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EDUCATION INQUIRY

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The concept of “educational science” in the Swedish context

*Education Inquiry* is a new international journal in the area of educational science. It has emerged in a period and a situation where in particular the concept of “educational science” is being used in different contexts in Sweden, not in the sense of the discipline of “education”, but as a field with unclear boundaries and ambitions. Initially, the concept was employed in various types of investigations and policy documents that in different ways concern proposals to change teacher education in Sweden.

The concept is conspicuous by its absence in the Swedish educational encyclopaedia, *Pedagogisk uppslagsbok. Från A till Ö utan pekpinnar* [“Educational encyclopaedia. From A to Z without lecturing”] from 1996, but it had already been used in an investigation of teacher education from 1978 *Lärare för skola i utveckling. Betänkande av 1974 års lärarutbildningsutredning* (LUT 74) [“Teachers for schools under development. Report from the teacher education commission of 1974”] in connection with proposals to provide teacher education with a research basis by means of various different postgraduate studies. On that occasion, the proposal contained three different types of postgraduate studies: discipline-oriented postgraduate studies based on disciplinary depth in the departments, and postgraduate studies in “education” as an educational methodology alternative. Between these, let us call them extremes, a third alternative was also suggested, namely postgraduate studies as a “general educational science alternative”, with demands for knowledge of subject theory, but also something else concerning teaching and learning.

After that, the concept seems to have lain fallow for several decades before it was again used in the 1990s by one of the two teachers’ unions, Lärarförbundet, in *Professionella läarare* [“Professional teachers”] (1995). The concept was used there in relation to issues concerning teachers’ efforts regarding professionalisation. In this connection, the expression “educational science basis” is used, referring to scientificity in a general sense, but also to didactic research in connection to different disciplines, i.e. subject didactics, research and development work in the activities of schools as well as engagement in the development work of schools.

The concept of “educational science” then cropped up in a proposal for a new teacher education *Att lära och leda. En lärarutbildning för samverkan och utveckling* [“Learning and leading. Teacher education for cooperation and development”] (1999). It contained a proposal to establish a new branch of science, Educational Science.
In Sweden fixed scientific resources are allocated precisely via branches of science, and the idea was hence that this branch would for the first time be guaranteed fixed scientific resources. However, the Swedish Parliament decided not to approve this proposal. Instead, an “Educational Science Committee” was established within the Swedish Research Council for the purpose of allocating research funding to research projects in the area. The concept of “educational science” is used for the broad research and postgraduate studies that are conducted in connection with teacher education and correspond to the needs of teacher education and professional educational work.

In the proposal for a new teacher education presented in 2008, En hållbar lärarutbildning [“Sustainable teacher education”] (HUT07), the “teacher education” concept is used in the sense of a “common educational science core”, i.e. knowledge to be acquired in teacher education. This core includes issues concerning the organisation and conditions of such education, the foundations of democracy, curriculum theory and didactics, the theory of science, research methodology and statistics, development and learning, special needs education, social relations, handling conflicts and leadership, assessment and marking, evaluation and development work. Educational science is seen as an umbrella term for research in different disciplines that is devoted to culture, education, teaching, fostering and learning. In the government proposal for a new teacher education, which is intended to be launched in 2010, Bäst i klassen – en ny lärarutbildning [“Best in class – a new teacher education”] (prop. 2009/10:89), these areas recur as examples of this educational science core.

The rise of the concept of “educational science” should be seen against the background of an enormous expansion of the education area in Sweden. From the early 1990s onwards new curricula for schools, a new marking system, wider entrances and programmes at upper secondary level were introduced, efforts involving adult education, child care and care of schoolchildren became parts of the education sector, preschools were given a curriculum of their own, the quality assessment of educational activities was started etc. In this period, the education sector in Sweden was doubled; the number of children in the sector grew from about 1.4 million to more than 2.5 million at the same time as the number of adults in education also rose. Taken together, including teachers and pupils and other school staff, the sector increased from about 1.5 million to about 2.8 million. If academic education is also added to these figures, more than 40 percent of the country’s population is found in this sector.

In a recently presented report from January 2010 on transition to postgraduate studies in different areas, the National Agency for Higher Education shows that there are limited postgraduate studies in the Educational science area (Swedish National Agency for Higher Education, 2010). It reveals that, on average, six percent of the students who have completed an undergraduate programme in Sweden start postgraduate studies. Among those who have parents with a postgraduate degree the proportion is higher, 16 percent, as might be expected. These are average figures. A closer inspection reveals great differences among the different disciplines. In science
about 30 percent of the students proceed to postgraduate studies after their undergraduate programme. The corresponding figures are in descending order: medicine and odontology (16 percent), humanities and theology (10 percent), agriculture and forestry (8 percent), technology (8 percent), social sciences and law (4 percent), health sciences (3 percent) and fine arts (1 percent). At the bottom of this scale we also find education and teaching, i.e. educational science, where only 1.5 percent of the students proceed to postgraduate studies after their undergraduate programme.

As is well known, it is now easy to conduct searches via Google and obtain a conception of different concepts and their distribution. In February 2010 the Swedish concept of “utbildningsvetenskap” [“educational science”] produced 131,000 hits. On the same occasion other concepts in the education sector gave the following number of hits: “skola” [“school”] 15,500,000, “universitet” [“university”] 10,900,000 and “pedagogik” [“pedagogy”] 1,230,000. The conclusion that might be drawn from this is that the concept of “utbildningsvetenskap” is relatively new, but also that it has become increasingly frequent in social discourse and education in Sweden. Another conclusion that may be drawn is that the concept is employed in many different contexts, as a name for university departments, conferences, graduate schools, faculties, research, professorships, lectureships etc.

