dog (by dog-owners), which lead to a sense of
insecurity in the evenings in certain areas of the park, and uncleanliness (dog-poo on the lawns). None of these latter groups of users have been called upon to participate in the process. The program was largely realized according to the proposals in the winter of 2007/2008. Other parts of the park remain unaltered, possibly waiting for new funding to be released.

Most attention was given to the new entrance to the park, which is the new representative space claimed to be needed ‘for the new inhabitants’. Designed as an art installation with permanent deck-chairs and sunshading umbrellas, placed on a light concrete slab surrounded by a coarse gravel surface, it can be as bright and hazy a place as I remember Åsötorget to have been that one day, walking across it in spring 2005. But this new place is all about dreams of summer, leisure and vacation. Before, the windy, modernist plaza was a mark of city life. Technocratic, bureaucratic, gray, grand? I never really knew that place, most probably it was a failure of sorts. But what is this ‘new’ thing that has come to replace it? That has stepped over the street and into the park. That takes its place from that of the giant climbing frame. What does it mean to the park and to the neighborhood, to everyday life?

I reside in the middle of this transition. A new inhabitant, I am a co-producer of the situation. As an intensive user, simply, with my family. But also in writing this chapter, as a writer and researcher, engaging in an investigation of what this can be, from the limited perspective of my own experience and use, the place that is becoming? In *Nomadic Subjects*, Rosi Braidotti articulates the feminist figuration of the ‘nomadic subject’. It shies away from the notion of a stable identity, and emphasizes the political necessity for the feminine subject to make constant shifts and re-positioning moves. This is in subjective response to current conditions as well as establishing new strategic positions in order to instigate change, to inhabit the fictional ‘as if’ which can envision a different world (Braidotti 1994). In her introduction to *Altering Practices*, Doina Petrescu cites Braidotti’s notions of subjectivity and change, reminding us as well that all processes of becoming are in the end specific, material and corporeal. They take place somewhere and involve particular actors (Petrescu 2007). It is thus important to be precise in these accounts, even if only partial perspectives are provided.

**AT THE LOWEST POINT IN THE PARK**

Autumn 2008, and another day at work has passed and it is time to leave to pick up my son from day-care, a yellow building at the lowest point in the park. Up on the hill behind, giant housing block towers. On the other side, a muddy playground, and far in the background graffiti-covered concrete walls. We walk out the front. Rosenlund Park at Södermalm in Stockholm in its current appearance has a mixed 1930s and 1960s character. The hills in the latter section are perfectly shaped as artificial little bumps and ridges.
The earlier parts are dominated by playgrounds and at the far end the posh gravel section for grown-up kids that was recently installed. Permanent deck-chairs signal vacation all year round at this end. Here we are. Walking and stopping, running through the park, splashing in the puddle, we get home. We spend a lot of time in this park. I am thinking now, how will this park shape my son's future perceptions of place? Will it become a deeply rooted point of reference in spite of its banal everydayness? If so what is it that lingers in the memory, what is it that makes up a remembered place?

Is it the muddy playground where, as a two-year-old, he chases the ball into either of the goals and imagines himself to be playing the same game as the deadly serious seven-year-old who is out perfecting his goal shooting skills with his dad? If so, what in the playground? The deep puddles that are so much fun to run through? Its boundaries (the bushes, the pathway, the red shed and its stair, the back-side of the park pavilion), those places where the ball tends to disappear, or where another child might take it? Or is just the feet touching the ground, the stumbling, hands down, face down, stand up again, and continue? The materiality of that mud, that damp cold, and that movement keeping you warm. The other day when we passed by, a team of four seven-year-old boys were playing in thin cotton shirts, coats thrown aside on the ground. It was about zero degrees but they were warm.

Is it the flat granite slope behind the 1950s organic playing sculpture (which in itself is a cave, a slide, a climbing adventure all in one)? I think back to the first picnic in springtime when we had just moved in. A small grassy spot just below the rock, keeping the hot coffee and the bread out of reach of my son who had the longest arms and the quickest grip. At that point I would bend my back to hold his hands as, with quick but unstable feet, he explored the flat sloping rock surface, struggling upwards, letting go downwards, getting stuck in a minor cleft, stopping there to put down his hands. Standing still. A year later my main concern was to keep up with his pace, to be there before he got to the end of the rock from which there would be a two meter fall, and to be prepared to catch a possible fall as he runs down. Especially after the rain. A slippery slope. Spring 2009: we have not yet gone there (until last week it was covered with snow), but the time has clearly come when, in spite of

Figure 8.2  Playing field. Damp, wet, mud. Photo by Katja Grillner.
some anxiety, the boy must be trusted to explore the rock on his own. For myself, this rock could be a small island in the Swedish west coast archipelago where I spent my childhood summers. On sunny days a place to comfortably lie back. Only here, there is no water around.

