



Research Article

Transit places and the production of public spaces

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Rethinking the bus stops: From mono-functional to inclusive public spaces

In conventional planning practice, the city's material infrastructures have been considered as mere technical entities, and people's movements in the city, urban mobility practices, perceived as merely functional, to move from one place to another. With planning aims at productivity and efficiency, the mobile is considered more desirable than the immobile, speed more advantageous than slowness (Bissell, 2007; Hubbard and Lilley, 2004). Waiting time was considered wasted time, and transit places only in-between-station containers for people waiting to be transported elsewhere. As such, bus stations and bus stops tend to be designed as generic technical fixtures, as non-places, to be distributed in the city without paying attention to local specific physical and social conditions at the transit locations (Jensen 2009, p. 141). The result is that many bus stops are desolate and unsafe places that discourage use. This applies particularly for those bus stops in the city's periphery where there is a high concentration of the urban poor.

Aiming for control and predictability, conventional planning also favors mono-functional spaces with specialized use. Many waiting spaces are designed as "niche construction", affording certain activities while blocking others (Kärrholm and Sandin, 2011). These mono-functional spaces of predictability tend to be homogenous urban spaces that accommodate some users while exclude others, thus are problematic for an inclusive city.

As contemporary cities invest more and more in sustainable mobility and public transport, transport infrastructure has been increasingly recognised as important space for interaction as much as for circulation (Jensen, 2009). There is a growing attention to the role of transit spaces as public spaces (Gehl Architects, 2011). But what makes a bus stop a public space? In what conditions and circumstances can bus stops serve as social spaces and public places? This paper discusses these questions through an investigation into the process of public making at selected bus stops in Malmö. It also provides some reflections over the measures needed to create attractive and inclusive transit spaces.

The research resonates with current body of work about public space (Staeheli and Mitchell 2007, Iveson 2003, Kohn 2004) that considers publicness not a ready-made quality, but a potential that needs to be actualized; public place is a process in which space is *made* public. Public spaces are considered to be characterized by heterogeneity and multiplicity of people and activities (Sennett, 2003; Kohn, 2004.; Madanipour, 2019). A public space that is designed to achieve a quality of heterogeneity, accommodating a multiplicity of use and users will be an inclusive urban space. The paper embraces a territorial production perspective, and considers public space as result of all territorial productions at a place (Sheller, 2004, Kärrholm, 2007, p. 20). The publicness of place can be described as "the result of different territorial productions (...) providing it with some kind of territorial complexity" (Kärrholmm 2007 p. 19. I). From this perspective, the territorial complexity is the quality that ensures the *making public* of a place. Instead of creating mono-functional spaces that are characterized by territorial singularity, we need spaces of territorial complexity, allowing the co-existence and intermingling of many uses and users. This study explores how the quality of heterogeneity are achieved at the bus

stops and by what means. This understanding expects to inform the planning and designing of lively and inclusive bus stops that are attractive and safe for all urban residents.

The study of bus stops in Malmö is based on a two-part observation study: the first involves unstructured observation at different types of bus stops, including one larger exchange bus station (Gustav Adolf's square), and several mid-sized and small bus stops. This study has a focus on observation of the waiting positions, individual and group behaviour, and identifying forms of territorial productions at different types of bus stops. The second part involves structured observation of waiting activities at the bus stops. This includes a direct observation and a video observation. In the direct observation, the researcher followed selected users' activities from the moment they arrived at the bus stop to the moment they boarded a bus or left. The video observation was of 15 minutes on each occasion, filmed from a distance, and used to register users' activities at the bus stops during the waiting duration.

