

Sverker Åström Foundation

Report by Yulia Krivtsova,
culturologist, curator of social and cultural projects
Yaroslavl

*Scholarship for the Research and Field study on the theme
«Cultural projects as means for urban development of a city»*

*August, 13th – November, 20th 2014
Stockholm*

I was happy to get to know Sweden and especially Stockholm city with the support of Sverker Åström Foundation. No doubts, my Swedish scholarship was a unique chance which gave me a lot of knowledge, experience, new professional and personal contacts. I should noticed that my participation in the program was a result of the attentive attitude of Disa Håstad who has a great talent to open doors and new opportunities for young people. And I want to thank all members of Sverker Åström Foundation for the chance, the communication, and the interest which they generously expressed during our visit.

My research and field study were dedicated to the cultural landscape of Stockholm. I tried to see and analyze innumerable cultural practices which influence on the city space and offer various scenarios for citizens. Obviously it was a great pleasure to become a part of the Stockholm cultural life for three months, observe various places, programs, projects, events, talked to organizers, participants, and guests.

Each day I moved through the city, visited museums, libraries, and cultural organizations in different parts of Stockholm. When I was preparing my plan in Russia I knew more about famous organizations situated in central parts, but later, being in Stockholm, I shifted my focus to peripheral cultural centers and added parks which also play a prominent part in the city cultural life.

Sometimes I made appointments and interviewed curators and art-managers, other times I aspired to be a casual guest and see how cultural centers live in different circumstances: a time of a day, a day of a week, a weather or a kind of an event.

I made this trip and research with my family — my husband — architect and little son Mark. It allows me to perceive the city with different perspectives: as a researcher, a professional and at the same time as an ordinary citizen or a tourist. Together or separately each second we investigated the city and constantly extended our internship's plan and list of organizations to visit.

The first and very important point of my plan was **Stockholm Cultural Festival** (report in Russian — <http://lift-project.livejournal.com/57771.html>). I have visited almost all events formed the program. There were 6 places in the city which invited citizens and tourists to attend performances, concerts, exhibitions and to be engaged in various cultural activities.

I analyzed forms of activities, people's behaviors, the composition of participants, and urban design of city places. Fortunately, I got acquaintance with Stockholm by the participation in the city cultural festival. It allowed to feel a unique atmosphere of the city and learn more about its creative forces. I paid attention to cultural organizations who introduced themselves through the festival program and I decided to visit them later.

Therefore I attended a **Post museum** (<http://lift-project.livejournal.com/57018.html>), a **Transport museum** (<http://lift-project.livejournal.com/58572.html>), a **City museum** (<http://lift-project.livejournal.com/59400.html>) and other museums which revealed how Stockholm is organized. Later I prepared detailed posts about their activities and a role in the city life. Besides, I visited galleries dealing with contemporary art in order to see exhibitions, organization of work and space and to work at some libraries: Moderna Museet, Fotografiska, Magasin III, Liljevalchs konsthall, Index gallery, Artipelag museum (<http://lift-project.livejournal.com/57926.html>).

I was surprised how a **park's program** was interesting and intensive in Stockholm, so I decided to add their cultural events to my scholarship's plan. Weekly during August and September I visited concerts and performances in Vitabergsparken, interviewed guests and organizers, attended lectures and discussions in Brukenberg square – a temporary public space in the center of Stockholm - found new friends and professional contacts there, attended cultural programs in Kungstrandgarden, a cinema festival in Ralambashovsparken. From the news-paper I learnt about the city festival "Stadsodar" in Fatbursparken (<http://lift-project.livejournal.com/60070.html>). I visited the event, talked to guests about their attitude and discussed with organizers how they had engaged communities of city gardeners to festival. Near at Medborgarplatsen I regularly became a witness of various cultural activities initiated by city or professional communities and changed the city atmosphere a lot.

During all 3 months in Stockholm I were very much inspired by various and ambitious activities which took place in peripheral districts and worked with a local context and local residents. Therefore I studied cultural centers in Stockholm's suburbs.