Ever since the late 19th and early 20th century there has been an intimate relationship between the growth and institutionalisation of the social science disciplines on one hand, and a context with great social problems and strong demands for generating knowledge of social facts from different parts of society on the other, in particular from institutions such as schools, politics, administration etc., all connected to the state. Actors in the political field have received support and inspiration for their political innovations in the discourses developed by actors in the disciplinary fields. When the concept of “educational science” is being launched on a wide front, this should be seen in this connection. As a concept, content and practice, it has not been formulated by the researchers and teachers in the area. It should rather be seen as a politically determined multidisciplinary organisational principle lacking specific content but working for the attaining of goals without them being decided. As Trondman (2006) puts it, educational science actors have provided a multidisciplinary bunch of researchers with a concept, an organisational principle and a research area that are now also supposed to be filled with content. Education Inquiry will participate in this work. This issue of Education Inquiry contains four articles. In “Spaces of social inclusion and exclusion. A spatial approach to education restructuring and identity in Sweden”, Joakim Lindgren takes as his point of departure the decentralised Swedish school system that has become ever more directed at the construction of self-governing and responsible pedagogical identities that are supposed to make integration and participation possible. Drawing on the work of the geographer Edward W. Soja, he acknowledges how material and symbolic spatialisation intersects with the local production of included and excluded identities in the context of restructuring education. The article
is based on a study in two areas of a segregated Swedish city, one disadvantaged and the other advantaged. Lindgren uses a wide range of data such as policy documents, questionnaire data, longitudinal statistics, interviews with local politicians, school actors and former students. The findings show that former students from the disadvantaged area were more often excluded from further education and dependent on social welfare to a higher extent. Moreover, they faced low expectations and were simultaneously excluded from new educational processes that explicitly aim at social inclusion. Lindgren discusses how ethical ideals of decentralisation and participation, and the evaluation of such policies in terms of access to further education and work, conceal the local production of excluded identities. This production, he argues, is based on an amalgamation of material conditions and spatial representations.

In his article “Student Participation and School Success. The relationship between participation, grades and bullying among 9th grade students in Sweden”, Björn Ahlström finds his starting point in the Swedish school law and curriculum which states that students are to be participative in their work and that they should work in a participative manner. The pedagogical idea is that influence and participation have multiple benefits for students’ development. The article examines the relationship between student participation and school success. By using a theoretically based participation index, eight schools were chosen for closer examination. Success was measured by school grades and the level of perceived bullying among students. Student participation seems to have beneficial effects on students’ academic and social development. In schools with a higher level of student participation, the grades were higher and the level of perceived bullying among the students was lower than schools with a smaller level of participation.

In “Proposed Enhancement of Bronfenbrenner’s Development Ecology Model”, Jonas Christensen deals with how academic disciplines are constituted and claims that the related professional developments must be viewed within their wider social, political and economic frameworks. When studying the organisation, transformation and spheres of influence of professions, the Development Ecology model, he argues, provides a tool for understanding the encounter among societal, organisational and individual dimensions, a continual meeting point where phenomena and actors exist on different levels, including those of the organisation and society at large. However, the theory of development ecology may be questioned for how it looks at the individual’s role in relation to other actors in order to define and understand the forces underlying the professional development and constitution of academic disciplines. Factors relating to both the inside of the individual and social ties between individuals and in relation to global factors need to be discussed.

In Jonas Aspelin’s article, “What really matters is ‘between’. Understanding the focal point of education from an inter-human perspective”, the focal point of education is simultaneously defined as the place where the most important educational activity is taking place, and the place where the main interest of educational theory (and
educational practice) should be located. Aspelin discusses the idea that the focal point is located somewhere between the teacher and the student. This idea is introduced by references to Gert Biesta’s inter-subjective theory. The article discusses Martin Buber’s contribution to understanding the focal point of education. Buber contributes by emphasising “the interhuman” as a primary dimension in relation to “the social”. From Buber’s perspective, what really matters in education exists in an ontological and relational event. In the last section of the article it is suggested that exploration of the focal point should not stick to just one form of relationship. The interhuman event is, taken by itself, supposed to be primary, yet the focal point cannot be fully understood without a penetrative picture of its social context.

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Spaces of social inclusion and exclusion
A spatial approach to education restructuring and identity in Sweden

Joakim Lindgren*

Abstract
The decentralised Swedish school system has become increasingly directed to the construction of self-governing and responsible pedagogic identities that are supposed to enable integration and participation. Drawing on the work of the geographer Edward W. Soja, I acknowledge how material and symbolic spatialisation intersect with the local production of included and excluded identities in the context of restructuring education. The paper is based on a study in two areas in a segregated Swedish city; one disadvantaged and one advantaged area. I use a wide range of data such as policy documents, questionnaire data, longitudinal statistics, interviews with local politicians, school actors and former students. The findings show that former students from the disadvantaged area were more often excluded from further education and were dependent on social welfare to a higher extent. Moreover, they faced low expectations and were simultaneously excluded from new educational processes that explicitly aim at social inclusion. In the paper I discuss how ethical ideals of decentralisation and participation, and the evaluation of such policies in terms of access to further education and work, conceal the local production of excluded identities. This production, I argue, is based on an amalgamation of material conditions and spatial representations.

Keywords: education restructuring, identity, locality, social exclusion, space

Introduction
“What is required, therefore, is an interrogation of the relationships between the production of space and the construction of identity” (John Paul Jones III & Pamela Moss, 1995, p. 256).

“[S]ubjects do not make places, but, in a sense, are places” (Thrift, 1991, p. 462).

This paper concerns the relationships between education restructuring, locality and the social inclusion and exclusion of youth in two segregated areas in a Swedish city – one a segregated middle class area and the other a poor and ethnically segregated area. The notion of restructuring is used to discuss policy change in a broad and practical sense including local interpretations, outcomes, consequences as well as the ordering principles of policy. Policy is thus simultaneously seen as text, and
a discursive and social practice (cf. Ball 1994). In the paper I draw attention to how policies on decentralisation and increased local freedom work together with – and against – policy ideas about schooling as the construction of specific identities that qualify and disqualify individuals for participation.

