

Postcards from Rosengård

Matthew Federico Becker, Zerin Demir, Yeşim Özer, Özüm Ezgi Satılmış, Martino Zibetti

I. INTRODUCTION

Matthew Federico Becker finished his bachelor's degree in geography at the Ruhr-University Bochum in 2023, during which he primarily focussed on local economics and social development. Simultaneously, he worked for the association of local economic development in Duisburg, Germany. He is now studying the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's "Redesigning the Post-industrial City" that has given him deep insights into urban governance and the interconnections of social and economic development. The master's heavy focus on engaged research had a major impact on his methodological approach, motivating him to walk on the thin line between traditional scientific research and practical implementation.

Zerin Demir is currently a master's student at the UNIC in the Redesigning Post-Industrial Cities program, her research interests include sustainable and resilient urban development. Originally from Istanbul, Turkey, she completed her bachelor's degree in architecture at Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University. Currently, works as a project coordinator in Bremen, Germany. In her role, she manages interdisciplinary projects centered on sustainable energy projects and collaborates with diverse teams.

Yeşim Özer is an Istanbul-born urban planner and culture advocate currently pursuing her master's in the UNIC RePIC program, with studies in Germany, Ireland, and Belgium. Focusing on post-industrial cities and community engagement, she combines expertise from Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University with hands-on experience in Istanbul's cultural sector, including projects with the Istanbul Jazz Festival and Biennial. An analog photography enthusiast, Yeşim believes in the power of storytelling through images to capture urban life and works to make cities more inclusive and creative.

Özüm Ezgi Satılmış is an architect, artist, and curator studying in the "Re-Designing the Post-Industrial City" master's program. Her work tackles urban transformation, community resilience, and cultural narratives across varied city contexts. A graduate of Istanbul Technical University, she has presented research in exhibitions centered on "human-artificial/natural environment interaction," illustrating shared, utilized, and perceived surroundings. She has also contributed to projects with the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts, including the Istanbul Biennial. Known for her experimental installations and mixed media practice, Özüm aims to unite diverse narratives and foster inclusive, resilient urban spaces.

Martino Zibetti is an activist and young urban researcher focusing on issues of social justice and migration in European cities. His involvement in direct solidarity initiatives along the 'Balkan Route' spurred Martino's academic interest in the contested and temporary squats occupied by people on the move within migration corridors and beyond.

This work was produced by a student group working under the theme of 'Migration and Super-diversity' in Malmö, as part of the UNIC RePIC master program (Re-Designing the Post-Industrial City), as part of a City Lab, held in Malmö in September 2024. The work was conducted under the stimulating and enriching guidance of our mentors Cathal Mulry and Dr Denis Linehan from University College Cork.

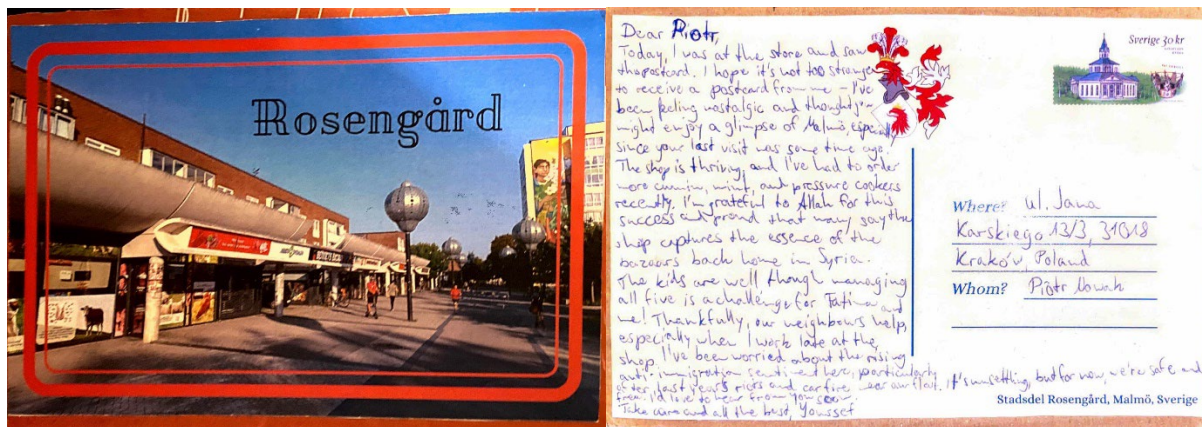
As a team, we embraced the importance of every step in our exploration through city walks and talks. Whether through observation, dialogue, or the creation of visual narratives, we approached each part of the process with the belief that every detail—no matter how small—contributes to the bigger picture. By addressing themes such as migration, integration, and identity in Rosengård, we as a team hope to bring attention to ongoing discussions relevant to this neighbourhood and the global conversation about cities and super-diversity. Our final work is not a solution but an invitation to reflect on the complexities we observed. We hope to contribute to a deeper understanding of the spaces and people we studied.

