

Mirek Dymitrow
Karin Ingelhag

Anatomy of a 21st -century
sustainability project

T H E U N T O L D
S T O R I E S

Anatomy of a 21st -century
sustainability project
THE UNTOLD STORIES

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Abstract

Dymitrow, M. and Ingelhag, K. (eds.) (2019). *Anatomy of a 21st-century sustainability project: The untold stories*. Gothenburg: Mistra Urban Futures, Chalmers University of Technology.

What does a sustainability project look like in the 21st century? Not the glossy version, but the naked truth? Tired of manicured, over-theorised accounts of the ‘musts’ and ‘shoulds’ of sustainability transitions, we got to the bottom of things; actually, to the very bottom of the project hierarchy: the individual. Our point of departure is that projects are nothing but temporarily interconnected people. This means that if we don’t know what people do and what they think about their work, we will never be able to create a deeper understanding of the project, its rationale and future impact. Making use of the autoethnographic method, this book provides critical insights into what it’s like being part of a 21st-century project. Building on unfiltered first-hand contributions from 73 authors representing the five organs of a project’s anatomy – the brain (theoreticians), the skeleton (leaders), the limbs (strategists), the heart (local stakeholders) and the lungs (researchers) – the book covers all the important aspects of contemporary project-making: (1) projectification as a societal phenomenon; (2) sustainability as the main project buzzword; (3) transdisciplinarity as a hot working method; (4) economy as the invisible project propeller; (5) space as the contextual project qualifier; (6) gender and integration as the obstinate orphans of project-making; (7) trends as the villains of thoughtless project mimicry; (8) politics as the “necessary evil” of projects; and (9) knowledge production as the cornerstone of all project work. The book ends with an extensive critical analysis of what makes a project tick and how to avoid project failure. We infer that talking about project outcomes and impacts is just that... talking. What makes a difference is what can be done to the project in itself. Three important virtues – the ABC of project-making – emanate from this book’s 40 chapters: building good relationships (Affinity), having the guts to make a change (Bravery), and showing willingness to learn (Curiosity). These are the basis for the successful execution of future sustainability projects, where complexity, unpredictability and desperation will become a staple force to reckon with. The original contribution of this book is to shed light on the silent triumphs and hidden pathologies of everyday project-making in an effort to elevate individual knowledge to a level of authority for solving the wicked – yet project-infused – problems of our time.

Keywords: projects; sustainability; transdisciplinarity; co-production; autoethnography; individual perspective

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Foreword #1

It gives me great pleasure to introduce this book, not just on account of its valuable contribution to the diverse portfolio of outputs from the work of Mistra Urban Futures but also because of its highly distinctive contribution to transdisciplinarity and co-production – the very ethos of our Centre. Indeed, while self-reflection and reflexivity are key elements of all good research and especially the various forms of co-production, this volume breaks new ground in terms of the depth and diversity of individual autoethnographic perspectives integrated around a single project. That this was no ordinary applied research project, but a highly innovative experiment intended to think and do the apparently unthinkable with multiple co-benefits and which inadvertently became controversial because of external misrepresentations and related contestations. It deserves a wide audience, both among those in the Gothenburg region and elsewhere in Sweden who should understand the complexities and those further afield for whom it represents a salutary lesson to help them anticipate and address potential unpredictabilities and controversies that can arise with present-day applied sustainability research projects.

Having observed the changing fortunes of the Urban–Rural Gothenburg project from the ‘near outside’ and as someone whose career straddles the urban and development studies communities and with lifelong engagement in and between Africa and Europe, the perspectives included in this book are poignant and ring true.

One of the most valuable contributions made by the postcolonial and postmodern schools of thought has been to break down the obsolete categories that had divided the world into geopolitical blocs on the basis of ideology and degrees of industrial sophistication. As part of this mindset, Social Anthropology had traditionally been about societies outside Euro-America (‘out there’) and Sociology about those ‘in here’. Similarly, and despite much altruistic intent, Development Studies had focused on ‘problems of development’ in poorer regions, with a Northern-centric normative mindset of ‘helping them to become more like us’. Increasingly, Development Studies has become concerned with issues of global diversity, inequality, poverty and exploitation in all its forms and how appropriately to address them in the context of economic restructuring and fragility, climate and environmental change, mobility and polarizing populism. All these intellectual and policy currents find implicit or explicit expression in the pages that follow.

This book explores the implicit knowledge created during the process of running a complex sustainability project, in order to understand better both its value and limitations in the context of rapid change. It highlights a complex co-creation process from the perspective of the individual in a transdisciplinary context. In so doing, it sheds light on the silent triumphs and hidden pathologies of everyday transdisciplinary project-making as a microcosm for solving the wicked problems of our time.

David Simon

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Former director of Mistra Urban Futures*

Gothenburg, September 2019

Foreword #2

Appearing in the last quarter of the 20th century, sustainable development was born as a result of the warning signals issued by scientific experts, quickly relayed by international bodies, particularly within the UN. These signals concerned the scarcity and unequal distribution of natural resources but also the impacts of pollution and forms of agricultural, industrial and urban development on the climate and on the biosphere. The indisputable institutionalisation of a sustainable development policy is currently taking place at all scales: from the international level, through the regular and delicate work carried out in the conferences of the parties initiated by major specialized Conventions (on climate, biodiversity, etc.), to the commitment of the States, which mediate and reify the content of the conventions at the local level. The public authorities integrate environmental and sustainable development issues when it comes to intervening to develop space. Who are the bearers of these spatial planning projects? In liberal democracies, public authorities intervene first and foremost to develop space with the intent to improve the well-being of citizens and all inhabitants by creating new places of public utility, nurseries, schools, universities, hospitals, cultural venues, public squares, green spaces, etc. Private companies also have a role in spatial planning, either by invitation from public authorities or because they carry out private projects in the realm of real estate, service provision and industry.

In all cases, the development operations resort to sustainable development. In relation to this essential paradigm of public policies, in most countries, especially in the democracies, the transformation of space involves taking into account the actors, the inhabitants but and all others affected by the undertaken approaches. However, until recently, linked to the rise of conflicts, concerning firstly nuclear then other infrastructures, in particular high-speed railway lines, airports, dams, wind turbines, as soon as the stake consists of changing a territory, local people lay claim to what they see as their heritage. Development actors, public or private, often feel helpless in the face of these difficulties and conflicts. Encouraged by these developers, the social and environmental sciences also struggle to offer keys to understanding. Land management needs understanding about the changing social goals related to conflicts and concerning the sharing of commons or goods deemed to be part of a set of resources that constitutes well-being and human interaction. In particular, conflict resolution processes require a better understanding of social structures, stakeholder goals, and stakeholder participation. Under these conditions, environmental-science approaches are invited to radically change the discourse of experts. They are invited to hear what opposing actors say about these conflicts. For this to happen, they must commit to necessary transdisciplinarity: to open up geographers and sociologists, to the approaches of ethnologists and anthropologists; to crossbreed views and methods to reach new objects of investigation, to emphasise the individual with their trajectories and networks rather than merely definite sociological classes. The challenge is to move towards components other than those of the usual deterministic methods, to understand that apparent conflicts conceal deeper conflicts around questions of gender, democratic deficits or deep legacies of communal hierarchies, not least within land ownership.

This book represents a remarkable contribution to this kind of work on scientific innovation. The result of a research program funded by the European Union, the book decompartmentalises the disciplines to organise an exciting reasoning written by 73 contributors on innovative subjects. The authors come from different disciplines, some are researchers, others are practitioners. The method of this research project is to cross disciplinary boundaries but also those that separate the researchers from the practitioners in various situations. That is why the

undertaken challenge involved many and varied participants: collective intelligence feeds individuals. All of them confront their expertise with those of others by means of autoethnographic accounts, where the central object is the actor-individual. They offer their views on the project, their representation of the territory, productive experiences on new kinds of demands and needs, as well as forms of organization based on commitment. From this very rich material where disciplinary tools and viewpoints of contributors intertwine, the editors present a host of elements constituting a project's "anatomy". The title deconstructs the scattered materials of space objects to reconstruct the organs of a living being. Thus, the authors demonstrate that the link between individuals and their territory is an organic link. A sustainable project is not just a development project. It is also a project to carry out with others. A development project can only succeed if it is a project concerning a specific territory and a project desired by that territory.

We hope that this book will become a reference manual for all operational approaches to sustainable development but also a reference book for all environmental sciences, both human and ecological.

Pierre Pech

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Paris, October 2019

Celebrating a truly collective effort

Preface. The book you are reading is a popular-science publication emanating from Mistra Urban Futures – an international centre for sustainable urban development hosted by Chalmers University of Technology and the Gothenburg Centre for Sustainable Development in Sweden. The book represents a final, summative contribution from a three-year transdisciplinary project called the Research Forum, a collaborative platform in the interface between academics and practitioners. The Research Forum, in turn, was Mistra Urban Futures’ contribution to a large European Union-sponsored project for sustainable development titled ‘Urban Rural Gothenburg’ (URG), with the overarching aim to create improved conditions for green innovation and green business development between the city and the countryside. In this book, URG represents the anchor point (or case study) around which the empirical part revolves, while the theoretical, analytic and editorial superstructure of the book has been developed within the Research Forum.

The purview of the Research Forum revolved around three principal tasks: (a) to make sure that the work within the project ‘Urban Rural Gothenburg’ is based on scientific knowledge; (b) to develop and perfect methods for sustainable urban-rural development; and (c) to contribute to improved knowledge about projects based on a transdisciplinary (pentahelix) structure in order to secure their long-term impact on sustainable development. While this publication approaches tasks (a) and (b) indirectly, its goal is task (c).

The book is a comprehensive publication in academic dimensions, comprising 40 chapters and 73 authors, representing a broad spectrum of views, roles and assignments from within ‘Urban Rural Gothenburg’ as well as several associated actors, not directly connected to the project. We interpret the fact that so many actors have shown interest in participating in this publication as a sign of the book’s relevance and importance for developing the pentahelix model within future sustainability projects.

Our list of thanks is long. First and foremost, we would like to thank our project secretary and lead co-researcher Shelley Kotze for her enormous contribution to this book both in terms of administration and content. We also thank John Wright, our dedicated copy editor for his superior handling of text when assisting our invited authors to best relay their thoughts and reflections. Shelley and John, without your commitment, resourcefulness and continuous support, this book wouldn’t have been possible.

We also express our sincere gratitude to all authors of this publication for devoting their time, and energy to letting valuable implicit knowledge see daylight, a place where it is more likely to be useful. Thank you: Inga-Lisa Adler, Eva-Lena Albihn, Jenny Almén Linn, E. Gunilla Almered Olsson, Marie Alminger, Jan Anderson, Slobodan Arsovski, William Bailey, Martin Berg, Erik Bick, Rene Brauer, Monika Carlsson, Šefika Ćorić, Leszek S. Dąbrowski, Elma Duraković, Karin Eriksson, Kristina Fermkog, Margareta Forsberg, Susanne Forsman, Mats Fred, Lasse Fryk, Ulla Gawlik, Elżbieta Grzelak-Kostulska, Annette Gustavsson, Per Hallén, Helena Hansson, Simon Hedin, Kerstin Hemström, John Holmberg, Gun Holmertz, Nigar Ibrahim, Sanna Isemo, Magnus Jäderberg, Eva Maria Jernsand, Joachim Keim, Linea Kjellsdotter Ivert, Shelley Kotze, Helena Kraff, Wenche Lerme, Roland Lexén, Patrik Lidström, Kristina Liljestränd, Heléne Lindau, Katarina Lindfors, Jonas Lindh, Magnus Ljung, Ulla Lundgren, Christina Lundström, Kristina Magnusson, Claudio Mc Conell, Dan Melander, Géza Nagy, Jonathan Naraine, Lena Nordblom, Olle Olsson, Inger Orebäck, Henrietta Palmer, Pierre Pech, Peter Rundkvist, Susan Runsten, Stina Rydberg, Dragan Šako, David Simon, Henriette Söderberg, Stefania Środa-Murawska, Mårten Sundblad, Nazem Tahvilzadeh, Anna Ternell, Alfredo Torrez, Sandra C. Valencia, John Wedel, Christoffer Widegren and John Wright.

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*Karin Ingelhart and Mirek Dymitrow
Gothenburg, 2019*



Introduction:

PULLING IT ALL APART

(1)

**Anatomy of a 21st-century project:
A quick autopsy**

Mirek Dymitrow • Karin Ingelhag

Projects, projects, everywhere...

We all are accustomed to projects. Projects are everywhere, and everything is basically a project. We have learnt how to deal with projects, for better or worse. Some of us love them, some of us are fed up with them. But projects are here to stay. Projects are far from a new invention, what has changed is the fine-tuning (cf. Söderlund 2004). It has changed to the point that projects of today are virtually unrecognisable from those from days of yore (Crawford, Pollack and England 2006). All projects of today ‘must’ be green. They must have social relevance. They must be innovative, and must leave footprints (not ecological, hopefully). Projects of today are ideally transdisciplinary; wearing blinkers is a thing of the past. Inclusive projects, bottom-up projects, future-minded projects... who would even challenge that? Projects are no longer ‘targeted, planned, structured endeavours’; that description no longer suffices. To be able to do projects today, we are trained in project management, project leadership, spreadsheets, GANT charts, swimlanes, Kanban, Scrum, Waterfall, sprints, deliverables, bandwidths, roadblocks, backlogs, agile methodologies and the like (cf. Burke 2013; Morris, Pinto and Söderlund 2010). Have you noticed a pattern yet?

On the other hand, projects of today are full of pitfalls (cf. Lock 2013; Reijniers 1994). Lack of resources, scope creep, poor project handling, unrealistic deadlines, lack of interest from stakeholders or simply not paying attention to warning signs are just some of the most oft-cited reasons why projects fail (Hasan 2016). With this book, we want to halt this chthonic gallop, and just pause for a while. We want to open the lid to the black box of project-making and let it stay aslant for the time it takes to read this book, so we can peek into what goes on – *on the inside*.

Why this book?

We didn’t want just a theoretical book about project-making. A theoretical book about project-making would be too abstract, too detached from ‘reality’ to say anything new about how a 21st-century project operates on the inside. Neither did we want an academic book that approaches a project empirically. While this indeed would be ‘closer to the ground’ (Tomine 2015), we wanted to approach the empirics through first-hand stories, told by ‘real’ people with a name, a work title and real-life experiences, without the risk of being transformed into a bundle of anonymised data to be mangled, filtered and generalised by a researcher (cf. Brauer, Dymitrow and Tribe 2019). That too would not align with our intentions.

A project’s results can be assessed on the basis of the value it creates for individuals, organisations and society at large. At the same time, projects are nothing but people who are

temporarily interconnected organisationally (Lundin and Söderholm 1995; Packendorff 1995). This, in turn, means that if we don't know what people are really doing within projects and what they think about their work, we will never be able to create a deeper understanding of the project, its rationale and impact. This is further exacerbated by the fact that a project's image as conveyed by official reports focuses on results, often using a catalogue of trendy clichés (cf. Lundin and Söderholm 2013). In doing so, you can miss the fine print that is not overtly visible, but which has a decisive influence on the outcome of the project. With this in mind, we wanted to analyse a sustainability project departing from the *building blocks* of the process which are the participating actors' personal reflections on their own involvement within the project. The aim of this book is to explore the *implicit* knowledge created during the process of running a complex 21st-century sustainability project, in order to better understand both its value and limitations in a changing reality. Put differently, this book highlights a complex co-creation process from the perspective of the individual in a transdisciplinary context.

The concept of 'transdisciplinarity' connotes a collaboration strategy that crosses several epistemic (knowledge-related) boundaries to create a holistic approach. In societal projects, the transdisciplinary context is often embedded in what has been called the *pentahelix model*. The model assumes that the way stakeholders are engaged in a project can make a significant difference for how the project is developed, how it is perceived and how it can be a source of early confusion, friction and frustration (cf. Lientz 2013). The pentahelix is a tool that maps interests and explores ways of keeping a project balanced between its participants. While it may seem simple, such method of working can help stakeholders understand the importance of alliances and team-playing in the common struggle for a better tomorrow (Osmos 2018).

Based on the above, the underlying hypothesis behind this book is that shedding light on the *implicit knowledge* of sustainability projects is important for taking sustainability work forward. When this knowledge is left in the shadows, sustainability projects risk landing in cosmetic clichés, which are easy to learn and apply routinely, but without desirable or noticeable effects. Project results may then look good on the surface, but fail to reflect the challenges encountered during the process. The risk is that this leads to a watering down of what 'sustainability' is meant to address, or that the concept is exploited for non-sustainable purposes (such as greenwashing or social washing). A remedy to such tendencies could be making more visible the personal, or autoethnographic, knowledge and insights into what the processes involve. Oftentimes, the underlying co-production work never gets to see the light of day. The knowledge built throughout the process is continuously filtered due to constant internal and external 'refinement' (also known as censorship), fuelled by ambiguous motives such as financial gains, career propulsion, and output inflation, or simply a lack of reflexivity (cf. Dymitrow and Brauer 2014; 2018). Our ambition to counter such practices is mounted into this book's principal method.

Personal reflection as a method

The principal purpose of 'research' can be divided into (at least) three general types: to illustrate, to systematise and to explain a phenomenon. The first type of research is based on given theories and aims to illustrate these with concrete examples. The second type aims to systematise a disjointed reality and present it in a more coherent way. The third type attempts to explain in depth complex processes by looking at patterns, relationships and causalities. This book contains traces of all three avenues but emphasises the explanatory process by focusing on multiple personal reflections on what it is like to be part of a 21st-century sustainability project structured around the pentahelix model.

As Swindoll (2019) put it, “*life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you react to it*”. This means that the outcome of a project is only fractionally determined by external, uncontrolled factors. Rather, the overwhelming part of a project’s success or failure depends on the capacity, maturity and engagement of its actors, and how they react when met with challenges. By focusing on *individuals* as carriers of different meanings, our book project seeks to deepen the understanding of how different discourses and social mechanisms can tacitly propel or impede project work, and what socio-material effects they may incur upon project management, its execution and end results.

The main body of work behind this book (chapters 11–38) has been carried out as an *autoethnography* (cf. Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2010). Autoethnography is a research technique based on “*personal experience harvested from a specific set of (...) professional experiences*” (Tribe 2018). It is a form of qualitative research in which a respondent uses self-observation, self-reflection and reflexive investigation to explore anecdotal and personal experience, in order to connect these personal stories to wider cultural, political, and social meanings and understandings (Maréchal 2010). Atkins, Simmons and Roberts (2014) take this stance even further, suggesting that “*reality itself is made up of individual people’s perceptions, that never match each other exactly, and that our own personal view of the world is really based upon an imaginative map that we revise and recreate throughout our lives as a result of the information that is presented to us and filtered through our own set of skills, beliefs and prejudice*” (p. 249).

Autoethnographic accounts are windows into cultural beliefs and practices, to be described, weighed, and critiqued (Ellis 2014). At best, autoethnography “*shows people in the process of figuring out what to do, how to live, and the meaning of their struggles*” (Adams, Holman Jones and Ellis 2015). Due to this insistence, autoethnography is used across a plethora of different disciplines, including communication studies, performance studies, literature, anthropology, social work, sociology, history, psychology, religious studies, marketing, business administration, arts, and education.

The autoethnographic work that forms the basis of this book comprises focussed critical reflections from professionals who have worked within, or been associated with, the Swedish project *Urban Rural Gothenburg* (described later in this chapter). Altogether, 61 professionals contributed. The relatively large number of invited persons was motivated by the desire to give voice to as many actors as possible, and through that create a balance in the corridor of opinion. Nobody wants to hear manicured tales regurgitated through well-lubricated political megaphones or succumb to trademark-obsessed machinations of neoliberal businesses and their cronies (cf. Deephouse 2002; Holgersson and Wieslander 2019). Such information cannot be considered autoethnographic, but rather propagandist, predictable and uninspiring. Neither would such an approach be scientifically sound. Instead, we contend that people in different life situations and roles in society experience social phenomena (including ‘projects’) in different ways. Hence, openness to a diversity of opinions is key if we truly want to grasp, test and evaluate a 21st-century project from within. This must include embracing both conformist and non-conformist, and even dissenting accounts, otherwise instead of pursuing autoethnography we will succumb to *analytical ethnocentrism*. Analytical ethnocentrism denotes the act of addressing and interpreting a complex world by the values and standards of one’s own culture (Omohundro 2008; Stier 2011). It is known for uncritically placing a set of postulations above the pursuit of ‘truth’, hence accepting a form of historicism that disregards inchoate perspectives by drawing an essentialist line around the concepts studied (Thomassen 2016). This can hardly bring sustainable project work forward.

Another methodological addition, following Tribe (2018), was the inclusion of us as editors to the group of (autoethnographic) research subjects (chapter 14 and 32). This brought the important benefit “*that there [was] no communication gap between the researcher and the researched since they [were] the same person*” (p.15). This research part of the process was effectively enhanced by an internal dialogue between the two editors, augmented by triangulation with our supporting production team.

As Tribe (2018: 15) notes, data analysis in autoethnography “*consists of critical reflection to connect the personal experiences to wider cultural, social and political practices and produce new understandings*”. In our case, the analysis was informed by theoretical frameworks provided by 12 experts invited to write nine theoretical chapters (chapters 2–10), thematically unrelated to the project Urban Rural Gothenburg) anchored in relevant literature. Based on these, the data from the 61 autoethnographic accounts (accumulated into 28 chapters) were organised into nine major themes, each represented by the theoretical frameworks introduced in the preceding nine expert chapters. The analytical, abductive (both deductive and inductive), process was prompted by the general aim of the enquiry: to better understand both the value and the limitations of pentahelix-led projects, by help of implicit knowledge created during its runtime. By mixing theory with practice in this way, and making use of knowledge of both academics and practitioners, this book’s methodology gained greater diversity of perspective.

Moreover, understanding that unpurposed mixing and merging of different pools of knowledge is seldom desirable (Dymitrow and Ingelhart 2019), we made sure that each pool of knowledge got to stand on its own merits. Therefore, the categorisation of autoethnographic subjects was done by, firstly, combining them according to their general roles within the project (leaders, strategists, local actors and researchers), and, secondly, grouping them in line with the more specific functions, performances and stances they held within the project, each group being awarded a separate chapter. The autoethnographic reflections were captured in ink with the (technical) assistance of a professional writer to support the authors in relaying their accounts. The conversations were conducted both individually and in groups, depending on the abovementioned conceptual rationale. The conversations leaned against loose discussion points suggested by the editors, but the discussants could freely choose what they wanted to talk about and what they found relevant in the context of this book’s aim.

In terms of writing, to stylistically emphasize personal reflection as a method, we chose a narrative technique that combines ‘third-person omniscient narrative perspective’ (3PO-NP) with ‘first person narrative perspective’ (1P-NP) (cf. Warner, 2018). 3PO-NP has been utilized to summarize long yet information-scant passages to compress the chapters to 2000 words, while 1P-NP has been used to emphasize vivid and information-rich expressions. While the combination of the two narrative perspectives provided variation, dynamics and visual differentiation, *all* contents of the empirical chapters represents the views and opinions of their respective authors.

An important aspect of the research process are ethical considerations (Diener and Crandall 1978; Guillemin and Gillam 2004; Miller et al. 2012). In this research there were no substantive ethical concerns involved. The book underwent standard scientific peer review regarding its conceptual design (chapter 1), theoretical framework (chapters 2–10), and analysis and epilogue (chapters 39–40). The only redactions in the empirical chapters (chapters 11–38) concerned a few minor factual errors, which could be substantiated by hard evidence. Any other, purely textual, redactions occurred consensually in close dialogue with the authors, and all were given the opportunity to revise their statements. Lastly, the book manuscript was disseminated for comments within a group of 20 invitees from Swedish academia and practice, and reviewed by seven external experts representing the broader international perspective.

A first dissection

So, what's in a project? A lot. Having adopted an 'anatomical' take on project-making, let us continue in that vein (no pun intended). The human body contains 206 bones, 639 muscles, 1,320 tendons, 60,000 miles of blood vessels and 30,000,000,000,000 cells. That's a bit much to structure a book around. Instead, we have selected five characteristic body parts, which – using them in a metaphorical sense – came to serve as the intellectual measure by which the validity and merit of the concept of '21st-century project' could be tested.

Before embarking on this section, we should perhaps apologise to sensitive readers for our scientifically shaky use of anatomical concepts. That said, we think you will get our point. It is no secret that project-making has captured the world with its esoteric jargon (Lucidchart 2017), but explaining esoterism with more esoterism is not, we argue, the best way to go. Rather, the Ersatz anatomy we have introduced here is meant to work as *auxiliary concepts*, i.e. alternative, secondary or derivative ideas that can “*help put into a new and clearer perspective several aspects of the role which auxiliary concepts play in scientific theories*” (Hintikka and Tuomela 1970: 298). With that apology sorted out, let us commence with our first dissection, hard and soft tissue galore.

The brain: Theoreticians

The brain is truly our most unique organ. The brain is the headquarters, the centre of calculation, our natural think-tank. It is from here qualities like mind, personality, and intelligence originate. In the brain, we find the only few cells that have accompanied us since conception (cf. Cepelewicz 2017) and can be said to be the only part of us that is actually... 'we'. In clinical medicine, brain death is used as an indicator of legal death in many jurisdictions, even though the remaining body is still alive (Jones 2018). It is in the brain the Odyssey, theory of relativity, Mona Lisa, moon landings and solar power took form. *Everything* we know is mediated by our brains, and in-between us and 'the world' will always be... brains (Pinker 2007). That said, it comes as no surprise that embarking on a trip into the Project Kingdom requires some *serious thinking*.

Meeting that challenge with due aptitude required the involvement of some brainy contingents. Realising that a 21st-century project is all but a welter of competing aspects, interests and dimensions, the matter had to be dealt with holistically. Nine theoretical chapters have arisen from this ambition, covering: (1) *projectification* as a societal phenomenon (Fred 2019); (2) *sustainability* as the main project buzzword (Valencia 2019); (3) *transdisciplinarity* as a promising working method (Hemström and Palmer 2019); (4) *economy* as the true project propeller (Hallén 2019); (5) *space* as the contextual project qualifier (Dymitrow 2019); (6) *gender* and *integration* as the obstinate orphans of project-making (Kotze 2019); (7) *trends* as villains of thoughtless project mimicry (Środa-Murawska, Grzelak-Kostulska and Dąbrowski 2019); (8) *politics* as the “necessary evil” of projects (Tahvilzadeh 2019); and, lastly, (9) *knowledge production* as the cornerstone of all project work, in sickness and in health (Brauer 2019). These nine theoretical chapters are the nine lives of our big fat cat named “Projo” that refuses to die anytime soon. And while not part of the empirical project per se, their knowledge hovers above it like an eagle (for guidance), a wasp (for sting) and an angel (for consolation), until the final meltdown in this book's analytical climax.

But how does theory translate into practice when embedded in a real-life project?

The skeleton: The leaders

Without adequate support any delicate living structure is likely to collapse. The skeleton is the body part that provides support, shape and protection to the soft tissues and delicate organs. In projects, leaders represent that skeletal function. Leadership is an indispensable practical skill in project management encompassing the ability to guide individuals, teams or entire organisations (Chemers 1997). In more specialised meaning, leadership denotes “*a process of social influence in which a person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task*” (Chin 2015). Good project leadership is thus not just about being *in charge* of a project – that’s merely a formality – but to possess and be in control of certain traits and skills that can create meaningful situational interactions, uphold desirable functions and generate productive behaviours. For this to happen, leadership needs to interpolate the use of power, charisma, intelligence and imagination to implement visions and create value (Tonnquist 2016; Wheelan 2016). The distinction between being in charge and being in control is also visible in the two most frequent skeletal types in zoology: the *exoskeleton*, which is the outer shell of an organism, and the *endoskeleton*, which forms the internal support structure of a body (Barnes, Fox and Barnes 2003). Now, which variant is preferable in projects: a rigid façade with a soft inner mess or a stable inner core with a vulnerable external tissue? Though both variants can be found, and a project may need a bit of both in its different phases, we concede that a good leader is neither a turnkey nor a sentry, but a visionary who at the same time can maintain a good grip of goal, structure and timeframe. Within societal projects a leader must also make sure that the project does not turn into a microcosm of political agitation, but consistently focus on *societal good* as the main prerogative.

But what does leadership look like from the inside in a real-life project?