Since the late 1990s, large geographical variations have emerged concerning school results and the subsequent transition to further and higher education in Sweden (Swedish National Agency for Education 2009). In turn, these are associated with the social, economic and ethnic composition of the immediate surroundings. In so-called ‘areas of social exclusion’ in Swedish cities there are schools where less than 50 percent of the students leave compulsory schooling with a school leaving certificate. These areas are also associated with high unemployment, such that more than 30 percent of young people aged between 20-25 neither work nor study (Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs 2008). In light of these figures, researchers have begun to raise questions about ‘site’ or ‘neighbourhood’ effects. Here, I join this discussion. My aim is to consider how policy can interact with the local social production of particular included and excluded identities. In order to do this, I draw on the geographer Edward W. Soja’s (1989; 1996; 2000) transdisciplinary theory of human historicality, sociality and spatiality.

**Education restructuring and the emergence of new spaces and identities**

In an international perspective, Sweden has been described as a social-democratic welfare regime (Esping Andersen, 1990) or universalistic welfare regime (Gallie & Paugam, 2000). In these welfare-state narratives, Swedish institutional settings and cultures are described in terms of social justice, generous welfare solutions, low unemployment and consequently high levels of social inclusion. Education has been at the centre of these narratives. From the 1940s to the 1970s, education was seen as “a spearhead into the future” and regarded as a “social and citizenship right promoting public and collective good...equality and equity...social inclusion and democratic participation” (Aasen, 2003, p. 111, emphasis added). For these reasons involving education, Sweden has also been described as a “universalistic transition regime” (Walther, 2006). As a transition regime, Sweden is built on a comprehensive school system where relatively high percentages of pupils are expected to make the transition to post-compulsory levels. Indeed, around 80 percent of school leavers complete national programmes and acquire certification that gives them access to higher education (Walther, 2006).

However, there is also another narrative concerning Sweden. It derives from an internal rather than an international perspective (see, for example, Arnesen & Lundahl, 2006; Johannesson, Lindblad & Simola, 2002; Lundahl, 2002; Aasen, 2003). It is based on the claim that the Swedish welfare state, including its education system, has undergone significant change in the wake of the international, even global,
spread of ideas about marketisation, deregulation, decentralisation, accountability, goal steering, effectiveness, competition, economic downsizing, individualism, and freedom of choice (cf. Ball, Goodson & Maguire, 2007). These internal changes have also been a response to episodes of national economic recession in Sweden in the early 1990s. Pressure on public funds led to greater attention being paid to new forms of organisation that would give greater value for money – by, for instance, regarding education as a private rather than a public good and, in turn, allowing schools to compete with each other to gain a share of the educational market and its credit-bearing customers. Thus, it has been claimed that education restructuring not only presented “opportunities for financial cuts” but also for “the acceptance of differences between schools and regions” (Lindblad et al., 2002).

Overall, the restructuring of the welfare state served to introduce a new balance between the state and the individual. This restructuring called for a new kind of individual, a citizen who could participate in and reproduce these new marketised relations. This new state telos envisages (a) the creation of free individuals with sufficient responsibility and self-sufficiency that they (b) become active and adjustable job seekers who, at the same time, regard themselves as (c) lifelong learners who can vigorously strengthen their autonomy from the state. According to Olson (2008), education policy change during the 1990s in fact meant a fundamental redefinition of citizenship in Sweden – from the traditional nation-builder to the present mobile, self-determinate and self-realising market nomadic.

This production of responsible and self-regulative identities became central to education restructuring in Sweden (Lindblad et al., 2002; Dovermark, 2004). The current national curriculum, for instance, indicates that “[b]y participating in the planning and evaluation of their daily education, and exercising choices over courses, subjects, themes and activities, pupils will develop their ability to exercise influence and take responsibility” (Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 5). Further, it is assumed that the practices of self-government shall “prepare pupils for active participation in civic life” (Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 5). Such practices of individualisation tend to privilege students with a non-working class background (Bernstein, 2000; Arnot & Reay, 2004; Swedish National Agency for Education, 2009). Overall, they support the overall transformation of society in terms of an increased stress on individual responsibility (Carlgren et al., 2006). Moreover, they alter and intensify notions about young people, who they are and how they ought to be (Lindgren, 2007). Overall, they exemplify a “shift from governing practices related to the formation of collective social projects to contemporary projects that focus on cultural identities” (Popkewitz, 2000, p. 167; cf. Frykman, 1998).

These changing policies have been important aspects of education restructuring during the last decade. Another aspect relates to new policies on social equivalence. Equivalence tends to be discussed, compared and evaluated by focusing on measurable aspects of education, such as grades, and the transition from compulsory schooling
to upper secondary, gymnasium education. Such statistical data enable comparisons between localities, schools and categories of students. In the period before the 1990s access to education was most often related to social class, but since then the focus of statistics has shifted to categories based on ethnicity and gender. During much of the 20th century Swedish education was regulated by the state which secured national equality in terms of the costs, quality, content and results of compulsory education. In the late 1980s policies started to call for decentralisation, local solutions and individualisation. With reference to differences in terms of students’ abilities and interests, an increase in the sovereignty of the family as a consumer was called for (Englund, 2005). The curriculum introduced in 1994 opened up to allow greater variations in school:

National goals specify the norms for equivalence. However, equivalent education does not mean that the education should be the same everywhere or that the resources of the school shall be allocated equally. Account should also be taken of the varying circumstances and needs of pupils as well as the fact that there are a variety of ways of attaining these goals. (…) For this reason education can never be the same for all (Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 4).

At the close of the 20th century ‘equivalence’ no longer referred to ‘equal’ schooling in the traditional sense. Instead, it referred to local diversity, individual freedom of choice and opportunities for individual development (Englund, 2005). According to Arnesen and Lundahl (2006, p. 296), this change related to a fundamental redefinition of education policies:

Equality and uniformity are gradually replaced by diversity and (…) increasing school segregation and growing performance-related differences between pupils and schools. Individual agency replaces collective and political action. Social and equality goals tend to be superseded by fostering self-regulating, rational and flexible learners.