II. CURATORIAL TEXT

This multi-media exhibition transports its spectators into Rosengård, a superdiverse neighbourhood of Malmö, Sweden. Dwelling on the theme of migration, 'Postcards from Rosengård' aims to destigmatize a multi-ethnic district whose reputation often disturbs Malmö's otherwise successful post-industrial transition. Each postcard is an

impression, a glimpse of reality that we collected during our three-day fieldwork in September 2024. The variety of themes, visual materials, and speculative scenarios we propose reflects the explorative nature of our investigation, immersing viewers in a descriptive rather than normative research project. Our anthology of (visual) stories originates from a non-native standpoint and, therefore, caters to other outsiders to Rosengård, offering all that we could forage while 'scratching the surface.' In a rapidly changing city like Malmö, the surface matters as narratives and images often overpower reality in determining the trajectory of a place. Our work hopes to add a sincere and honest contribution to the ongoing discussion on Rosengård, pointing to themes such as identity, community, and super-diversity along the way. While social tensions and socio-economic fractures appear as essential ingredients when cooking up narratives on migration in Malmö, we consciously avoid problem-oriented discourse and report on the solutions already in place in Rosengård. Notwithstanding our positive outlook on the district, problems and contradictions emerge from our Postcards, illuminating the inextricable complexities of a super-diverse society.

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Postcard 1 by Matthew Federico Becker

Dear Piotr,

I hope it's not too strange to receive a postcard from me—I've been feeling nostalgic and thought you might enjoy a glimpse of Malmö, especially since your last visit was some time ago.

The shop is thriving, and I've had to order more cumin, mint, and pressure cookers recently. I'm grateful to Allah for this success and proud that many say the shop captures the essence of the bazaars back home in Syria.

The kids are well, though managing all five is a challenge for Fatima and me! Thankfully, our neighbours are a great help, especially when I work late at the shop.

I've been worried about the rising anti-immigration sentiment here, particularly after last year's riots and a car fire near our flat. It's unsettling, but for now, we're safe and free to live as we wish.

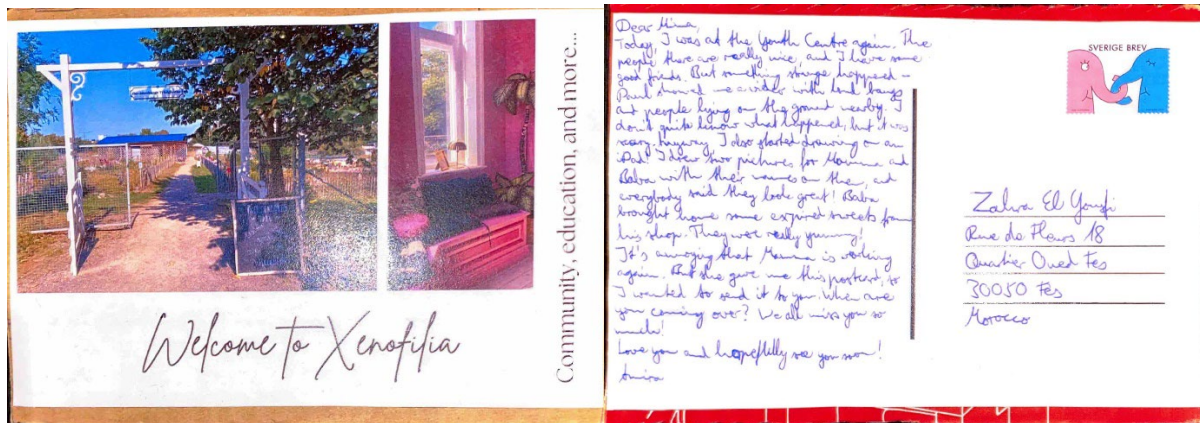
I'd love to hear from you soon. I might give you a call over the weekend.