The limbs: The strategists

Nothing happens by itself, and you can’t have something from nothing. Every successful project requires legwork and dexterity to get it moving. While the leaders cannot offer but a skeletal frame for the project’s system to lean against, the system must be able to *move* in order to become operable (cf. Kerzner [1979] 2013). This notion makes the strategists the powerhouse of any project. Strategists are responsible not only for the formulation but also the implementation of any given project strategy. This involves setting goals, determining actions to achieve these goals, as well as mobilising the right resources to execute the determining actions (Mintzberg and Quinn 1996). The associated concepts of strategic planning and strategic thinking are an indispensable part of a strategists’ palette of tools (Roberts 2012). As such, a strategist is not only an occupation but also a personality type. A true strategist personality includes equal shares of intuition, introversion, thinking and judgment, a combination known to be very rare among people and thenceforth very sought after (e.g. cf. Briggs-Myers and Myers [1980] 1995). According to Kvint (2015: 43), a strategist is a “*wise, disciplined, and optimistic professional with a strategic mind-set, a vision of the future, and intuition*”. This puts the strategists in the hot seat when it comes to permeating the strictures of ill-devised, idle or failing projects. In other words, a project stands or falls in pace with its strategists’ compulsion to flee chaos and competency to escape projectual mayhem.

But what does strategising look like from the inside in a real-life project?

The heart: The local stakeholders

A closed system cannot function without its substance being constantly distributed to all constitutive parts. The heart, as an organ, pumps blood through the vessels of the circulatory system, provides the body with oxygen and nutrients, as well as assists in the removal of metabolic wastes. Digressing from anatomy, the heart is also an ideograph used to metaphorically express the idea of positive emotion, including affection and love. That too is needed. In Christian iconography, a burning bloodied heart, surmounted with cross and thorns, is one of the most sacred symbols of devotion to God's boundless and passionate love for mankind (Hendrix 2014). The blood, cross and thorns represent the struggle of unconditional love for the good, but also show that true love doesn't come easy. Lastly, the heart also stands for the centre of things, both physically and topically (Davies 2001): this is where the important stuff happens. Surprisingly, the triple semantics of the concept of heart finds evocation in the work of local stakeholders within a project. Local stakeholders are seldom part of the project itself, but wallow in the blurry and often ungrateful *Zwischenland* between the formal and informal, between the public and private, between word and deed. They are often the ones who have *de facto* power to realise project goals by effectively reaching out to the project's purported recipients and make them embrace its rationale (or not, if it sucks). Occasionally, they can encourage stale project officers to leave their 'armchairs of ethnocentrism' (cf. Dymitrow and Brauer 2018: 207) to see 'the world out there'. Local stakeholders make up a natural point of convergence where the project's battles are won or lost. Even when a project is declared braindead... their hopelessly dedicated hearts continue to beat, hopelessly. Needless to say, without a well-functioning heart, the project will eventually die of cardiac arrest. That's why projects ♡ stakeholders, and local stakeholders provide projects with a heart. Both the pump and the emoticon.

But what is it like to be a real-life local stakeholder in a sustainability project?

The lungs: The researchers

Any ecosystem, if not aired on a regular basis, is likely to get musty (Brauer 2018). By repeatedly addressing similar kinds of situations in similar ways, competency with regard to particular kinds of problem-solving becomes internalised and automated (Hatano and Inagaki 2000). Routinised practices, in turn, can retain certain conceptual frameworks, even when they are of no or little applicatory utility because their sell-by date has expired (cf. Law and Urry 2004). The atmosphere inside an ecosystem can not only get musty, but also turbulent. Lengthy exposition to the same people, idle co-workers, exploitative bosses, nosy evaluators, and scrambles for power can create acrimony and churn up a lot of turbulent air. Lastly, the breathing space in an ecosystem can get thin with time. Lack of new ideas, home blindness and textual entrapment¹ (Dymitrow and Brauer 2018) can suck out the air of any project, making it a diluted, tiresome, and uninspiring environment. An of new ideas injection is badly needed. Daring, concerned and diligent researchers are the lungs of a project. They are able to extract oxygen from the ecosystem and systematically supply it with fresh air, which all too quickly tends to close in on itself. They also ensure that old 'carbon dioxide', which is no longer functional, is released back into the atmosphere, where it can linger for a while until, rejuvenated, a new pair of lungs will make use of it. Academic freedom is a virtue worth defending (Russell 2002). The principle holds that it is beneficial for society in the long run if scholars are free to hold and examine a variety of – including controversial – views, protected

¹ Sometimes referred to as 'armchair research', i.e. linguistic and philosophical methods based on intuited data (cf. Clark and Bangertner 2004), its practitioners "*supposedly do not have to leave the comforts of an armchair*" (Jucker 2009: 1611).

from personal, political, and other non-work-related factors. Therefore, the presence of researchers in sustainability projects is important to keep the latter oxygenated, otherwise they may fade into aposiopsis.

But what's it really like being a project's 'house researcher'?

Inside the cauldron

Every championing project requires fire that keeps it burning. But fire also needs to be contained in order not to cause conflagration. As purveyors of sports miscellany, we would like to liken the fire to the energy that sets alight and propels the project forward, and cauldrons to the projects within which the fire is contained. We are of course thinking about the Olympics and the Olympic flame, a symbol of unity and friendship. Months before the Olympics, the flame is lit at Greek Olympia. This initiates the Olympic torch relay, which ends with the lighting of the Olympic cauldron during the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games. The flame burns in the cauldron for the entire duration of the Games, until it is finally extinguished at the Olympic closing ceremony (cf. Winn 2010). The size, design and technical complexity of Olympic cauldrons differ, but the Olympic project follows more or less the same procedure, and fire accompanies it throughout. The same can be said about projects; their size, design and technical complexity varies, but 21st-century projects are governed using very similar components, and they rely on the energy of their enactors to be kept alive.

But even the most heroic of flames encounter problems along the way. During the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, one of the four pillars of the Olympic cauldron failed to rise. At the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul, a flock of peace doves sitting on the cauldron rim got burned to a crisp in the Olympic pyre. Also, metaphorically speaking, in view of state-sponsored doping violations at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, many are fighting "*to relight the Olympic flame that's dimmed in many of our hearts*" (Uhlaender 2018). In the same vein, a project may not rise from its starting pits. It may char a couple of souls along the way. It may also become embroiled in a damaging controversy. Sheer goodwill, wits and determination are not always enough, as both endogenous and exogenous factors keep projects balancing on the precipice of impending failure.

The cauldron around which this book revolves is called 'Urban Rural Gothenburg' (URG). URG was a three-year (2017–2019) EU-sponsored project for sustainable development with the overarching aim to create improved conditions for green innovation and green business development between the city and the countryside. Operating in five testbeds in four local hubs in north-eastern Gothenburg (Sweden's second-largest city with 570,000 inhabitants), URG sought to develop and implement new low-carbon approaches to local development, with particular linkages to food, logistics, tourism, and ecological business models. Using this methodology, but also through transdisciplinary pentahelix cooperation between the municipality, the business sector, the residents, the civil society and academia, URG aimed to contribute to the fulfilment of Gothenburg's sustainability goals. These goals involved combining innovations for social improvement with a reduction of environmental and climate impact, to become a sustainable city of globally and locally equitable emissions. At least that's what it said on the record. Approaching it from the inside would of course be a different issue.

URG was chosen as the main project around which the empirical part of this book revolves, for four reasons: size, complexity, ambitions and mode of execution (cf. Sahlin-Andersson and Söderholm 2002): (1) it is a *large* project in terms of breadth, quantity and cost, as well as the many parties involved within its scope; (2) it is a *complex* project with a focus on linking actors

and processes into new synergies; (3) it is a project with explicitly big ambitions to be *sustainable* in all its dimensions; and (4) it is a project that is less result-based than it is *process-based*, i.e. its main working methods are exploratory, knowledge-building and proactive through various forms of collaboration.

These four dimensions, we argue, are increasingly solidifying the staple of 21st-century projects rooted in *wicked problems* (Rittel and Webber 1973) – i.e. socio-cultural dilemmas that are difficult or outright impossible to solve. The project of yore appeared to be straightforward: if a street, road or house needed to be built – we built a street, a road and a house. This is how we eventually connected the world, sheltered everybody, eradicated the most dreaded diseases, and provided clean water, sanitary sewers, hospitals and schools (cf. Krzysztofik et al., 2015). Today, when those “easy” problems are virtually all but gone we are instead “*renewing our preoccupation with consequences for equity*” (Rittel and Webber 1973). Those new problems, however, appear insuperably stubborn, almost as if they were... wicked. The main differences between tame (old-time) and wicked (new) problems can be summarised in three dimensions: goal formulation, problem definition, and choice of solution. Tame problems are definable, understandable and consensual, while wicked problems are fragmented, bedevilling and intractable (Dymitrow et al. 2019). Wicked problems have at least 10 characteristics (after Rittel and Webber 1973). (1) They are essentially unique and thus very difficult to generalise. (2) They have no definitive formulation; they are too diffuse to understand what is at hand or what we might be dealing with. (3) Wicked problems have no stopping rule; as one intervention breeds the need for another intervention, they can go on forever. (4) They are not true-or-false, but good-or-bad, which means that resolution is based on opinion, not necessarily on fact. (5) Solutions for wicked problems cannot be immediately tested as they are too complex to be contained and examined. (6) Wicked problems do not allow for a trial-and-error procedure, offering only critical one-shot operations; this stems from their solutions being too demanding and resource-heavy to be successfully replicated. (7) Wicked problems have no enumerable set of potential solutions; there is no guidebook or cheat sheet to follow. (8) Wicked problems are always symptoms of other problems, a characteristic that points to their interconnectedness. (9) The choice of explanation determines the choice of resolution; if we choose the wrong track there will be serious ramifications – the so-called ‘garbage in-garbage out effect’. (10) Lastly, contemporary culture of ‘expertise’ is not lenient on experts being wrong; this easily creates a culture of fear which entreats ‘playing it safe’ rather than risking failure. These ten characteristics of wicked problems form the basis for our choice of URG as a case study (size, complexity, ambitions and mode of execution), and how it fits into the wicked picture of a 21st-century project.

Following this line, this book is *not* about URG in terms of content and achievements. URG (the empirical parts of this book) is just a drop in the World Ocean of Projectification. Rather, URG was chosen because of what the project *represents* along the abovementioned dimensions. It is URG’s approach to project-making what makes it a typical 21st-century project, commensurable with other projects, from both national and international perspectives (Dymitrow, Ingelhart and Kotze 2019; Smit et al. 2020).

Summarily, with the aid of the autoethnographic approach this book sets out to capture the knowledge acquired, generated and used by the project actors when navigating through a taxing project within their respective roles. Given this book’s dual theoretical and empirical ambitions, we believe that these skills and insights can then be transferred to other similar projects in temporal proximity, and thus contribute to improved knowledge about how to conceptually and practically tackle future work with sustainable development.

Disposition

This book consists of four distinctive sections: introductory section, theoretical section, empirical section and analytical section. The introductory part sets the tone for the book, outlining its aims, ambitions and methods. The theoretical part that follows consists of nine expert-written chapters, each of which presenting key aspects of project-making, necessary to better understand a 21st-century project, but also to provide guidance on how to read and interpret the ensuing empirical part. The empirical part is by far the book's largest, revolving around the aforementioned Swedish project Urban Rural Gothenburg. It consists of autoethnographic accounts provided by 61 invited persons, which have been arranged into 28 chapters within four overarching subsections (seven chapters per subsection) based on the authors' role in the project: the leaders, the strategists, the local actors and the (associated) researchers. Finally, the book's analytical part consists of two chapters. The first one provides an analytical exposé of the interlinkages between the introduced theoretical frameworks and the data material extracted through autoethnographic accounts (Dymitrow, Kotze and Ingelhag 2019). The second chapter is an epilogue (Ingelhag, Dymitrow, Kotze and Wright 2019), in which we lay out the most pertinent reflections emanating from the book project in its entirety.

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The brain:

THEORETICIANS

(2)

**In the shadow of innovation:
Projectification of local government**

Mats Fred

Introduction

Public sector organisations are often portrayed as inflexible, difficult to change and bureaucratic – hence, organisations are in great need of innovation (see Fred and Mukhtar-Landgren 2019; Homburg, Pollitt and van Thiel 2007; Styhre 2007). As a response to this desire to change the processes and the outcome and impact of public sector organisations ‘waves of reform initiatives’ have washed over Western societies during the last couple of decades, often bundled as and labelled *New Public Management*, or in more recent years *New Public Governance* (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011). In practice, these ideas have been composed of different organisational solutions motivated by a desire to break with earlier habits in order to experiment and to promote innovation and change (Fred 2018). One specific feature that many of these ‘solutions’ have in common is that they have been carried out via, or resulted in, (temporary) project organisations. As a consequence, we have observed a proliferation of *the project* as an organisational solution in sectors as diverse as IT, housing, social services, education and culture (Fred and Mukhtar-Landgren 2019). This phenomenon, *the projectification of the public sector* (Hodgson et al. 2019), has attracted attention from scholars as well as practitioners. Despite a growing interest, we know surprisingly little of how processes of public sector projectification unfold in practice, especially at local government level.

The aim of this chapter is to conceptualise public sector projectification by answering the questions of how projectification is manifested in practice, and what the consequences of a project logic are for the public sector in general and local government organisations and their employees in particular.

The fact that we can observe a growing number of projects in local governments doesn’t necessarily tell us much about local government practices. In this chapter, I argue that several of the consequences of the increasing reliance upon projects, project techniques and tools often are unspoken, unexpected, hidden, or perhaps something we do not even notice. Merton (1968) called these *latent consequences*. The opposite he called *manifest consequences* meaning outspoken and expected consequences of organisational behaviour. As an example; when an organisation launches a project aimed at tackling issues such as unemployment or gender equality they expect, or hope for, positive effects on the employment rates or improvements in gender equality – the manifest consequences. However, they rarely explicitly state, intend or even recognise the latent consequences of the organisational form and logic of the project. Projects are often treated as means to an end, and are, as such, not expected to influence anything in their own right. However, projects in general are not to be regarded as neutral devices merely delivering goods, but as ‘policy instruments’ that produce specific effects of their own, independently of their stated objectives or aims ascribed to them (see Lascoumes and Le Galès 2007).

The chapter builds on a six-year ethnography conducted in a Swedish municipality and its organisational and institutional surroundings between 2012 and 2018. The work is published in its entirety in my dissertation (Fred 2018).

Following this brief introduction is an overview of the literature on project organising and public sector projectification. Following that are three interrelated sections, each dedicated to a specific argument of how local government projectification can be understood. The chapter then ends in a summary discussion.

Projects, their defenders and critics

The traditional narrative of how contemporary projects came to be fashionable often refers to the US military and space programs of the 1950s and '60s. The overwhelming scale—in terms of resources and ambitious timing — of military and space projects, such as the Manhattan Project or the Apollo space programs, created daunting challenges of coordination and control, which led to a professionalisation of the project manager (Engwall 1995; Grabher 2002). Several techniques and tools for project planning and project monitoring were developed during this period; techniques and tools that still are used and taught at universities and by consultants around the globe (Thomas and Mengel 2008). Project management as a profession and *the project* as an organisational function or solution have, since the 1960s until today, spread to almost every sector of society and to almost every part of the world.

Despite criticism (see Archibald 1992; Engwall 1995; Frame 1994; Morris 1994) and an awareness of the shortcomings of project techniques and tools they have retained a firm grip on the project manager's toolbox over the years. In part, this has to do with the fact that the techniques seem to have played a significant role in many projects (see Brulin and Svensson 2012). Another contributing factor is the extensive activities of professional associations like the Project Management Institute (PMI) and the International Project Management Association (IPMA). The overarching aim of these associations is quality assurance in project management through standardisation of techniques and certification of project managers (Ljung 2011). The underlying view of associations, such as the IPMA and the PMI, is that projects are fundamentally similar; the same methods, models and tools can be applied to all organisational environments, contracting as well as public health, the private sector as well as the public sector.

Why projects?

Experimentation, innovation and change or the desire to break with earlier habits are often drivers that motivate public sector projects (Sahlin-Andersson and Söderholm 2002; Sjöblom 2006; Svensson et al. 2013). Projects are used to develop local government practices and/or to handle complex problems that are thought of as problematic to solve within the realm of the ordinary organisation (see Styhre 2007). The project format is attractive. One reason for the intensification of project organisations is that they are "*perceived as a controllable way of avoiding all the classic problems of bureaucracy*" (Packendorff and Lindgren 2014: 7). The project is regarded as more flexible and change-oriented than the bureaucracy, and the project manager is also given a clearer mandate to manage the operations and make decisions based on established objectives. The projects often aim to change something within the ordinary organisations. They are, as such, an answer to an identified problem and a possibility to try out new working methods or ideas to solve the identified problem.

The intended 'break' with bureaucracy that is embedded in the concept of projects is also a manifestation of the will to act, to change and to be modern. There is a perceived pressure on

public sector organisations to be more flexible, and as a result “*new management techniques* [such as projects have been] *adopted in an attempt to overcome bureaucratic pathologies, including inefficiency and inflexibility*” (Parker and Bradley 2004: 198).

Why not projects?

Despite what the advocates of projects argue, the critics reason that projects contribute to more (not less) bureaucracy and tend to promote organisational fragmentation. Even though projects often promise innovation and “*draw upon the rhetoric of empowerment, autonomy and self-reliance*” (Hodgson 2004: 88) they tie employees “*to a variety of technocratic planning, execution and reporting tools*” (Räisänen and Linde 2004: 103; see also Clegg and Courpasson 2004). Several researchers also argue that public sector projects support a kind of ‘de-politicisation’ by contributing to an increasing focus on, and perhaps also a placement of more trust towards, management-inspired practices and thought models at the expense of political dimensions and different power relations (Hodgson and Cicmil 2006; Burnham 2014; Hodgson et al. 2019). The critics argue that projects are put forward as non-political entities, they are ‘rendered technical’. That is to say that if a project fails (or succeeds) it is due to the technicalities of project organising and project management skills – and the issues of political prioritisation, resource allocation, and possible power shifts, are swept under the rug (see Hodgson et al. 2019). Engwall (2003) captures this critique eloquently in the phrase ‘no project is an island’, pointing towards the fact that projects need to be considered as part of a wider historical, as well as organisational, context. This is a context that must be addressed and taken into account when projects are initiated, implemented, evaluated and researched.

The explosion of projects in the public sector is at the same time somewhat paradoxical given the long-term policy challenges in health, employment, infrastructure, social services, and environmental issues that now are emphasised more than ever (cf. Skerratt 2012), in public debates as well as in research. A common critique in this regard is that project organisations offer short-term solutions to long-term problems (cf. Abrahamsson and Agevall 2010).

The attractiveness of projects and the concept of projectification

Projects in the public sector are, as shown above, ambiguous. On the one hand, they are perceived as flexible, change-oriented and drivers of innovation, and, on the other hand, they appear to be techniques used for control, stability and even bureaucratisation. Some suggest that this duality of project organising makes them even more attractive. They combine the best of these two worlds: the rational notion of controllability, and the modern entrepreneurial focus on creativity and innovation (Clegg and Courpasson 2004; Hall 2012). In other words, projects are popular because they are able to deliver both ‘controllability and adventure’ (Hodgson and Cicmil 2006; see also Sahlin 1996; Sahlin-Andersson 2002).

The increasing reliance on projects, in part due to their attractive nature as an organisational solution, has been described as projectification. The very term projectification originates from an article by Midler (1995) in which he studied the transformation of Renault from an ordinary car manufacturer to a project-based organisation. Since then, the study of projectification has evolved in different directions, but much writing has focused on identifying the advantages and disadvantages of this change (for instance, Arvidsson 2009; Hobday 2000) or providing practical guides to facilitate projectification. In parallel to this prescriptive research, a number of writers have extended what they call a *narrow* projectification (focusing only on a particular organisation), arguing that it is accompanied by a *broad* projectification (Packendorff and Lindgren 2014) referring to the more fundamental discursive “*spread of projects and related*

phenomena as they become embedded, naturalised, and institutionalised across organisations, societies, and in everyday lived experience” (Hodgson et al. 2019: 2). At its broadest, the phenomenon has been described as “*the project society*” (Lundin et al. 2015) or even the “*projectification of everything*” (Jensen, Thuesen and Geraldini 2016).

Projectification – more than a lot of projects

There have been various attempts to measure projectification, from studies tracing the membership of professional project management associations (Hodgson and Muzio 2011), to researchers trying to count the number of projects undertaken in particular countries (Schoper et al. 2018) or to surveys showing the growing employment of project managers in the public sector (Löfgren and Poulsen 2013). What these, and other projectification studies, have in common is an agreement of the proliferation of the project as an organisational form and solution. But what does that mean in practice? What are the practical consequences for public sector organisations coming from a broad definition of projectification? In my studies (Fred 2018) I have identified three interrelated distinctive consequences of projectification: (1) proliferation, (2) transformation and adaption, and (3) organisational capacity-building. The first one – proliferation – is in many respects the consequence of project work that I referred to above as *manifest* – this is what earlier research has indicated, and perhaps what we might expect of ‘the project society’. However, the other two consequences of local government projectification are more latent – the types of changes and effects of projects that to greater extent take place under the radar.

1. Projectification as proliferation

Projectification as proliferation emphasises the increasing use of projects and project ideas, and how these, to an increasing extent, are organised and diffused within and between local government organisations. The term proliferation is used here to indicate how projects are added to local government practices — meaning more activities/production, but often also more funding. Project proliferation, however, may also indicate more projects and project-inspired work *instead* of ordinary local government practices, resulting in less ordinary work and more temporary work. Projectification as proliferation also entails the diffusion of project ideas within and between local government organisations. It is not uncommon, for instance, to find the same or a very similar project in several different municipalities.

Another dimension of the proliferation phenomenon is about individual project employees who move around, either within the municipality and various projects or between different municipalities and other project-related activities - as in a small project world. An example of this are people involved in local-government EU projects. Here, to move around in the EU project world (see Büttner and Leopold 2016), is common. Perhaps you start as a project employee in one municipality to later become a project manager in another, and eventually an EU coordinator or perhaps an evaluator and consultant of EU projects. Fred and Mukhtar-Landgren (2019) described this as an ‘EU project market’ where financing, ideas, employment opportunities and project partners are bought and sold. When activities are organised as projects, Fred and Mukhtar-Landgren argue, there is automatically a possibility to tap into different kinds of EU project-related resources through EU networks, collaborative public EU organisations, EU conferences and EU seminars or consultants.

2. Projectification as transformation and adaption

Projectification as transformation and adaptation is about processes in which the more ‘permanent’, or stable, organisational units and activities are converted to be managed by temporary projects. This may concern specific policy areas or specific organisational

departments/units that previously were organised within ordinary administrative structures and budgets, but which for various reasons are made to be organised and managed through individual or multiple interlinked projects. Local governments initiating so-called *social investment funds* is such an example. Here the municipalities transform activities, often within public health or social services, from something that previously was taken care of through the ordinary budget and organisation to now be handled by a project funding system through which civil servants may apply for funding to organise and finance public health and social-service-related work.

The projects and project activities described under ‘proliferation’ can be understood as fairly loosely coupled to the ordinary organisations. They are often financed with external funds where the project form is predetermined (in order to obtain EU funds, for example, the activities must be organised in project form). However, the project activities under ‘transformation and adaptation’ are more closely linked to the everyday activities of the municipalities. Here the municipality itself chooses to handle certain activities through projects. This type of organisational change also brings a number of adaptation requirements for the municipal organisations, as well as for the surrounding organisational structures – adaptations that often come in the form of organisational capacity-building.

3. Projectification as organisational capacity-building

Projectification as organisational capacity-building entails processes that are somewhat subtler than those of proliferation or transformation and adaptation. Here, projectification is to be understood as the proliferation not of project organisations and project ideas but the proliferation of a project logic – project-inspired values, beliefs and ways of thinking, talking and presenting the organisations and the activities. The project logic is spread and diffused in local government organisations through different kind of practices – such as the use of project lingo in all activities, the creation and diffusion of project models, the engagement in project courses and the employment of project-management-skilled civil servants – further encouraging the project logic.

So, when projects are launched, or when an organisational unit is transformed into a set of projects, the capacity to handle these processes of change is created by encouraging not only the projects but also ordinary, day-to-day activities to adapt to the project logic, and this also entails activities in the organisational context of the projects.

In practice, this means to employ project managers (instead of civil servants) to enrol civil servants and politicians in project management courses, to create project offices, produce project models and to make use of project-inspired language when describing and presenting the work carried out in the municipalities.

In Fred (2018) we meet municipalities with more project managers, or officials with project management skills, than there are projects. Here the author describes how several civil servants, as well as politicians, also promote the use of project models (designed to streamline specific projects) in all municipal activities, meaning that whatever the civil servants have in front of them, it can (or should) be treated as if it were a project.

Concluding discussion

Throughout the chapter I have argued that projectification can be conceptualised as three separate but interrelated phenomena: proliferation; transformation and adaptation; and

organisational capacity-building. Based on these three presented conceptualisations one can draw several conclusions in relation to local government practices:

First, projectification should be regarded as something more than a lot of projects. Even though we may observe an increasing use of clearly defined and demarcated projects, the consequences of this kind of organisation goes far beyond the sheer number of projects. The projects and the processes of organisational transformation and adaptation that come with the projects have consequences for the way municipalities talk about and present their organisation and work, it has consequences for the way they hire staff, how they locate funding and organise their development as well as ordinary work.

Second, and closely related to the first, projects are not ‘just’ vehicles carrying something forward, but techniques, tools and practices that produce specific effects of their own, independently of their stated objectives or aims ascribed to them. Social investment or social innovation, total quality management, collaboration or any other organisational ‘solution’ sweeping across the public sector implicitly encourage organisations to build project capacity and organise in project form. Just as in the clothing industry there are fashions when it comes to organisations. The organisational solutions come and go, but when they come, they often do so through project funding. No matter what intended consequences these solutions have, the odds are great that the organisations, through latent consequences of the project, also will become somewhat projectified.

Third, organising in project form is an ambiguous endeavour which, in your work, will include the possible characteristics of flexibility and innovation at the same time as it will bring control, stability and bureaucracy. And building on the analysis above I would argue that you cannot have one of them without the other. If you organise in project form in order to be innovative and/or more flexible you also need to have a strategy for how to manage the less innovative or ‘un-flexible’ features that come with projects, such as project models/tools/standards or different forms of project-related control systems.

Fourth, and related to the third, there appears to be an almost causal relationship between organisational innovation and organisational learning, and the mechanism affecting these two is ‘distance’ (see Jensen, Johansson and Löfström 2017). If the aim of a project is innovation (to work in a completely new fashion, for instance) then distance between the ordinary operations and the project is of no immediate concern. The project then can work creatively, try out new techniques and collaborations, it can be situated far from any other activities of the project owners, be organised in experimental terms, have external funding and be run by external management etc. This ‘distance’ to the project owners (the ordinary operations) allows, and is necessary for, such innovative practices. However, if the aim of the project is organisational change and learning or long-lasting effects on the ordinary operations and organisational structures, the project would have much to gain by being organised with some proximity to the ordinary operations. Mulgan (2014) talks about this in terms of a ‘radicals dilemma’. If the innovative project work is too embedded inside the system (close to the ordinary operations), the work risks losing its ‘radical edge’ – yet if the work stands too far outside, it risks having little impact (Mulgan 2014).

Finally, I quite often come across project fatigue when I talk about, or discuss, projects with local government employees. I hear things like: “*We should only get involved in projects that we really want or that we really need.*” Or they say: “*We should only initiate projects that lead to long-term effects!*” That is, of course, an admirable ambition. However, (project) funding is attractive and local government (and its organisational context) is filled with ambitious, entrepreneurial individuals that want to do good, and that want to change the organisations for the better. There are also a number of (project) funding agencies, local as well as regional,

national and international, that these actors may apply from. There is, as such, no shortage of project possibilities within or in relation to local government.

However, some people go ‘further’ in their project fatigue argument and reason that we should not do projects at all! – *let’s ban all project work!* - But the last couple of years we have learnt a great deal of ‘new’ terms for innovative (project) initiatives, such as pilots, experiments, policy labs or test beds. These are often temporary in their character and in practice organised as projects, although not termed or called projects. With that in mind, I argue that it is better to think about the increasing reliance on projects and projectification as something more than, or perhaps something beyond, a lot of projects. It is more of a logic that influences the way we think about, organise and present our organisations, and we should learn how to recognise that logic and use it to the benefit of our work.