In the late 1990s statistics started to show dramatic differences between schools regarding student performance (SOU 2000: 39; Swedish National Agency for Education, 2006). The situation was particularly problematic in poor and ethnically-segregated areas. The language of social exclusion was introduced as a response to this overall situation. It provided a new way to describe, understand and address questions of poverty and structural inequality. Following international interpretations, it constructed problems primarily in terms of a lack of education and work, while establishing a new social distinction between those who are included and those who are excluded. It was presumed that excluded individuals lacked responsibility, possibilities, opportunities, motivation, engagement and ambition (SOU 1995: 76; Gov. bill 1997/98: 165; Government bill 2007/08:1). By local mobilisation from below, raising individual opportunities and emphasising the individual responsibilities of targeted groups in targeted areas, it was assumed that inclusion would be realised (Dahlstedt, 2006).
To sum up: the Swedish education system has traditionally aimed at achieving equality and participation as a collective social project. Over time, social-inclusive aspects of schooling have become more and more decentralised, individualised and, in addition, focused on the construction and evaluation of individuals and their capacities. At the same time, differences between, on one hand, school results and school practices and, on the other, the social structure of localities increased. Although official statistics frequently map out social exclusion in terms of access to education and work, there is little research about these relations from a perspective that acknowledges how education restructuring intersects with the local production of included and excluded identities. This paper starts to explore the interweaving process of local inequalities and identity formation in two environments that exemplify socio-spatial differences in Sweden: Garden and Park.

**Methodology**

Garden and Park are two city areas. The former is a disadvantaged segregated area – known as an ‘area of social exclusion’. The latter is an advantaged segregated middle-class area. These areas were chosen since they had the greatest differences in average incomes, share of welfare recipients and degree of unemployment in this city. Both sites were investigated between 1997 and 2000, and again in 2007-2008. A questionnaire study (N = 150) conducted in 2000 explored attitudes on education, educational identity, self-evaluation, personal plans and expectations, future orientation, and factors leading to social exclusion among 9th grade students – aged around 15 – in one school in each area. The students belonged to a generation of young people born in 1984 who started compulsory school in 1991. In Garden, special preparation classes for newly arrived immigrants were excluded from the study because of language obstacles, while the other case (Park) is based on a representative population. I also draw on interviews with local politicians (N = 12) and school actors (N = 47) from the two sites. These were conducted in 1998 and 1999 and focused on education restructuring, discursive constructions of identities, and social inclusion and exclusion. In 2007 and 2008 I conducted interviews with a small sample of former students (N = 7) from the school classes that took part in the original questionnaire study. These interviews used a biographical perspective and focused on identity, local conditions, education and social inclusion/exclusion.

In this paper, I also draw on statistical data describing patterns of social inclusion and exclusion among all the students from the school classes who answered the questionnaire. I use official data regarding transitions to upper secondary education (National Agency of Education) and exclusive longitudinal data from Statistics Sweden regarding transitions to university, unemployment and social welfare (N = 196). Finally, additional data were gleaned from field observation, national and local reports, policy documents, statistics, reports of the Swedish National Agency of Education, and data provided by the schools and their websites. This mixed-method approach...
was inspired by life history studies where biographical interviews are complemented by other contextual data in order to understand the “social geographies in which life stories are embedded” (Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p. 17). All together, this body of data makes it possible to explore how local implementations of education policy change have manifested themselves in the lives of young people who are today trying to make the transition to further education and work.

I position myself as a social constructionist interested in the ‘discovery’ of new meaning in a hermeneutic sense. A theoretical framework inspired by the geographer Edward W. Soja (1996; 2000) informs the tentative analysis and the representation of data. I identify and elaborate selectively on those general themes that foster an understanding of the relationship between education restructuring and the consequent local production of social inclusion and exclusion. Overall, the theoretical approach is heuristic inasmuch as I try to use a geographical theory in order to explore an educational problematic.

**Edward W. Soja’s trialectics of space**

A growing body of international research in the field of education policy sociology draws on spatial theories (cf. Gulson & Symes, 2007a; 2007b; Usher, 2002; Peters & Kessl, 2009). Variously, these studies have explored the relationship between space, neoliberalism and identity (e.g. Gulson, 2005; 2007; 2008). The starting point is that space (or place) is central to understanding social relationships, social becoming, experience, imagination and memory – that space, therefore, is “profoundly pedagogical” (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 621). Space has also been used as a metaphor in order to explore the spatial politics of educational reform. For example, Popkewitz (1997; 1998) argues that pupils today inhabit, or are located, in discursive spaces that map out their personality and capacities. In this respect, education functions “as a map that it organizes the territories of membership by producing boundaries between the members and non-members” (Popkewitz, Lindblad & Strandberg, 1999, p. 19).

Some of these educational studies have been inspired by Soja’s work. Soja’s starting point is ontological. Using the ideas historicality, sociality and spatiality, he offers both a picture of human existence and a statement that guides the search for practical knowledge and understanding (Soja, 1996). Inspired by the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre (1991), Soja’s epistemology uses another sense of three-ness. His “spatial trialectics” includes three overlapping perspectives: “Firstspace”, “Secondspace” and “Thirdspace”.

Firstspace refers to common material, measurable and mappable spatial practices “that work together to produce and reproduce the concrete forms and specific patternings of urbanism as a way of life” (Soja, 2000, p. 10). Typically, Firstspace comprises statistical information on local conditions that allows comparisons over time and the hierarchisation of milieus, things, activities and groups of individuals. Looking at Garden from this perspective we discern an extremely poor milieu with a
high proportion of unemployed people who are dependent upon social welfare payments. In addition, Garden is dominated by blocks of flats, a large shopping centre in the middle, and orbital main roads. The area was built in the late 1960s as part of the modernist social democratic housing project called the ‘million programme’. Despite these inclusive political aims, the area quickly turned into a socio-economically segregated area. During the 1990s large groups of refugees settled there, accentuating patterns of ethnic segregation. In the aftermath of the recession in the early 1990s, more than 60 percent of the population between 20 and 64 years lived on social welfare; and more than 50 percent of the inhabitants were categorised as poor. In spite of numerous national and local interventions the overall situation in Garden has not changed. At the time of writing (2009), over 100 nationalities are represented and around 60 percent are immigrants with both parents born abroad. Less than 40 percent of the population (between 20-64 years old) is gainfully employed. In general, the inhabitants of Garden are poor, sick and living in confined and shabby quarters.