Take care and all the best,

Youssef

* The address on the right is a fictional, but realistic address of Youssef's friend Piotr in Poland: Piotr Nowak, ul. Jana Karskiego 12/3, 31-018 Kraków, Poland

III.



Postcard 2 by Matthew Federico Becker

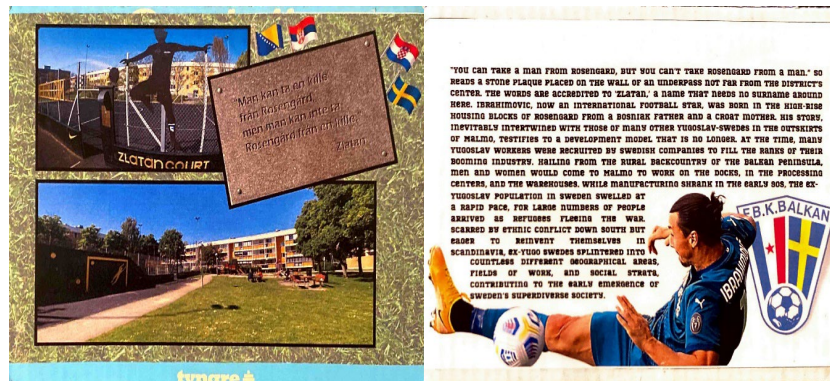
Dear Mima,

Today, I was at the Youth Centre again. The people there are really nice, and I have some good friends. But something strange happened — Paul showed me a video with loud bangs and people lying on the ground nearby. I don't quite know what happened, but it was scary. Anyway, I also started drawing on an iPad! I drew two pictures for Mamma and Baba with their names on them, and everyone said they look great! Baba brought home some expired sweets from his shop. They were really yummy! It's annoying that Mamma is working again. But she gave me this postcard, so I wanted to send it to you. When are you coming over? We all miss you so much!

Love you and hopefully see you soon!

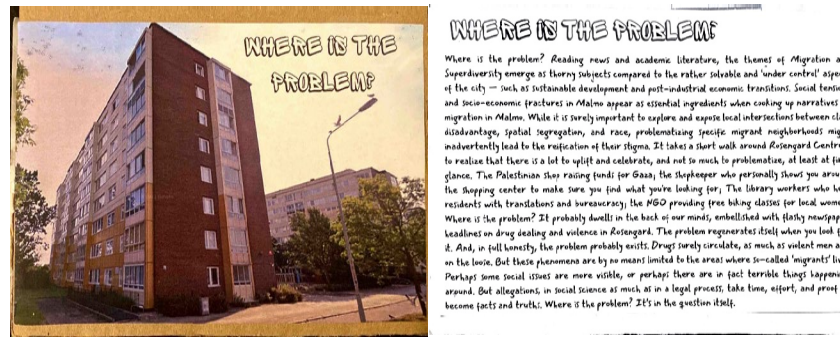
Amira

* The address on the right is a fictional, but realistic address of Amira's grandmother in Morocco: Zahra El Yousfi, Rue de Fleurs 18, Quartier Oued Fes, 30050 Fès, Morocco