Is it the recently installed climbing frame (approximately four by four by four meters), which bears a sign telling us that it is only to be used by children over six? We help him pass all the difficult obstacles so he can reach the principal attraction, the steep slide. But the obstacles prove to be a real problem at the moment when his courage fails him and we have to bring him down through holes not fit for grown-up bodies. Before this moment, up on the platform, his sense of independence is great. Proud to be up there, us down below, hello, goodbye, hello, goodbye, peekaboo! Does he ever stop to look out further behind us? Our heads at his foot level. The classicist facades of 1920s houses high up looking south, the grassy undulating landscape and the path toward day-care to the west, the sand box and path toward home to the east. Or he looks downwards, closing in on the modern orange EU-standard rubber surface on the ground. It is less wet here, no puddles, but it hurts less when one falls. A plane passes by and we look up into the sky together.

MAKING THE HORIZON SHIFT

When I first began to write this chapter, I was fascinated by the way in which, in my experience, place perception seems fundamentally affected by the everyday company of a small child. A matter of anxious safety concerns combined with playful interaction makes the horizon shift, not only closing in on the details, the ground, its challenging thresholds, street paving patterns, litter and dog-poo, but at the same time expanding your self through the anticipation of the child’s next move. Before he even moves, you want to know where he will be heading. It is a technique and I am quite certain it affects you deeply. Walking along the street there is always this double perspective, keeping up the pace, being close enough to grab his arm quickly, and at the same time looking up to register all the potential dangers, bikes and cars as they approach. And in the midst of this I hear him say: ‘A one.’ We stop, I look around, and the number on the neon sign right above us is fifty-one. A five and a one. Or he shouts: ‘An ambulance!’ We stop and I look, then I hear. In the very far distance, the sirens are calling.

In her seminal essay, ‘Throwing Like a Girl’ (1980), Iris Marion Young critiques the phenomenological model of a subjectivity characterized by its essential directionality—‘being oriented towards’ the world. The phenomenological subject does not, she argues, throw like a girl, that is, hesitantly, insecurely, but projects the ball through his whole body along his arms to the throwing hand and out into the world in an elegant, clearly directional trajectory. The phenomenological subject, thus, is clearly gendered.
Female subjectivity, Young provocingly argues, might rather be characterized by an oscillating directionality, knowing always that, while she acts on and toward the world, she is simultaneously gazed upon as an object in the world (Young 2005/1980). With Sara Ahmed's introduction of queer phenomenology, Young's critique gains greater momentum (Ahmed 2006). Ahmed takes an early point of departure in Edmund Husserl's account of his writing table, how his intense focus on the writing paper and the pen is set against a distant recollection of a domestic background (children playing in the summer house). It tells the story of a philosopher's privilege to absent-mindedly co-perceive his children while, in order for his paper to remain the focus of his attention, someone else is intensely taking care of that very background. A queer phenomenology, by contrast, accounts for alternative and multiple non-straight modes of being both oriented and disoriented toward the world and toward others. Ahmed describes how, for Merleau-Ponty, the loss of orientation, or grasp, in relation to the world, is seen to constitute a fundamental crisis, causing the body to 'collapse and become once more an object'. The making sense of the world (taking up a subject position) is ultimately conditioned by being able to face it straight on and close up (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 294–305). The oblique angle and the blurriness of peripheral vision are thus, in his view, not only of little significance but rather detrimental to subject-formation.

Rather than mourning (or striving for) the perfectly straight, upright, and unconditional subject-position directed toward the world, Ahmed points instead to the thickness of the queer moment of disorientation. In between subject and object, it is a relational place for potential new beginnings and where alternative lines of orientation may be drawn or sought after (Ahmed 2006, 157–179). Going back to Young, we don't need to be trapped in the image of the throwing girl who fails, but can instead make clever use of the expertise which ultimately develops from our oscillating subjectivity, constantly projecting out and being projected onto. Knowing what that means and carefully tending to our moments of disorientation.