The direct and video observation were carried out at three selected bus stop locations in Malmö: Djäknegatan, Anna Lindh's Plats, and Nobeltorget. Anna Lindh's Plats and Djäknegatan are centrally located while Nobeltorget is located outside the city center. The bus stops at Djäknegatan (Figure 1) are of a standard design (for Malmö) with a signpost, bus shelter, and bench inside the shelter. The bus stops at Anna Lindh's Plats are of a newer design, having two shelters with a standard bench inside each one, and many more round benches (some have round shape and built around a tree) located outside, providing a more flexible sitting position facing various direction (Figure 2). There are also several greenery arrangements nearby the bus stops, the boundary of which are in the form of low platforms that can be use as informal seats. Nobeltorget A & B are located on either side of a bus lane, and in between two car lanes, thus separated from the urban surrounding. The facilities here are of yet another design, with long and narrow shelter along the bus-stop islands (Figure 3). Nobeltorget C is a smaller bus stop marked with only a signpost, but it is located near a flower shop and a bakery (Figure 4).



Figure 1: Djäknegatan A by Hoai Anh Tran



Figure 2: Anna Lindh's plats B by Hoai Anh Tran



Figure 3: Nobeltorget A & B by Joel Landin



Figure 4: Nobeltorget C by Joel Landin

Forms of territorial production and the territorialization of bus stops

Territorial production can take the forms of strategies, tactics, appropriation and or association, and all these forms of territorial productions can operate at the same place (Kärrholm, 2007). A bus stop is an example of territorial strategy, in the sense that it involves intentional plan to mark or delimit a territory. Territorial tactics refer to individual, personal, attempt to mark a territory, and there are many examples of territorial tactics at a bus stop, such as the case when a person places a bag on the space next to his/her on the bench, preventing others to sit there. An individual or a group who uses the bus stop in a way that makes it their own, and by that keeping away others, can be said to involve in territorial appropriation, such is the case when two children using the bus stop shelter as a playing ground. Territorial association is a form of mental territorial production and occurs to areas where a specific usage is applied with regularities by a certain individual or group: when a specific bus stop is regularly appropriated as a gathering place, or for picnicking by a group, it will be associated with these activities by others.

Territories need to be constantly produced and reproduced to remain effective (Kärrholm, 2007). The regular occurrence of the activity ‘waiting for the bus’ helps to stabilize the bus stop as a territory. This process is termed territorialization and is mediated by material artefacts as well as by social norms (Kärrholm, 2007). The material artefacts that are used as part of the territorial strategy to territorialize the bus stop in Swedish cities constitute of signposts, timetable, bench(es) and shelter(s). The bus stop is also territorialized by people’s activities which follow a certain rule of conducts (such as no littering, no smoking in the shelter, the bench is to sit on and not to stand on). That the bus stop is associated (territorial association) with the activity of ‘waiting for the bus’ also contributes to territorialization. If the bus stop, for example, is regularly appropriated by some dominant group for other use (such as picnicking or drug use), it will deter bus passengers from using it. We can say that the bus stop’s identity is destabilized.

Territorial productions at the bus stops in Malmö

Interpersonal space and territorial production

Observation showed that keeping interpersonal space seems to be a tacit code of conduct that rules the territorial production activities at the bus stops (Figure 5a & b). When standing, people tend to stand apart at a distance of 1 or 1,5 meters from each other. If the bench in the bus stop shelter was occupied, the next passenger prefers to stand outside the booth, even when there is enough space for one or more people. In case more than one people sit at the bench, they tend to space themselves far apart on benches: so that a bench that could fit four people might only be able to fit three. The space inside the shelter is used more when there are less people at the bus stops. When there are more people at the bus stops, most stand outside the shelter preferring to keep their interpersonal space instead of crowding in the shelter (unless weather conditions are adverse). This pattern of territorial production results in that the main waiting territory is outside the shelter, and not inside the shelter itself.