This contrasts with Park, the wealthiest area in the city. Here we find high house prices, little unemployment, rare recipients of social security and high levels of education and income. Since the mid-1990s unemployment has been below five percent. Half of the population (between 20-64 years old) has enjoyed a post-upper secondary education and the income per individual is about twice as high as in Garden.

Secondspace refers to a more mental, ideational and imaginary field that is conceptualised in “reflexive thought, and symbolic representation, a conceived space of the imagination” (Soja, 2000, p. 11). Whereas Firstspace tend to focus on experiences and ‘objective’ material aspects or ‘things’, Secondspace is more ‘subjective’ and thus related to how we think about space. Soja (2000, p. 11) identifies representations as intrinsic to our experience of space. They are ways of perceiving reality which shape our experience, behaviour, expectations and time conceptions. Secondspace, therefore, identifies how official statistics, urban planning and research – not to mention mass media reports on different areas and regions – serve as a discourse which produces and reproduces ideological patterns of difference, including subordination and dominance. For example, Garden has often featured in media reports on crime, violence and social exclusion. In my interviews, some of the former students from Garden described their home area as a ghetto-like dystopia while informants from Park generally spoke about a child-friendly and pleasant ideal. Garden is hence associated with a social stigma, whereas coming from Park is regarded as having a superior symbolic value.

The stigmatisation of Garden is closely connected to notions of race and ethnicity. Hana, a Lebanese student who has lived in the area since the late 1980s, described the decay of the area by reference to the decreasing percentage of ethnic Swedes. Somewhat paradoxically, Garden simultaneously functions as a spatial utopia for individuals who have escaped war and political persecution seeking a new and better life in Sweden (Lindgren in press). Spatial imagination in Garden has also involved conceptions of positive subjectivities being produced, or renovated (Gulson, 2005),
by the visions, ideals or objectives associated with national or local policies such as social inclusion, economic growth or educational attainment.

Finally, Thirdspace refers to an alternative – or higher – way of thinking which incorporates both of the former perspectives and their deconstruction. This perspective, for instance, subjects the materialities and imaginaries of First- and Secondspace to further scrutiny. Thus, socio-spatial features can be re-analysed, not in terms of physical distance, but social distance; or human practices can be re-analysed in terms not of culture but power (cf. Green & Letts, 2007, p. 65). Thirdspace, therefore, allows an intersectional analysis of structural inequalities, subordination, discursive power, and stigmatisation (cf. Green and Letts, 2007). Overall, Soja’s framework makes it possible to acknowledge and contrast complementary perspectives on education re-structuring and the associated social inclusion and exclusion (cf. Popkewitz, Lindblad & Strandberg, 1999). The following outlines how Garden and Park may be understood as examples of Firstspace, Secondspace and Thirdspace.

**Firstspace**

Firstspace concerns the more concrete, directly comprehended and empirically measurable aspects of human life. I suggest that this analysis is read at two different levels. Drawing on interviews with local politicians, school actors and former students I will present local responses to education policies as well as aspects of local cultures, practices and experiences in the schools that have implications for the formation of identities. I shall also present statistical patterns of social inclusion and exclusion in the two sites by using traditional measures like grades and transitions to further education, unemployment, social allowance and the civil economy.

At the close of the last millennium, the local compulsory education market in this city was still organised in accordance with the ‘nearness principle’, which meant that students went to school in their own neighbourhoods. These local conditions were therefore reflected in the social structures of the two schools. The school in Garden was given extra resources. By 2001, the student/teacher ratio was more than 10:1, nearly twice as high as in Park. The gross cost per student was also considerably higher.

Policies on decentralisation were welcomed by the local politicians. Some even argued that the local goals were more important than the national curriculum and school legislation. They argued that the local conditions had become so different that central governing was impossible.

Today every school management area [Park belonged to an area with around 2000 students] gets a lump sum, which makes it possible to adjust the work to the local problems. (…) We have a new curriculum, which I believe in. On the basis of this curriculum we can organise the work with respect to the needs of the children and the young (Local politician, Park).

School actors, on the other hand, argued that the worsened economic situation and the local budgets tended to be given priority over new policy goals. Particularly in
Garden, decentralisation and the new distribution of resources were seen as threats to the idea of a school of equivalent standard for all children. In addition, increasing demands for planning, administration, documentation and reporting took time from teaching. At the same time, decentralisation and deregulation were seen as necessary and inevitable. As argued by a senior teacher at Park, it was time to “settle accounts with the system of rules and get rid of the trash”. The school actors argued that the idea behind this important policy change, described by the principle in Garden as “the biggest reform for the pupils since the war”, was to give the teachers freedom to adapt their teaching to the needs of the pupils. In that way, the pupils would become more self-determining, independent and capable of taking responsibility for their own study plans. Individualisation and decentralisation of responsibility was particularly stressed in Park. The principal explained that the goal was that teachers should be rationalised away so that “every student could be their own teacher”.

In Garden, the problematic local conditions did not allow for the realisation of policy goals on self-government. Instead, the school followed the city’s aim of improving “results, grades and qualifications for upper secondary education”. Despite the problematic local conditions, students liked being in school. The school building was welcoming and the classrooms were decorated with student exhibitions. During interviews, the former students stressed that schooling, and especially the social dimension, was fun. The school was a meeting place where friends got together and where students lingered after the finish of the school day. These positive attitudes towards education were also displayed in the questionnaire study. In fact, students from Garden were more positive regarding education than informants from Park. Students from Garden expressed stronger trust in meritocratic ideals and their own possibilities of success. They described themselves as being successful in school and recognised the importance of education for success in life. Acknowledging that this was an environment where young people liked to be, where the pedagogic culture did not entail serious threats to social life, this milieu had the potential to encourage processes of negotiation and accommodation.