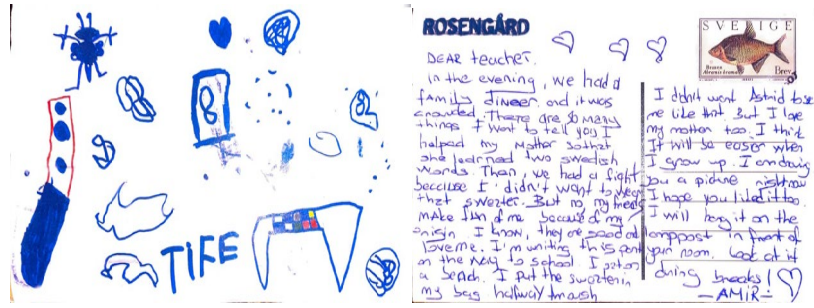
Postcard 3 by Martino Zibetti

"You can take a man from Rosengård, but you can't take Rosengård from a man." So reads a stone plaque placed on the wall of an underpass not far from the district's center. The words are accredited to 'Zlatan,' a name that needs no surname around here. Ibrahimovic, now an international football star, was born in the high-rise housing blocks of Rosengård from a Bosniak father and a Croat mother. His story, inevitably intertwined with those of many other Yugoslav-Swedes in the outskirts of Malmo, testifies to a development model that is no longer. At the time, many Yugoslav workers were recruited by Swedish companies to fill the ranks of their booming industry. Hailing from the rural backcountry of the Balkan peninsula, men and women would come to Malmo to work on the docks, in the processing centers, and the warehouses. While manufacturing shrank in the early 90s, the ex-Yugoslav population in Sweden swelled at a rapid pace, for large numbers of people arrived as refugees fleeing the war. Scarred by ethnic conflict down south but eager to reinvent themselves in Scandinavia, ex-Yugo Swedes splintered into countless different geographical areas, fields of work, and social strata, contributing to the early emergence of Sweden's superdiverse society.



Postcard 4 by Martino Zibetti

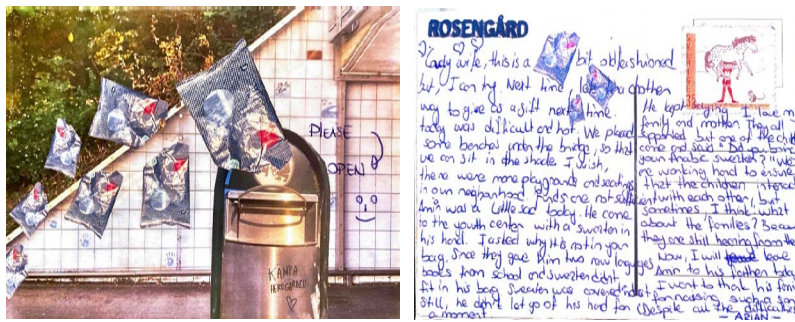
Where is the problem? Reading news and academic literature, the themes of Migration and Superdiversity emerge as thorny subjects compared to the rather solvable and ‘under control’ aspects of the city — such as sustainable development and post-industrial economic transitions. Social tensions and socio-economic fractures in Malmo appear as essential ingredients when cooking up narratives on migration in Malmo. While it is surely important to explore and expose local intersections between class disadvantage, spatial segregation, and race, problematizing specific migrant neighborhoods might inadvertently lead to the reification of their stigma. It takes a short walk around Rosengard Centrum to realize that there is a lot to uplift and celebrate, and not so much to problematize, at least at first glance. The Palestinian shop raising funds for Gaza; the shopkeeper who personally shows you around the shopping center to make sure you find what you’re looking for; The library workers who help residents with translations and bureaucracy; the NGO providing free biking classes for local women. Where is the problem? It probably dwells in the back of our minds, embellished with flashy newspaper headlines on drug dealing and violence in Rosengard. The problem regenerates itself when you look for it. And, in full honesty, the problem probably exists. Drugs surely circulate, as much as violent men are on the loose. But these phenomena are by no means limited to the areas where so-called ‘migrants’ live. Perhaps some social issues are more visible, or perhaps there are in fact terrible things happening around. But allegations, in social science as much as in a legal process, take time, effort, and proof to become facts and truths. Where is the problem? It’s in the question itself.



Postcard 5 by Özümlü Ezgi Satılmış

Dear teacher,

In the evening, we had a family dinner. It was crowded. I thought about how I would do my homework. Oh, there are so many things I want to tell you. Yesterday morning, I helped my mother a little so that she could practice her Swedish. I taught her two new words :) After that, unfortunately, we had a fight. Because, she forced me to wear that sweater again. But, no. My friends at school make fun of me because of my origin. I know, they are not malicious and they love me. I wore it so that she wouldn't be upset... I am writing this part on the way to school. I sat on a bench. I put the sweater in my bag halfway through. I don't know. I didn't want Astrid to see me like that. But I love my mother too. I think it will be easier when I grow up. I am drawing you a picture right now. I hope you like it too. I will hang it on the lamppost in front of your room. Look at it during breaks!