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The sustainability buzz

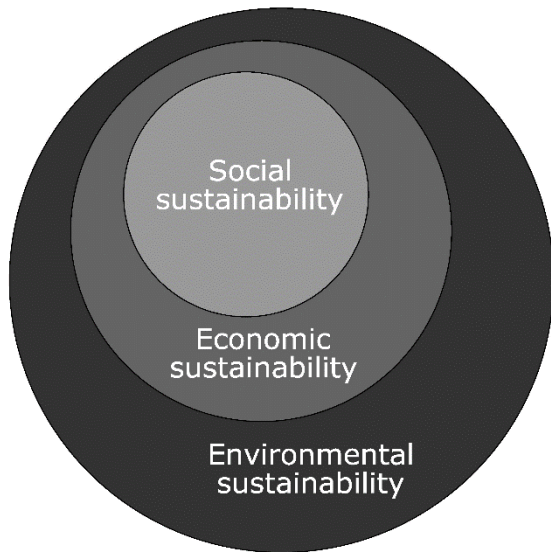
Sandra C. Valencia

Introduction to sustainable development

Following the 1983 World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), the commission, chaired by Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, was asked by the United Nations' General Assembly to formulate 'a global agenda for change'. The result was what is now commonly referred to as the Brundtland Report, officially named 'Our Common Future', which was published in 1987. The report is recognised for giving prominence to the concept of sustainable development. Sustainable development was defined in the report as "*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*" (WCED 1987: 41). Further, the report highlighted the intrinsic interconnectedness between societal issues, the economy and the environment. It conceded that many forms of development could be detrimental to environmental resources which the economy depends on, and that environmental degradation could, in turn, be detrimental to economic development.

According to the commission, the concept of sustainable development implies limitations on human activities given existing technology and the ability of the natural environment to withstand the impacts of those activities (WCED 1987: 12). In that respect, significant weight is given to the ability of technology and social organisation to gradually reduce the impacts of economic activities on the environment, as well as to reduce poverty worldwide, with the aim of allowing all people to fulfil their aspirations for a better life (WCED 1987: 16-17). The commission calls for a new era of economic growth that is forceful yet socially and environmentally sustainable. Sustainable development is not considered a fixed state but a process of change where the needs of present and future generations are met through the appropriate exploitation of resources, investments, technological development and institutional change (WCED 1987: 17). Since the report, sustainable development has been understood to be about finding a balance between its key components, the social (linked with social equity), economic (linked to economic growth) and environmental (linked to environmental protection) dimensions.

The concept of sustainable development has gained significant popularity and its use has penetrated all levels and sectors, from international negotiations, national level policy making, municipal planning (Fig. 1), project development, civil society advocacy to private sector reporting. Different actors have adopted different interpretations of the concept, some of which will be explained in the next section. This chapter will review the history of the sustainable development concept, taking a critical look at the concept, including the contradictions that the concept embeds given our current dominant political economic system. The chapter also looks at the increasing framing of urban sustainability projects around the 2030 Agenda by analysing its potential benefits as a common language in transdisciplinary projects, as well as the limitations of using a global agenda in local contexts with varying needs and priorities.



In Sweden, several municipalities (e.g. Falköping, Jönköping, Hjo, Nybro) have adopted a conceptualisation of sustainable development where the societal dimension is at the centre and the main goal is to reach social sustainability through welfare, safety, health and education services, culture, work and participation; the economy provides the resources for societal progress and the environment provides the limits of what can be done or the conditions under which natural resources can be used in the form of ecosystem services, natural resources and the planet's limits.

Figure 1. A conceptualisation of sustainable development

Strong versus weak sustainability

As the concept of sustainable development has gained recognition, a discussion that has emerged is 'what is to be sustained'. Some argue that in addition to what it is to be sustained, sustainable development also includes what is to be developed, and an intra-generational component (i.e. the importance of considering present and future generations' needs) (Faran 2010). Different approaches have emerged to address what is to be sustained and maintained while considering present and future generations. Here I will discuss two of those approaches, weak and strong sustainability.

Weak sustainability

Nobel laureate economist Solow (1995) interpreted Brundtland's sustainable development to mean that the decisive issue was to sustain economic well-being. For economists, gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is the measure of people's well-being. This means that the goal is to maintain equity from current to future generations in terms of GDP per capita. However, Solow does not discuss intragenerational distribution of income. To sustain human welfare, it is necessary to maintain the stock of capital of a country. This stock can be, for example, manufactured capital (e.g. equipment), technological knowledge and natural capital (e.g. non-renewable natural resources). However, using natural capital means that those resources are reduced over time. Solow argues that what is important is not to conserve every particular single thing but instead to replace what is consumed with something that provides similar benefits or the ability to produce something similar (Solow 1995). An example could be trees. If we take down trees to use for furniture, following Solow's logic, we do not necessarily need to replant the trees, rather what needs to be conserved is the capacity to continue making furniture, even if it implies using other materials.

This implies substitutability, a notion where one form of capital can be substituted by another. Particularly, in the case of natural capital, Solow's sustainability assumes that natural capital can be substituted by other forms of capital, such as technological capital. For Solow, the current dominant economic paradigm of capitalism, which is based on the idea of continuous and unlimited growth, is both possible and desirable. Unlimited growth is possible, according to Solow and others, based on the progressive dematerialisation of the economy and the substitutability of non-renewable resources owing to continuous (and also presumably unlimited) technological progress (Kerschner 2010). Solow's interpretation of sustainable development is therefore considered weak sustainability since it does not include any commitment to preserve the environment, only to not leave future generations worse off than the current generation (Faran 2010).

Strong sustainability

Strong sustainability starts from the weak sustainability premise of sustaining human welfare as the decisive issue but gives priority to the preservation of ecological goods. Daly (2008), one of the proponents of strong sustainability, argues against a perfect substitutability between natural and manufactured capital, meaning that the depletion of natural capital cannot be compensated simply through additional manufactured capital to complete the total stock of capital (Faran 2010). This puts environmental protection at the centre of sustainable development as natural resources need to be maintained to ensure the human welfare of current and future generations. Strong sustainability also implies that natural capital cannot be accounted by the same economic measures as manufactured capital. While for Solow (1995) the economy can continue functioning without natural resources, for Daly (2005) the economic system is dependent on the finite non-renewable resources of our planet. For Daly and other proponents of strong sustainability, a different economic system is required to reach sustainability, namely steady state economy or zero growth (Daly 2005; Kerschner 2010). Given our finite planet, with finite availability of non-renewable resources, the capitalist system based on continuous economic growth is not feasible. Steady state economics or zero growth do not necessarily go against the idea of development, rather the focus is on producing quality and useful goods and increasing efficiency, instead of continuing producing many non-useful goods. With such an approach, quality of life can still be improved under a steady state economy. Shifting to steady state economics, however, poses significant challenges due to the current economic and social system, which is based on the market system and private property institutions. The shift would require a strong political intervention and a transformation for a large majority of the population of culture and basic values away from the existing consumerist behaviour of most societies (Faran 2010).

Critiques

While the concept of sustainable development has become mainstream, the concept has also been questioned. The strong sustainability proponents and critics of the capitalist system, such as those who advocate for degrowth (Fotopoulos 2007; Latouche 2007; Kallis 2011), have questioned it from the perspective of the impossibility of reaching sustainable development under the current capitalist economic system. The concept of sustainable development is considered an oxymoron (a contradiction) by its critics, arguing that the current economic development is linked to continuous economic growth, an impossibility on a finite planet with finite, non-renewable resources upon which the economic system depends (Redclift 2005;

Spaiser et al. 2017). The assumption that technological development can compensate for the depletion of natural resources has been questioned given our existing unsustainable lifestyles with high levels of consumption of resources and continuous population growth. One of the limiting factors to the continuous expansion of the economy is the availability of energy (Kerschner 2010). Even renewable sources of energy, such as solar power, require mining of finite materials for the photovoltaic solar panels, to give an example. Kerschner (2010: 548) argues that there is likely a direct relationship between the amount of energy we consume and the environmental damage we cause. In that respect, if we managed to find a ‘miracle’ source of energy, the result would probably be a massive increase in human population with a proportional increase in consumption and therefore a tremendous impact on the planet.

Others question the concept of sustainable development starting not from ‘what is to be sustained’ but ‘what is to be developed’. Some raise the fact that development is temporally and culturally relevant, and that it should not be assumed that the goal is for all nations to ‘develop’ as Western industrialised societies in Europe and North America have done, not only from the perspective of the unsustainable consumerist societies that have emerged but also from the societies and their social systems, values and informal and formal institutions that have evolved (Ratner 2004; Alkire 2010). Nations in the Global South, in particular, argue for the right and freedom to develop as they see fit. This may not necessarily be about reaching the same societies of the North, and may imply different economic, social, cultural and political forms of organisation (Pieterse 2000). The argument is not about questioning some of the objectively positive aspects that some Global North nations have reached, such as reduced levels of poverty, high levels of education, reduced child mortality, etc. Rather, it is about questioning some of the resulting, possibly unexpected, consequences of the industrialised development, such as pollution, and the predominance of work over personal life, as is often seen in e.g. the USA, Japan and South Korea (Hart 2001; Ratner 2004; Alkire 2010).

Despite the challenges and disagreements still remaining regarding the concept of sustainable development, 193 member states of the United Nations agreed in 2015 on a global agenda on sustainable development, the ‘Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’ agenda (United Nations 2015).

A global agenda for sustainable development: The 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a global agenda for sustainability adopted in 2015 by the UN General Assembly, which replaced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The United Nations Millennium Declaration adopted by 149 world leaders in September 2000 committed UN member states to achieving the MDGs by 2015. The MDGs consisted of eight goals:

- 1) eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
- 2) achieve universal primary education;
- 3) promote gender equality and empower women;
- 4) reduce child mortality;
- 5) improve maternal health;
- 6) combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases;
- 7) ensure environmental sustainability; and
- 8) develop a global partnership for development.

The MDGs were meant to be implemented exclusively in the Global South (low- and middle-income countries) with the financial and technical support of the industrialised high-income countries. While progress on the eight goals has been recognised, the MDGs have been criticised for being mostly a top-down exercise and for countries adjusting their policies and data reporting to gain access to foreign aid and debt relief (Easterly 2009; Satterthwaite 2016b; Klopp and Petretta 2017).

The process leading up to the 2030 Agenda tried to address some of the criticisms of the MDGs by having a broad and highly participatory process including civil society, subnational entities and the private sector (Klopp and Petretta 2017; Valencia et al. 2019). Implementation of the 2030 Agenda started in 2016 and will run until 2030. An important difference between the MDGs and the 2030 Agenda is that all countries, regardless of income, are expected to work towards its achievement with the understanding that all countries have work to do to achieve sustainable development and that the work should be adapted to local contexts and needs.

The Agenda consists of 17 global goals, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs address the world’s most pressing challenges—from poverty, to inequality, consumption, degradation of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems to climate change (Fig. 2). The vision of the Agenda is to ‘leave no one behind’ and in its declaration countries emphasise the need to take transformative steps to shift the world on to a sustainable and resilient path.



Figure 2. The 2030 Agenda’s Sustainable Development Goals

The SDGs have been designed with the idea that they are integrated and indivisible; that they are global in nature, which means that they apply to all countries in the world; and that they are universal in the sense that they embody a “*universally shared common global vision of progress towards a safe, just, and sustainable space for all human beings to thrive on the planet*” (United Nations 2015). Each SDG has a set of more detailed targets totalling 169. Each target includes at least one suggested indicator to monitor progress towards its achievement. There is a total of 244 indicators. All member states are expected to report progress through so-called Voluntary National Reports (VNRs).

The 2030 Agenda was not the only international agreement of 2015. In fact, the year 2015 is now recognised as a very important year for international diplomacy as several international agendas were agreed upon in 2015; all to be aligned or coordinated with the 2030 Agenda. These include The Paris Agreement to limit global warming to 2°C (with ambition to limit to 1.5°C); the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, which establishes a strong foundation to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by providing a new global framework for financing sustainable development; and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. The following year, the New Urban Agenda was agreed during Habitat III in Quito, Ecuador.

The New Urban Agenda is the guiding document for the UN system's urban engagements over the next 20 years. The New Urban Agenda aims to contribute to creating 'Cities for All'; that is, cities that are just, safe, healthy, accessible, affordable, resilient and sustainable. It was adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 2016. The SDGs are unofficially the implementing framework of the New Urban Agenda, particularly the urban SDG (SDG 11), which focuses on urban areas and human settlements (Revi 2016; Satterthwaite 2016a; Caprotti et al. 2017). The NUA, however, has not yet received the same level of attention or adoption as the SDGs, particularly at the city and project level (Valencia et al. 2019).

While the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs was adopted by nation states and its reporting is designed for the national level, achieving the SDGs will require the commitment and action of all levels of government as well as a broad range of actors. The 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda represent a historical moment as nation states together, for the first time, explicitly recognised the role of subnational entities (local and regional governments) in contributing towards the achievement of sustainable development (Revi 2016; Valencia et al. 2019). SDG 11 explicitly recognises the central role of urbanisation in sustainable development and calls for "*making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable*". SDG 11 is made up of 10 targets and 15 indicators covering issues ranging from housing, transport, air pollution, participation in decision making, risk management, waste management, and public spaces.

The 2030 Agenda at the local level: opportunities and challenges

The 2030 Agenda, and its SDGs, has the potential of contributing to municipal sustainable planning, particularly given its comprehensive approach that addresses the social, environmental and economic dimensions of sustainability. Since the Agenda was adopted and designed by nation states a process of adaption to the local level is necessary. The adaptation process can initiate an assessment process. As a first step, working with the Agenda could help municipalities assess where they stand with respect to sustainability, i.e. identify a baseline, and reflect on where the municipality needs to go, the major gaps, what it needs to do to achieve it and how to measure progress. This assessment process can also help identify data and policy gaps as well as underscore what is already available but may need updating or complementing. In addition, these assessments can help identify potential conflicts, synergies and trade-offs, both among the municipality's strategies as well as among strategies and programs of different actors and different levels of government. It is important, however, to question when these analyses take place, who is involved in the process and who is excluded. It is crucial, therefore, and it is one of the aims of the Agenda, that the implementation process will involve a multi-stakeholder discussion and engagement (Simon et al. 2016; UCLG 2016; Hansson, Arfvidsson and Simon 2019; Valencia et al. 2019).

As noted by Valencia et al. (2019), delimiting the boundary to be used for analyses, planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation is also an important step to adapt the Agenda to the local level. Delimiting the boundary can be useful for identifying the area of jurisdiction where specific urban laws, codes or regulations are applicable for implementing and monitoring programs and projects. Delimiting the boundary is also useful for identifying relevant goals and targets, but also for identifying which goals and targets the defined level of government has the mandate or power to influence, and what kinds of collaborations, with a broad range of actors and levels of government, are necessary to complement work in those areas without jurisdiction.

The Agenda is not straightforward to implement at the local or project level and there is vagueness in many goals and targets, leaving enough room for interpretation. This room can be seen as an opportunity to adapt and make the Agenda relevant to a particular socio-political, cultural and environmental context. The flexibility can also be considered an advantage for transdisciplinary research projects that would like to use a global framework for conceptualising their sustainability goals. In that respect, the 2030 Agenda can serve to initiate a process of self-reflection and ignite action by a variety of actors ranging from regional and municipal authorities to research project developers. At the same time, there is a risk that the Agenda is used for ‘SDGs washing’. Similar to the idea of ‘greenwashing’, the Agenda can be misused to highlight and promote the existing work, maintaining business-as-usual, rather than making the necessary changes that can lead to a real transformation in societies, where environmental degradation is significantly reduced, and opportunities are given to all to thrive and live fulfilling lives, leaving no one behind.

Returning to the critiques mentioned earlier in the chapter on the concept of sustainable development, the question remains, however, whether sustainability is an achievable goal given our current economic (and political and cultural) systems or whether it will remain an elusive and unattainable goal.

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The brain: Theoreticians

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**On participatory research, knowledge integration
and societal transformation**

Kerstin Hemström • Henrietta Palmer

What is the point of participatory research? Should all knowledges count as equal – and how can we value or relate to the knowledges of others? Let’s begin to answer these questions by introducing two images. The first one is the famous picture from Antoine Saint-Exupéry’s story about the Little Prince. The Little Prince has drawn an image of something amorphously shaped. “*What is this?*” the grown-ups ask, looking for the truth behind. “*Is it a hat?*” “*Can’t you see?*” the Little Prince replies: “*It is an elephant swallowed by a snake*” – drawing attention to the ignorance of the adults. The other image also stems from a children’s story, frequently referred to in contexts of collaborations. In this Indian fable, seven wise, blind men each carefully examine a part of an elephant. “*It is a tree,*” says the man examining the leg. “*It is a cord,*” says the one holding on to the tail. None of them, restrained as they are by their individual apprehensions, comprehend the completeness of the large animal in front of them.

With some imagination, these images symbolise key motivations and meanings of participatory collaborative research. The seven blind men show us that being blindly devoted to only one part of a phenomenon, is not enough to grasp the entirety of the same. The story from the Little Prince tells us that we need to understand the relationships between different, and seemingly unrelated parts to reach new and creative ideas, while reminding ourselves of the power relations involved in defining solutions. Coming out of these images, this chapter will discuss some underlying motivations behind participatory collaborative research, the knowledge emerging from such processes, along with key parameters to reach results worthwhile. Although challenging, a participatory approach can indeed produce new knowledge, but more so, trigger intense learning processes among participants. Our take is that this learning is not only a necessary and pivotal component of participatory research, but a key outcome necessary to achieve sustainable development in the long run.

Participatory collaborative research as part of a ‘participatory turn’

The past few decades have seen an increasing call for more participatory, collaborative and democratic approaches to knowledge production. Terms such as co-production, co-creation, co-design, and multi-stakeholder, participatory and transdisciplinary research broadly refer to the inclusion of diverse perspectives and actors to better inform knowledge production and decision-making. This trend is conspicuous in various sectors and contexts around the world, e.g., in urban planning, health care, resource management and in research for sustainable development.

Broadly, this move has been motivated by three interrelated concerns (Felt et al. 2015). From a *democratic* point of view, the move towards participation is motivated through concerns regarding who has the right to participate in defining problems and developing solutions. From an *epistemic* point of view, the move is motivated by the need to engage and blend several types of knowledge and experiences to adequately identify and address the complex societal

problems of our time. Finally, from a *legitimacy* point of view, participation is motivated through the need to make science and science institutions more accountable for, and relevant to society (Felt et al. 2015; Kläy, Zimmermann and Scheider 2015).

Participatory collaborative research to address complex problems

All these concerns are rooted in the notion of *wicked problems*. The concept surfaced in the 1970s through a seminal paper by the two American planners Rittel and Webber (1973) and has recently been further acknowledged through increasing awareness of global dilemmas such as climate change, biodiversity loss, terrorism, and rapid urbanisation. Grappling with the complexities of urban planning in the increasingly diverse society of the United States, in a time of social uprisings, Rittel and Webber realised that some problems are far more than complex. They are coupled with a set of properties that make them unsolvable within conventional realms of science and planning practice (Rittel and Webber 1973).

The main property of what Rittel and Webber defined as wicked problems, is the very absence of satisfactory problem formulations. Each attempt to frame a problem reveals yet another one. As such, there is no definitive end to the wicked problem-solving process. The problem-solving itself becomes the problem formulation, shovelling problems forward. Rittel and Webber also observed that many ‘solutions’ to societal problems are arbitrary. In a pluralist society there is no longer an undisputable ‘public good’ shared by all. Instead, the very intersection of goal formulation, problem definition and societal ambitions towards equity becomes the essential point where wicked issues emerge (Rittel and Webber 1973).

By analysing the diverse properties of wicked issues, Rittel and Webber demonstrated the embedded limitations of scientific and other expertise in coming to grips with contemporary societal complexities (Head 2018). None of these could longer be defined within traditional social science methodology. As wicked ‘problems’ and ‘solutions’ cannot be clearly separated from one another, they require a different approach. Rittel and Webber did not give precise suggestions on how to proceed in science and practice, but through the attention to wicked issues that followed, the array and diversity of approaches, practices and procedures for participation has been magnified. Multiple research and practice communities now look to inclusion and participation of diverse actors, in research, public policy and decision-making to enable change in more sustainable directions. Among these is the 2015 agreement on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals¹, underlining an importance to integrate different actors’ expertise and knowledge and to collaborate to promote sustainable development. Yet another reason for the rise of collaborative initiatives are the reforms to public administration following new public management. A strengthened focus on evaluation, measurability and efficiency has indeed backed new counter-reform forums for participatory multi-stakeholder initiatives, beyond public administration (Head 2018).

The relevance and challenges of transdisciplinary co-production research

Taken altogether, engaging a diversity of actors in the generation and communication of knowledge has become somewhat of a gold standard (Felt et al. 2012; Klenk and Meehan 2017; Miller and Wyborn 2018). In practice, however, several understandings of what such collaboration entails co-exist, with different connotations as to who is involved in what, when,

¹ In 2015, the United Nations agreed on a global ‘2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’, including commitments to universal sustainable development goals, commonly referred to as ‘SDG’s’. The Agenda recognizes the need to engage a broad range of actors and stakeholders in realizing these goals.

and how, and for what purpose. Terms like *co-production* and *transdisciplinarity* are used in parallel and alternately to describe fundamentally different degrees of participation and collaboration. This confusion extends to the realms of science, where standards for how to do participatory research are constantly reinvented and re-conceptualised. *Co-production* has become a popular term in relation to societal problems in various areas of governance, policymaking and research (cf. Klenk and Meehan 2017). First emerging through Elinor Ostrom's work in the 1970s, the concept has developed separately in several academic fields. On the one hand, 'co-production' carries a normative aspiration to integrate a diversity of perspectives and actors in *research* and the generation of knowledge on how to change the world, and/or a normative aspiration outside of science, to include a diversity of perspectives and actors to collectively produce *public services*. For others, the same term refers to the interdependencies between knowledge and the context in which it is produced, carried and put into practice, and is used to critically analyse the co-evolution and constitution of science and society (Miller and Wyborn 2018).

Similarly, *transdisciplinarity* has become a popular term to refer to the integration of multiple perspectives but is far from uniformly defined. The term can be traced back conceptually to scholarly work in the 1950s and 1970s but is broadly recognized to have gained popularity through the early 1990s works on so-called post-normal science and 'Mode 2' knowledge production (Gibbons et al. 1994; Hessels and van Lente 2008; Jahn, Bergmann and Keil 2012; Nowotny, Scott and Gibbons 2003). By criticising the paradigm of disciplinary science and illustrating that social science facts are not value-free, these pointed to the need to recognise a multiplicity of legitimate perspectives. The currently most predominant definition of transdisciplinary research refers to the extension of academic knowledge production to include a variety of actors, with an open perception of the relevance of different forms of knowledge. Characteristic for this approach is that it is problem-oriented and based in real-world problems; it addresses the complexity of these problems by involving a variety of researchers and extra-scientific actors (i.e., actors from outside of academia) and accounting for the diversity of their perspectives; and aims to generate normative and solution-oriented results with relevance for both research and practice (Lang et al. 2012; Pohl and Hirsch Hadorn 2008; Polk 2015a).

Like co-production research, transdisciplinary research promises to 'close the gap' between knowledge generation and action, and to deliver results at the interface of scientific questions and societal problems. The idea is not only to understand or explain a reality-based problem, but also to reach new knowledge on how to address it. In principle, collaboration between diverse forms of knowledge can build knowledge about the origins and development of the problem (systems knowledge), knowledge about what we should aim for (target knowledge), and knowledge about how to change the development in a desired direction (transformation knowledge) (Wuelser, Pohl and Hirsch Hadorn 2012). However, the concept of transdisciplinarity itself says little about the scope of collaboration among participants, and the power relations involved in the process of integrating their different knowledges (Mobjörk 2010; Rosendahl 2015). It can largely be used to refer to a broad set of research-practice collaborations, despite the qualitative difference between research conducted on equal terms between participating actors and having actors from outside academia to only respond or react to the research conducted (Mobjörk 2010). Recognising this, Polk (2015a) introduced *transdisciplinary co-production* as a participatory approach to transdisciplinary research. This concept is confluent with definitions of transdisciplinary research used in sustainability science (see e.g. Hoffman et al. 2017), connoting a joint knowledge process that ideally is coined by several stages of deliberation and iteration, and intentional reflection and mutual learning between experts from different scientific disciplines, societal sectors and decision levels (Hoffman, Pohl and Hering 2017; Lang et al. 2012).

While amiable, translating this approach to a more detailed methodological level and putting it into practice can be demanding, or even utopian. A rigorous body of scientific literature points to key challenges in catering for the qualities of transdisciplinary co-production, along with recommended process design principles, methods, and skills and capacities among the participants (cf. Lang et al. 2012; Pohl and Hirsch Hadorn 2008; Pohl et al. 2017). However, with no universally accepted agreement on terms and definitions, generally acknowledged research standards that could guide researchers, programme managers and funders of this type of research are missing (Jahn, Bergman and Keil 2012). Further, the processes and methods applied generally need to be tailored to the specific reality-based problems addressed, and to the specific context conditions of the research endeavour (Polk 2015a; Schneider and Buser 2018). The recruiting of participants and forming a research team that can work effectively in response to a reality-based problem alone involves many considerations, to the point that team formation itself can be conceptualised as a wicked problem (Norris et al. 2016). It involves being mindful of, e.g., what counts as appropriate knowledge or expertise and when to stop recruiting expertise, considering that any decision to change the research team will involve a new way of viewing the problem. Thereto, throughout the research process different knowledges and ‘thought collectives’ (Fleck 1979) may have different significance at different stages and changed circumstances may bring the research process into a terrain of uncertainty.

In this way, it is not unusual that normative aspirations of inclusiveness and a diversity of knowledge types fall short when concepts such as transdisciplinary co-production are translated into research practice, despite good intentions. Also, and essentially – diversity of participants or not – power relations tend to come into play between, e.g., senior and junior positions, academic and societal actors, and competing researchers, and along discriminatory grounds such as gender, class and ethnicity. Therefore, a key ingredient and challenge in this form of research is *knowledge integration* (Jahn, Bergmann and Keil 2012; Pohl et al. 2010; Zierhofer and Burger 2007). This is presumably what the participatory research process should be about, and from where new knowledge should emanate. In general, though, little attention has been paid to how knowledge integration takes place in practice (Westberg and Polk 2016), and what it needs to involve in order to contribute to societally relevant outcomes. Often, scholarly discussions on transdisciplinary knowledge integration are held at an instrumental level, e.g., on whether knowledge is integrated through a common group exercise or by one or several selected experts or leaders. The overall conclusion tends to be that it matters whether the decision on how to integrate knowledge is made jointly or not, that there is no generic answer to what is right or wrong in a specific situation, and that power relations always come into play (cf. Hoffmann, Pohl and Hering 2017; Zierhofer and Bruger 2008). Many of these allude to knowledge integration as a process of consensus-building and negotiation (Klenk and Meehan 2015). Others, however, point to a different kind of integration process, in which differences are not defused to a new entity but somehow set in motion. The latter option opens for a process in which the participants engage in each other’s differences, rather than seek common denominators or mutually agreed understandings acceptable to all.

What is knowledge integration and how can it come about?

In thinking about the differences of knowledges and their possible integration, Pohl has drawn to attention *thought collectives*, borrowing the concept from the Polish microbiologist Fleck (1979). A thought collective is the communal shaper of individual apprehensions and thinking, and a creator of a *thought style*, which sets the foundation for the working practice of a thought collective by carrying a certain world view and normative and cognitive rules on what is

relevant and what is not. Each of us is a member of many thought collectives from which our thinking is formed, and which we move between freely in different situations. Our thought styles stem from many realms, such as academic disciplines, religions, and everyday practices. Each thought style, however, is shaped by certain assumptions about knowledge, which comes into play in knowledge integration. Assuming the stakeholders in a research process exhaust the problem well enough through their different perspectives, it would still be tricky, argues Pohl, to integrate different forms of knowledge as we tend to be unaware of the cognitive rules of our own thought-style, while being reluctant to others (Pohl 2011).