In my interviews with students from Garden aspects of local identity formation were discussed in relation to the problems of education transitions. For example, Djamel, whose family escaped political persecution in Algeria in the early 1990s, was a successful student who made it to one of the more prestigious upper secondary schools. However, he soon felt forced to drop out of the school:

[Upper secondary school] was tough. It was the first time I met Swedes. You know I came from Garden, we were two foreigners in the new class. I felt out of it. I was used to be the best, but I was not anymore. I could not understand the jokes they were telling. I mean ‘what the hell are they laughing at?’ I was more serious, completely different (laughs). I mean, we were thinking differently, when we were ten years old we were thinking like fourteen year olds. We had hard times at home. I should have gone to another upper secondary school with more immigrants.
Djamel’s story indicates that feelings of Otherness are spatially produced and related to an amalgam of social, ethnic and educational dimensions. The interviews drew attention to the ‘level’ of teaching in Garden. According to Nadia, a Bosnian girl who fled with her family from the Balkans in the early 1990s and who was one of the few students that eventually made it to university, the school was not a very good school in this respect:

I still have problems with spelling, because they [the teachers] always said ‘if you can speak, you don’t have to be able to spell correctly’. It is really embarrassing today when I’m studying Law and I don’t know how to spell certain words. (...) They [the teachers] tried as hard as they could, but I don’t think that we learned as much as students in other schools.

In Park, the situation was dramatically different. In the late 1990s Swedish schools had started competing in an evolving education market. The school explicitly aimed to be among the national top schools. Local inspectors praised the teachers and the continuity of the staff. The pedagogical culture encouraged teachers to promote skilful pupils by means of differentiation and individualisation. The school was built in the early 20th century and classrooms displayed few signs of student activities. Instead, bookshelves were occupied by neat lines of classic textbooks from the early 1960s. Students stood to attention for teachers (quite an unusual procedure in Sweden) and the only explicit school misfit, a punk rocker, politely commented on a misspelling in my questionnaire.

The competitive orientation of this school was also highlighted by the former students in my interviews. Sara, who was a successful and ambitious student, described this culture as stimulating while Peter was very critical: “[the schooling] was very traditional and conservative, dictatorial, horrible, they were not good teachers quite simple”. He described how he, who had some difficulties in school, was always put under pressure by the teachers during oral tests and that he felt teachers disparaged him in comparison to the good students. The informants from Park described how assessment was not only directed towards fostering academic achievement, but also at fostering good student behaviour. Thus, the formation of behaviour, capacities and identity hence played an important role in the schooling of Park students. Their narratives also indicate an absence of remedial teaching. Such activities were suspended or placed outside the compulsory schedule and therefore rejected by students – “you just wanted to get away from the school as quickly as possible” (Peter). I would argue that this environment, more than Garden, worked in order to construct competitive educational identities and to consolidate divisions between successful and less successful students inside the school.

**Patterns of social inclusion and exclusion**

There are considerable differences between the two sites regarding the measurable aspects of social inclusion and exclusion. The transition to upper secondary education
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is one source of differentiation. Of all students in Sweden who left compulsory school in the year 2000, 89 percent were eligible for admission to a national programme (i.e. a core gymnasium course). In Garden, however, less than half of the students were eligible while the corresponding figure in Park was nearly 100 percent.

Patterns of social inclusion and exclusion among the informants can also be mapped out using longitudinal data from the national longitudinal database “LISA” (Statistics Sweden). The statistics cover the period between 2003 and 2006. According to Figure 1, there are dramatic differences between the sites. More informants from Park made the transition to higher education during this period and they were also less likely to be long-term unemployed (> 100 days) or living in households receiving social security payments. In addition, there are substantial economic differences between the populations exemplified by data on unearned income.

Figure 1. Patterns of social inclusion and exclusion in Garden and Park 2003-2006 (%)

Note: 2003: Garden N = 101, Park N = 95, 2004: Garden = 98, Park = 95, 2005: Garden N= 98, Park N = 95, 2006: Garden N = 97, Park N = 95.
To sum up, policies on decentralisation provided scope for the accentuation of local differences. A national policy directive on self-government as a pedagogical strategy was neglected in Garden. Garden represents an example of the intergenerational reproduction of social exclusion. Economic compensations have not been able to correct this situation. Yet my fieldwork suggests there was a mismatch between the positive experiences and the ambitious future aspirations of young people in Garden and the statistical information on their failed trajectories. In other words, there seems to have been a mismatch between the Firstspaces and Secondspaces occupied by these young people.

**Secondspace**

Spatial representations are related to the formation of identity in different ways. As pointed out by Popkewitz (1998), outcomes of normalisation can be thought of as social spaces that students inhabit. Popkewitz (1998, p. 29) argues that “[t]his inhabited space is not what is conventionally thought as physical, ‘contextual’, or geographical” but “one constructed through the systems of ideas”. One aspect of Secondspace draws attention to how school actors picture their student population. These representations are ascribed characteristics that impact school practices. According to the school principals, students in Garden were distinguished by their meagre cultural capital and poor language. This mode of description was also common in local action plans and in local inspection reports from the National Agency of Education. Overall, students in Garden were described in terms of their defects and deficiencies. School staff in Park, on the other hand, reported that 95 percent of the students had the necessary potential and motivation. The school had few immigrant students and, according to the principal, these were immigrants of a special kind, those “who are strongly devoted and have an academic background…”.