Figures 5 a & b: Interpersonal space and territorial production at Gustav Adolf B and Studentsgatan A. Photos by Hoai Anh Tran, edit work by Jeongmin Hyeong

Territorial appropriation

Territorial appropriation is a common territorial production form at the bus stops. People frequently make use of artefacts in the physical surrounding (low wall, concrete platform, electric box) as informal seat or as wall to lean on while waiting. At the Gustav Adolf square bus stops, the low wall of the cemetery (Figure 6a), and the low cement platform (Figure 6b) are used extensively as seat, even when the bench inside the bus stop shelter is not occupied. At Nobeltorget C (Figure 6c) the bench of the bakery next to the bus stop is quite often appropriated by transit passengers, both during and outside the shop's

working hours. The use of the top of the waste bin as a parking surface for the coffee cup is another example of territorial appropriation.

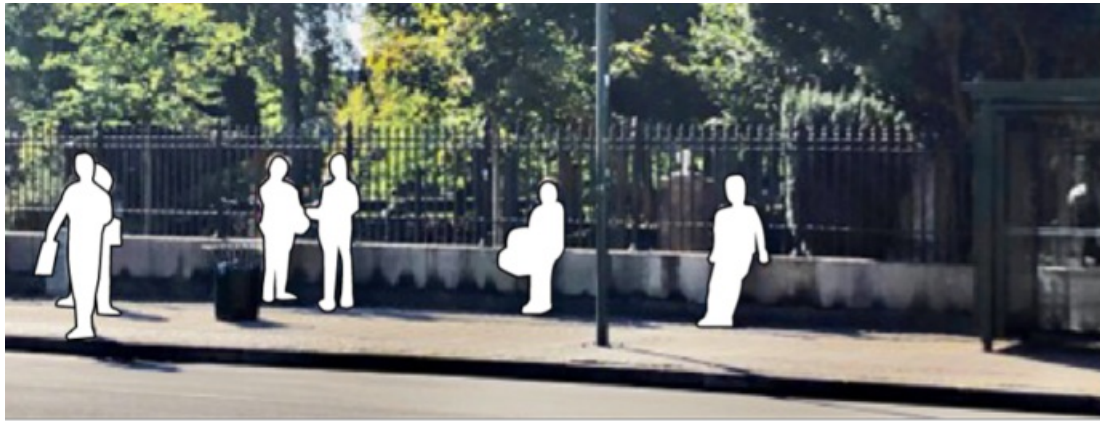


Figure 6a



Figura 6b



Figure 6c



Figure 6d

At Anna Lindhs plats (Figure 6d), the round benches (built around a tree) are often used as a parking surface where people put their bags or jackets. These benches are also used, or “appropriated,” by people who are not bus passengers. On one occasion, two children used the benches as a playground: holding to the tree as a handle while running on top of the bench. The low concrete platforms around the greenery are used by both bus passengers and other people as informal seats. Furthermore, the position of these round

benches away from the bus stop shelter seems to attract people who engage in activities that may disturb others such as smoking or talking on the phone. These various layers of territorial production here produced by a variety of uses and users contribute to the territorial complexity of the place.

Territorialization and deterritorialization

Observation showed that passengers' territorial appropriation activities produced a waiting territory that tends to be larger than the assigned bus stops themselves. In other words, the territorial appropriation activities constitute territorialization processes that redefine the bus stop territory. This can be found in the cases of the bus stops at Djäknegatan, Anna Lindh's Plats, and Nobeltorget C (Figure 7 & 8, the waiting territory is marked with a green contour). Territorialization following appropriation has a stabilizing effect to the bus stop as a waiting place, allowing the accommodating more people and a wider range of activities.



Figure 7 a & b: Territorial production and territorialization at Djäknegatan, drawing by Jeongmin Hyeong