I visited **Marabouparken konsthall** for different events (lecture, performance, exhibition) and interviewed a curator of the Marabouparken lab Helena Selder about their urban projects. She described me projects which touched upon a local context. In this dialogue I learnt about artist Kerstin Bergental who participated in the 4-years residency program in Marabouparken konsthall and gave an example of the long term cultural project distinctly influenced on social and urban context. I wrote to Kerstin and asked about possibilities to communicate and to invite her to Yaroslavl. Now we know that she will come to Textil with the Kulturkapital team.

I had a very interesting talk with Emily Falhen, a mediator of **Tensta konsthall** after visiting the center in an ordinary day and in the opening day of an exhibition. Emily told me the Tenssta's foundation's story, described methods and themes they work with. Helena Selder and Emily Falhen shared with me a lot of unique informations which should be useful for my Russian colleagues. Thus I will plan to make an article based on materials of these two interviews.

Several times I visited **Botkyrka konsthall** for exhibitions and educational events. For me it was very unusual and attractive their experience of constructing a temporary building in the Tumba district. It became a place for international cultural events and at the same time a place for local residents.



Anna Kindgren and Carina Gunnars

I had a pithy conversation with Anna Kindgren and Carina Gunnars, curators of **Konsthall C**. We visited them at the time of their radio broadcast program. They make an excursion for us, showed spaces and resources, told the story of the konsthall, its structure, difficulties and results. There happened a very frank conversation about a role of a cultural center in a city and tendencies of a modern cultural policy.

I saw a new cultural house built by the **Cyclopen** group in Huddinge. Before I had followed their project in Internet and was impressed by their enthusiasm to build again and again their own and independent place in the city. I analyzed the way how they had organized a process of construction of the «kulturhuset» and planed to write to the main initiator of the process.

For one September week we became participants of the international interdisciplinary **conference «Playing the City»** (<http://lift-project.livejournal.com/59759.html>) organized by Monica Sand and Ricardo Atienza from Architecture and Design Center. Architects, artists, curators, researchers, performers, and photographers presented their methods how to deal with a city space. Besides, a discussion dedicated to artist's responsibility in a city was initiated. During two days we participated in artistic actions offered by conference's members in different parts of Stockholm. Our action which also was a kind of «a playing the city» took place in Gamla stan and engaged tourists and residents in the game when you created and broke rules in order to observe changes in the place where changes were prohibited (<https://vimeo.com/112904889>). We became friends with Monica and Ricardo, met several times, shared our experience, and discussed possibilities for future collaborations. We have still kept in touch with some participants. Jemmy Simmar invited us to join to her performance at Slussen in September. Several times we met Pavel Matveev and had very interesting talks.



Monica and Ricardo

At the end of September we took part in the **conference «Impact of Culture»** in Umea. I was curious not only about the international conference program, but also about the city itself. In 2014 Swedish Umea was an European Cultural capital. I had a chance to see the city, new public spaces and art objects. We stayed in the New culture hotel «U&ME» which suggested new services for guests: a library, an art gallery, and a public place. A conference's program included two days of reports, discussions and practical sessions.



Eva Ernqvist

It offered an interdisciplinary view on the topic «culture as a driver of urban development». I acquainted with specialists from England, Belarus, USA, and different parts of Sweden. After the conference we didn't miss the chance to see the famous Amedalen park with star contemporary art objects presented in a space of the ordinary residential area in Umea.

“Outside Stockholm” program also included the **Gamla Uppsala museum** and the **Sundsvall Kultur Magasinet** where I could see methods how to talk about the history and to discuss a current day's agenda.

The Fargfabriken art and urban center was another important point of my scholarship program. I interviewed art managers and attended several exhibitions, including the survey of urban projects from different European cities. Many projects selected for the exhibition still work for me as international examples of grass-roots initiatives in cities.

I have a meeting with Eva Ernqvist, a leader of the former **Meat Packing District** project. She invited me to their new place, made an excursion along artist studios and told about their residency program.