Norms on what makes up an ideal student can be understood as locally produced discursive spaces which young people strive to inhabit. These are spaces students have to relate to during schooling and they also relate to the capacities that are valued outside the school, for example in the labour market. Secondspace explores the qualities of these discursive spaces and compares notions of the ‘ideal student’ in Garden and Park. When local politicians and school staff in the two sites talked about what was expected of a successful student, they stressed individual responsibility, autonomy, interest, flexibility, self-confidence, commitment, and the ability to take initiative. Their ideal student was a goal-oriented, lifelong learner, an image adopted from the terms of a national policy. Students who did not fit this description were described as “losers in today’s school”.

In my interviews the former students differed in their view of the ideal student. When students from Garden talked about norms on how to act and behave in school they mentioned features related to classroom order. The good student was “silent”, “calm”, “obedient”, “ambitious”, “careful”, “punctual”, “diligent” and “goal-oriented”.

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He or she listened to the teacher and responded to oral questions. Commitment in school activities and willingness to study outside school were also regarded as important.

Djamel: You were supposed to be silent and calm. Listen to the teacher.
Nadia: Behave well, manage well with questions on homework and not disgrace one’s family.
Do the best you could.

Informants from Park gave descriptions that combined these traditional ideals with the current policy ideals. The good student from their perspective was also “active”, “involved”, “social”, “positive”, “verbal”, “independent”, “self-confident” and “creative”.

Sara: You were supposed to do as you were told, do your homework. You were expected to do the best you could and be willing to learn. You should be social and involved in the lessons, dare to talk in front of the class and not be ashamed of oneself.
Tomas: You were supposed to behave well and stay calm during lessons. Be punctual, bring your things and be active, determinate and dare to ask questions.

In Park, the ideal referred to a curious and testing attitude, which implied that you spoke up for yourself and questioned authorities such as the teachers. The ideal student was active and consciously sought success. Summing up the exploration so far, it is possible to argue that identities, as representations, take on somewhat different forms in the two contexts. In Garden, the student population was considered as a problem in terms of their lack of many of the important competencies embodied by Park students. The pedagogical identity described by informants from Garden might be characterised as traditional or narrow, whereas the Park identity was more complex and dynamic, involving an oscillation between passivity and activity, reproduction and production etc.

In the following section, I continue to discuss aspects of local constructions of identities as a Thirdspace problematic in an attempt to bring the previous perspectives together in a joint analysis.

Thirdspace
As classed and racialised spaces, Garden and Park obviously produce different identities in relation to social inclusion and exclusion. Relatively speaking, young people in Garden are more often excluded from work and further education. It is, of course, difficult to prove that the education system causes social exclusion. However, it is possible to argue that the decentralised education system works in order to produce somewhat different local pedagogic identities – a narrow ideal in Garden and a competitive, dynamic and self-governing ideal in Park.

Thirdspace embraces local material conditions, practices of schooling, patterns of inclusion/exclusion and constructions of identities as an intertwined phenomenon. It also draws attention to how distinctions about the inner characteristics and capabili-
ties of students are related to norms for participation. The idea here is that “discursive spaces”; distinctions and differentiations, function to qualify and disqualify students for action and participation (Popkewitz, 1998). Such symbolic spaces are real in the sense that they “provide a way in which to think, speak, see, feel, and act toward the child” (Popkewitz, 1998, p. 29). I argue that they are also real in the sense that they construct in students different ways to “think, speak and feel, and act”.

The ascribed and/or real and existing characteristics of students in Garden served to lower the demands in school. The fact is that, when asked to compare the norms on how to be and behave at home and in school, no student from Garden described school as more demanding, strict or hard. Among the informants from Park, on the other hand, no one described the norms at home as more demanding, strict or hard. As indicated by informants from Garden, school was fun but they “did not learn as much as other students”. Therefore, their further education careers were problematic, even impossible. The relative social exclusion in Garden is also interesting in relation to the fact that these young people were excluded from aspects of schooling that according to policies were designated as social inclusion. Garden students were excluded from the production of capacities supposed to make them an included individual and provide “opportunities” for participation. Already as they entered school, they were considered to be sufficiently apart (or excluded) to be incorporated or included in this practice. In other words, the same activities that were aimed at social inclusion constructed them as different and outside the normal space of participation in relation to the new policies (cf. Popkewitz, 1998). Their exclusion from these practices of self-governance was justified with respect to their language problems, but also to their particular interests, aims and cultural capital. According to school actors in Garden, it was impossible to follow goals in the curriculum in terms of self-governance:

The goals that are established by the state authorities become problematic for us. These children will not be able to work in the new way. There is no time and energy (…) The pupils are not trained enough to work in a self-governed manner.

Language problems were mentioned as the foremost obstacle. However, it was also maintained that these students’ own objectives stood in opposition to pedagogical ideas about ‘self-government’. These immigrant students, it was argued, had a more instrumental orientation towards education. They did not want to ‘construct knowledge’; they preferred to achieve grades that qualified them for programmes at the upper secondary level. The school also acknowledged the interests of the students and parents and, as a consequence, prioritised the more academic goals.

This de-emphasis of expectations and the resultant spatial, classed and racialised disqualification from the new education of self-governance was indirectly supported by new policies on equivalence that encouraged schools to organise learning with respect to local needs and conditions. This means that the geographies of education, class and race functioned as “dividing practices” where different “pedagogies, forms
of teacher-student relationships, identities and subjectivities are formed, learned and carried” (Ball, 1990, p. 4). Local material conditions and discursively devised representations were thus conflated in the construction of identities. In Garden, this meant that poverty, subordination, discursive power and stigmatisation intersected and fostered daily school practices creating the excluded immigrant student.

This is not to say that the new policies of ‘self-government’ were not problematic in relation to local conditions in Garden. Nor is it to say that these new ideas, if implemented, would actually produce social inclusion in terms of access to education and work. On the contrary, the conditions in Garden, and other Swedish “areas of social exclusion”, appear to make just about any kind of policy ineffective in this sense (cf. Sernhede, 2009).