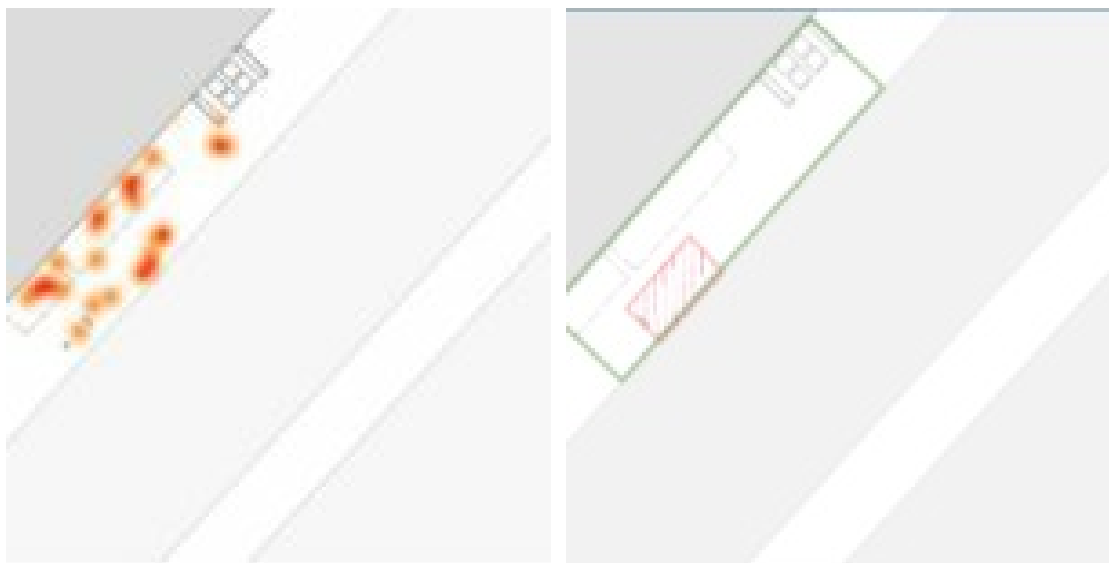


Figure 8a & b: Territorialization at Nobeltorget C, the bench of the bakery shop is incorporated as part of the waiting space. Images by Jeongmin Hyeong.

At Nobeltorget A & B, however, as the bus stops are located in between car lanes, and separated from urban surroundings, there are little opportunity for involving more territory and artefacts through appropriation. The waiting territories that are produced here are constrained to the assigned area (Figures 9a & b).

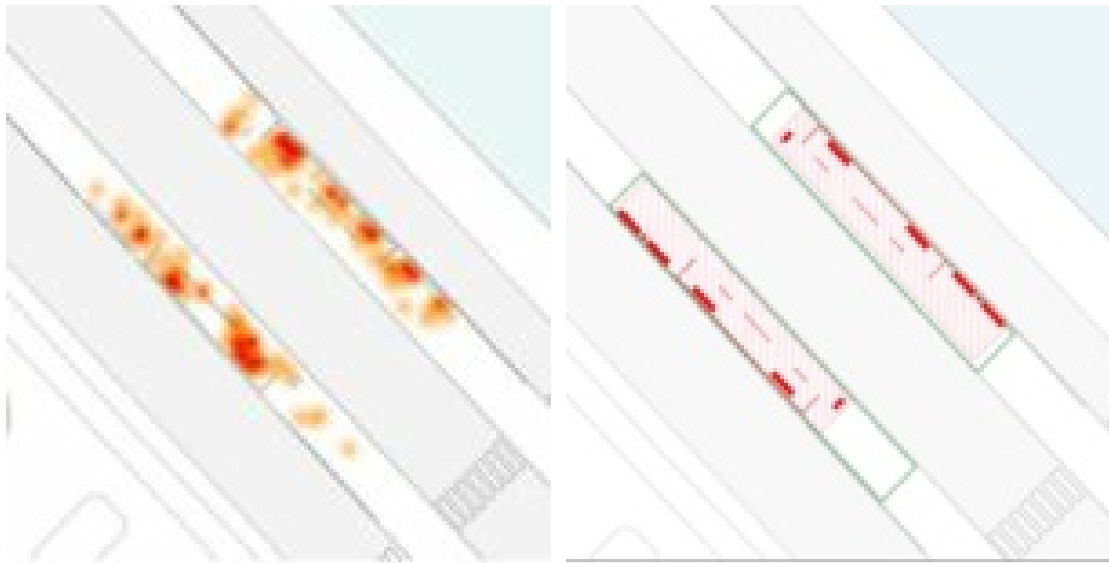


Figure 9a & b Territorial production at Nobeltorget A & B, images by Jeongmin Hyeong