In response to these difficulties, Brown (2010) formulated a *Collective Learning Cycle* as an example of an open but critical approach to knowledge integration. Similar to the notion on thought styles, Brown uses the concept *knowledge cultures* to frame the decision-making in Western contexts. Here, knowledge is carried by five archetypical cultures – individual knowledge, community knowledge, specialised knowledge, organisational knowledge and holistic knowledge – each with different content, languages, and rationales for decision-making. Unless these key knowledge cultures are included in a process of *collective learning*, decision-making tends to be based on one that is perceived as more valid than the others, rather than the whole (Brown 2010).

On that account, Brown puts *learning* amongst knowledge cultures at the centre of knowledge integration. Here, two different forms of knowledge integration can be outlined, equally essential to transdisciplinary co-production research: *synoptic* vs *synergistic* integration. In visualising these, let us return to the two children's stories that opened this chapter. The seven blind men, if capable of identifying the elephant's body parts correctly, could be an example of a synoptic integration. In approaching a problem complex we need to bring perspectives from all knowledge cultures in parallel, to be able to produce a broad response to the first question of the learning cycle – *what should be?*; then compile the observations from each knowledge culture to reach an exhausted response to the second question – *what is?*. The second image, of the elephant inside a snake, visualises a synergistic form of integration. In this mode, we do not need to know all details about the elephant and the snake, but we need to be open towards that which emerges when one eats the other. This, according to Brown, is the creative part of knowledge integration. This involves generating new ideas and theories and putting them into an active experimentation in response to the two following questions of the learning cycle: *what could be*, and *what can be?* According to Brown, the learning process is conditioned by each proposed question of the Collective Learning Circle being followed by collective reflecting, observing, imagining and doing. The final 'doings' form a basis for repeating the initial question *what is*, now from a collective experience and practice. This, according to Brown, is a collective construction of knowledge that differs radically from the pursuit of one right answer, consensus or highest priority (Brown 2010). Through all four stages of the learning circle, the validity of each knowledge culture is made explicit, and with both synoptic and synergistic integration, each knowledge preserves its validity.

Knowledge integration is learning, and learning is key to transformation

In almost all conceptualisations of sustainable development, learning plays an integral part (Boström et al. 2018). This is because sustainable development necessitates not only scientific and technical advances, but also profound social and cultural changes; breaking with unsustainable norms, habits, practices and structures. As such, it entails a challenging of ways of thinking, knowing and acting, in a process of *transformative learning* (Kläy, Zimmermann and Schneider 2015; Boström et al. 2018). The concept refers to the shortcomings in the most prevalent ways of addressing the challenges in sustainable development and offers a

constructive perspective on how to enable change. Among other things, it pays attention to sustainability as a product of learning as well as a learning process; a way of thinking and acting that is open to learning and changing. Different from other learning approaches, transformative learning “*awards social context, social relations, conflicts and power conditions a central place as integral parts of learning processes*” (Boström et al. 2018: 6). It points to a *punctuated equilibrium*, as a moment triggered by shock, crisis or a critical event, when what previously was considered stable loses its firm consistency. At this point, dominant thought-styles can prove to be inconsistent while other forms of knowledge emerge, resulting in transformative learning.

Learning is beyond doubt a social process, taking place as individuals participate in the creation and fulfilment of meanings (Westberg and Polk 2016). One way of making way for transformative learning is to introduce reflexive approaches (Boström et al. 2018). *Reflexivity* is often referred to as a key aspect and purpose of transdisciplinary co-production research. It is a way of dealing with the challenges of knowledge integration by keeping close ties between the research process and the reality-based problem, thereby controlling the quality of the process (cf. Jahn, Bergmann and Keil 2012; Rosendahl et al. 2015; Westberg and Polk 2016; Boström et al. 2018). In action, this means to be fully engaged in the knowledge process and to recurrently be attentive to what does and what doesn't work in the manner described in the collective learning cycle by Brown (2010). It means to be consciously aware of differences in thought styles, knowledge cultures and power, and engaged in conflicts that emerge.

By its very nature, practicing reflexivity in this way can trigger intense knowledge integration and learning processes (Pohl 2009; Brown 2010). It tends to shift understandings and decision-making capacities among participants, to better approach the real-world sustainability problem at hand (e.g. Schuttenberg and Guth 2015; Adler et al. 2018), and to challenge the underlying assumptions and taken-for-granted truths both between and within thought-styles (Pohl 2011; Lang et al. 2012; Boström et al. 2018). It is also known to foster commitment to the research endeavour, and to real-life change in practice (Jahn, Bergmann and Keil 2012; Westberg and Polk 2016; Thompson et al. 2017).

Conclusions: Moving forward together?

There is widespread agreement on the need for participatory collaborative multi-stakeholder approaches to sufficiently address the challenges entailed by a more sustainable development. Although still marginal to disciplinary and interdisciplinary research, transdisciplinary co-production research and the like are increasingly upheld as crucial to grasp and solve complex environmental and societal issues, and the discourse has grown immensely (Klenk and Meehan 2017). Currently, however, there is no similar agreement on what needs to characterise the process and outcome of transdisciplinary and co-production research. This is partly because the meaning and scope of this type of research necessarily depends on in what context, how and for what purpose it is put into use, and due to challenges involved in linking the research process to societal change (Hansson and Polk 2018).

A related issue and point of criticism to this research is that the generated new knowledge and learning has no clear belonging beyond the context from which it is produced (Polk 2014; Westberg and Polk 2016). It belongs to those who participated in the learning process but can be difficult to establish within their everyday context. However, if we revisit the notion of wicked problems, also these have no belonging, and cannot be sufficiently addressed within traditional realms of science and practice. If this is the nature of our problems, perhaps the integrated knowledge needed to deal with them needs to be equally undetermined?

Let us end with a final image – an unsought association from the elephant inside the snake, of the one eating the other. It concerns the Brazilian artistic concept *antropófago* – the cannibalistic eating of knowledge that surfaced in a seminal manifesto by poet Oswald de Andrade in 1928, as a critique of the international paradigm of modernism. The manifesto recalls a legend where the indigenous Tupis ate a Catholic missionary, not because they were hungry but because they wanted to inherit his qualities and to become him, ‘the other’ (Hansen and Strauß 2016; Jáuregui 2015). This concept of knowledge integration; eating to become *also* the other without losing oneself, is analogous to Homi Bhabha’s definition of cultural hybridity. Rather than a melting of two cultures into a third *entity*, hybridity according to Bhabha is an exchange of diverse cultures that might be unequal, as between the colonizer and the colonized, but where the outcome is ambiguous and does not favour the expression of the traditional positions of power; it takes a subversive quality (Bhabha 1993).

What this image illustrates is that the integration of knowledge is not necessarily a process of negotiation and creating commonness and consensus, shared goals, and a solution good for all. It is a process that must allow a conflicting but creative integration, sensitive to critical events, from which new knowledge can emerge without erasing differences, producing relevant but possibly also diverging results. Ultimately, transforming society to become more sustainable cannot be conflict-free (Boström et al. 2018). Change can be painful and lead to ambivalence and negative emotions, and there will always be conflicting views of ‘sustainability’ (Kemp and Martens 2007). This opens for participatory collaborative research for sustainable development to be subversive and political by asking normative questions and engaging in conflicts as transformative (Lederarch and Maiese 2009; Polk 2015b). It also calls for attentiveness to the meaning of transdisciplinary co-production research, and to what the process is about.

An alternative definition of transdisciplinarity is offered by Anata Kumar Giri, who sees it as a *field of relationships*. In this view, knowledge integration denotes a reciprocal and creative relationship between actors marked by care, to which it is central to recognize the significance of others’ knowledge – for oneself as well as for the world. Here, knowledge integration occurs through the practice of *creative transdisciplinarity*; a conscious abandonment of safe grounds to move into ‘uncharted lands’ (Giri 2002). This serves to support our concluding point. As the fragmentation of knowledge can be understood as the very reasons why wicked issues have emerged at all (Brown 2010), we need knowledge integration to deal with them. More so, if we trust participatory research such as co-production, transdisciplinary and transdisciplinary co-production research to practice reflexivity and incite transformative learning, and that this learning can incite action and societal change; then we need more such processes that embrace and reflect diversity in an open-ended and creative manner, to remake and continue to remake our diversity of knowledge and make room for diversity in our world.

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(5)

**Fire, economy and social welfare:
Transformation forces in planning**

Per Hallén

The interaction between planning and economic structures is visibly around us if we take the time to look, think and understand. The ability to remember the past and plan for the future is part of the human success. Planning made it possible to manage the landscape even during our time as hunter-gatherers. It was easier to make clearings in the woods and lure the animals to them rather than searching the forest for game. Similar work-saving planning was used by people across the world. Agriculture and domesticated animals were also part of this long history of planning built upon knowledge from the past. In some communities, large surplus from the food production could create the opportunity for some inhabitants to become specialists in different professions. These specialists made it possible to build some of the most well-known monuments in the world: Stone Age monuments like Stonehenge in Britain and the Pyramids in Egypt and many others. Our knowledge of how these early plans were established is of course extremely limited. But without the experience of previous generations, the planning in today's societies had not been possible (Bairoch 1988; Fagan 1995; Stone 2013).

In this chapter two examples from our history will be used to illustrate the connection between economics and planning. The first is from 17th-century England and the second from 20th-century Sweden.

The Great Fire of London

The City of London was a walled medieval city in the mid-7th century, built along the old streets and with houses mainly of wood. Around the walled city extensive suburbs existed, housing the majority of London's population. Despite the recent civil war and a severe outbreak of the plague, London was doing well, and its trade relations were growing (Ackroyd 2000; Bucholz and Ward 2012). The population increased every year; in 1600 the city had about 200,000 inhabitants, but in 1650 it had augmented to 400,000. The threat of fire was always present in the cities at this time. London had previously been hit by large fires but had not introduced as far-reaching regulations in terms of building materials as in, for example, the Dutch cities (Clark 2009; De Vreis 1984).

In September 1666 the Great Fire swept through London and left 65,000 homeless. Approximately 13,200 houses had been destroyed, alongside 87 parish churches and the cathedral of St Paul's (Clark 2009). This was a disaster to businesses and workers, but some saw it as a great opportunity. Within a few days of the fire, three different rebuilding plans were

presented to the King by Christopher Wren, John Evelyn and Robert Hook (Britannica 2019). They wanted to remove the old medieval streets and build a city with grand streets, squares and large public buildings, but this would prove impossible to achieve. London was not under an absolute ruler, as such it was not possible to confiscate land and do a radical restructuring of the city. Instead meticulous work started on mapping the city, its streets, with all the plots and their owners. This was necessary to pay compensation to the owners of the plots if any changes were to be made, for example, widening of the streets. Some restructuring was made, and two new major streets were created, Queen Street and King Street. However, most of the grid of the city maintained the medieval layout albeit with slightly wider streets.

It is clear from the following history that the reconstruction based on the older grid did not prevent London from expanding. Furthermore, it is impossible to tell if the plans of Wren, Evelyn and Hook would have made the development go in a different direction. If a more radical new plan would have been adopted, the reallocation of plots would have taken longer and may have caused severe delays in the rebuilding of the city. Perhaps many would have chosen to leave London instead. The result was quite different. Despite a cost of the reconstruction at that time of around £6 million [the equivalent of 860 million USD today] (Clark 2009) the outcome was a success. Thanks to the careful surveying of the ownership of the town plots the city had gained a solid knowledge about the property rights, and that is likely to have had a stronger impact on the future economic development than a modernisation of the city grid.

The importance of property rights, the absence of absolute rulers, and good strong institutions have long been seen as important to economic development (North 1990). It has been shown that the strong urban development in Europe, compared for example with the Middle East and North Africa, can be to a large part explained by the institutional structure. It was possible for economic actors to develop favourable market institutions in many European cities. Despite the increasingly strong nation states many cities, especially the economically successful ones, managed to maintain a high degree of freedom (van Bavel et al. 2013).

The Great Fire of London, and its subsequent reconstruction, is a clear example of how institutions and economic interest could impact the planning after a massive destruction. A powerful ruler without regard for property rights would, perhaps, have done things differently, resulting in a different outcome.

The modernisation of Sweden's cities

In the late 1800s, urbanisation began to take off in Sweden (Schön 2012). Housing the new city inhabitants quickly became a big problem. Authorities did not have the tools to intervene during the first phase of large-scale migration into the cities. Living conditions were in many places miserable, with families living in, for example, basements that were not intended as homes. Although the true slum of the kind that existed in some European cities did not arise in Sweden, there were undoubtedly many poor and unsuitable homes. During the late 1800s, private donors and foundations made efforts to raise the standard of housing. They also conducted investigations that shed light on existing living conditions (Geigerstam 1894).

When universal suffrage and a modern parliament were set up after World War I, several government inquiries about housing conditions began. From 1933 the Social Democratic government started to make an impact on the planning and the economic policy. As part of its

policy, inspired by Keynesian economic thinking¹, housing was of great interest. The building of new houses would fulfil several objectives, stimulating domestic production, supporting the business community and raising the standards of living through modern housing. Overcrowding had long been a problem, as over half of the country's flats consisted of one room and a kitchen. However, during the inter-war period, the overcrowding decreased without any major new construction of housing having started. This was due to a reduction in the size of the families, which could partly be explained by the lack of more spacious apartments. Having fewer children was seen as a problem for the future. This meant that the modernisation of the Swedish housing stock was considered a prioritised task, as a means of maintaining and preferably increasing the size of the population. The realisation of the new economic policy was slow during the 1930s, with an economic crisis preventing many reforms. The crisis was transformed into a boom in 1935 with an ever-intensifying construction of private builders, but this came to a sudden end at the outbreak of World War II in 1939 (Schönbeck 1994).

In 1933, a public inquiry had begun to lay the foundation for a new housing policy, which would replace the older and unhygienic housing stock with new housing. Due to the Second World War the reports from the public inquiry were delayed until 1945 and 1947 (Statens Offentliga Utredningar 1945). The conclusions in this inquiry and in 'The decontamination question' (Statens Offentliga Utredningar 1954) in 1954 (Statens Offentliga Utredningar 1947) were important to the large-scale reconstruction that took place in almost all cities in Sweden from the 1950s to the 1970s.

During the war, the state had acquired many extraordinary powers to control the use of, for example, building materials. After the war, the state wanted to retain control of the construction and, through both rules and economic instruments, loans and grants. As such, the government's influence became great (Schönbeck 1994). The political aim had to be adjusted to the reality of the big problem of shortage of housing, the first goal was to remove the housing queues; thereafter, the remediation of older residential areas would begin (Schönbeck 1994).

In the 1950s, major rebuilding of the centre of Stockholm was started. It was to be the country's largest urban reconstruction project. There had been various thoughts and drafts of plans for a long time, but a real starting point was when construction of the subway began (Gullberg 2001). To be able to demolish and rebuild entire neighbourhoods, the city was first required to acquire ownership of the land. This was done through acquisitions of properties that lasted for many years. Private companies also bought properties in the hope of being able to resell them to the city for a profit. If someone refused to sell, the city's planners had support in the law to expropriate properties. All types of buildings were affected, from run-down houses to palaces from the 17th century. Churches, however, usually survived the large-scale demolitions as they belonged to the state. During a period from 1963 to 1973 this activity spread across Sweden and in total 100,000 apartments were demolished (Schönbeck 1994).

The acquisition of real estate cost the cities large sums and their own resources were not always sufficient. Therefore, joint companies, owned by both the city and the private business community, were formed. Large construction companies, both private and co-operatives, banks and retail companies, were part of the collaboration with the councils. The new joint companies were not affected by the same rules as for a publicly owned company but had the advantage of being able to call for help from the councils to facilitate expropriation of properties if the owners refused to sell.

¹ John Maynard Keynes was the man who presented a new way of approaching the economy and the response to economic decline during a recession. He advocated that the state should act to reduce the effects of economic crises. Similarly, the state would be active during an economic boom and then prepare the nation for trying times.

Of course, in order to implement the plans, the people who lived in the houses had to move. Many moved to newly-built residential areas in the suburbs or left the city and moved to neighbouring municipalities. In the older neighbourhoods there were also many small business owners, many of these would be forced to close their shops when the district was demolished. In many cases it was impossible to find a new location for them. The structural change of the redeveloped neighbourhoods went beyond streets and architecture. In the neighbourhood of Masthugget in Gothenburg, 23 small grocery stores provided food to the inhabitants, after the redevelopment only one large grocery store remained.

Exactly how many companies were forced to cease their businesses has not been investigated, but based on local examples, one can understand that the change was significant (Campanello 1984; Schönbeck 1994). When people moved back to the district, to new modern houses, there were only a limited number of shops left. Most of the old-time meeting points for the residents had been rationalised away. The planners of the time gave no consideration to this issue. Large companies, both in the construction industry and in the retail sector, were seen as the model of the future. Older people who ran small shops or worked as craftsmen belonged to the past.

Much of the grand plans were realised, but not everything was completed when the 1970s financial crisis reached Sweden. There was no longer the financial scope for continuing the urban redevelopment and the process stopped abruptly. This rather extreme history of planning would not have been possible without the economically highly successful years after the Second World War. And it would not have been possible without a strong and centralised state in close cooperation with large private companies.

Reflections on economy and planning

In this chapter two examples have been presented from the 17th and 20th centuries on different approaches to redeveloping the city landscape. Today the economic aspect of planning is even more clear, even at the offices of the city planners themselves and in the regulations guiding the planning. The planning of the modern city is more complex than it was in London during the 17th century, but not so different from Sweden in the period after the Second World War.

Looking at the planning process today, it is often clear that history makes an impact but often civil servants at the planning office and politicians making the final decisions are unaware of the historical context and can get into unexpected problems. Old institutions and property rights can have a far-reaching impact on present-day planning.

The interplay between the economic development and the planning is also interesting to observe. If the economy is growing the demand on city planning will increase. More houses, offices, factories, and infrastructure can put the city planners under pressure both from the private business community and from politicians who want to increase population and economic growth in the city. That can lead to planning without any overview, just reacting to different demands. At the peak of an economic boom era large projects are often planned or are under construction. The 'old statement' that a company that starts to build a grand new headquarters is moving towards bankruptcy is tempting to compare to city planning.

During years of economic expansion many start to believe that the economic boom never will end. Projects that start during such times will have higher costs, require more loans and will entail greater economic risk. The first signs of an economic downturn are often dismissed. The problems in other countries or cities do not concern us, is often the hopeful wish. But regardless of period the realities of the international economy will affect the local planning.

Today, then, most planning has shifted to only deal with one project and almost no overall increase in assessing risk has occurred.

Summary

Regardless of the time in history, planning, economy and finances are closely linked to each other. The process can be surrounded by economic, political or religious ideas about what is appropriate, but it is still the available economic resources that determine what is possible.

In London after 1666, it was not a question of whether reconstruction would be implemented, the question was just how. In that case, the city or state had insufficient political and economic power and did not have the will to impose a radical change in the ownership structure of the city. The earlier ownership was documented and respected. Entrepreneurs and property owners themselves had to finance the reconstruction. At the same time, through the mapping of the city plots, they had received clear evidence of their property rights, which made them more willing to invest in new, somewhat more fire-resistant houses that were a requirement for the reconstruction. This example fits in well with the picture of how Europe's cities grew and developed during the early modern time as a result of an institutional framework that favoured entrepreneurs and gave the city's governing large scope for economic action.

The strong Swedish state, especially after 1945, had, for a period, opportunities to enforce large-scale plans. The state and the regions had the power to demand that cities establish plans and thereby initiate change processes. The state also had many economic instruments in the form of loans, grants and regulations for, for example, rents. At the same time, the Swedish economy grew rapidly and provided the economic opportunity to spend public funds.

Those who ran the development were democratically elected politicians, but the public's insight into the processes was, to say the least, limited. Not least when some important decisions were made within the framework of external companies. However, without cooperation with construction companies and banks it was not possible to modernise the Swedish housing stock. After all, the strong state and resources of the state had their limits.

It is interesting to see how the thoughts of this transformation have existed ever since the inter-war period, but that its purpose, and partly methods, gradually have been adapted to changing circumstances.

Problems with overcrowding, problems with a diminishing population, support for an industrialisation of the construction industry, support for a more efficient retail trade, an improved housing standard and much more were part of the major urban transformation in Sweden. But finally, it was the global economic crisis that stopped the process in the 1970s after 40 years of transformation. As always, planning is limited by the economic development.

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The spatial dimension of project-making

Mirek Dymitrow

Introduction

Why is it important to understand the spatial dimension of project-making? Because projects are almost always restricted to a spatial focus – they are being *spatialised*. There are spatial projects referring to the *geographical scale of the project*, such as global, local or regional projects; there are spatial projects referring to *hierarchies of political entities*, such as state, county or municipal projects; there are spatial projects referring to the *character and quality of the area of deployment*, such as rural, urban or nature projects; there are spatial projects referring to the *relations between the involved actors*, such as national, international or supranational projects; finally, there are spatial projects referring to specific *administrative or functional units*, such as Gothenburg, the City Park, Main Street, Lake Victoria or the Amazon.

As these examples show, the spatial dimension of project-making is everywhere. The question, hence, is less whether projects are spatialised, but why and how. A long history of spatial analyses in scholarly literature reveals the problematic nature of thinking about societal projects in terms of spatial demarcations (cf. Dymitrow 2017a for an overview). ‘Spatial thinking’ before ‘problem thinking’ (cf. Scribner 1977) is a form of apophenic¹ or pareidolic² perspectivism conditioned by the culture of *spatial planning* [sic!], which may or may not impair sound diagnosis and intervention. The mere act of deploying a spatial analysis in certain contexts is problematic through the creation of perceived (geosophical)³ environments (Wright 1947) under the guise of geographic demarcation (consider the discussion about Global South/Global North, Eastern Europe/Western Europe). However, what this does is create tacit acknowledgement of the importance of the spatial dimension, when no (or little) such importance is warranted. The root of the problem, thence, lies in the sheer concept of ‘space’, how it comes about and how it is held in place (Crang and Thrift 2000).

For what exactly lies at the heart of an ‘urban development program’ or a ‘rural sustainability project’? Defining ‘urban’ today is far from an easy task, as it can be many things: “*a special location, a political entity, an administrative unit, a place of work and play, a collection of dreams and nightmares, a mesh of social relations, an agglomeration of economic activity, and so forth*” (Hubbard 2006: 1). The problem is partly material. Steady, fast-paced transformations in the environmental, economic and social dimensions (cf. Rabbinge and van Diepen 2000; Beesley 2003) have rendered simple spatial classifications decreasingly useful in the contemporary reality of interconnectedness (Hoggart 1990; Halfacree 1993; Massey, Allen and Pile 1999). Cities today are perceived less as the main drivers of development, as rurality has

¹ *Apophenia* is the tendency to attribute meaning to perceived connections between seemingly unrelated things (Conrad 1958).

² *Pareidolia* is a psychological phenomenon in which the mind responds to a vague stimulus as something known to the observer, e.g. rocks on Mars or spots in toast as faces (Liu et al. 2014).

³ *Geosophy* is the study of the world as people conceive of and imagine it (McGreevy 1987).

come to be envisioned through new conceptual developments (cf. Munkejord 2009; Corbett 2014). Defining ‘rural’ today is thus equally as difficult, ranging from landscapes of farming, sources of energy, and places of leisure, to havens of traditionalism, wilderness and tranquillity (Halfacree 2009a). But ‘rural’ is also often portrayed as “*remote, backward, under-developed places, in need of modernisation*” (Woods 2011: 1). This last stance is particularly damaging, as it perseveres in many formal conceptualisations.

For instance, having investigated the discursive shaping of the most strategic policy designed to inform the path of ‘rural development’ in contemporary Europe (EU’s Rural Development Policy), the results were unexpectedly unbalanced (Brauer and Dymitrow 2014). Despite intentions to broaden the policy’s scope toward more human-oriented subtleties (cf. Erjavec and Erjavec 2007; European Commission 2008), there was a clear thematic overemphasis on agribusiness which effectively diverted the attention from ‘rural people’ to ‘rural land’, including the vast majority of ‘rural people’ who are *not* involved in the primary sector. Here, a functional understanding of rurality overshadowed its less apparent aspects, such as community life, family life, health, political stability or gender equality (cf. also ECoA 2011; Schuh et al. 2012). There are also numerous premises suggesting the opposite (cf. Gorlach and Foryś 2003). Programs supporting innovation and large-scale investments are conceptually designed to further a growth-oriented brand of development widely understood as ‘urban’ (cf. Dibazar et al. 2013), regardless of where they are deployed. The ease of interchangeability between ‘rural’ and ‘urban’ is even more perplexing considering that the expansion of urbanisation into the countryside can be seen as both a process of “*ruralising the city*” and as “*urbanisation of the rural*” (Urbain 2002). This misalignment is readily visible in statistics, replete with conflicting statements like those that 80% of the EU is urban and 55% is rural (European Commission 2010). Sheer misalignment notwithstanding, when allocation of funds is involved in process, confusions like these can artificially (and detrimentally) uphold social differences (Dymitrow, Biegańska and Grzelak-Kostulska 2018; Biegańska et al. 2019).

As Dymitrow et al. (2020) observe, “*when culturally ingrained perspective-optics totalize all or most societal operations, they can act as artificial filters, obscuring problems that require seemingly straightforward solutions*”. Such conduct, instead of solving real problems of real people, focuses on solving ‘urban’ and ‘rural’ problems. In translation, instead of focusing on wicked problems, we create wicked solutions (Dymitrow et al. 2020). Still, ‘rural/urban’ continue to cater to large sectors of societal organisation as viable frameworks, a phenomenon Hamnett (2003) mockingly characterised as ‘fiddling while Rome burns’. This leaves the issue of rural/urban spatialisation within projects a contentious issue, while lack of adequate mainstreaming creates chaos, confusion and misdirection of resources – so-called *concept-induced harm* (Dymitrow 2020).

In this chapter, I will approach the phenomenon of spatial thinking in the context of project-making from several perspectives, each with its own set of assumptions and hidden problems. The purpose of such an approach is to raise awareness about the complicated role of space upon our decisions, actions, and consequences of those actions.

Apes in space

Let us start with the fundamental question what ‘space’ is. We all have a vague preconception of what space is, but actually defining it might be tricky. For starters, is it something concrete or abstract, real or imagined, robust or malleable, absolute or relative? What is ‘space’?

‘Space’, just like ‘time’, is one of the most fundamental concepts humans use to navigate through life, both individually and in collaboration with others. Generally, the concept of ‘time’ refers to the gradual process of material change (ageing) while the concept of ‘space’ refers to the extent of material manoeuvring (outreach). The concepts of time and space are intricately related, because reaching something takes time, while ageing changes the spatial extent of the entity. These simple definitions are far from satisfactory, as each subculture uses the terms in their own specialised contexts with special meanings. For instance, the concept of space in physics (cosmology) is different from the concept of space in mathematics (geometry), while space in geodesy (spatial measurement) differs significantly from space in psychology (environmental perception). Geography, with space as its ‘fundamental stuff’ (Thrift 2009), covers all these dimensions due to it being positioned across three scientific paradigms: natural sciences (physical geography), social sciences (human geography) and humanities (cultural geography). Unsurprisingly, the concept of space as used in geography may mean ‘cosmos’, ‘area’, ‘surface’, ‘distance’, ‘region’, ‘location’, ‘place’, ‘room’, and many others.

There is no one best scheme to represent space, although many scholars have tried. A famous model of different conceptions of space is that of Sack (1980). Sack represents space as a two-fold distinction between ‘objectivity’ and ‘subjectivity’ on the one hand, and between ‘space’ and ‘substance’ on the other. Accordingly, any understanding of space that sanctions these four distinctions can be considered distinct while those that merge them can be considered blurred⁴ (Sack 1980: 25). This means that ‘space’ used in a well-defined, specialised manner belongs to the first category (e.g. in natural and social sciences), while ‘space’ as used in everyday language, myth and arts belongs to the second category (cf. Couclelis 1992). One obvious problem is that the same nomenclature (‘space’) is used for so many different meanings, often with no pre-given definitions (Dymitrow and Brauer 2016; 2017). Conversely, conceptions of space may give the appearance of being used in a specialised way whereas they are randomly picked, or – less often – the opposite, when ‘space’ is used in a general, seemingly inclusive, way, it is in fact starkly coloured by a very specific understanding.

