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Inventing a University City: Visualizing Planning and Politics in Umea, 1950-1975

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Rapid urbanization of the kind occurring in Sweden during the last decades of the 20th century is a challenge to the historian, because of the complexities of the economy, democracy and the environment. Nevertheless, here as elsewhere, influential networks of planners, architects and politicians assumed responsibility for developing cities, only belatedly taking account of protests from groups of activists worried about e.g. the increasing number of cars.

In our presentation, we will demonstrate and explain how the history of this development can be made more accessible and explored through a historical and topographical database. Our presentation relies upon research in the project, “the History of Umeå Municipality, 1950-2000”. We focus on political decision making, persons and stories that have affected the development of University City. Two questions summarizing the effort is:

- *Who have been involved in key decisions affecting physical infrastructures, the traffic system and demography?*
- *What arguments were formulated to support different standpoints?*

The database design and its access-layer as infrastructure is based upon results and knowledge from the IST-FP6 project “QVIZ” (Query and context based visualization of time-spatial cultural dynamic www.qviz.eu). In QVIZ a time-spatial and conceptual faceted browser and map contextualization have been developed. The facilitation of a multidimensional access and exploration layer will be used to evaluate different hypothesis of development of a University City.

This approach will be used to consistently and understandable connect “simple” things on maps with more conceptual objects, such as networks of stakeholder and decisions processes. The infrastructure will support multiple data exploration methods. Our aim is thus to assist users (researchers and general public) in their understanding of pros and cons when choosing a particular method of exploration.