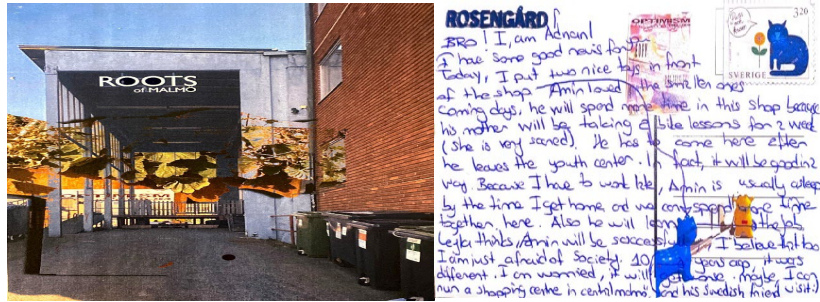


Postcard 6 by Özüm Ezgi Satılmış

My Dear Wife,

This is not my thing at all. Technology has developed and we have left these behind. You are so old fashioned. Let's find another way to give as a gift next time. But I will try. It is a difficult day, to be honest. It is a hot day in Malmö. I wonder if you saw it when you came. We placed some benches under the bridge in front of the building so that we can sit in the shade. Actually, I wish there were more playgrounds and seating areas like this in our immediate vicinity. It is difficult to do this with our own means. Funds are not always sufficient. The children love it here too. Sometimes they climb and play games. Hah, I said it was a difficult day. Amir was a little sad today. He came to the youth center with a sweater in his hand. I asked why it is not in your bag. Since they gave him two new language books from school, the sweater did not fit in his bag. He carried it in his hand the whole way. The sweater was covered in dust. Still, he did not let go of his hand for a moment. He kept saying I love my family and my mother very much. The other children supported him. Unfortunately, one of the children came and said, "Did you bring your Arabic sweater with you?" We are working hard to ensure that the children interact with each other, but sometimes I think: what about the children's families? What are we going to do for this group? The little children are trying to support each other despite all the racism their families subject them to. Now, I will go out and come home, but first I will leave Amir with his father today. I want to thank his mother and family for raising such a son. (Despite all the difficulties)

Arian



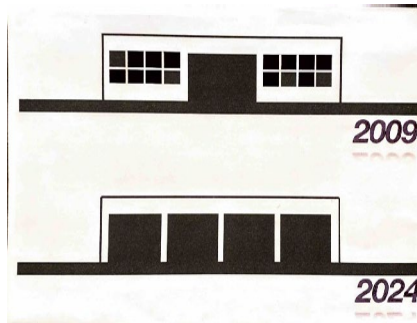
Postcard 7 by Özüm Ezgi Satılmış

Brother,

I have some good news for you. Today I put two nice toys in front of the shop. Amir loved the smaller one. In the coming days, he will spend more time in this shop because his mother will be taking a bike riding lesson for a week. (Between you and me, he is very scared of bikes) He has to come here after he leaves the youth center. In fact, it will be good in a way. Because since I have to work late, Amir is usually asleep by the time I get home. This way, we can spend some time together here. And maybe he will learn the job a little. If he can't study here somehow, he can at least make ends meet with the catering business. Leyla is much more optimistic about this. She has full faith that our child will be a very successful and empathetic individual. I believe that too. I am just a little bit afraid of society. Even 10 years ago, it was different. I am worried that it will get worse. Maybe, I am planning to buy a shop in the center and run it. Amir keeps seeing the same people here. If we have a cafe in the centre, maybe his local friends can come to visit him too.

Adnan

* While crafting the narratives for the postcards, I used a method called 'cross-narrative storytelling' to create a more holistic and interconnected story. I centered the narrative around three characters— a child, a teacher, and a father—each representing different perspectives, but all linked through their shared relationships and experiences in Rosengård



2009

In 2009, Building newly transformed into a garage in NGBG. The building had a simple and functional design that responded to the economic and social needs of the period. Its exterior and architectural features were no different from other commercial buildings in the area and served the needs of the local population.