Given this problematic, Dear Reader, can you tell what ‘spatial planning’ is? No? Don’t worry, probably no one can. Claiming that spatial planning means planning with a spatial focus would strike us as tautological and wouldn’t bring us much further in the discussion. Of course, there are more or less elaborate definitions, such as ‘methods and approaches used by the public and private sector to influence the distribution of people and activities *in spaces* of various scales’ or as ‘coordination of practices and policies affecting *spatial* organisation’, but the tautological element is always present, and usually left unresolved. Unsurprisingly, to Saey (2002: 295) spatial planning is as much as “*a form of methodical decision-making rather than the preparation of sound decisions*” (cf. also Healey 1997). We are apes in space. ‘Space’ is everything and everywhere, so why bother resolving it? Any conception will suffice.

Wallowing in headwind

Because of the problem of spatial ambiguity, spatialised projects often adopt secondary-level designations, some of which have already been stated in the beginning of this chapter (scale, hierarchy, quality, relationality and functionality). Given the wide array of supplementary spatial designations against the limited space (no pun intended) this chapter can fit, let us restrict our analysis to just a couple of them; more specifically, the binary ‘rural’ and ‘urban’.

⁴ Sack (1980) uses the terms ‘sophisticated–fragmented’ and ‘unsophisticated–fused’, respectively.

This binary, so very popular in project-making (Brauer and Dymitrow 2014), has a complicated history of semantic⁵ connotations (Dymitrow and Stenseke 2016). Already one century ago, Galpin (1918) questioned its validity, urging its immediate dissolution and replacement by a new orientation. Ever since, ‘rural’ and ‘urban’ have been characterised as “*vague and contradictory*” (Galpin, Campbell and Vogt 1918), “*entertaining*” (Gillette 1917: 184) and “*very uncertain*” (Bailey 1924: 162). The distinction has been deemed as one “*of individual outlook*” (Stewart Jr. 1958: 158) that “*reveals a gross lack of agreement concerning their referents*” (Dewey 1960: 60). ‘Rural/urban’ has been described as a “*fuzzy, descriptive designation*” (Bealer, Willits and Kuvlevsky 1965: 257), “*more remarkable for [its] ability to confuse than for [its] power to illuminate*” (Pahl 1966: 299). The rural/urban binary has also been characterised as a “*rhetorical device*”, with us being “*the victims of our own terminological duplicity*” (Copp 1972: 159) that leads to “*a form of theoretical-empirical myopia*” (Falk and Pinhey 1978: 547). Sher (1977: 1) went even further, contending that people, communities, and conditions “*are so diverse that we can find evidence to support nearly any characterisation*”.

In the 1980s, Newby (1986: 209) conceded that the ‘rural/urban’ distinction “*is wholly a matter of convenience, and that arid abstract definitional exercises are of little utility*”. Similarly, Hoggart (1990: 245–246) observed that “*we cannot agree what ‘rural’ is, this does not give us carte blanche to rely on ‘convenient’ definitions of it*”, while Thrift (1993: 229) found studying ‘urban’ to be replete with “*recycled critiques, endlessly circulating the same messages*”. Well into the 2000s, Cloke (2006: 20) observed, “[d]espite strong warnings to the contrary ... *these loose concepts continue to underpin ... [scholarship, with] empirical work conducted on this basis [often being] flawed*” (Cloke 2006: 20). According to Cloke and Johnston (2005a), “*the rural/urban divide has been kept alive by a binary model of thinking, peddling ideas of separation, difference and even opposition*”, while in practice “*the divide has become blurred in all kinds of ways*” (p. 11) to the extent it is “*no longer useful for making sense of societies characterised by high levels of geographic and social mobility*” (Hubbard 2006: 2). Concerns over ‘rural/urban’ overuse have been attached to notions of ideology, normativity and even myth-making. As Halfacree (2009b: 450) put it, “*continued belief in any town versus countryside divide may even be seen as ideological, both denying and confusing human understanding of the spatiality of contemporary capitalism*” (see also Brenner and Theodore 2002), while Stenbacka (2011: 243) ponders whether “*the divide [is] used to underpin the struggle to constitute the superior and uphold a prevailing norm*”. Lastly, Halamska (2014) concedes that when “*entering the territory of chaos with appearances of certain stability, referring to myths will not help solve problems*”.

This short compilation summarises more than a century of recurring pleas from disenchanted theoreticians to let go of ‘rural/urban’ as explanatory or guiding frameworks in specialised domains in research, analysis and planning. Brenner (2015) explains that spatial thinking is very strongly marked by the legacies of the last 100 years, presupposing certain underlying spatial taxonomies derived from the period of capitalist development in which the distinction emerged (cf. also Dymitrow 2017b). Hence, the urban/rural divide represents two specific types of spaces that supposedly should be studied according to their own principles, and this, Brenner (2015) concludes, continues to be “*epistemologically constitutive for thought and action*”.

This epistemological burden does not come without its consequences, and here I will only list ten of them (after Dymitrow and Brauer 2018). First, ‘rural’ and ‘urban’ are often used as a dichotomy despite realisation that dichotomies are badly suited to reflect any aspect of the

⁵The term *semantics* refers to the study of relationships between so-called *signifiers* (e.g. words and signs and symbols), and their *denotation* (what they stand for in reality).

human condition (cf. Derrida 1981). Second, ‘rural/urban’ are concepts of high interpretative flexibility; the more complex a concept the more difficult its operationalisation. Third, ‘rural/urban’ are used globally as if they were universally invariable, which poses threat to communication. Fourth, ‘rural/urban’ contain multiple aspects which can vary independently of each other; it is hence impossible to determine what ‘rural’ or ‘urban’ is without resorting to artificial calculations. Fifth, ‘rural/urban’ are old concepts and require dedicated justification to keep them afloat in a much-changed reality. Sixth, ‘rural/urban’ were taken from a ‘messy reality’ and remoulded into scientified and politicised themes; messy concepts are inherently unfit to get things done. Seventh, ‘rural/urban’ are considered foremost spatial categories; however, basing human-oriented governance on spatial categories aligns with the much-critiqued spatial determinism. Eighth, ‘rural/urban’ are ridden with power relations and othering mechanisms. Ninth, ‘rural/urban’ are both colloquial and specialist concepts; popular concepts used in unfamiliar ways are likely to become contentious. Tenth, ‘rural/urban’ are often used as stereotypes of effaced prototypes, something that rarely illuminates but often obfuscates issues. Likewise, Halfacree (1993) cautions us against the use of ‘rural/urban’, which, besides not working well empirically, have been criticised for being theoretically flawed: interchangeably as spatially deterministic or spatially indifferent.

With that pool of knowledge, the question that emerges is: why do we not think this is problematic? If we know ‘rural/urban’ to be spatial concepts of poor analytical and explanatory merit, why do we keep resorting to them so often, with the imminent risk of corroding social theory, compromising communication and deploying misguided development projects (cf. Smith 1981)?

Battling the human mind

Answering that question is not easy, but basically has to do with the cognitive limitations of the human mind and the capriciousness of human nature. There is a grave misconception that ‘rural/urban’ are useful concepts because they are meaningful. Hence, being able to differentiate between these two important qualifiers is key (after Dymitrow and Brauer 2018). A meaningful concept is one relating to an emotion or idea that is intelligible within or across domains of human language (Pinker and Prince 1996). A useful concept, on the other hand, is one that allows for the fulfilment of a task within a domain of knowledge (Bohleber et al. 2013). To be operable, concepts must have meaning and utility in order to be operable (Smith 1981: 115). However, while no concept can be ‘meaningless–useless’ or ‘meaningless–useful’, the combination ‘meaningful–useless’ is cognitively possible, and this makes certain concepts problematic.

To understand the ‘meaningful–useless’ conflation, can be done by considering four principal functions of concepts: *epistemological*, *metaphysical*, *linguistic*, and *stability* (after Rey 1983). Epistemological functions allow us to categorise things; metaphysical functions set the criteria for inclusion; linguistic functions help represent concepts by means of language; while stability functions allow for comparisons of cognitive states across speaker. The problem is that with regard to ‘rural/urban’, the linguistic function is fulfilled while the three remaining ones are not (cf. Bealer, Willits and Kuvlevsky 1965). However, lack of realisation that meaning and utility are two different things that cannot be used interchangeably to claim scientific merit has rendered a false sense of stability, where ‘rural/urban’ are not perceived as problematic (Dymitrow and Brauer 2018: 201).

In one paper (Dymitrow 2018), I illustrate the ‘meaningful–useless’ conflation, by pointing to six of the most common conceptions of ‘rural/urban’ in research, policy and planning: a) as a

dichotomy; b) as a *continuum*; c) as *hybridities*; d) as *relationalities*; e) as *performativities*; f) as *networks*. In another paper (Dymitrow 2019), I outline the common misconception of treating ‘rural/urban’ as *classical categories* (also known as Aristotelian categories) – that is, categories based on clear definitions, when they are in fact categories construed by way of *family resemblance* (also known as Wittgensteinian categories) – that is, categories with its members connected by a series of overlapping similarities, where no one feature is common to all (cf. Pinker 2015). This raises the question of how we should continue using ‘rural-urban’ in practice: as an Aristotelian category – based on clear, easily manageable, definitions... of something that does not really exist, or as a Wittgensteinian category – based on family resemblance... that is too messy to either grasp or explain any social process. Such conceptual disjunctivity only produces literal coherence and an inferred form of conjectural stability: we may think we are talking about the same thing, but in fact we seldom do.

Cushioning external push

Owing to a process known as *internalisation of reality* (Berger and Luckmann 1966), ‘rural/urban’ have given rise to separate theories and separate professional paraphernalia, including books, journals, conferences, scholarships, grants, education programs, development projects, and departments, all named eponymously after these old spatial categories. And while ‘rural’ and ‘urban’ are no longer attached to any unique physical environments or particular lifestyles, their extant institutional materialities inevitably force researchers and professionals to operate within their particular conceptual boundaries, keeping the distinction afloat.

The second issue deserving explanation, hence, regards the *factors* likely to retain the concepts of ‘rural/urban’ within professional conceptual purview. In line with Vygotsky’s (1978) assertion that higher mental processes in the individual originate in social processes and can only be grasped once the tools (here: concepts) that mediate them are understood, explaining the posed issue requires a detour via Science and Technology Studies (STS)⁶. Few will object to the notion that we are both products of nature and nurture, and that the factors that shape our personal development are both internal and external. In this section I will briefly touch upon the impact of factors that *shouldn’t* be involved in shaping our professional conceptual understanding, according to the canons of the institutions that curate it (e.g. universities, municipalities or firms) (cf. Brauer, Dymitrow and Tribe 2019). In one of our papers (Dymitrow and Brauer 2018), Rene Brauer and I pursue a structured case against unsolicited/unreflective uses of ‘rural/urban’ in human geography by making use of the concept *extraneous factor*⁷ (Fleck 1935 [1979]; Kuhn 1962 [1970]; Weber 1904 [1941]). Departing from theoretical frameworks and personal experience we identify a dozen psychosocial factors influencing retention of ‘rural/urban’ in human geography: boundary-work, perspectivism, politicised inclusionism, innovation requirement, cognitive dissonance, confirmation bias, analytical ethnocentrism, dualistic thinking, textual entrapment, routinisation, vested interest, and the imperception of concept-subject relation. More importantly, we do not end there but propose a set of questions that can be asked to identify those extra-scientific factors within our personal sphere. This, I argue, is the smallest step towards a more fundamental change of value systems in the longer run, if our goal is to develop projects not based on outdated concepts.

⁶ STS is a discipline that looks into how social, political, and cultural values affect scientific research by shifting the focus from philosophy to sociology (Latour 2005).

⁷ Extraneous factors are socio-material and cognitive drivers that shape any given institution, but which typically are not considered part of its canon (Brauer and Dymitrow 2017).

Conclusion

Projects are heavily spatialised because *everything* is located in ‘space’. The problem is that if we keep elevating the role of space by means of questionable concepts, we instead churn up a spatial dependency that goes beyond what we are trying to explain or combat. Taking into consideration that social phenomena are of uneven prevalence, relevance and quality, those that excel in prevalence and relevance but underperform with regard to quality are the most likely to benefit from a critical analysis, and ‘rural/urban’ seem to meet these criteria. Realising that the rural-urban divide – understood as the extent of civilizational progress bequeathed by the tenets of ‘modernity’ – may be no more than a vestige petrified into awkward permanence, I draw the following five conclusions (after Dymitrow 2017a):

1. ‘Rural/urban’ today hold up less as materialities, and more as social constructs that shape materialities. These materialities are shaped very differently depending on the discourse underpinning the chosen ‘rural/urban’ conceptualisation;
2. We don’t know what ‘rural/urban’ is today – it can be everything or nothing;
3. Most often, we don’t need ‘rural/urban’ to explain a specific phenomenon;
4. Many problems occur everywhere, regardless of whether we choose to call them ‘rural/’ or ‘urban’; instead, ‘rural/urban’ is likely to divert attention from the actual problems;
5. It is irresponsible to use ‘rural/urban’ as we please, just because it is convenient.

To avert the negative consequences of over-spatialising projects, we should be wary of how we and others use ‘rural/urban’; for instance, ask: “What do I/you mean by ‘rural/urban’?” and “Do I/you really need to use it?”.

Remaining sensitive to this curious yet reckless faith in the spatial dimension of project-making could make actors and stakeholders more receptive to the non-neutrality of concepts, especially when deployed as putatively spatial categories in human-oriented strategies, i.e. contexts, which by their scope and content are more human than spatial (Dymitrow and Brauer 2016). Of course, rural and urban *do* have a material and biological underlay, but, more than anything, they are cultural constructs burdened with all the intricacies ‘culture’ may imply. We must not forget that if we look for problems in ‘rural’ or ‘urban’ areas we *will* find ‘rural’ or ‘urban’ problems (cf. Law 2004: 5–6). However, such inquiries will never be capable of pinpointing the role of rurality and urbanity in creating those problems, simply because the problems were made ‘rural’ or ‘urban’ simply by placing it ‘there’ from the beginning (Dymitrow 2014; Dymitrow and Brauer 2018).

So, should we let go of ‘rural/urban’ forever? As Somerville, Halfacree and Bosworth (2014: 295) put it, “*the production of the rural [and, by implication, of the urban] is far from dead, and within this ongoing process the struggle to attain at least a degree of coherence (whether desirable or not) will itself carry on*”. This means that ‘rural/urban’ will continue to exist, and because of that, they will have to be dealt with. So, although we cannot erase some concepts, what we can erase is the contagion of indifference attached to them in order to minimise their undesirable impact. This is especially important whenever ‘rural/urban’ are uncritically resorted to for explanatory or analytical guidance, not least in project-making.

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(7)

**Gender and integration:
The ebb and flow of mainstreaming in projects**

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Introduction

Mainstreaming has become somewhat of a mantra in response to dealing with inequalities. The term was thrust into the limelight in the context of gender mainstreaming at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, in 1995. Gender mainstreaming, as a concept, developed from the realisation that gender inequality was an integral dimension of all programmes and policy-making processes; that the processes themselves were gendered, that is that they reflect the experience, prejudice of one sex more than the other (most commonly male over female). As such, gender inequality was not going to be redressed through separate women's groups and gender-specific programmes. Rather, gender mainstreaming implores all levels, micro, meso and macro, of governments and institutions, organisations and programmes, to transform their policies and policy-making processes to analyse their effects on both women and men, and to ensure equality in their responses and outcomes.

Although considered a contemporary 'solution' to gender inequalities, gender mainstreaming presents an answer to Olympe de Gouges' 18th-century paradox of feminism: are women's rights best protected through general norms or norms only specific to women? This questioning is represented in the current framing of the concept as a shift in policy, from the specific to the generic, and in governance, from state- to policy-centric. The most widely cited definition of the concept of gender mainstreaming is that from the UN Economic and Social Council:

“Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.” (United Nations [UN] 1997)

The concept was widely adopted by the vast majority of international institutions and governments, not only owing to its transformative appeal with regards to gender inequality, but also to its concreteness. It was a concept that was clear and measurable. This is demonstrated in the fact that the same definition and call to action could be applied to the 12 critical areas of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action for Women: poverty; education and training; health; violence; armed conflict; the economy; power and decision-making; institutional mechanisms; human rights; the media; the environment and; girls (UN 1997). Thus, the vocabulary of gender mainstreaming is omnipresent throughout vast swathes of policy and governance.

However, it is widely accepted that gender mainstreaming has not reached the dizzying expectations that have been placed upon it since Beijing. Van Eerdewijk and Davids (2014) describe gender mainstreaming as a *mythical beast*. A concept that promised much and delivered very little, in part since the hype around gender mainstreaming and its transformative potential created a vacuum of taken-for-grantedness. The concreteness that initially seemed so appealing has been replaced by a critique that views its acceptance as blind and bureaucratic, and that a mainstream approach to gender has diluted claims to equality within a sea of male-dominated and hierarchical norms (Charlesworth 2005). So, given such a scathing and widespread critique, why is mainstreaming being adopted within other societal relationships where inequalities exist?

As gender mainstreaming remains the most common adoption of the tool, the latest trend within mainstreaming is that of migrant integration policies. Mainstreaming in this domain has been adopted due to inability of other tools or methods to manage migrant integration at the scale experienced in Europe's very recent history. The rise and fall of multiculturalism (Vertovec and Wessendorf 2010), the 'assimilationist turn' (Brubaker 2001) and a rethinking of European policy approaches to deal with super-diversity have all been cited as reasons for the adoption of mainstreaming within integration policies. However, there is little understanding of the impact of mainstreaming on integration policies.

This chapter seeks to draw some parallels between the critiques of gender mainstreaming, and the new trend of mainstreaming within immigrant integration. By discussing three key themes in mainstreaming policy, (1) the use of language, (2) homogeneity and intersectionality, and (3) (a)symmetrical relations, critiques of both gender mainstreaming and migrant integration mainstreaming are explored. Finally, I offer an argument as to whether mainstreaming still has a viable role in addressing inequalities and provides suggestions of how the concept itself can avoid being swept out to sea.

Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is an inherently contested concept, both in theory and practice. Its aim, as a process, is to promote gender equality¹ through improving the effectivity of policies by making visible the gendered nature of assumptions, processes and outcomes (Eveline and Bacchi 2006). As a theory, gender mainstreaming encapsulates the tensions and dilemmas of feminist theory and practice since the turn of the 21st century and provides a new focus for debates on how to move such debates forward (Walby 2005). However, Charlesworth (2005) suggests that the use of the term 'mainstream' in itself does little to redress the power balances and inequalities that it seeks out to.

Charlesworth (2005) uses the colloquial definition of mainstreaming to demonstrate how divisive the term 'gender mainstreaming', in itself, has perhaps become. The Oxford English Dictionary defines mainstreaming as ideas, attitudes and activities that are regarded as *normal* or *conventional*. If gender and 'women's issues' are to be integrated into the mainstream, then does that point to the assumption that the hierarchical position of men in institutional structures is the norm (Charlesworth 2005)?

¹ "Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born female or male. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, thereby recognising the diversity of different groups of women and men" (European Institute for Gender Equality 2019).

Gender relations

One of the main critiques of gender mainstreaming is the way in which it can be used to focus on difference to achieve equality. The equal opportunities approach to gender mainstreaming places emphasis on looking at the statistical differences between men and women. The presumption that men and women can occupy a symmetry of position implies that gender is something that you *have* rather than acknowledging the differing social and power relations that create and sustain gender (Charlesworth 2005; Eveline and Bacchi 2006).

An equal opportunities approach may be delivered with all the best intentions. For example, unemployed single mothers seeking work are often offered funds to access higher education, the idea being that women can balance education and childcare, with the overall aim of getting a job. However, men (whether they were supporting children or not) are more commonly offered wage-supported enterprises with on-the-job training, a regular wage and its associated benefits (Status of Women Canada 2001).

This equal-opportunities approach, although well-meaning, exacerbates the advantage of financial independence that men hold over women (Eveline and Bacchi 2006). Furthermore, speaking of women's disadvantage both presupposes and normalises men's advantage (Bacchi 1999). Therefore, the use of gender mainstreaming to generate equal opportunities policy inherently suggests that women can only gain equality when they are able to perform to the standards set by men (Eveline 1994; Rossilli 1997; Beveridge, Nott and Stephen 2000; Guertina 2002).

Homogeny and intersectionality

An interesting question arising from the debate is: who do we speak of when we speak of 'women'? 'Woman' is not only viewed in relation to 'man'. Gender is just one of the multiple, and ever-expanding, European Union (EU) grounds on which one can be discriminated against: gender, ethnicity, disability, faith, age and sexual orientation. The category of 'woman' is internally divided into different forms of difference and inequality; therefore, the concept of gender mainstreaming has been contextualised within multiple and diverse forms of social inequality (Walby 2005).

The adoption of gender mainstreaming within diverse forms of equality politics has been considered as both a positive and negative development for gender mainstreaming. Practically, diversifying the context of application may result in a loss of focus on gender and the diluting of its resources. This, Walby (2004) argues, creates competition in the priority of inequality. However, Squires (2005) counters this argument by suggesting that diversifying the context may strengthen the actions of gender mainstreaming by connecting previously separated communities of difference.

As has already been noted, the language of gender mainstreaming flows everywhere: from local NGO projects to international United Nations institutions. So, how does the concept of gender mainstreaming span, encompass and mean something to all women in the world? A further critique of gender mainstreaming is that it is a hard-to-grasp and slippery concept for different stakeholders (Braidotti et al. 1994). Charlesworth (2005) cites a Farming and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) project which used gender mainstreaming to increase the levels of women involved in fish farming projects. However, the project became no more than a game of counting numbers of participating women as local project workers failed to understand why the focus was on including women. As such, the gender focus rendered the project irrelevant and inconvenient.

Language

Whilst the language of gender mainstreaming has been fairly easy to include within all levels of government, institutions and organisations, pinning down what the concept in itself means remains contested. The concept's contestation informs different responses. However, some ways of conceptualising gender mainstreaming may inhibit its efficiency. Eveline and Bacchi (2006) suggest that the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming may be increased if gender is viewed as a verb rather than a noun; that is, that gender is viewed as a process rather than a static and bounded category (Butler 1988).

In 1992, McClure argued for the rethinking of theory as a verb rather than a noun; that is the consideration of theorisation as a concept which is inescapably implicated with power. Eveline and Bacchi (2006) furthered this argument, suggesting that gender, like theory, is not fixed. Rather, gender is a contingent and located social process with specific effects on power and advantage (Butler 2004).

Charlesworth (2005) also highlights another critique with regards to the language of gender mainstreaming: the difficulty to translate gender mainstreaming into languages other than English. Charlesworth suggests that the inability to translate the term generates an increased resistance between different stakeholders, and that is unrelated to the concept of gender itself, and rather reflects the dominance and power of English-speaking countries over the rest of the world (Braidotti et al. 1994).

Whilst only a few critiques of gender mainstreaming have been discussed, there is a black cloud that hangs over the achievements of gender mainstreaming, with some describing its level of success as disappointing (van Eerdewijk and Davids 2014) and others going as far as to suggest gender mainstreaming has failed to deliver on the promises from Beijing (Moser 2006). However, the concept of mainstreaming remains a forceful torrent which is spilling over into other areas of policy. The most recent application has been within the arena of migrant integration. This discussion now shifts from gender to integration, drawing parallels between the ways in which integration is considered a process or outcome; the internal diversity of migrants and; the relationship between native populations and migrant communities.

Integration mainstreaming

As the EU's population is changing, European societies are faced with increased diversity and multiculturalism. Policy-driven attempts and governance efforts, at the local, national and institutional (EU) scale have followed the ebb and flow of trends in migrant integration strategy. Through the rise and fall of multiculturalism, the (perhaps contradictory) assimilationist turn, central European governments are now looking in the direction of migrant integration mainstreaming to 'solve' the wicked problem (cf. Rittel and Webber 1973) of integration.

Super-diverse societies seem the ideal context for integration mainstreaming, as the concept, at its heart, seeks to move beyond specific policy towards the generic. This implies moving beyond target groups to policy which is applicable and relevant to the entire population. It is then understandable that mainstreaming has been adopted within migrant integration policy and governance. However, gender mainstreaming also held an enormous amount of potential and expectation, and yet it has failed to deliver the transformative change expected of it (Moser 2006; van Eerdewijk and Davids 2014). So, what can the mainstreaming of migrant integration learn from the existing critiques of gender mainstreaming?

Verb or noun?

The steady stream of migrants from a great diversity of areas into Europe has created a super-diverse society in almost all European states. This has generated new challenges with regards to sustaining social cohesion (Bijl and Verweij 2012). The challenges most often present themselves as marginalised housing, segregation, sub-standard living conditions, low educational attainment and poor employment outcomes (Dymitrow and Halfacree 2018). The manifestation of such challenges has been termed an ‘integration failure’ (Hellgren 2016). Whilst some academics have focused on the discussion of integration policy failure (Koopmans 2010; Hansen 2012; Dustman and Frattini 2011), others have directed their inquiry towards the concept itself (Robinson 1998; Castles et al. 2001; Ager and Stang 2008).

Just as Eveline and Bacchi’s (2006) argument that gender would be a more effective concept if the term were treated as a verb, it could be argued that integration itself would be more successful if viewed as a process rather than a set of achieved outcomes for measuring success. The ways in which the concept of integration is used, as both outcome and process, is nowhere more evident than in Sweden.

Swedish migrant integration holds a unique contradiction in that it is lauded as having the ‘best’ policy in Europe (Migration Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) 2015), but its outcomes are amongst some of the poorest (Eurostats 2011; OECD 2016). MIPEX is a unique tool which uses 167 policy indicators on migration integration to benchmark and score current laws and policies against best practice (MIPEX 2015). Sweden scores 78 overall (out of 100) for its integration policy, and 98 for its policy on labour market mobility. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s (OECD) first review of the Swedish system for labour-market integration, conducted in 2004, found “...*their outcomes to be unfavourable in an international context*” (OECD 2014). As the OECD (2014) discussions highlight, “...*there remains room for improvement in integration outcomes and recent refugee cohorts still have low employment rates.*” Thus, Sweden still has the largest gap (of OECD countries) between immigrant and native-born employment levels, with 57% of 15–74-year-olds born outside of Sweden having a job, compared to 67% of native-born Swedes (Eurostats 2011; OECD 2014; OECD 2016).

Native–immigrant relations

As the above Swedish example demonstrates, there is a discussion to be had within migrant integration mainstreaming that mirrors those already held with regard to gender mainstreaming – the assumed symmetry to be achieved between men and women or, in this case, migrant and native.

As Hellgren (2016) acknowledges, there is increasing discussion upon the role the receiving society plays in achieving ‘successful’ integration. These discussions have moved beyond academic debate and have been adopted in widely cited definitions. One such definition of integration is that of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2011):

“The process by which migrants become accepted into society, both as individuals and as groups... [Integration] refers to a two-way process of adaption by migrants and host societies...[and implies] consideration of the rights and obligations of migrants and host societies, of access to different kinds of services and the labour market, and of identification and respect for a core set of values that bind migrants and host communities in a common purpose.” (IOM 2011)

Furthermore, among the common basic principles on integration in the EU Framework of Integration, the first principle defines integration as: “*a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States*’ (as cited in Carrera and Atger 2011: 4).

However, even within the definition of migrant integration as a two-way process, differences of opinion remain. As within the IOM’s definition, Zapata-Barrero (2012) see the two-way process as both migrants and the autochthonous majority, somewhat equally, adapting to each other. Penninx and Garcés Mascareñas (2016) explicitly place the weight of integration on the shoulders of the majority society. Furthermore, Penninx, Spencer and van Hear (2008) call for further research into the ‘de facto’ process of integration. That is, exploring and understanding how integration operates in practice, rather than drawing assumptions based on public policy.

Homogeny and intersectionality

One of the most appealing reasons to adopt mainstreaming within migrant integration is its ability to be able to deal with multiculturalism and super-diversity. In itself, multiculturalism is a manifestation of mainstreaming in the integration-policy context, as it also seeks to promote equal opportunity, inter-ethnic contact and a shared sense of belonging within super-diverse societies whilst avoiding the reification of cultural and ethnic boundaries (Bouchard 2010; Zapata-Barrero 2012).

Given the sheer number and historical depth of migration that Europe has experienced over its history, the evolution of diversity has reached such a level that it is now almost impossible to distinguish between specific groups, be those on the grounds of ethnicity, creed or country of origin (Vertovec 2007). Migrant communities in themselves have become increasingly diverse, as they transgress, reproduce and reinvent their own boundaries within their host societies (Alba and Nee 2005). Scholten, Collett and Petrovic (2016) go as far as to suggest that “*mainstreaming is not just an option, but also a necessity, for policies in super-diverse cities, where group distinctions can no longer be made*” (p. 284).