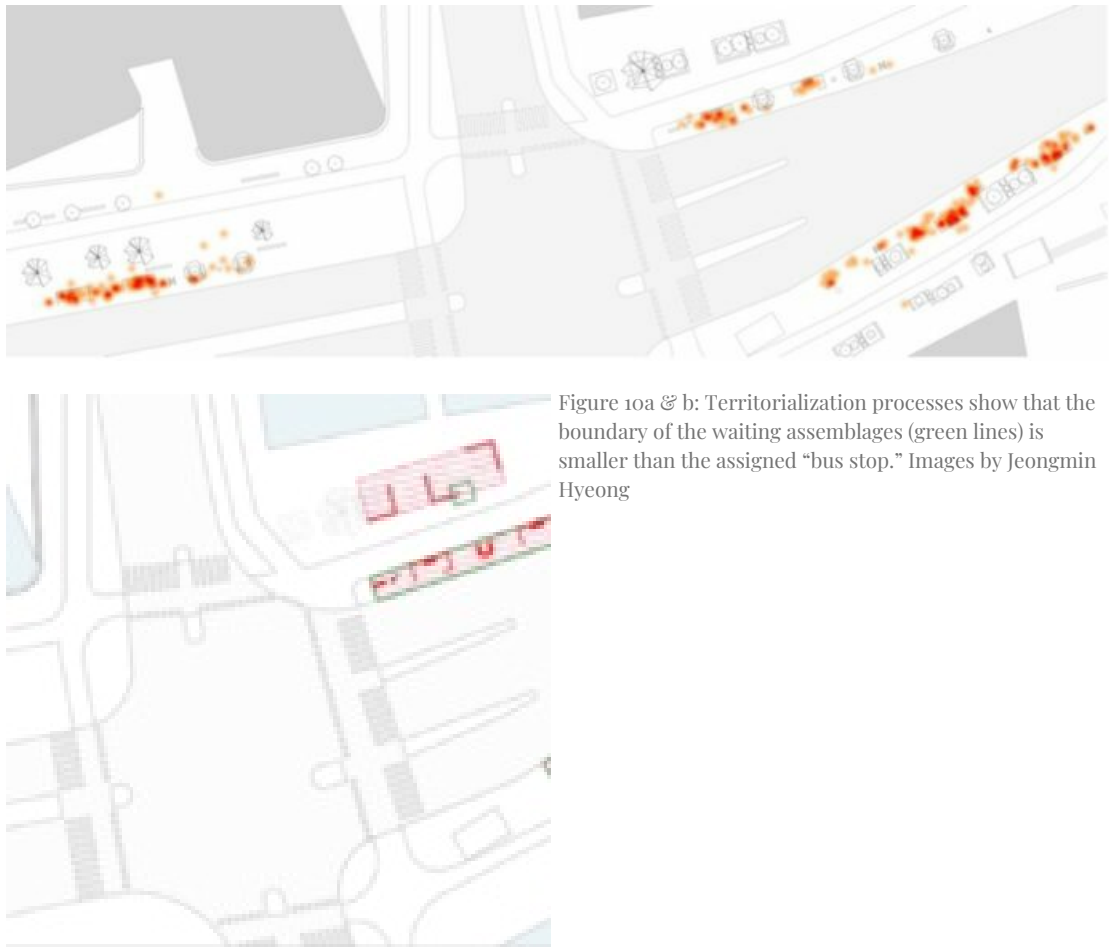


Figure 10a & b: Territorialization processes show that the boundary of the waiting assemblages (green lines) is smaller than the assigned “bus stop.” Images by Jeongmin Hyeong

At Anna Lindhs Plats bus stops (A, B, and C), stops with two shelters and several benches outside the shelters, an observation study showed that the benches located behind the shelter across the bike path tend to be neglected, thus territorialization processes at these

locations produced a waiting territory that is smaller than the planned one and does not include all the provided benches (Figure 6a & b). For the bus stop sections across the bike lane, it can be said that their identity as waiting space is destabilized.