Postcard 8 by Zerir Demir

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2009

One of the defunct buildings in NGBG, with remains from the industrial time. The building's industrial heritage is evident in its red brick facade and simple architecture. In 2009, Over time, immigrant communities have settled in the neighborhood surrounding the building, and the repair shop has become both an economic opportunity and a social gathering place for immigrants. It can be said that immigrants are integrating into new communities by receiving support from such local businesses, especially in overcoming language and cultural barriers. Communities, especially by seeking support from local businesses that overcome language and cultural barriers.

Postcard 9 by Zerir Demir

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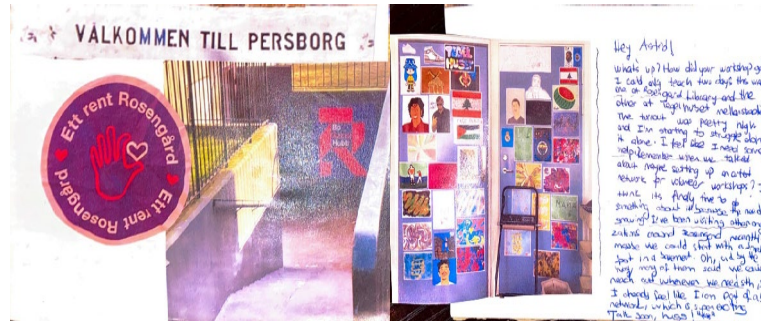


Postcard 10 by Yeşim Özer

Egee, what's up?

I hope you're still not mad at me for losing your ball, I swear I didn't do it on purpose. If I made you sad, I'd be super sad too! Something amazing happened today! I signed up for the soccer school near our house. Dude, it's only 44 steps from my building, so it's awesome. When we got inside, there was Zlatan's signature on the wall, I couldn't believe it! (I put a picture of it next to this.) One day, I'm going to be just like him. We're already kind of like his mom and dad are from another place, but he was born here. My mom and dad are from another place too, but I'm like him, I'm from here!

The soccer balls on the field weren't so cool, that made me a bit sad. But I won't stay here forever. Once they see how good I am, they'll transfer me. Then I'll have loads of money, and I'll build sports centers everywhere here. EVERY 12 STEPS! and by the way, can you sign up too, so we can be awesome together.



Postcard 11 by Yeşim Özer

Hey Astrid,

What's up? How did your workshop go? I could only teach two days this week—one at Rosengård Library and the other at Tegelhuset mellanstadiet. The turnout was pretty high, and I'm starting to struggle doing it alone. I feel like I need some help. Remember when we talked about maybe setting up an artist network for volunteer workshops? I think it's finally time to do something about it because the need is growing. I've also been visiting other organizations around Rosengård recently to check out their spaces. Maybe we could start with a small spot in the basement. Oh, and by the way, many of them said we could reach out whenever we need something, so I already feel like I'm part of a big network, which is super exciting! I'm attaching a sample photo of one of the spaces in the back—we can chat more about it later.

Talk soon, hugs!



Postcard 12 by Yeşim Özer

Aslı!!

The other day I came across an old house in the neighborhood. I went inside and learned that it is a social farm and kitchen called Botildenbuorg. Anyone can rent the space and use its facilities, participate in workshops like fermentation courses, or eat at the restaurant that serves seasonal food they grow themselves. Look, I'm even adding the photos I took to the postcard. They provide farm training to people, and others who have recently arrived in this city and are struggling to find something to do. From what I've heard, most of the people who complete the program manage to find jobs. This seems like a great opportunity for me to meet people, find an occupation, and hopefully get a job afterwards. It seems like a good opportunity, though, what do you think? If I get accepted, maybe after completing the program, I could also become a trainer and at least support others who share similar concerns. After all, no one understands the challenges of the integration process better than those who have lived through it :)

Lots of love, I hope we meet soon!

IV. PHOTOS FROM THE EXHIBITION

Photos from the exhibition at Media Evolution, Malmö, showcasing our project on migration and super-diversity (September 2024), taken by Özüm Ezgi Satılmış.