The intense intersubjective dynamic that is introduced when caring for and playing with a small child adds further complexity to the phenomenological model. Much as Merleau-Ponty at times experienced his car as becoming an extension of his body and perceptual apparatus (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 143), the child appears for fleeting moments to be an extension of yourself, an extension which, however, has its own subjectivity. It is at once an oddly disconcerting and enriching sensation. The place that takes shape in such moments is particular and yet evasive. How does one write that place? Rosi Braidotti engages the reader in her own nomadic life experiences in order to write, and make herself accountable for, the performative image of the nomadic subject she envisions (Braidotti 1994, 6–7). Making the queer moments of caring-grown-up-and-small-child-relational-place-experience appear through writing articulates a temporary yet intense and significant subject position. Since I began working on this chapter time has
passed, and it has become clear to me how rapidly the character of this intersubjective dynamic is changing ground with time. Those moments are soon gone. It was with some sadness that I discovered, while working on this text, that already in the spring of 2009 I could lean back and gradually retreat into my old self from time to time. From then on, visits to the playground have included more moments of detached observing, more or less engaged, chatting with other parents, or on the phone. Just sitting, standing, letting the time go by. It can be boring, too.

THE MOMENT OF INEVITABLE DESTRUCTION

As a particular place changes, expands or shrinks, along with our own actions and relations within and toward it, its conditions within the larger context of urban redevelopment sets another framework that, as in the case of Rosenlund Park and Åsötorget, can be the objective of radical change. During the three years in which we have lived in our apartment, our view has been that of permanent construction work. They have almost finished building now. When we moved in, Åsötorget was already gone, a hole in the ground being filled in as an underground garage. What remained of the plaza was a fragmentary circular paving pattern on patches of ground, a displaced park bench, and a bush of red, red roses. The roses survived almost two years of construction. I lamented the moment of their inevitable destruction, and regretted that I never sneaked in to save a sapling. I had thought of doing that so many times.

On what kinds of information were the radical transformations of this particular city block based? Was it easy to make the plan, to decide on eradicating not only a little-loved plaza, but a modernist architectural composition, an historical urban type? To convert the block into its present hybrid character, a regular city block with a high-rise building and a shopping mall oddly squeezed in? What did they know? A wide array of methods are used for the purposes of site mapping within architecture and planning practice. Collecting composite knowledge of spatial, material, technical, legal and market conditions, potentials and limitations;

Figure 8.3 Åsötorget. Destruction, construction. The bush of roses turned upside down. The image includes a detail from the 1960 plan of the square. Photo by Katja Grillner.
historical background and traces; current uses and users; articulations of user needs and desires etc. In a regular commercial development project, heavy emphasis is placed on mapping out the necessary hard facts, i.e. what are the physical, legal, and market conditions on the site, what is possible, and where might development meet resistance, etc. Some methods are dependent on general information systems, site-specific conditions as charted by GIS and accessible from the city planning office, others on history writing and museum archives, and an important further layer of knowledge is gained from neighborhood surveys, interviews, workshops, or information meetings and program discussions with future users. The planning process in Sweden also always includes public presentations, hearings, and a right for citizens and legal bodies to file an opinion.

Corporate commercial interests tend to play an explicit role as driving agents in most larger planning schemes in Stockholm today, i.e. proposing what needs to be done and negotiating with the city planning office to run the proposal through the legal process, while individual citizens or citizens' groups are rarely understood to be significant actors or agents for change. User groups, if involved, are expected to give their views on current conditions or respond to ready propositions, not to work actively to make something new take place. This means that the principal agency for change is located with architects, planners and politicians (on the level of conception) and with commercial or public institutions (on the level of programming and funding). The citizen's role is reduced to that of informer rather than knowing subject or potential agent for change.4 How more adaptive frameworks, which are sensitive to grassroots initiatives, may be applied can be observed in a city like Berlin or, closer to Stockholm, in Malmö.5