Monthly we got invitations for **tea-parties** which were organized by friends of Sverker Åström. Those meetings gathered people from different professional communities (journalists, diplomats, writers, curators, etc.) to share opinions on a current moment, history and various interests. With these invitations we received possibilities to learn more about Stockholm and Sweden, to extend our research field and to receive warm personal contacts. Thanks to Disa Håstad our acquaintance with new people were easy and friendly. Some of these contacts prove to be most useful. Elsa Håstad connected us with the Swedish organization “Kulturkapital”, interested in international collaborative projects. Gunnar Johansson invited our family for dinner and very interesting conversation.

Last month in Stockholm one or two times a week we visited a team of “**Kulturkapital**” for brainstorming about a possible collaboration. We told our Swedish colleagues about the Textil project — a new cultural space in Yaroslavl - and suggested to organize an international project together. We prepared a proposal for the application to the Swedish Institute and planned our future project which could take place in Yaroslavl next year. We were interested in a project with invited artists, curators or researchers from Sweden, who could bring new knowledges, methodological models, and perspectives, and with whom our team and creative communities could share their ideas, visions, and experience. Keeping social and cultural dimensions of a project we would try to create a good base for intercultural communication which enriches every participant of the project.

When I were looking for organizations who occupied industrial areas as Textil in Yaroslavl, I drew attention to **Almgren textile museum** in Södermalm (report in Russian - <http://lift-project.livejournal.com/58118.html>). I studied the whole exposition, interviewed staff members and guests. I was impressed by the way how a factory and a museum were combined. Saving the past the museum team thinks about the future. They tell the story about the silk cloth and at the same time custom produce cloths.



Thomas Lilheberg

During our visit to Botkyrka konsthall we learnt about **Thomas Lilheberg** — a Swedish artist and a curator — who initiated cultural projects in Stockholm. I made an appointment with Thomas in a city cafe and we talked together for hours. I told about our projects in Yaroslavl, he introduced me his experience.

This conversation was very important for me from the methodological point of view: we talked about values, terms, circumstances of projects. For what reason and how do you do projects, which partners do you choose and which instruments are more available? Thomas said a very interesting thing: «all airports and contemporary art centers look similar, thus, I prefer to work in Stockholm suburbs: there I always observe changes and a real life». It was a very inspiring meeting and I would like to continue the communication with the wise and experienced Swedish artist.



Casimir Messner

Besides, we were very lucky with places to live in Stockholm. First, it was an apartment in Gamla stan which allows us to be very close to all places of the Stockholm’s Cultural Festival. There we met Casimir Messner, a very active person, an artist in the past and an art events’ haunter now. Weekly he gave us invitations to opening days of exhibitions and shared artists’s contacts. Secondly, we moved to Södermalm to the Gunilla Larsen apartment in the Hornsgatan artists’s district. Very soon we became friends with Gunilla, her relatives, friends, and neighbors. And finally we received an invitation to make a performance and a presentation of our projects in the common library.

At the end of October we organized such a meeting in the library and tried to invite all our new friends and colleagues. We were not very happy with results of the performance, because it was too difficult to consider all circumstances of the hall and audience’s behavior. Nevertheless the conversation about Yaroslavl projects arose and gave good feedback.

When people ask me about the greatest impression in Sweden I told the story which I heard from Disa Håstad. The story how her neighbors agreed to celebrate an anniversary of their house with a guided tour to each other's apartments. It is an excellent example of social friendship which is formed in the people friendly city. Stockholm for us is such a kind of a city which gave many new contacts, spontaneous smiles, support, and inspiration. **Disa Håstad** is a unique person who builds bridges and roads connecting people in direct sense of the word and in metaphorical one.

Now in Russia we have still felt a support which we received in Sweden. A support of our values, interests, and ideas. We met friends who left Russia and live in Sweden now. We found new friends whom we dream to meet again. We found new colleagues and carried out a Russian-Swedish project "People Making Spaces" which could allow us to develop an independent cultural space in Yaroslavl, to strengthen local creative society and continue to create new linkages between Russian and Swedish cultural lives.



Disa Håstad