Territorial productions are mediated by social control and rule of conducts

Observation study showed that those who smoke or talk on the phone, tend to follow a tacit social norm, leaving their seat and move outside so as not to disturb others. This can be observed in Djäknegatan and Anna Lindhs bus stops (Figure 7a & b). However, the adherence to these social rules seems to be neglected by people who are in groups of more than three persons. It seems that their relative dominant position at the location seems to allow them to stop paying consideration to others. Several incidences of smoking inside the cubicle by passengers in group were observed in Anna Lindhs Plats B (Figure 7b).

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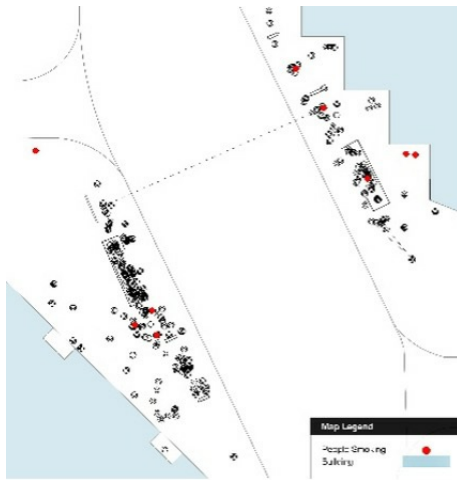


Figure 11a & b: Observance of social norm at Djäknegatan bus stops (left) and Anna Linhds Plats B (right). Images by Jeongmin Hyeong

Observance of social rules decreases in places with few territorial productions

At Nobeltorget A and B, those bus stops that located between two bus lanes, separated from urban surroundings, the observance of social norms seems to be notably slackened. Observation study shows several incidences of lone passengers smoking or talking on the phone inside the cubicle.



Figure 12: More people smoke inside the shelter at Nobeltorget A&B.
Image by Jeongmin Hyeon

Territorial appropriation by a larger group has a destabilizing effect

It is also at Nobeltorget A and B that we observed the occurrence of territorial appropriation by large groups who do not use the bus. The group occupied half the space of the bus stop shelter with their big bags. The effect was that bus passengers did not want to come near the group and gathered on the other side of the long shelter (Figure 13). The neglect of adherence to social norm in the form of littering could also be observed at another time of observation as seen in Figure 10. The isolated location of these bus stops, meaning less exposure to social control, seems to provide an environment that is tolerant for group dominance and the neglect of social norms regarding smoking and littering.



Figure 13: This group of people and their big bags at Nobeltorget C (right corner) has a destabilizing effect. Photo by Jeongmin Hyeon