**The aestheticisation of education – fabrications, commodities and agency**

In Park the local evaluation of 2001 stressed that the school worked in accordance with all the objectives in the curriculum, including those related to the “influence and responsibility of students”. Here we find a perfect match between local conditions and such notions of the student population that have allowed for new policies of “self-government” to be accomplished. I argue that this new mode of identity formation resembles the process of aestheticisation (Baudillard, 1983; Featherstone, 1991). As a consequence of the increased documentation in school ‘real’ learning and ‘real’ individuals are transformed into texts, symbols and signs that make up what Ball (2003) terms “fabrications”. An “economy of signs” (Lash & Urry, 1994) evolves where capacities become commodity signs in a marketplace where students market themselves as commodities (cf. Ball, 2004; Beach & Dovermark, 2007). In order to render evaluation possible, students are encouraged to put themselves and their ‘inner’ capabilities on display – to act out or even perform in the classroom. Peter who went to school in Park explained that “[a]s a student you ought to appear to be interested. You should do your homework. And you ought to be active, to ask questions and show your interest at classes.” In these new circumstances, students must know what it means to be ‘active’, reflect on it, speak about it, and perform it. To be an ideal student one needs to talk and think about oneself, and reflect on actions, development and relationships using a certain kind of language. Peter, who went to school in Park, looked at this whole situation with a somewhat critical and cynical attitude: “it does not matter how good you are, as long as you cannot tell others how good you are.” Supposedly, the aestheticisation of education functions as preparation for a further career and for the transnational labour market where individuals have to rely on entrepreneurial behaviour; communicate their ethos in the form of ‘social skills and competencies’, and to demonstrate their ‘employability’ in order to attract employers. In relation to Bauman’s (2008, p. 57) influential work on the consumer society, this practice can in fact be understood as a crucial prerequisite for social inclusion.
as the making and marketing of oneself: “Members of the society of consumers are themselves consumer commodities, and it is the quality of being a consumer commodity that makes them bona fide members of that society”. If individuals are to be qualified for the labour market by means of education, then students from schools like Garden suffer a double disqualification. Not only are they disqualified in terms of a failure to complete compulsory education, their disqualification is also related to an identity produced by the local educational discourse.

**Concluding remarks**

In this paper, I have explored some relations between education restructuring and the production of space, identity and social inclusion/exclusion in Sweden. Using Edward W. Soja’s spatial trialectics, I have discussed implications of local responses to a combination of policy initiatives on decentralisation and ‘self-governing’ which arise from the ‘real’ and ‘unreal’ aspects of local educational practices and identities. The practices and outcomes of education policy will always be intertwined with local conditions. This intertwinelement is complex, and is becoming even more complex, as policies encourage schools to meet the demands and needs of the surroundings in order to realise urban change. This transformation of fundamental political and economic problems into local educational challenges is endemic to the process of restructuring.

I argue that Soja’s framework becomes useful in this context. For example, it enables an understanding of how ethical ideals of participation, and the evaluation of such policies (the measurement of social exclusion), conceal the local production of identities that are based on an amalgamation of material conditions and spatially guided representations. Soja encourages researchers to combine ‘incompatible’ theoretical perspectives in new ways and to think differently about space, policy and social inclusion and exclusion. The exhaustive and experimental nature of Thirdspace, which ought to be given strategic privilege over Firstspace and Secondspace, opens up an epistemological complementarity that might be useful for studies in the field of education policy sociology. This applies especially to empirical studies that use critical and eclectic approaches to explore complex and practical issues, such as intersections between globalisation and local practices. Such studies could also further examine the tentative conclusion of this paper, for example the claim that measurable patterns of social exclusion are interwoven with more ‘aesthetic’ dimensions of identity production in local schools.

It could be argued that my choice of highlighting Park and Garden creates a schematic dualism between two different areas and two different types of identities. Of course, there are deviations from these typologies. Such ambiguities and complexities are important aspects of the lived reality of Thirdspace and need to be addressed in future studies. Here ethnographic observations of classroom practices become desirable. Overall, more research needs to be carried out across other differentiated social groups and educational actors.
Meanwhile, the young informants of this study continue to struggle with their lives. They went to school during a decade that represented dramatic policy changes and a concurrent economic recession. At the time of writing, like other countries, Sweden is facing an economic recession of ‘historic proportions’ which will most likely accentuate problems of social segregation and ‘neighbourhood effects’. What will be the local response in Garden this time around?

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Endnotes

1 By segregation I here refer to a situation where social and geographic differences coincide. I choose not to reserve the label segregation for areas that are defined as victims of the process.

2 Upper secondary education is organised in one single school form called Gymnasium [Gymnasieskola] with a range of national programmes giving access to higher education. The Gymnasium also includes a so-called individual programme for those pupils who do not qualify for a national programme – because they did not perform to the required level in the prior compulsory school. The individual programme, then, is organised to help pupils to qualify for national programmes.

3 All names of the sites and individuals have been changed.

4 The interviews were conducted by Lisbeth Lundahl and Gunilla Zackari. When I refer to the voices of politicians I draw on transcriptions, whereas the voices of school actors stem from published work (Zackari, 2001).

5 The official definition of “poor” refers to a disposable income which is lower than 60 percent of the national median income.

6 In my interviews, the informants’ notions of inclusion and exclusion were linked to work, education, economic well-being, health and housing. Paid labour was discussed as the main prerequisite for social inclusion in line with the political discourse of social exclusion. Individual economic independence was important whereas dependence on welfare state resources was viewed as very problematic for both moral and economic reasons. The result of the questionnaire study supports this. In the ninth grade the informants regarded “Being unemployed”, “Poor education”, “Passivity” and “Poor language knowledge” as the most crucial factors leading to social exclusion.

7 In Lindgren (in press) and Lindgren and Lundahl (forthcoming) I discuss how informants from Garden challenge hierarchical structures in the education and labour markets and how they develop and use capacities in order to realise biographical projects and socio-spatial mobility.
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