Concluding remarks

Whilst it has been acknowledged that migrant integration and mainstreaming seem a ‘perfect fit’, one has to be wary of it falling into the same trap as gender mainstreaming, particularly with regards to its aim of equal opportunities. Rather than striving to reach the perceived and presupposed outcomes set by men and native populations, mainstreaming should be seeking to introduce new hybrid standards in which different gender and cultural norms are valued as equal (Walby 2005).

One major step forward has been taken with an increased focus on intersectionality, and the consideration that various forms of inequality are not simply additive but intertwine to produce a great diversity of outcomes (Collins 1998). However, Scholten, Collett and Petrovic (2016) warn against replacing strategies which focus on, for instance, women or migrants, directly with those that focus on ‘new’ needs-based projects, for example, in education, housing or labour. It is suggested that these groups-based projects quickly become replaced with projects that are needs- or area-based. However, as De Zwart (2005) acknowledges, these ‘replacement strategies’ often reappear and reoccur in the same places with the same participants, as various factors of inequality are so intrinsically intertwined.

Perhaps we are looking in the same places (quite literally, De Zwart [2005] would argue) to find solutions to the same old problems. But, gender equality (van Eerdewijk and Davids 2014) and immigrant integration (Dymitrow and Halfacree 2018) are both characterised as wicked problems (Rittel and Webber 1973). As such, they are not easily addressed; with each ‘project failure’ the subsequent projects become more and more radical and controversial. The reaction to this radicalisation of projects is that institutions seek to stabilise the norm by watering down projects. Ultimately, this causes a ‘project failure’, and the dominant powers prevail (van Stoppelenberg and Vermaak 2009).

The future, Bacchi (2005) suggests, lies not within these all-encompassing, universally applied policies, but rather within developing an awareness and understanding amongst project leaders, institutions and governments. This assumption relies on the idea that the policies in themselves are embedded within gendered structures, or structures that favour natives over migrants. It is these policies and processes that, in themselves, reproduce the structural inequalities that women and migrants experience in the particularities of their everyday lives.

This deeper understanding of the implications of structural inequalities may be achieved through the reconnection of the realities of people’s lives and the policies in which they exist (Parpart 2013; van Santen 2013). A method of achieving this is through the challenging and destabilising of knowledge that is currently produced on women, gender relations, migrants and integration (van Eerdewijk and Davids 2014). However, dominant institutions and governments are already watering down projects which attempt to address the wicked problems of gender equality and migrant integration mainstreaming. So, how long before the concepts get washed away with the tide?

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**The phenomenon of trend in project-making:
Contemporary perspectives**

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Introduction

The phenomenon of projectification pervades the life of contemporary man (Lundin et al. 2015). As Jensen, Thuesen and Geraldi (2016) note, projects “*permeate what we do, how we speak, how we think of our daily activities, how we construct our identities, and ultimately, who we are*”. Projects change the face and shape of the surrounding space and impact the development of different social groups. Due to the global reach of the process and the ever-increasing number of projects, it is necessary to indicate the reasons for this popularity and the diversity of projects, but also to delineate the direction in which projectification is going, bearing in mind the potential risks related to the changes taking place. This is especially true for Europe, where “*the new form of redistributing money and power within the European realm is arguably more readily perceivable in rural areas. However urban development has also been reshaped in the wake of ‘projectification’*” (Füzér 2013: 28).

More and more dimensions of our lives are shaped directly or indirectly by projects. At the level of the country, individual regions, cities, towns, villages, housing communities, streets and individuals, various types of projects are implemented. The spatial scope of projects covering all countries and their wide thematic spectrum – from mega-projects changing the centres of the largest cities, to mini projects operating on a micro scale – implies the need to explore and question the phenomenon of trend in contemporary project-making. The indication of leading trends will help systematise knowledge and identify the most important areas of activity in contemporary societies. Thus, it will provide insight into the future and enable further reflection upon our chosen course, and how we might tackle problems in different areas most efficiently.

Theoretical background

Following the dominant project activities carried out in various parts of the world, one can make a simplified division into three main thematic categories of projects, namely projects (1) carried out by companies/business projects, (2) carried out in a specific space and strongly related to the same, and (3) strictly social. Business projects (1) are those related to the implementation of all types of ventures by companies. Space-related projects (2) are undertakings where the focus is on modification of physical space. Finally, strictly social activities (3) focus on people, their knowledge, qualifications and competences. At the same time, even a superficial analysis of projects with a specific spatial and social dimension encounters a problem, because the elements allowing for their identification do not exist disjointly but are intertwined (in many cases they are supposed to be complementary). This, of course, does not contradict the legitimacy of the simplified branding of projects as social or spatial, provided that we are fully aware of their complexity.

Starting from the assumed division, if we look at various spatial projects (understood as a combination of spatial and social aspects), we are more likely to come across projects related to urban space – ‘urban projects’. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, cities, especially large ones, have many problems requiring continuous intervention because of their development dynamics (rapid changes generate the need for continuous problem solving). Secondly, cities are areas where a large proportion of the space is shared, and this creates the need to participate in its use. This is particularly evident in countries with civil society. Thirdly, global competition between cities has contributed to the spread of the project management model around the world. Along with the evolution of the ideas of neoliberal economy, the role of cities has changed. Modern cities are not top-down administrative units. Cities forced to compete for limited goods resemble companies. There has been a transformation from the administrative and distributive model of the welfare state to the model of urban entrepreneurship policy (Jamka 2011). Forced rivalry contributed to many actions unplanned by the local government. They were dictated not only by the need to renovate cities after the crisis of the 1970s and 1980s (Swyngedouw, Moulaert and Rodriguez 2002), but at the same time they were supposed to attract investors. Therefore, the basic catalyst for the expansion of project-based urban management was the crisis of the post-industrial city.

The factor determining the popularity of projects is, first of all, the imposed manner of investment financing. International organisations, e.g. the European Union (EU), rely on projects to a large extent when conducting their policy for regional or local development. Similarly, other public, private and non-governmental organisations, provide opportunities to apply for financing by offering support in the form of projects. Moreover, the specific fashion for projects is the result of this method of implementing tasks. The features of projects, including their uniqueness, complexity, wide range of impact, focus on a specific objective, ideally correspond to the needs of modern society. Due to the above factors, the most popular model for management of contemporary space is that of projects based on experiences from the business world.

Dominant trends

The common denominator of urban projects is the willingness to adapt the space to the needs of the citizens, which can be achieved through various paths: from physical changes in the urban tissue, often accompanied by an attempt to solve social problems (revitalisation projects), through the introduction of functions stimulating development, activating or integrating the local community, to projects aimed at implementing comprehensive functional solutions. The diversity of the implemented projects is so vast that the above-mentioned directions need to be described in more detail to demonstrate, through selected examples, the wide array of problems to be solved.

First of all, as mentioned above, there are projects focused on ‘revitalisation’ in the broad sense of the term. The crisis of down-town districts strongly affected by rising unemployment, the effects of international migration, destruction of infrastructure and depopulation have had an impact on the continuous implementation of projects aimed at a comprehensive or partial renovation of the city centre. A large group of projects consists of activities focused on investments in urban areas degraded after the closure of industrial facilities. In the literature, such investments are called brownfield investments. They consist in the re-use of disused land which had lost its previous function. It is indicated that in contrast to greenfield investments, brownfield investments recycle space, which allows for the management of cities according to the idea of the compact city (Środa-Murawska et al. 2017).

The 21st century has also been the century of ‘railway’ projects (cf. Halsall 2001; Erkan 2012; Krzysztofik, Dragan and Gierczak 2014; Alexander and Hamilton 2015; Dragan, Dymitrow and Krzysztofik 2019). Classic examples include the ‘urban mega-project’: Stockholm Central Station, Amsterdam Central Station, Stuttgart 21, which aimed, among other things, at “*the expansion and upgrading of rail infrastructure, the reduced demand for industrial space in central urban locations, the privatization of railways, efforts to increase the attractiveness of cities*” (Bertolini, Curtis and Renne 2012: 31).

The next set consists of projects aimed at revitalising space by implementing new activities or strengthening existing ones. The introduced changes may concern both exogenous and endogenous functions. Their scale may be local or cover the whole space, contributing, e.g., to the change in social composition or direction of development.

The 21st century has also been characterised by the dominance of projects focusing on the idea of cities attracting the creative class, initiated by Florida (2002). The concept of creative cities is the reality of the largest cities, and thus the largest projects were implemented precisely there. The search for unique and original events with the potential to contribute to the city’s growth in stature is reflected in the organisation of a number of festivals. Some of the cultural events have gained a worldwide reputation as a brand in their own right. The popularity of festivalisation means note must be taken of this phenomenon, as it is characteristic of the development of modern cities (Cudny 2016; Richards 2017).

This group also comprises a trend consisting in the implementation of the European Capital of Culture (ECC) programme. The idea of the ECC is a standard example of the promotion and inclusion of the cultural sector in urban development strategies. From the outset, the main cultural capitals of Europe, i.e. Athens (1985), Florence (1986), etc. promoted culture and heritage at cultural festivals. The idea changed dramatically when Glasgow was awarded the ECC title, which resulted in the economic and physical revitalisation of the city through culture. The planned and implemented objectives related to cultural events contributed to the overwhelming success of the city. ECC projects are part of a broader trend towards culture-led regeneration, i.e. projects dedicated to the renewal of degraded areas using culture (Evans and Shaw 2004; Środa-Murawska 2019).

It is worth noting here the projects dedicated to sports-led development, first of all carried out in Olympic cities. The degree of interest and the many active and passive participants in major sporting events are responsible for urban redevelopment or expansion projects (Gratton and Henry 2002).

As a rule, a different scale accompanies an interesting activity based on projectification – urban farming. It is a response to the dwindling resources of biologically active land in cities in developed countries, increasing air pollution and omnipresent noise. However, the environmental effect itself is not predominant. Urban farming also brings social benefits and can be a source of food for local communities in developing countries (Egziabher 1994; Foeken and Mboganie-Mwangi 2000; Haysom et al. 2019). Though there are many positive aspects in the activity of urban farmers, it may also be negative in nature through inadequate urban policy, contributing, e.g., to chaotic urban planning, traffic problems and environmental degradation (Moshia 1991). It is worth mentioning the phenomenon of guerrilla gardening, because in this case gardening activity takes place informally, without the consent of the landowner. Such grassroots initiatives are often a manifestation of the need to care about the aesthetics of the surroundings combined with the need to be in touch with nature.

The third path revolves around searching for comprehensive solutions. A large group of projects includes activities in the field of sustainable development and environmental protection. This is the result of a growing awareness of the ecological state of our planet and the environmental threats from human activity. Sustainable urban development projects provide integrated, comprehensive measures to attenuate the impact of industry, transport, etc. on the environment. One example of a mega-project on an international scale was the Kyoto Protocol, which included actions taken by states to combat global climate change (Trexler and Kosloff 1998; Moomaw et al. 1999).

Sustainable development projects have proven a springboard for various trends in the design of cities which have become more or less environmentally friendly. These trends include one of the most popular urban concepts, namely *smart city*, where one of the main assumptions is a *smart environment* based on renewable energy sources (Kylili and Fokaidis 2015; Calvillo, Sánchez-Miralles, and Villar 2016).

A similar trend, but with the main emphasis on the coexistence of the city with the natural environment, is the *eco-city* or *green city*. The projects implemented within this strand are based on many activities focused on, among others, prioritizing green areas, reducing the share of individual transport in favour of cycling and walking, supporting local agriculture and social gardens, protecting biodiversity or cooperating with enterprises in the implementation of ecological activities (Roseland 1997; Hulicka 2015). The increasing fashion for being *eco* and *green* has also created new risks. One of them is *greenwashing* which involves companies misleading consumers about their purportedly good eco-practices and corporate environmental responsibility (Furlow 2010). It is indicated that greenwashing firms apply two measures at the same time: they take little care of the environment and create a positive message about their pro-environmental activities. There are two levels of manipulation: when a company is touted as eco-friendly (firm-level greenwashing) and when a product or service supposedly reaps environmental benefits (product-level greenwashing) (Delmas and Burbano 2011).

Concepts bordering on sustainable development such as *resilient city* and *compact city* are also part of these trends. The former is based on building resilience and cities adapting to natural hazards (Klein, Nicholls and Thomalla 2003; Jabareen 2013). The latter is based on the highest possible building intensity and the lowest possible use of space.

However, regardless of the dominant trend, some common features are present in the projectification of space, namely:

- urban projects are most often state-led and often state-financed,
- “*planning through urban projects has indeed emerged as the main strategy to stimulate economic growth and to ‘organize innovation’, both organizationally and economically,*
- *the emergence of a more fragmented and pluralistic mode of urban governance has also contributed to the redefinition of roles played by local authorities*” (Swyngedouw, Moulaert and Rodriguez 2002: 566–567).

Separating a group of social projects is, as mentioned earlier, a matter of discussion. However, it seems reasonable to point to a certain group of projects which are commonly referred to as social projects/soft projects. Their expansion is related to the need to reconcile growing social needs with financial constraints. Project activities undertaken in order to satisfy current needs and conducive to social development are implemented due to unfavourable demographic changes, growing social problems caused by an unstable financial and economic situation and increasing social needs. In order to meet these challenges, changes in the implementation of social policy in European countries mainly focus on solutions based on social investment.

Problems

The described dominant trends in project activities may prove ineffective if mistakes are made. It is extremely important that local decision-makers start the process of preparing projects that are not based on the incoming competitions but are in line with the needs of the city. The authors' experience of the implementation of various types of urban projects in former socialist countries shows that in many cases the disorderly planning of projects is terrifying. The particular interests of individual stakeholder groups distort the very idea of many urban projects. This is partly due to the lack of local spatial development plans. In many towns and cities, we are dealing with a conglomeration of development conditions and indications for land development implemented by individual investors which are often mutually exclusive. This is connected with the patchwork nature of projects and activities and the chaotic spatial development with individual elements poorly 'glued' into one whole. This process in relation to the capital of Poland is analysed by Anioł (2016), who points out, e.g., the problems associated with the unplanned project of the so-called 'Mordor', i.e. an office district to which about 100,000 people commute every day, and which was not and still has not been adapted to its character.

Another problem is citizens' lack of interest in social participation. Even the youngest generation are still not being taught to actively participate in society (cf. Środa-Murawska, Dąbrowski and Smoliński 2018). As a result, when the residents are invited to speak out during the planning phase, the participants are always the same – 'community activists' and/or people directly interested in a given problem. In extreme cases, these are someone's cliques who can support/protest an idea. Most often, however, the supposedly most interested party, e.g. the residents of a given street/district, are not present. It is also a feature widely discussed in the public debate – the lack of an educated, active civil society in post-socialist countries.

Another threat to the effectiveness of project activities may be the phenomenon of *social washing*, which is defined as companies' use of marketing information which creates the false impression that the company's policy is based on the creation of social values, while in truth it is not. Companies are increasingly moving away from green activities towards sustainable activities that cover a wider spectrum of factors, i.e.: environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors. Currently, teams of individuals are taking on companies' role in society, because it influences the interest of stakeholders, potential investors and employees (Akinyemi et al. 2013). Copying projects that have been successfully completed in a given place but that are not necessarily a good fit in other conditions may also be problematic (Dymitrow 2014). This shortcut appears easy and tempting, but it may be a blind alley. Using best practices is not wrong, but it must be connected with an analysis of the project's adjustment to given circumstances, taking into account local conditions (also secondary ones). Unique projects, built from scratch, are more likely to effectively solve problems.

Looking ahead

Speaking about the future, it is worth asking the question: What is the reason for the astounding success of projectification today and, at the same time, can these factors remain valid in the future? Above all, it seems that the answer to this question lies in the universality of the approach that fits different concepts (from large to small, from short- to long-term, from top-down to bottom-up, from action in the urban fabric to action in the social fabric or modification of functions). In the planning and implementation phases, the project process concretises and organises the activities. The focus on achieving the desired outcome has a mobilising effect, at

the same time facilitating the involvement of various actors. Finally, it is worth noting that such a form makes it easier to share experiences – building a set of good practices means building a set of successful projects.

Although one has to be very careful when trying to infer future trends, it seems that the future of the project approach is not threatened. The factors guaranteeing its current success should continue to work in the future, although some changes can certainly be expected. These can be brought about by technological progress related to access to information, making it ever easier to use. The expected effect may be a quicker reaction to existing problems and inclusion of a larger part of the society in decision-making processes – resulting in the beneficial phenomenon of co-responsibility.

However, the effectiveness of the project approach may depend on the decisions of local authorities responsible for disbursing funds and on how active the local community is. The clash between grassroots initiatives (focused on solving specific problems) and top-down activities (assumably far-reaching, in line with general planning assumptions, although in some cases not free from decisions dictated by political pragmatism) may have different effects. The growing importance of grassroots initiatives is a response to the problems resulting from neoliberal urban management, so it is beneficial to plan activities with the inhabitants. Bottom-up activities should be supported and coordinated with local authorities' policy plans. When combined, they may create interesting and valuable initiatives that build social bonds, such as urban gardening; however, without support these initiatives may become chaotic or turn into a form of disapproval manifested by the residents (guerrilla gardening). Being sensitive to the needs of both parties and searching for compromise solutions through joint projects will undoubtedly remain the most effective form of action.

Future prevalent thematic trends of projectification will be determined by the most important problem areas of individual regions. There is a clear trend related to the implementation of transport investment. Apart from the huge motorway projects, the predominant type is the reconstruction or rebuilding of all kinds of transport solutions which must be environmentally friendly and relieve the current transport system. For example, the public bicycle is one of the new and innovative urban transport services (Zhang, Xu and Yang 2015; Belanche, Casaló and Orús 2016; Kwiatkowski 2018). A good example is the process of evolution of subsequent generations of bike-sharing projects in Poland, described by Kwiatkowski (2018), which changed along with the development of modern technologies and the evolving needs of their users (DeMaio 2009; Shaheen, Guzman and Zhang 2010).

A future trend is reflected in the growing share of 'senior' projects aimed at adapting spaces to the growing elderly population. They focus on fulfilling the principles indicated by Burton and Mitchell (2006), i.e. familiarity, distinctiveness, safety, comfort, accessibility, legibility. Projects described by Yung, Conejos and Chan (2016) also emphasise the active role of seniors in planning, which increases their social inclusion in city life.

As noted, the direction of action is dictated by climate change. Projects related to the creation of resilient cities – cities resistant to adverse weather conditions, as well as projects aimed at reducing the detrimental impact of man on the natural environment – will gain in importance. It is also worth mentioning that in the future solving global problems should aim at coordinated actions based on cooperation between cities of similar size (as they are facing similar problems) in a supra-regional and international system.

To sum up, when thinking about the phenomenon of trend in project-making, it might be worthwhile to reflect briefly on this phenomenon. In the conditions of globalisation, we are increasingly facing similar problems, although they arise in areas with different cultural,

economic or political characteristics. Projects are supposed to bring solutions and respond to emerging needs. If the two are convergent, then when creating a project, we are in line with the existing trend. This seems natural and does not raise any objections. Going one step further, it also seems fully justified to use other people's solutions. Taking note of other experiences, observing projects can bring benefits. This is often an opportunity to notice problems at a stage when less money is needed to solve them. Should we therefore be enthusiastic about projects? The answer seems quite obvious if we bear in mind the problems identified earlier. It should be remembered that despite the similarities between the issues, their solutions may not always be the same. The transfer of ready-made solutions need not be a threat if we take into account the individual context, retain critical thinking and common sense, and are not driven by particular interests or aim at short-sighted goals.

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(9)

**The political functions of development projects
in the margins: Five propositions**

Nazem Tahvilzadeh

“For a colonised people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity.”

– Frantz Fanon, 1926–1961

In the name of sustainability

Sustainability is the new ideology in town. Government actions strive to realise the equal flourishing of current and future generations. Many are the highly competent, ambitious and intellectual professionals striving to do ‘good’ in the name of sustainability. Old-school bureaucratic values and principles are de-emphasised, and external project funds buy some respite from nosy politicians and the bureaucratic chain of command. Project-based policy actions deploy a fresh de-hierarchical management style where creativity is encouraged. On the ground, new task forces materialise that engage in problem-solution exercises, desk clerks transform to ‘innovators’ and researchers redress to field participants. The desire to solve our daunting challenges is refreshing: knowledge is appreciated, innovation is promoted, and ‘sustainability’ is the new Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, what is really changing?

Consensus reigns over the aims of sustainability in urban governments, however, not over its means. A bureaucratic apparatus of thousands of professionals that make sense of what appears to be a unanimous policy-paradigm in objectives, but a highly politicised minefield in implementation, is a heart-breaking symphony to contemplate. The puzzle is this: a number of policy programmes that are operating on a tight schedule could enable path-breaking operations. Embedded researchers measuring intentions and impacts can push the frontiers of know-how for change. Citizens that engage in participatory activity could be empowered to find new solutions for everyday life problems. However, on the outcome side of the political chain, inequalities increase, the environment is put under even more stress, and the proliferation of uneven development stresses governments and the everyday life of people.

In this chapter, one aspect of sustainability politics will be in focus as a way to critically reflect urban development policies in general: place-based development programmes rolled out, targeting what is declared as ‘underdeveloped’ areas in the margins of the city, or what is often called ‘the suburb’ (in Swedish: *förorten*). These programmes are recurrently dressed in the policy-language of ‘sustainability’ and I assume that most students and professionals want these anti-poverty projects to do well. Therefore, evaluators persistently analyse their successfulness based on what they are officially declared to do. The conclusions are that the programs appear ineffective because poverty seems not to be caused by the configuration of particular places but rather by societal supra-structures. These analyses are accurate, but perhaps we miss what the programs then actually do? To grasp the politics of place-based

development projects, or at least, to see them from another angle, a theoretical discussion about their functions can expand our understanding about modern urban politics and its paradoxes. So, what follows here are five related propositions about the political functions of place-based development programmes.

First proposition: Austerity demands diplomacy

The governing of cities is increasingly becoming a hierarchical enterprise. Reforms centralise power around a few actors at the apex of organisations leaving planning and service production units with less autonomy and stronger pressure to comply with bureaucratic frameworks formulated from above. ‘Efficiency’ is the overarching priority in welfare production agencies since more demands and tightened finances put the entire system under stress. The new politics of austerity is not responsive to the needs of citizens dependent on government services for their everyday life. Children, families, the disabled and elderly, the unemployed and the poor are receiving less of the wealth produced in the city.

The ruling classes, a collaborative network of property-owning industry representatives and liaison public managers, have stakes in austerity. Often these governing coalitions are defending financial cuts with survival arguments, as cities have to manage the economic base of their own existence in the troubled world of the global economy. Taxes, they claim, must not be elevated and should adhere to international standards. Therefore, spending on reproductive welfare services must be effective and this management necessitates a hierarchical governance model. However, centralisation comes at a price.

When power and control tighten around a small number of politicians and top-level managers, sub-local political committees and administrative units lack the capacity to resolve the problems on the front-line level of operations. The narrower flows of information which tend to exclude knowledge among the staff and concerned actors outside of the chains of command render the organization deafened to information, grievances and complaints from its surrounding environment. This problem needs management.

This was Cockburn’s (1977) classic analysis of the entanglements of city politics as she observed the rise of the ‘community development’ programmes in London. For Cockburn, the embracing of participatory ideology was the other side of the coin to the ongoing tightening and toughening of the management in local government through a plethora of reform initiatives. She called this latter mode of operating ‘corporate management’. The same management consultants that restructured the large private firms were advising local governments to follow the same recipe. Today we call this *New Public Management*, and in several aspects, the problems of this model have become more severe. The effects of a stiffened private corporation-like urban governance reducing the power of the amateur politician for the benefit of the business suit economist, is the endangering of the central function of liberal democracy, argues Cockburn. A workforce eager to work, and a stable social order for the benefit of capital accumulation, does not come easy for any ruling class, it must be deliberately reproduced. When the working-class were becoming more militant in their organisation and activities – many solved homelessness by squatting empty apartments – urban governors needed a more manageable situation to handle. The ‘community package’, observed Cockburn (1977), initiatives such as community workers, participatory forums, social planning and conflict management tools, granted people some kind of participation in management, but without empowerment. Militants gained a seat at the table in a diplomatic gesture. The government could thus resolve its lack of information about the perilous aspects of their

environment (radical activists and unruly behaviours) and thus coordinate the implementation of politics more effectively. The result was the reproduction of a stable social order in a cost-effective way, without solving the actual social problems.

The first proposal is thus that *place-based development programmes targeting marginal areas are suitable diplomatic devices to manage democratic deficiencies in the management of cities through participatory schemes without targeting the main social problems.*

Second proposition: Apparatuses of pacification

In a liberal democratic context, the working-class, the poor and middle-income citizens have one crucial resource in political negotiations: they outnumber the ruling classes. They can win elections and even more dramatic, bodies can easily conquer the streets with the sheer force of will and through solidarity, those that do not own other important properties can unite and force the ruling classes to comply. Diplomacy has its limits and when people lose their temper, riots turn to the rhyme of the unheard and trouble the legitimacy of democratic governments.

The emergence of welfare redistributive measures has been one of the ways to restrict the most militant tendencies among the have-nots. However, despite these social measures, post-war democracies have had to handle poverty and powerlessness as persistent issues. American cities were explicitly troubled with this post-war paradox. In the midst of flourishing affluence, the poor and black working classes were inhumanely discriminated, deprived and increasingly politicizing the liberal order. Revolutionary ideology and actions were inspiring students who mobilised for anti-war and civil-rights demands. The upsurge was also global. In the post-colonies, liberation movements' insurgencies against colonists pressed for increased autonomy.

Western governments needed to deal with insurrections both at home and abroad. The 'community approach' was originally developed in practices arising from British colonial rule, where the tough side of colonial military seizure of land and resources was complemented with a more tender management in relation to colonised communities (Cockburn 1977). According to Roy and colleagues (Roy, Schrader and Shaw Crane 2015), the evolution of the American community-development programmes targeted both turmoil at home and abroad. The area-specific anti-poverty development programmes in the U.S. grew out of the needs to manage urban unrest in the 1960s. They addressed issues of urban poverty, youth delinquency and neighbourhood decline. Simultaneously, military operations were being developed abroad to pacify insurrections in the colonies.

The strategies targeting militants in a colonial context became blueprints for policing strategies in disorderly American cities. These strategies were specifically targeting uprisings in black neighbourhoods and the burgeoning black power movement. 'The bureaucracies of poverty' emerging in the War on Poverty-programmes that demarcated poverty as a territorial phenomenon were according to Roy, Schrader and Shaw Crane (2015) functioning as 'apparatuses of pacification' aiming to assimilate poor people in efforts of cultural 'renewal' or assimilationist programmes promoting 'self-help' for what was framed as 'underdeveloped' geographies. One such policy trait was the aim of achieving the 'maximum feasible participation' of local communities, often constituted by the local civil-rights leaders of black communities, in the management of social programmes which did not question the reasons nor resolved the problems of poverty. The other aspects were policing strategies for the pacification of radicals developed and tested in the striking down of insurgencies abroad. The second proposal is thus that *place-based development programmes targeting the margins of the city,*

function as pacification strategies that through policing and cultural programmes neutralise the tendency of militant mobilisation among the poor.

Third proposition: A poor substitute for welfare policies

Militant movements are now marginal in contemporary cities; however, area-based development programmes targeting marginal areas have become established practices. In the neoliberal era of ours, the urban growth machine and its entrepreneurial apparatuses that hail principles of inter-urban competition, self-branding and exclusive housing opportunities for the affluent, have transformed the city to a site of mass consumption. The metropolitan geography has strengthened urban politics in relation to state ambitions, according to scholars like Brenner (2009). This rescaling of governance shapes the urban to a 'state space' managing the wealth of nations.

In most European cities, the financial base of wealth diminished as production facilities were reallocated to countries with cheaper labour costs. A large number of unemployed and disillusioned workers still needed jobs and services. The reliance on the private industry made cities survive the crisis by reimagining and restructuring the economic base. Oil-stained shop floors became fashionable housing areas, next to gleaming arenas for cultural consumption and exclusive housing areas. Universities attracted new professionals and consumers (students) together with events and hotels. Migrants seeking shelter from poverty or political oppression became the new poor working class. The middle-classes, once fleeing the dirty city to the gardens of sprawled suburbia, now returned, curious about all the new things to experience and shop.