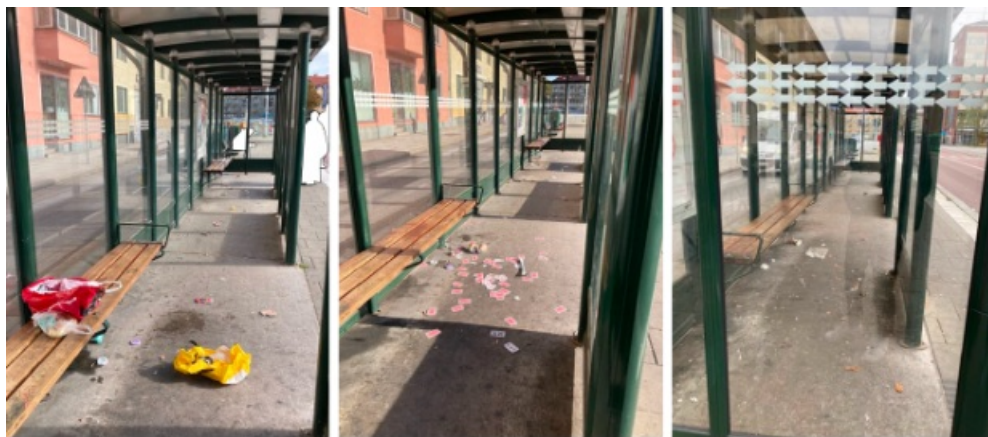


Figure 14: Littering at Nobeltorget A&B. Photos by Jeongmin Hyeong

If the bus stops are repeatedly used in this fashion, with large group occupy the place for other activities, and the allowance of littering and smoking, they will deter bus passengers from using it. As result, the territorial appropriation and association made by other groups disappeared, leading to the decrease of territorial complexity. Furthermore, they will be associated with the negative activity itself. Their identity as waiting space will be destabilized not only through undesirable territorial appropriation but also by territorial association.

Concluding remarks

The study shows that the opportunity for territorial appropriation is important for territorial complexity, as it contributes to the creation of heterogenous urban space. The co-existence of diverse form of uses and users – different forms and layers of territorial productions – stabilizes the waiting places through processes of territorialization. Territorial appropriation by a dominant group is however not desirable as it leads to poor adherence or neglect of social norms, which deter other passengers from being there. Repeated occurrence of these activities will destabilize the bus stop through fewer territorial production forms (less territorial complexity) as well as through territorial association where the bus stop is connected to just this negative activity.

The role of the physical and social surroundings is thus important for the stability of the bus stops. Existing physical structure nearby the waiting place, for example, provide the users with the opportunity for territorial appropriation. The presence of other people contributes with more territorial productions as well as serves as a form of social control that helps to prevent territorial appropriation by a dominant group. Bus stops in isolated locations (such as that of Nobeltorget A and B in this study) tend to have reduced observance of rules and social norms and are prone to be appropriated by larger groups compared to bus tops that are emersed in the urban context and where social norms are duly observed.

The study highlights the importance of the urban contexts in supporting various waiting activities. While the bus stop territory is characterized by a predominant territorial strategy (a place for waiting for the bus), the allowances for other production forms such as territorial tactic and appropriation create a variety of uses, thus can also accommodate a heterogenous group of users. This, in turn, stabilizes the bus stop's identity as a transit

place. Territorial homogenization occurs when the bus stop is regularly appropriated by a dominant group for other use (such as the case of Nobeltorget A & B) which deters other passengers from using it. It is the lack of territorial complexity that leads to territorial homogenization and exclusive use. Locations that allow for a variety of territorial productions can accommodate a variety of waiting practices, and thus can better serve as urban public spaces.

The territorial perspective has proved important for the study as it shed light into the waiting practices, to illustrate the variety of actions that are involved in the waiting activities, and to highlight the embeddedness of the bus stop in the urban context, both materially and socially.

The study points to the need to rethink the design of transit spaces generally and bus stops specifically. Bus stops should not be considered as niche construction, as standardized technical fixtures, but as urban public spaces. Instead of aiming toward a specialized space for bus transit, we should look for possibilities to allow a wide variety of activities involving multiple forms of territorial productions by different groups of people. The design of waiting places should aim at creating a kind of territorial complexity that enable the 'making public', to make it a public place. The co-existence of different forms of territorial productions not only makes the place lively, but also provides a level social control that makes it a safer and more pleasant place.

Bus stops located in residential areas at the city periphery do not have support from the existing urban infrastructure tend to be mono-functional places that run the risk of neglect or being taken over by specific groups, which results in desolate and unsafe places to be. The planning of these bus stops should especially consider incorporating the bus stop with other services to allow for more activities and more users at the location, allowing the 'making public' to take place, thus creating more attractive and safer waiting places.

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