TANGIBLE - INTANGIBLE HERITAGE(S) – DESIGN, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CRITIQUES ON THE PAST, PRESENT AND THE FUTURE

• Paper / Proposal Title:
Neon lights – city-branding through visual improvement programs for shopfronts

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• Presentation Method. I would like to:
 Preferable:
 i. present in person (with/without a written paper)

 Possible:
 ii. present via pre-recorded film (with/without a written paper)
 iii. present via skype (with/without a written paper)
 iv. submit a written paper only (and not attend/present)

• Abstract (300 words):
In times of entrepreneurial urbanism, when post-industrial cities are forced to compete to attract citizens, visitors and capital, the invention of identities and profiling, also called city-branding, have become a wide-spread phenomena.
One common tool for implementing an invented identity visually is by carrying out visual changes on ground level shopfronts in local centres and high streets. In some places in Great Britain there are shopfront grants for shopkeepers to apply for, and in many places there are mandatory top-down improvement programs that shopkeepers must adapt to.

This paper departs from a case study in Stockholm, Sweden, where a municipal housing company is conducting visual improvement programs for at least three local centres in Stockholm suburbs, focusing on visual coordination of shop fronts and signage.

What are the current ambitions and ideals for a local centre, and how are these translated to visual expression? What businesses and shops are valued and not, what social and visual aspects are valued and not, and how are such arguments articulated? How does visual improvement programs express ideas that has to do with local historical and cultural heritage, and how does these ideas apply to shopkeepers and their shopfronts?

The aim of this paper is to contribute to an understanding of the visual scheme in the city in a framework of social concepts such as gentrification, migration and cultural heritage.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Maryam Fanni is a graphic designer and Ph.D Candidate in Design at HDK Academy of Design and Crafts, University of Gothenburg, Sweden. Her research interests intersect at the junction between visual communication, cultural theory, and urban studies. She graduated from Konstfack University College of Arts, Crafts and Design (2013) and Architecture Department of Royal Institute of Art Stockholm (2015) and has been running a design studio focusing on printed matter and book design for cultural and non-profit clients, as well as working with research-based collective artistic practices. She is co-founder and member of collectives Söderorts Institut För Andra Visioner (SIFAV) working on issues around right to the city and commons, MMS, a collective of graphic designers working design history-writing from feminist and workers perspective, both since 2012, as well as the group Mapping the Unjust City, investigating civil rights in relation to ownership in local centers since 2015. She is tutoring at Konstfack University College of Arts, Crafts and Design, working as an art critic at national Radio Sweden and a member of editorial board of journals Fronesis and Tecknaren.