Cities found a new post-industrial groove to ride on which enabled political action space for downsizing of welfare services and amplified pro-growth politics. Investments were directed to the affluent rather than the poor. Ruling classes also demanded the lowering of taxes and cutback on affordable housing for the underprivileged. Wealth is still unequally redistributed and the urban working class that make the cities' everyday services and industries function are receiving less of the fruits of their work. Their housing units and neighbourhoods are lagging or falling apart and they are racialized as the problems of society, *per se*. Still, the city has to keep the social order intact without recognising that the order of wealth production is unsustainable. The problem is solved by naming distinct and marginal areas where the underdogs of the modern economy reside as 'unsustainable'. These areas serve in modern policy discourse as the main obstacle to the new narrative of the success of the city. For Brenner (2009), local development programmes targeting socially excluded populations inherit an economic logic distinctive of the new urban-focused neoliberal governance regime, and its need to pave the way for entrepreneurial strategies.

The third proposal is that *in order to mitigate the ills of entrepreneurial urbanism, urban governments engage in place-based action programmes in order not to invest in welfare policies, but rather in symbolic inefficient actions that aim to ease the risk of social unrest.*

Fourth proposition: The city and the state need their 'others'

Neoliberalism is not the only problem. We can observe that increasing nationalism and the return of fascism as a popular force, authoritarianism and the institutionalisation of racist and discriminatory practices are political rationalities fronting how cities deal with urban problems.

The most overt example are the recent ‘Ghetto’-laws in Denmark discriminating inhabitants of some neighbourhoods in blatantly stigmatizing and racist ways.

The politics of cities are not only struggles over the managing of actual problems and realities, but also a struggle about the representation and construction of problems in order to recommend actions presented as necessary for the projects of the ruling classes. The city is a way for the nation to represent itself. Policies aimed at certain urban spaces also struggle over different ‘regimes of representation’, in geographer Dikeç’s (2007) words. What constitutes a ‘Badland’, a stigmatised territory in a city in a given policy process, is for Dikeç a spatial imagination, not a reality, created by a number of statements by the state which put the places in a frame suitable for state interventions. Through its bureaucratic activities of measuring, naming and mapping, the state does not portray the reality of space but rather works over time with different practices of articulation, such as investigations of the situation and living conditions to constitute them as *objects of intervention*. The purpose of these interventions is not only the realisation of economic logics but also the ambitions of nationalistic traditions to make themselves relevant as establishments of the state.

Dikeç’s analysis of French urban policy in the post-war era gives us further clues of the functions of place-based development programmes focusing on the ‘excluded’. Since the 1980s, the policies constituted a number of places as ‘threats’ and exceptions in relation to the core values of the republic. When the riots of 2005 and a number of social movements raised issues of social injustice and discrimination on the national agenda in France, the establishment could articulate the problems of the city based on a racist and xenophobic politics in which these areas were associated with threats such as terrorism. Once constituted as ‘menacing exteriorities’ the banlieux could be submitted to brutal violence and repressive measures to reinforce state power, argues Dikeç. The fourth proposal is that the *authoritarian and nationalistic ideologies of the state need their ‘other’ places to prosper in symbolic as well as in material power*.

Fifth proposition: Democratic games mystify oppression

Colonisation established the relevance of the European ruler, enriching and protecting the populace from the ‘under-developed’ people and contributing and spreading ‘civilisation’ to the world while simultaneously robbing people of their land and life. Consequently, the marginal areas serve the same function for urban governments, which knee-deep in several crises, need to remind their populace of why they are legitimate rulers. Another effective way to legitimate a ruler or a government action besides the ‘sustainability’ idea, tends to be the ‘democratic’ argument: the action is a desire of the people and/or a benefit for the people.

The fifth proposal gives us a hint about the more detailed operations of area-based development projects, which tend to be legitimated with arguments emphasising ambitions to ‘deepen democracy’. Social movements and other initiatives recurrently complain of bad policies or inefficient government operations, so the government needs to react. In a democratic context, it is not always appropriate to send out the police authorities in cases where mothers or the elderly manifest their distrust and anger with the cleaning of streets and parks, or with the closing down of schools. Diplomacy is often a more effective reaction and has become a more sophisticated political scheme.

The fifth and final proposal can be formulated thus: *the function of area-based policies is to mystify the oppression in the city by making poor people and their communities engaged in a*

democratic game which mystifies the prevailing power relations in place. These games are powerful because they appeal to the rational interest of the poor communities' associations, desperate to find funding for their social and cultural activities. The civil society in marginal areas is the sphere where the citizens attend to the collective solution of their individual problems. They are safe and socially trustful platforms where poor people creatively attend to collective issues. The associations are the primary site of self-empowering activities and potentially the biggest threat to the legitimacy of any unjust urban order. These associations need facilities and staff to establish activities, so while driven to represent the interests of their members they still become dependent on a number of public services for their existence.

The place-based policy programmes have become the administrative way to deal with these associations' grievances, which turns these schemes into a form of 'game of making out' (Kings, Ålund and Tahvilzadeh 2016). This game invites associations to apply and compete for project funds, controlled by local administrations and bureaucrats with discretion to distribute resources according to their own priorities. The game is a way to negotiate with the local state but also results in competition with other associations over funds. It establishes certain norms in the neighbourhood where associations tend to focus their grievances towards fundraising activities rather than political pressures on the local state. In a way, the game promises democratic participation in resource allocation but weakens the collective agency of civic associations. This tends to calibrate associational activities away from confrontations with city politics.

Conclusion

Projects launched by city governments tend to be justified as necessary steps to realise the public interest, which at the moment spells 'sustainability'. No doubt, professionals want to do 'good', but how can we explain the obvious policy failures? Given the well-established fact that city governments make a number of decisions that leave marginalised people worse off and that the projects targeting these areas are not effective in relation to their aims, the question posed in this chapter has been what other political functions these projects might have. I have proposed five functions: 1) Diplomatic means of dealing with the democratic deficiencies; 2) Apparatuses of pacification that neutralise the militant mobilisation among the poor; 3) Actions that mitigate the risks of social unrest; 4) Policies that establish a category of citizens and areas as the 'others' of the city and 'threats' to the nation because of their differences in order to advance repressive governance measures; and 5) Democratic games that mystify the oppressive political order in cities by encouraging civic associations to collaborate with city government.

These political functions are not mutually exclusive. One can be more active than the other and sometimes perhaps they all operate simultaneously. What we need to deal with is that instead of enabling opportunity structures for the empowerment of the working classes, these programs portray poverty as a territorial phenomenon and increase the power of outsiders in marginal areas. Maybe sustainability programs are not policy failures? Maybe the accomplishment of area-based development programs lies in their ability to successfully sustain an unequal urban order?

Returning to the portal quote by anti-colonial thinker Fanon (1965), land is the most essential value for colonised people, and as long as the ruling classes deny some territories their right to self-determination, self-development and 'dignity', a contestation of inequalities will never end. Development programmes for 'sustainability' strive to do 'good' but result in the conservation of an unjust order that people eventually will question, because at a certain point they will have nothing but their dignity to lose.

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(10)

**Understanding collective knowledge production:
What lessons can be learned from controversy?**

Rene Brauer

Introduction

In 2017, the *Gothenburg-Post* published several articles with the claim that taxpayer funds had been misappropriated for the establishment of a Camel Centre in North-East Gothenburg (e.g. Verdicchio 2017a; 2017b). The incendiary story was picked up by the Estonian-based Swedish libertarian-conservative newspaper *Fria Tider* [Free Times] (2017), allowing them to ridicule the supposed decadence of Swedish immigration and integration policy. Similarly, it played into the narrative of *Russia Today* (2017), who lambasted the Swedish development efforts as “*pure racism*”¹¹. The U.S. conservative outlet *Breitbart* (Hale 2017) ridiculed the project as “*absurd.*” Subsequently, there were internal investigations and a lot of commotion all caused by the framing of the articles that stoked the controversy. Several months afterwards, we then learn that the project at the eye of the controversy was threatened to repay all the official funds they received (Österberg 2017). Meanwhile the Camel Centre maintains that the money was used correctly (Svensson 2017). In the face of this public controversy that played out over multiple newspaper publications, naïvely, we could ask ourselves: “*So who’s lying?*”

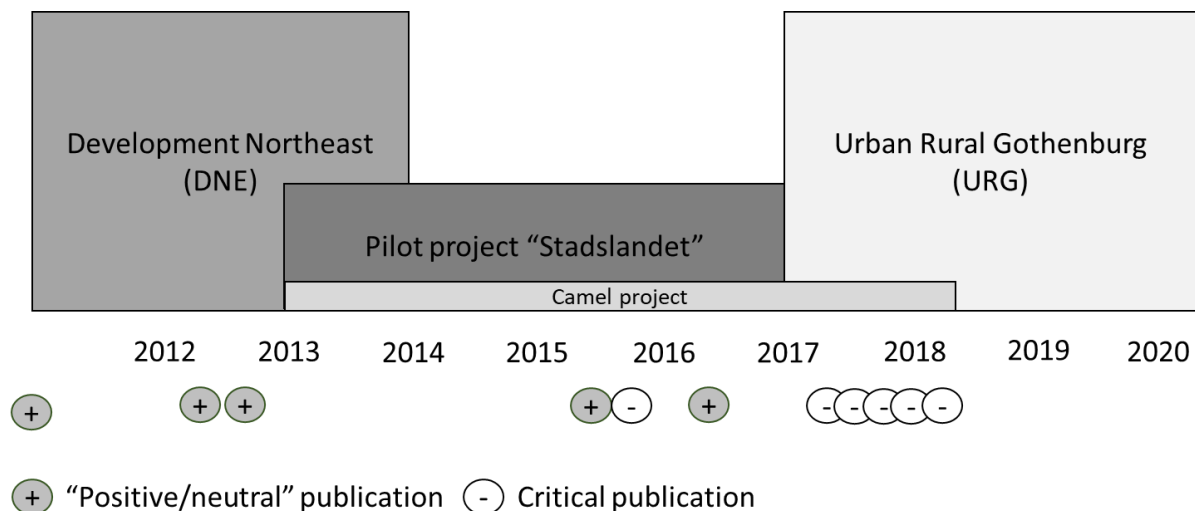


Figure 1: Timeline of articles discussing the establishment of a camel centre in a suburb of North-East Gothenburg (cf. Brauer 2018a)

¹¹ This expression first appeared in the original *Gothenburg-Post* article and only referred to the pilot project Stadslandet, quoting one individual living within the area. However, as it spread through other media sources, it was mixed up with the Camel Centre issue.

From the perspective of the author of this chapter, the source of confusion that contributed to the controversy (here labelled as the *camel problem*) can be illustrated with a timeline that highlights a sudden shift in how the Camel Centre was portrayed in the media (cf. Fig. 1). In order to understand this shift in focus we first have to set the scene and introduce some of the main actors, such as the local population, different development projects and who were the financial backers.

The first actor are the people living within the area. Compared to other areas of the city of Gothenburg, a relatively high percentage of the population are of immigrant background, many of which have lower levels of education, are less fluent in Swedish, and struggle with more socio-economic problems, compared to the majority (cf. City of Gothenburg 2019). There have been many development projects launched in the area to address this situation, with varying degrees of success and enthusiasm (e.g. Siwe 2015). Regardless, the Camel Centre was started as a passion project by local residents in 2012, which in turn was reported upon in a positive fashion (e.g. Bozinovska 2012). This positive framing fitted well with the *Development North-East* (DNE) focus on how cultural diversity could be utilised for economic gains and creation of employment (e.g. Hohner 2012). Additionally, DNE generated a pilot study called *Stadslandet* [in English meaning literally ‘The Urban Countryside’], which, with further development, went on to become the fully-fledged development project *Urban Rural Gothenburg* (URG). Although not part of the URG project, the Camel Centre featured within the initial discussions of the pilot study *Stadslandet* in 2017. As both the pilot study and URG are known under the Swedish name ‘*Stadslandet*,’¹² hence it is easy to see the risk of conflating the two related, yet very different, projects.

By the time the controversy superseded previous positive press, URG had already distanced itself from the Camel Centre. Most of the publications about the Camel Centre were positive prior to the publication of the aforementioned *Gothenburg-Post* article that accused the project of racism and misappropriation of funds (Brauer 2018a). As such, there have been millions of taxpayer funds involved across different but tangentially related projects. This loose connection seems to be the lynchpin that allowed external actors to ‘jump on the band wagon’, utilising the *Gothenburg-Post*’s articles’ negative framing for their own narrative purposes to attack a strawman of Swedish integration policy.

The aim of this chapter is to showcase that the mere multiplicity of actors within the controversy, their different outlooks on reality and the complexity of the subject matter is enough in explaining ‘the camel problem’. The structure of the chapter is as follows. Next follows a brief outline of the here used theoretical framework; namely the fable of the elephant and the blind men. In the empirical part, five different viewpoints will be contrasted; on how the actions of the blind men themselves distorted or changed the nature of identifying what the problem is in the first place. A conclusion is drawn, in respect to what lesson can be learned.

The elephant and the blind men

The parable of the blind men and the elephant is a very old Indian tale. In the story a group of blind men that do not know what an elephant is, are trying to make sense of it by investigating it. Each individual, based on their position, observes a different aspect of the *same* phenomena

² Furthermore, the internal administration of URG is also called ‘*Utveckling Nordost*’, which is the Swedish translation of DNE. Again, despite having the same name, they are different projects.

(i.e. the elephant). Each individual's mental construct is consistent with their sensory information of touching the ears, tail, legs or trunk of the elephant respectively. Yet, when they attempt to describe their own experiences to each other, they discover that they differ starkly and are not at all describing the *same* phenomena. Some variations of the tale also include that such a contingency then leads to accusations of dishonesty and malice. The lesson of the story is usually that every individual describes reality based on their own limited (subjective) understanding, whilst ignoring or criticising others' (equally subjective) experiences. Useful for understanding our controversy is to realise that such conduct generates collective consequences for knowledge production (cf. Fig. 2). For example, the entire notion of what an elephant (or camel in our case) is, is called into question based on the actions of the blind men themselves. Are they really discussing the *same* phenomena?

In relation to gaining new knowledge (i.e. things that we do not already know) we can imagine ourselves all as blind men, as nobody really knows yet. Everyone is applying their own pre-existing knowledge, to make sense of the reality that they are observing. Entangled within the camel problem, the blind men attributed it to racism, ignorance, corruption, decadence, negligence, to name but a few of the psychological projections that now embroil the controversy. Cynically, we could now throw our hands up in the air and say; "*Aww what's the point, there is no external reality,*" (Kirby 2006: 37) especially in relation to how technology, sensationalism and fake news seem to exacerbate issues relating to such human tendencies.

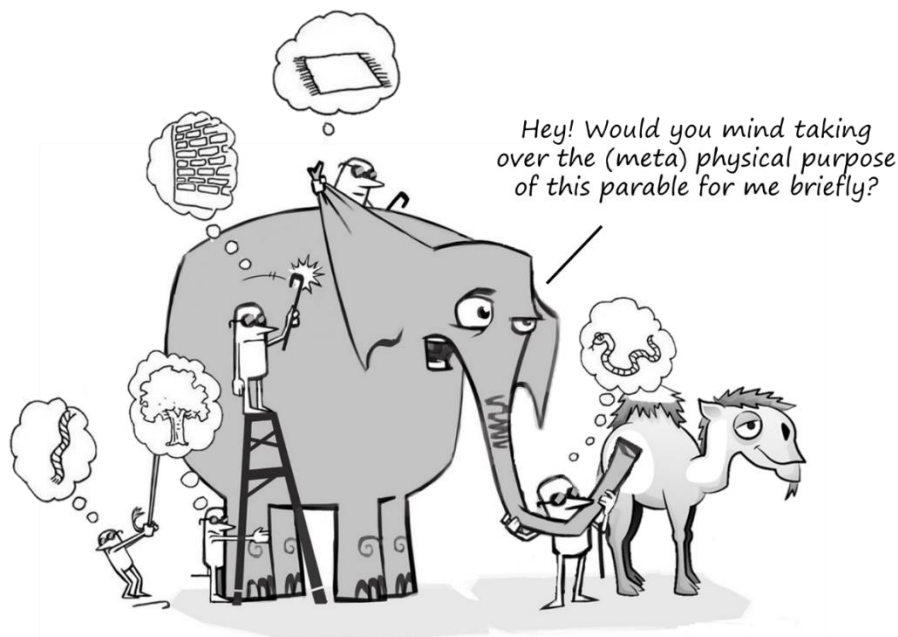


Figure Two. Illustration of the parable of the blind men and the elephant (adapted from Amdur 2018; gstatic n.d; Oatley 2018)

What fatalistic and fantastic characterisations of reality often miss is that our human condition causes this multiplicity of interpretations (cf. Lakoff and Johnson 2008). The associated difficulties in communication are not new, and neither are their solutions (Shapin 2012). For example, Habermas [1971] (2001) characterises scientific research as an *ideal speech situation*, which occurs only when all the blind men acknowledge their blindness and collaborate in identifying the camel/elephant. Any researcher who aims to participate in a serious scholarly

discussion, has not only to structure, narrate and present their own argument in a certain fashion. They also need to manifest a certain set of scientific values *before* any attempt at dialectic can succeed (Brauer 2018b). Scientific facts are formerly contentious claims that have had limitations placed on them by their author's choice of construction. Think sample size, selection criteria, theoretical and analytical framework, research methods, data selection, knowledge gap, funders' interests, ethical consideration, editors' consideration, peer-review feedback etc. In fact (see what I did here!), it is precisely due to these limitations that within the scientific ideal speech situation agreement can be found and claims become non-contentious.

The blind men's own conduct

The following section will now analyse the camel problem in relation to a particular blind man: the misuse of criticism to generate a controversy, how the multiplicity of different purposes causes confusion, how ignorance and identity cause different perceptions of reality, how any actions can have unintended consequences and, how hyper-complexity within wicked problems represents a problem in and of itself. All aspects are intended to highlight how the blind men's own actions contributed to causing the camel problem in the first place.

Criticism is easy, creation is difficult

Whilst there is a lot to be said about the human condition, when we want to focus on how the conduct of the blind men themselves is hindering the establishment of an ideal speech situation, simplistic labels of good/evil, right/wrong, true/false etc. often generate counterproductive outcomes (cf. Haidt 2013). For example, narrative devices such as the innocent victim, the evil wrongdoer with nefarious intentions, the gallant hero and so forth are indeed powerful and allow the author to stoke a controversy. However, such narrative choices usually say more about the author than what is being described (cf. Nietzsche [1887] 1989). The thing we blind men have to remember, is that criticism is mostly directed at *other* peoples' bad actions. It is possible to make a career out of such conduct yet – as was the case with Class Relotius (Connolly 2018)¹³, – such sophistry is subsequently discovered to be fake news. The ensuing public outcry will generate a scapegoat (e.g. Klusmann 2019), yet it is not addressing the climate and circumstances that created such sophistry and outright fabrication in the first place.

In our controversy, there were millions of Swedish Krona involved in development project funds in the area, but not all of it was devoted to the Camel Centre. Indeed, the Camel Centre can be cast as a comical effort to address issues of segregation and economic hardships, which is presumably one of the reasons why it was not included in the bigger URG project. Just to be clear, nobody is accusing the *Gothenburg-Post* journalist in question of outright lying here. However, what is clear is that this 'blind man' (referring to the parable above) played 'fast and loose' with some facts of the camel problem, in order to generate sensationalism.... in which he succeeded. Unfortunately, whilst such conduct may be beneficial in generating clickbait for the *Gothenburg-Post* to bolster ad revenue and subscriptions, it does nothing for, or is even harmful to, the people living in North-East Gothenburg (Dymitrow and Brauer 2016). Not to speak of the loss of trust in journalistic integrity that such yellow journalism breeds (cf. Frost 2011: 80-83).

¹³ “The award-winning German journalist who admitted falsifying stories on a large scale” [...] “Moreno said: “He was the superstar of German journalism if one’s honest” [...] “At the start it was the small mistakes, things that seemed too hard to believe that made me suspicious.”

Multiplicity of interpretations and purpose

The Camel Centre does also manifest the multiplicity of different interpretations. The vision of the people involved with the Camel Centre had a very hopeful characterisation. The camel problem started to occur when other blind men scrutinised the project with a different purpose in mind. The controversy initiated an internal investigation within Business Region Gothenburg (BRG), as it partially funds URG. Among others, it uncovered that there was a study visit to investigate camel husbandry facilities in Kazakhstan. The BRG employee did finance this trip with private funds, nevertheless due to failing to declare holiday the individual was let go. This, it seemed, was enough to make the individual a scapegoat to showcase that the management was taking the controversy seriously and was prepared to protect the BRG trademark. Whilst such conduct is understandable given the circumstances, it still generates collective consequences for communication.

For all of the blind men involved (be it URG, the Camel Centre or the political management) there was something that they saw as meaningful, hence their involvement with the Camel Centre. Yet as we have seen from the fable of the elephant, meaning can differ based on one's particular position. It appears the initial enthusiasm was contagious and fitted well with DNE's focus on culture as a facilitator for socio-economic change. Several years down the line, *other* outside blind men (e.g. the *Gothenburg-Post*) not caught up in the same enthusiasm and meaning, cast a very different interpretation of the Camel Centre based on their own particular purpose. These other blind men drew very different lessons as to what to improve, whom to blame and what the *real* camel problem was. Such conduct may allow a blind man to cast blame, but it's not constructive for identifying the shape of the camel problem and what lessons can be learned from this problem at hand (Brauer et al. 2016).

Ignorance and identity

Controversy is not something that is new to North-East Gothenburg; the predecessor development projects received their own fair share of criticism (e.g. Göteborg Direkt 2013). As it appears, there is an entire 'zoo' of problems in the area, the crucial question being, who decides what animal/problem to focus on? It can be argued that the conceptual framing of focusing on urbanity and inclusivity as something to be celebrated, may have shifted attention away from more fundamental problems such as school completion, Swedish language proficiency and self-segregation (Dymitrow and Brauer 2017). What becomes clear, is that the supposed diversity, which was cast as a strength, in practice created many of the problems that they intended to address.

Just to showcase how *diverse* North-East Gothenburg is, i.e. the context of phenomena that all blind men are squabbling over, let's just exemplify. In the *same* area there is both a Christian organisation (Caritas) that teaches immigrants the Swedish language, and Muslim extremists recruiting jihadists (Lindroos 2016). There we also find several Buddhist temples, and organisations that organize a recurring Latin American-style carnival (cf. Dymitrow and Brauer 2014). All these individuals have a particular outlook on reality, against which the sensory information will be interpreted. Any hope to ascertain consensus, needs the acknowledgement that other people who do not share your own identity also have the possibility to contribute something worthwhile. In such a situation of collective ignorance, individual ignorance is not a problem, intolerance of others' clumsy attempts to express themselves is.

Iatrogenesis

Iatrogenesis is a Greek word that stands for ‘from the healer’ emphasising that even well-intentioned actions can have unintended consequences (cf. Taleb 2014). Any purposeful action always has this potential, regardless of sincerity, hopes or benevolent intention of the actor (Merton 1936). Perhaps the resulting controversy is an unintended consequence of the shift from DNE’s urban focus to URG’s more rural focus. Nobody forced BRG – or the relevant individuals – to adopt these previous names or themes. Yet this decision created the impression of continuity. When the project call was meant to generate funds from various funding agencies this continuation of their efforts from previous projects was stressed, resulting in the perception of Tillväxtverket (one of the funders) that:

“After DNE finished; its activities, its project aims, and organisation structure have largely been reincarnated within BRG as a parent company.” (Tillväxtverket 2016: 15)¹⁴

Rhetorically, for any funder this is very pleasing to read. By signifying that there has been a prior effort that is now continuing, the project application showcases continuity and commitment. However, now that the situation has blown up into a controversy, all this continuity and commitment seems to have evaporated... surprising no one.¹⁵ Now officially, the project management can maintain that these are two separate projects in their scramble to re-establish their integrity. Sadly, such conduct is just addressing the symptoms and not the cause of the camel problem. Presumably, these types of ‘unfortunate’ unintended consequences will keep happening in the area if people continue to disengage from controversial/negative issues as a form of damage control, as nothing new is learned and old mistakes are repeated with impunity (cf. Brauer et al. 2016; Brauer, Dymitrow and Tribe 2019).

Hyper-complexity within wicked problems

Now given this complexity of different actors observing the *same* phenomena, we seem to have a situation where the involved actors are attributing completely different causalities to what is causing the problem. Sociologically, such a situation could be described as a wicked problem. Wicked problems are socio-cultural challenges that are hyper-complex, hard to pin down and have elusive solutions (Rittel and Webber 1973). A first positive sign that some of the blind men are indeed talking amongst each other was the research seminar on the 18th of September 2018 with the title ‘Wicked problems or wicked solutions? Sustainability–differently’ (Dymitrow et al. 2018). During this seminar, four scholars (including myself and the author) discussed cases of wicked problems in urban planning from Macedonia, Poland and Sweden.

The common ground found in the discussion was that the academic process of; allowing the speaker to state their case, outline their methods, present their data and elaborate on their conclusions is necessary for any serious discussion. During such an open format, the rationality, intentions and integrity of the speaker are revealed to the audience, who subsequently can make their own judgement upon whether that blind man is trustworthy or not. Therefore, when speaking to blind men it is paramount to stress the limitations of your own process. Furthermore, whilst you should allow for shortcomings and mistakes in others’ accounts, your own account should be as accurate as one can reasonably expect (Dymitrow and Brauer 2018). The downside of this process is that it takes time, energy and resources that need to be invested in order to maintain the integrity of the dialectic.

⁴ The original reads: “Efter projektslut har verksamheten till stor del levt vidare och Utveckling Nordost ingår nu i stadens näringslivskluster med Business Region Göteborg (BRG) som moderbolag.”

⁵ In 1961, responding to a question by a journalist about the failed Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, US president John F. Kennedy responded: “Victory has 100 fathers, but failure is an orphan.”

Lessons for the blind men

To conclude, the illustrated camel problem appears to be a characteristic of the wicked issues that present themselves within the area of North-East Gothenburg. The kaleidoscope of different interpretations is an indication of the complexity and difficulties underpinning the issues facing the people living in North-East Gothenburg. Since humans are ready to cast blame and eagerly shirk responsibility, this controversy appears to be symptomatic of the multitude of underpinning problems. If we can draw any conclusions from this controversy it should be that only by acknowledging the subjectivity and shortcomings in our own and others' descriptions of reality can we even hope to constructively engage in any form of problem solving. If this common value ground is not present, then the whole interaction is not only pointless in solving the problem at hand, but potentially even is making it worse. Yes, humans do disagree, but because we are often inclined towards simplifications and mischaracterisation, our own actions are often inadvertently contributing to conflict and controversy. The only way out of this quagmire is to acknowledge the possibility to learn from other peoples' different descriptions of the *same* camel/reality in spite of our own tendencies to dismiss such accounts. To finish with a quote from a radical philosopher and historian of science providing a characterisation of the underpinning value ground of the ideal speech situation:

“A friend is someone that you allow to disagree with you.”

– Paul Feyerabend, 1924–1994

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The skeleton:

LEADERS

(11)

Building a relationship economy

Dan Melander

Dan Melander is a project manager at Business Region Gothenburg in charge of climate smart and green business development for social sustainability. He was instrumental in launching Urban Rural Gothenburg (URG), a project that has given him new hope of a surge in sustainability driven local economic development and green business.

Dan: I feel that since democracy is so fragile and the global economy increasingly is being controlled by totalitarian states or flawed democracies, it is important that people, communities and businesses become society-builders together, while also creating a value-based economy. This is important also in a historic perspective – during the 1950s we had 200,000 politicians in our country. Today we have 38,000 politicians and we are a couple of millions more people in Sweden. When using local co-creation to build sustainable local municipalities and economies fostering common relationships, trust and new learning is highly important. And URG has made me see that this path is possible.

URG emanated from a discussion Dan and his colleagues had with people, organisations and businesses in the local community involved in the project Development North-East in 2012 and 2013 where they asked themselves what strengths there are in Angered:

Dan: We were fully aware of the problems of segregation, but what potential was there? What qualities? Many mentioned that one of the strengths of Angered is that it's located between the city and the countryside. There and then we got the idea of doing a pilot study.