While specific to the site, the information accumulated and assimilated in these processes does not build up knowledge of a situated kind. By situated, Haraway understands the concept of embodied. That is, partial perspectives as articulated through human action and experience. This is a perspective which is clearly at odds with the more generalizing and objectifying mechanisms at work in both architecture and planning. The highly partial perspective on Rosenlund Park which is presented (and produced) in this chapter is one attempt to articulate what situated knowledge can be in direct relation to place perception and production. However, it remains a largely theoretical project in its current implementation. That is, so far these writings have not been shared or discussed in their very local context. For them to take site-specific effect, a larger network of actors needs to be formed.6 As a critic, scholar, and architectural researcher, I have approached these questions experimentally in a very basic and rather cautious sense—careful to keep abstractions and generalizations at bay, never to forget how specific experiences are, when they are in effect taking place. Writing is a practical tool for this investigation, retelling and restructuring site-specific memories, allowing the narrative to introduce layers of different times and sites that are then put into motion.
What then, if anything, might be generic in this tale, in terms of the site that it claims to write? What specific value may a few glimpses of a rather ordinary neighborhood park in Stockholm, and of my own and my son’s particular place relations, have for a broader readership, not familiar with, or having no particular interest in, this very place? The ambition, after all, has been to write this place, to write it in a way that will allow it to enter into your imagination, to make it a place of your own. It is a place that is intensely mine in the sense that it has been created from my own experiences, actions and associations. By writing, not about the place, but the place itself, writing it, the place can take on an independent existence for the reading imagination. An essay such as this may offer multiple moments of knowing recognition and, related to those, moments of critical discovery influencing the way in which you might understand and value a very different situation and location elsewhere. Thus, its criticality lies not primarily in what it represents, but in how it creates a new point of reference for understanding, use and action elsewhere.

SQUINTING AT THE LOW EVENING SUN

Early summer 2010, sitting on the warm granite slope, squinting at the low evening sun and at my soon-to-be four-year-old son busy climbing. Every morning for the last few weeks we have biked together through the park. For him it is a new movement and sensation, for us both a new relationship and a new space (yet another park). The early days of biking (without support wheels) brought back momentarily the sense of intense co-perception described above: being nowhere but there, just there by the child, to avoid the fall, to avoid an accident. Only here was this rickety vehicle in between, with its spiky pedals and handlebars. It hurt. Gradually that bodily attention (and tension) was released. Even if the passage through the park takes only a couple of minutes, to bike there, side by side, or myself after him, together, was then a great relief. This park will continue to change, I now understand, from season to season, over the years to come, depending on my relational ties and its various uses. I find myself returning again to that spring day, five years ago, when I first encountered the park and passed that place which has now disappeared. I still do not know why I miss it.

NOTES

1. The research for this article was supported by the Swedish Research Council. I wish in particular to thank my architecture and writing research colleagues and collaborators, Rolf Hughes, Mona Livholts, Jane Rendell and Naomi Stead, for providing challenging and inspiring input to this research, and to fellow teachers in FATALE, Katarina Bonnevier, Brady Burroughs and
Meike Schalk, as well as my architecture and writing students, for providing ample opportunities to discuss and articulate what this investigation might really concern. This aside, however, from the depths of my heart, I thank Leo, my lovely son. I wonder what you will think one day, if you read this essay. It is simply wonderful to make place together with you!

2. Designed by Thomas Bernstrand (Bernstrand & Co.), the project, which was entitled ‘The Beach’, received the Siena Award for the best outdoor design in Sweden, 2008.

3. Ahmed’s use of queer addresses its double signification as, on the one hand, concerning more generally an oblique, or non-straight, angle, that is any diversion from norms or standards from a cultural or aesthetic perspective, and on the other hand a more specific use concerning non-straight sexual orientations (Ahmed 2006, 131).

4. For further critical discussion and research concerning issues and potentials of social agency and participatory processes in planning see listed references to articles and book chapters by Carina Listerborn, Meike Schalk, Ernstson and Sörlin, and Erixon and Ernstson.

5. Urban Pioneers presents different social and urban actions that have greatly influenced the development of Berlin after the Wall (Senatsverwalting 2007). The book Urban/Act Catalogues on a European Level: Alternative Urban Development Practices, Groups, and Networks (Atelier d’Architecture Autogereee 2007). In the Swedish context, the city planning office in Malmö is testing alternative approaches to planning in specific projects, for example in Stapelbäddsparken (Malmö City Planning Office 2011).

6. For example, the London-based writing practice, Urban Words, developed by Sarah Butler, engages in site-specific writing projects in urban regeneration areas. Local engagement is sought and stories of the place, past and present, are collected and presented. The publication and web-site Home from Home portrays through photos and personal accounts the migrant neighborhood Elephant and Castle in London, which is currently subject to radical regeneration (Sajovic and Butler 2010).

REFERENCES