During the course of the study Dan and his team talked to around 1,200 people, both from urban and rural areas. They represented the business community, academia, the municipal administration, politics and NGOs [non-governmental organisations]:

Dan: We also came across several studies essentially telling us the same things we had heard from Gothenburgers. A study from Shanghai called 'Design and Harvest' demonstrated how the lack of green areas in cities led to lower quality of life for urban dwellers, prompting them to take long bicycle trips on weekends to experience nature. Around the cities there were farmers who weren't very digitally connected and who were struggling to make ends meet. The demand for locally-produced food, different forms of climate smart business development and a higher quality of life suggested a win-win situation if these two groups could be brought together to develop a new local economy.

One study that caught Dan's eye was a national American report from 2013 called 'Green Opportunity' concluding that small-scale green business, such as renewable energy, energy efficiency, locally-sourced food and sustainable tourism was the fastest growing part of the economy in the U.S. over the past six years, growing by 360% in that period, while the industrial economy only grew by 30%.

A new topic that also caught the attention was the suburbs new role as areas for economic development for sustainability. It was focused by the research study concerning a new form of urbanisation between urban and rural areas named 'Peri-urbanisation in Europe – Towards European Policies to Sustain Urban-Rural Futures'. This research was based on data, maps and contributions from scientists from 35 institutions from 14 European countries and China:

Dan: Suddenly green and climate smart business was seen as real economic development, with urban food production and other forms of sustainable businesses becoming popular. New York City restaurants were growing food on the roofs. Seattle set aside an entire park as a food forest, garnering much attention. When I saw their forest, I noted that we were doing the same sort of things in Gothenburg. But hardly anyone knew.

This research confirmed what Dan and his colleagues had gleaned from conversations with Gothenburgers. They concluded that Gothenburg needed an ecosystem-based, green and climate smart infrastructure and business development where the economy would drive ecological and social sustainability and boost biodiversity. Thus, URG grew out of Development North-East, Sweden's hitherto largest EU project for urban sustainable development:

Dan: We had a start-up phase, applied for EU funding and received support from all the major political parties in Gothenburg. Our application was approved by the EU and the project was launched in 2017.

Listening tour

Dan's role in URG basically consists of talking to people, soaking up thoughts and opinions, being a matchmaker between various actors, such as locals, NGO's, companies, officials, politicians and people in academia facilitating their network building. Personal relations are paramount in this work, including building mutual trust. Learning from the success of other projects is also important:

Dan: Recently we travelled to Malmö, 25 of us from the Angered district [a socio-economically challenged area of Gothenburg], administration officials, business entrepreneurs and others, to study a mansion that has been made into a centre for sustainable business development in one of the suburbs. They are developing new forms for urban food production and other forms of sustainability driven businesses, synchronising with local restaurants, creating jobs, and it's also becoming attractive as a tourist destination.

According to Dan, the various branches of the municipal administration in Gothenburg all operate too much in an old-fashioned way. Since many are not used to working with process-oriented innovation and development in close proximity to the citizens and local businesses there is a disconnect and a democratic deficit. URG is basically about building society bottom-up, through co-creation, involving citizens and businesses in building our community through cooperation between urban and rural areas:

Dan: During this whole project I and others have listened to the voices of the Gothenburgers who wanted this to happen. Many are from countries similar to northern Italy where they have creative co-created local economies with for example - local abattoirs, markets and bakeries. We saw that in Sweden we have been destroying a lot of this type of local economy since the 1950s.

Speaking to some local green business entrepreneurs in Gothenburg, Dan and his team were told: *"Our politicians have neglected us. They only think about the big companies, but we are the entrepreneurs of this city. We have produced five-star quality food here for five generations."* Thus, there were many small businesses and individuals who had skills and knowledge that weren't put to good use:

Dan: We were propelled by the message we heard from the population and local businesses. This wasn't just our idea. We really did become enlightened by the citizens.

Bucking the municipal trend

To Dan, traditional municipal culture with its hierarchical structure is a far cry from working with development processes in local communities where citizens become part of the decision-making. Local business development, as a process, entails not only being process-oriented in your work methods but also that you constantly have to be prepared to revise your view of reality:

Dan: Reality isn't always what you think, it is often much more complex, so you have to change as a result of the people and actors you meet. This means that your objectives have to change as well. Accordingly, what we initially thought was needed must be applied differently depending on the particular community we're working with. So we often find ourselves saying: "*We have to rethink this.*"

This way of thinking and working is a major departure from traditional administration culture. There are civil servants who find it hard to adapt to process-oriented work methods as these might be perceived as a threat to those who are comfortable with the current state of affairs:

Dan: Traditional municipal culture also has its benefits. It does produce tangible results so we shouldn't condemn it. But there is a risk that civil servants and their managers respond to the requirement for change by digging their heels in the old structures. This will further increase the segregation between the municipal administration and the population, as well as the segregation both in our cities and between urban and rural areas. This is why building trust, relationships and new learning processes is important.

Dan emphasises that segregation is something we all create, through our structures and ways of working in official administrations. There are some civil servants that really understand the process-oriented way of working. Dan sees them as heroes. But it can be tough for them to work in this manner if the majority of their colleagues cling to old ways of thinking:

Dan: I don't see tension and conflicts as wholly negative, for within them are the seeds of solutions for everyone, from citizen, to business and to civil servant. When we fail, it's easy to become bitter and angry. The failure is an important part of the learning process when working in complex local realities. We also often need to slow down and wait for the processes to become acceptable to those who at first don't understand them.

Regrets

Dan thinks that if he had started working on the project today, he probably would have made a greater effort to prepare the whole URG team, training them thoroughly in process-oriented work. Managers and central politicians should have been more trained and involved in this type of exploring new ways of working for better concrete results for local economic and sustainable development. Perhaps there was too much organisational planning. Organisational conflicts and policy conflicts got the upper hand as the project started:

Dan: I would have done that differently. And with so many people from various administrations it was hard to build a team, though now we have succeeded. There was a lot of staff insecurity because the public servants worked in different branches of the

municipal administration. We weren't the staff managers; their respective bosses were. We could have avoided some confusion by being clearer on that early on.

Dan also admits that the collaboration between academia and the various branches of the municipal administration could have been better organised at the management level from the beginning. Moreover, there also could have been a more dynamic dialogue and a more receptive attitude overall.

Building bridges

What pleases Dan most about the project is seeing that there are so many citizens, businesses and NGOs who really want to act more sustainably:

Dan: I probably underestimated this force. There are resources and resolve in the population far greater than I could have imagined. Seeing the collaboration between citizens has given me immense satisfaction.

Dan is delighted to see how Ugandans and Ethiopians are working with reforestation and new forms of ecosystem-based business development, and how they have built organisations in Gothenburg to facilitate this cause. Having been able to lease land from the City of Gothenburg they are now well on their way to creating Sweden's first agroforestry centre:

Dan: Suddenly they start collaborating with a local farmer here in Angered. It also turns out he had been to Kenya 10 years ago and has lots of contacts there. So, we build bridges between people, between businesses in urban and rural areas and between local international development projects, and there is enormous mental relief in that.

The Angered Farmstead [an arena for education and innovation projects in North-East Gothenburg] also appears a success story. The upper secondary school for management of natural resources has been established there and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences are also on their way in:

Dan: This could become a centre for green business development, circular economy and local economic development for sustainability, maybe the first in Sweden of its kind: Gothenburg's biggest farm in the centre of Angered!

The Property Management Administration in Gothenburg have performed a feat according to Dan. They have granted 140 leaseholds for commercial urban food production. Growers are starting to deliver locally-produced organic food to schools and the pupils take trips with their teachers to meet the growers:

Dan: There are also plans for medium-scale industrial production of vegetables in greenhouses and urban land-based fish farming. We did a study on this and there are business plans indicating this will be financially feasible. There is demand. These greenhouses can also become cafés where people can meet, or city terminals for climate smart logistics in new forms of distributions. Consumers, stores, hotels and restaurants might be able to buy shares in growers' production and it could be distributed by electric-based logistics. This is how we can build a relationship economy.

One of the prime examples of local communities perhaps exceeding URG's expectations is Olofstorp, a small locality in the northeast corner of Gothenburg. Dan notes that these communities didn't have an active local development group there before URG was launched.

The group grew out of the project. Now they are coordinating the entire community, all the NGOs and the local businesses:

Dan: What we have done is to support a process where the local actors are taking responsibility themselves. They are doing the work we previously did or attempted to do. So, the people we have supported are running far ahead of us. This means that that the goal has been achieved.

How successful has it been?

Dan says grading URG is difficult since it's such a complex project with so many participants, including seven branches of Gothenburg's municipal administration. There are at least 15 projects within URG focusing not only on local food but also on climate smart logistics, sustainable building, redesign of second-hand textiles, furniture and building materials. And it's not just about attaining results but also about learning and finding innovative paths towards the project's objective. Dan would give URG a five out of five in this pathfinder sense since even what might be viewed as failures are important learning experiences for the city:

Dan: We could have reached many more companies and organisations in the short-term, but we looked at it from a broader and longer-term societal perspective. It's about co-creating an environmentally sustainable local economy, and that's more important to me than ticking a box saying we have reached this or that number of companies. So, viewed in its entirety, I would give URG between four and five on a scale... Four plus. I think we need a project like URG on a national level. The segregation between urban and rural areas, and within cities, is a threat to democracy and social stability. But I would also see it as a great possibility for co-creating sustainable economic development.

(12)

The epicentre of things

Susan Runsten • Heléne Lindau • Eva-Lena Albihn

Susan Runsten, Heléne Lindau and Eva-Lena Albihn are employed at Business Region Gothenburg (BRG), Susan as head of the BRG Development North-East unit, Heléne as chief project economist and Eva-Lena as deputy CEO. They all became part of Urban Rural Gothenburg (URG) as BRG is the organisation coordinating the project.

In 2015 there was a review of the various companies owned by the City of Gothenburg. One of the results of this review was the amalgamation of Business Region Gothenburg (BRG) and Development North-East (DNE), the company that ran the namesake development project in the Gothenburg city districts of Angered and East Gothenburg [socio-economically challenged areas of Gothenburg]:

Eva-Lena: This was when the embryo to URG emerged through various interviews around what had happened in DNE. I became chair of URG's Steering Group [a constellation with representatives from each of the participating organisations]. It was Susan who asked if I could take this role. It has been very interesting and a good learning experience, as there are so many organisations who collaborate in this.

The URG Steering Group has a representative each from the organisations that collaborate in the project. Apart from BRG there are nine other actors, including seven municipal administrations as well as the Research Forum at Mistra Urban Futures and the business advisory organisation Coompanion. The Steering Group normally convenes three times a year since Heléne writes the financial reports every four months:

Eva-Lena: We follow up the financial report at the meetings as well as objectives and results. Additionally, we have separate meetings where Susan, the project managers and I meet with the various actors. What is it in your hub [geographical areas where the project is particularly active] or testbed [subproject] that doesn't work or that works very well or that we can assist you further with?

It is important, Eva-Lena emphasises, that URG does what it said it would do in the application to the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (SAERG) and also ensures that the financial side is given equal consideration:

Eva-Lena: What are we allowed to do? We must be in continual dialogue with SAERG, our financiers, if we for instance want to shift costs within the project.

Heléne: There haven't been that many discussions of this kind.

Eva-Lena: No, I think there have only been two or three of them, cases where we have shifted resources from activities to employees. But we had many coordination meetings before we handed in our final application as well.

Heléne and her boss were to a large extent involved with the financing in conjunction with the application process since there were so many actors involved in the project:

Helène: It was quite natural when URG started that I continued working with the project as responsible for the finance side of it.

Susan was manager for the project DNE. When the application for URG was written she contributed in this work. At BRG she is now head of the unit bearing the name DNE, a name which thus once designated both the project DNE and the company that was specifically created to run the project. This unit within BRG has the responsibility for URG:

Susan: I am fairly involved in the operative management of URG. I participate in quite a lot of conversations around how we should handle situations when things aren't going smoothly.

Susan says that what differs financially from DNE is that all the money there was cash that could be spent within the project. The City of Gothenburg contributed 75 million SEK [7.9 million USD] while the European Union added 50 million SEK [5.25 million USD]:

Susan: There we could finance everything with new money. In URG the financing from the City of Gothenburg is in-kind funding, through their staff contributing with work hours within their respective administrations. The advantage of this is that what you build within the project will remain within the organisation.

Clear roles

While many URG participants seemed rather uncertain of their mandate at the initial stage of the project, Susan, Eva-Lena and Helène have had very clear roles. As chair of the Steering Group Eva-Lena chairs and plans meetings, ensuring there will be a structure encompassing the whole year. As responsible for the financial side Helène keeps track of how much money URG has at its disposal and what is possible to do during the remainder of the project. She is also a member of the Project Management Group where project strategy is discussed. Reporting accrued expenses to SAERG every four months is something of a mammoth task:

Helène: I make a requisition to SAERG based on the invoices I get from the all actors within URG. At BRG we have a good reputation as managers of EU projects, so we have a very open dialogue with SEARG. We have asked them many times what is possible to do within the project and would rather ask one time too many than vice versa.

Susan's role is to monitor URG from a project owner perspective. It is a matter of interpretation exactly what that entails, she observes, as she isn't project manager but is head of BRG's DNE unit:

Susan: I have leadership responsibility. My role entails that it changes quite a lot depending on what happens and how the project is performing. So initially there was quite a lot of work in getting up-and-running. But now the role is different because everyone knows what to do and we are increasingly proud of the project and can see tangible results. Now it is more a question of how we take this further.

Susan thinks that when the project ends her focus will be to pave the way for safeguarding what has been achieved within the project. URG is often seen as an expedition by its participants. But as it draws to a close, being concrete about its findings is crucial if the various municipal branches are to make use of these within their organisations. As the administrations customarily work in silos the task of implementation may be a bit of a challenge.

The perils and pitfalls of projects

Susan feels that in her role she constantly has to be aware of various risks. *“What could go wrong? What will someone react to in all these systems that hasn’t been perfectly agreed upon?”* This is the perspective one must have:

Susan: There is definitely a need to handle conflicts from time to time. To be a calming influence on others.

Eva-Lena: Yes, but also to be propelling.

Susan: Yes.

Helène: The structure we work in is difficult since we don’t really lead people working in the project. So, we have to work with coordination meetings, steering groups and such.

Having been involved in many projects, Susan has observed that they generally become much more scrutinised than everyday work within public administration. Activities in projects with external funding have to be administratively tiptop:

Susan: All results should be verifiable, and preferably four or five years after the project’s conclusion one should be able to phone up a company who’ll say: *“Yes, URG did a great job.”* So there are tough demands in running a project of this kind. And there is also a broad conception that projects are a bad thing per se. We shouldn’t have them. So this is also something you have to relate to, the view that everything should be done within the ordinary administrative structures.

As for the criticism against URG for draining funds from the municipality’s regular activities, Susan notes that the EU money that funds URG cannot be used for purposes such as raising teacher salaries, building a new preschool or improving eldercare, since it is earmarked for the very sort of purpose URG exemplifies.

Towards implementation

Given all the results from URG and the experiences of working within it, what should be implemented in future activities? Eva-Lena says that they have started discussing the issue in the separate meetings BRG have with the other URG actors and also within the Steering Group:

Eva-Lena: We will have these conclusions during 2019. We should definitely use as much as we can and point to all the positive examples.

Susan: It’s an ongoing process. I think that the more concrete we are when we talk about this, for instance a certain network, or some companies that need continued support, the more likely it will be something we can handle. So, who should be responsible for doing this? Perhaps there already is similar support or work within the city. Then we can lead them there. If there isn’t, we can think: *“Is there someone who can start doing this work who hasn’t done it before?”*

On the issue of collaboration between municipal organisations, Susan feels it might be difficult to decide whose responsibility it will be to implement this way of working in the future, if indeed the various actors within URG conclude that cross-sector methods are an important benefit of the project:

The skeleton: Leaders

Susan: At BRG we have the responsibility for business development. The Property Management Administration are to administer the land. The city districts have responsibility for the citizens. It won't be altogether easy to decide how we are going to collaborate.

Eva-Lena, Susan and Heléne would give URG a four on a five-point scale. Heléne feels the project has been very challenging as there are so many URG actors, requiring very complex accounting, but it has been very rewarding work:

Eva-Lena: I also feel that it is good that we have brought all these people together. I'm happy that we are working as a team. Now there is a Facebook page where you can read about different projects. It becomes something concrete we can talk about.

Susan: A lot of good impulses and learning will come out of this project, people being helped and connected with each other. Who knows where this will lead?

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A tempestuous voyage

Stina Rydberg • Peter Rundkvist

Stina Rydberg is a former project manager and author of the application for the Urban Rural Gothenburg (URG) project, Peter Rundkvist is one of the initiators of URG. Hence, they were both involved in URG at the planning stage, working in concert to pave the way for the project.

Peter left URG in May 2017. He says the project has brought him plenty of insights and knowledge. He has continued tinkering with various project activities in North-East Gothenburg on his own, helping people seek funding:

Peter: I suppose I am such an incurable idealist that I'm not really disappointed. I still believe it's possible to do good projects, but one shouldn't carry them out in this manner. Running a development project such as URG in an old industrial city like Gothenburg, knowing its culture and history, how the Law of Jante operates and what the political undergrowth really stands for, is hardly feasible.

In the early 2010s, Peter was part of the project Development North-East (DNE), at the end of which a pilot study called *Urban Rural Gothenburg* was launched. The pilot study then inspired an application for a larger, independent project. The application was written by Stina, which eventually led to URG being approved as a three-year enterprise by the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth:

Stina: I worked as a consultant for an agency in Gothenburg. I don't remember how it happened, but Peter's and my paths crossed, and it ended up with me being assigned to write the application for funding. It was so-so.

When working with Stina on the pilot study, Peter had emphasised the importance of URG having a scientific footing as it contained a number of theses and hypotheses around urban-rural development processes. It seemed urgent to get the scientific community on board. An opportunity presented itself for researchers who were interested in these issues:

Peter: This became my job, to get these connections with researchers. So we came to collaborate on this very early on.

Stina: That's right.

Peter: And this was also a pilot study, one might say, a pilot study within the pilot study which was focused on the research side which then you did, Stina, or we did it together, but you had the formal assignment to write it.

Stina: Yes. We had fun writing it.

As a result of Peter's insistence that URG have a scientific anchoring, the Research Forum was created at Mistra Urban Futures (MUF).

The aim of the Research Forum is to strengthen the work in URG's various testbeds [subprojects] and hubs [select areas of Gothenburg where the project is particularly active] and to boost project results. The Forum's connected research projects and other contributions from research institutes and academia would safeguard high quality in meeting project objectives:

Peter: We saw the possibility of benefit to the research community from the Forum, as it would provide a test and demonstration environment for research on sustainable urban, peri-urban and rural development.

Apart from meeting the project objectives one also anticipated further results from the project in terms of development of methods, applications for research funding, scientific articles and various other dissemination activities:

Peter: During 2016, around 30 researchers and research students participated in seminars and workshops. The interdisciplinary profile was clear, and they represented various disciplines and faculties at the two major universities in Gothenburg and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in Skara. There was an obvious interest from the researchers we contacted, but most saw challenges in finding funding for possible research studies within the framework of the Research Forum.

The pilot study was set up so that Stina and Peter sorted and grouped the proposals for research questions that came up during the introductory workshops. They made some priorities and met the proposers to develop and clarify the issues together with them, while continuously reporting back to URG. Stina and Peter had a fruitful and creative collaboration which resulted in a final report that they presented in January 2017.

Tempest in a teapot

When URG was launched, in March 2017, Stina was hired as project manager, and she and Peter were able to continue collaborating – but not for long. Around this time came a deluge of critical articles in the *Gothenburg-Post*, a daily newspaper, about a planned camel centre in Angered, in north-eastern Gothenburg:

Peter: During DNE we had looked at potential development possibilities for business and tourism in Angered. I had looked at camels as a possible idea back then.

The camel centre wasn't part of URG, and no money from the project had been allocated to the centre. Yet through sloppy journalism the general public had come to wrongfully equate URG with what they perceived was a failed and costly camel project. The negative publicity was becoming ear-deafening:

Peter: When the media frenzy kicked in it was too much. Someone had to go. So, I left the project in May 2017, just a few months after you became project manager, Stina.

Stina: I thought it was very saddening. I looked forward to working with you.

Peter: Yes, we had laid the ground for something that could have been really good. So, I was bitter, or sad at least, to have to leave.

Stina: Quite rightly so. I would have been too.

Peter: This is the way it's done. It's normal logic. You see the same things in government agencies. Of course, I knew there was a risk, but I never imagined this strong reaction.

Desperately seeking structure

When Stina came in as project manager she was made responsible for administration and governance of URG, including reporting, budgeting and chairing meetings. She had a colleague as co-project manager responsible for the URG processes:

Stina: My colleague and I had long meetings where we planned what was to happen in the project. We spent a lot of time on this. Initially this went well, and we thought it was nice, but with time there was difficulty in agreeing on paths forward and there was increasing tension between us. There was something good in the initial idea that we would be two project managers, one square and the other more amoeba-shaped, and that we would complement each other. At first it seemed a nice thought that really might work, but it didn't.

At the root of the problems, Stina suggests, was insufficient funding for the project which simply didn't allow for doing something meaningful. While many others seemed to think that an efficient organisation with lots of projects could be built with scant resources, Stina disagreed. Moreover, the amoeba-shaped nature of the organisation didn't sit well with her sense of order and structure, and getting things done efficiently:

Stina: I was supposed to work on multiple fronts simultaneously, hoping something would flower somewhere. This is not how you should conduct a project. You need clear confines. My role was to maintain these, but I found them to be virtually non-existent. I was trying to build this framework while there were other forces pulling in the opposite direction.

A little less than a year after she started, Stina left her job as project manager since the stressful work situation made continued employment untenable. She also felt she didn't receive adequate help. She likes to finish things she has started and was worried about how her resignation might affect her chances of getting another job. In a conversation with a former boss, she was assured that the work she had done for URG would be seen as a major qualification:

Stina: The boss said my quitting the job was a non-issue in terms of future possibilities. That's when I got the confidence to resign. I quit without having another job to go to; it was dramatic for me.

Currently Stina works as project manager of Johanneberg Science Park at Chalmers University of Technology, billing themselves as Sweden's leading collaborative arena for urban development:

Stina: Our role is to bring together academia, society and companies and to do projects together. It is very exciting. I enjoy it a lot.

The confusing world of politics

If there is one area where Peter feels he lacks knowledge that might stand him in good stead it is insights into the inner workings of political scheming. Having been in the private sector virtually all his life politics remains largely uncharted territory:

Peter: I need someone to hold hands with me in this game, telling me: "*Don't say that, don't do this, now is the time to make a statement.*" Things like that. In this area, I think I have been much too naïve.

Stina reckons her lack of experience in the public sector may have hampered her somewhat. She feels it would have been valuable for her to have more of this experience since one requires a little more patience when working within the municipal administration:

Stina: I found myself thinking, “*This just isn’t working out.*” But perhaps I should have thought: “*Okay, things take time in public administration.*” I don’t know. Why should things move more slowly in the public sector? Couldn’t they work a bit faster too?

Peter: Absolutely.

Stina: Being patient about this slowness is perhaps a skill that I lack, but I’m not quite sure I would want it.

Peter sees city districts’ unfamiliarity with innovation projects as stemming from signals they have received from citywide decision-makers. The various city districts have been able to choose different paths and set their own priorities up to a point, but their hands are tied behind their backs in terms of conditions and pointers accompanying the local budgets accorded them by the city council:

Peter: The resources they have been allocated have sufficed to administer parts of centrally determined politics within the schools, eldercare and certain parts of the culture sector. So administration has been the norm, but development activities and instigating change processes have never been the purview of the city districts.

There is some anxiety, Peter senses, on the part of city districts when possibilities such as URG come along. Instead of grabbing the opportunity to do something in the local community, politicians can become very hesitant at the risk of getting their wrists slapped both by the city council and the various citywide committees, causing acquired fear. It becomes much easier to do nothing than to try something new:

Peter: At least in Angered I think this is the case. It has happened there as well as in other city districts that when colourful politicians or civil servants join the ranks of the district’s incumbents, they don’t prove very long-lasting.

Stina: No. I think there was a major problem in Angered in that the two people who were to collaborate with us within URG suddenly left their jobs as the project started. There was no proper handing over of responsibility for the project to their successors. It surprised me, since I have worked in the private sector my entire life. When their beloved head of development quit and left at short notice the entire development department became totally helpless and nothing happened. The efficiency is extremely low if one compares with the business sector, though the city district does some good work as well.

Sombre conclusions

Neither Stina nor Peter would rank URG very high, nor would they recommend its design for future sustainability projects. They agree that the City of Gothenburg has behaved badly towards URG. There hasn’t been sufficient commitment or interest in the project on the part of politicians and civil servants:

Peter: It has to do with the structure of this type of project, where on the one hand possibilities are opened up, while on the other there are many major problems in the City of Gothenburg. I sometimes wonder what would happen if the project were carried out in another city, like Malmö.

Stina: Yes, Angered is so far from the city centre. But Rosengård [a socio-economically challenged Malmö suburb] is virtually in the middle of the city. So, there are very different prerequisites. It feels as though the municipality has thrown in the towel on Angered – and shouldn't have to. But I can't say what you ought to do instead... Maybe move the big sports arenas there.

Stina says she was happy when she got the job as project manager but also happy when she mustered up the courage to resign:

Stina: For a time, it was something I would rather forget because I felt so bad and didn't want to think about the experience for a long while, until this spring. Recently I have met some of the people from URG and have started to think that I don't have to be ashamed of the work I did. Apparently, some projects are working out quite well.

A former colleague asked Stina if she regretted joining the project. She answered him: "*No, not really.*" In hindsight she feels the project was interesting in its own way. She has developed a wider network, made new friends and learnt a lot about North-East Gothenburg:

Stina: Today, in contrast to three months ago, I can stand up for the work I did and say: "*Yes, I was part of that.*" It didn't turn out the way I thought, but it was okay anyway. It was an experience that I can be proud of.

One of the things Stina is most satisfied with is how she managed to secure employment for a sustainability strategist in URG:

Stina: I managed to get her a job by phoning an employment officer and persistently arguing for my case. With the employment agency subsidising her salary, it was possible for her to work in URG. She hadn't had a qualified job in Sweden for years though she has fantastic experience. I feel great satisfaction from recruiting her to the project.

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Keeping the home fires burning

Karin Ingelhag • Katarina Lindfors

Karin Ingelhag and Katarina Lindfors are project managers for Urban Rural Gothenburg (URG). Karin largely has a strategic role while Katarina's is operative, with responsibility for the northern and eastern parts of the Angered City District.

In theory, project management is rather simple, Karin notes, but there is the human factor to consider. In practice many difficulties may arise, and to solve these, employing a methodology may not be sufficient. What is needed is experience:

Karin: As project manager you constantly develop. You learn something new with every project. URG is complex, with many different goals for the various subprojects. This all has to be handled in a challenging municipal context where there is a new political leadership following the 2018 Swedish general election.

There are three project managers sharing the leadership in URG. They have come to the project with different backgrounds and experience. Karin's and Katarina's colleague has a broad network on many levels:

Karin: His networks are beneficial to the project and have opened up many possibilities for us. But there is this aspect that processes tied to a particular person might not become anchored in the organisation.

URG comprises four hubs [geographical areas where the project is particularly active] and five testbeds [subprojects]. Some of the activities in the testbeds were initially unclear to many of the project participants, so it was a challenge to figure out how these projects were interconnected and how they related to the project on the whole. There have been challenges in project management, Karin admits, and it has taken time and energy to catch up and achieve what the project is supposed to deliver:

Karin: I think we have made up for lost time through hard work. Our main task as project managers is to plan and lead URG's hubs and testbeds. When searching for processes to share knowledge and create our common vision we have been aware that we continuously must re-evaluate URG's structure in every phase of the project.

Karin, Katarina and their colleague have found a division of labour where their respective strengths have come to good use. The meeting structure between the project managers and the various participants in URG has emerged over time:

Karin: Time has been an enabler for us, as has a firmer structure within the project management. URG is an EU project over three years. In that time, the project is to be built, executed and concluded, and we also must safeguard the project's effect. This is something you should be mindful of already when writing a project application. We actually started the work with safeguarding the effect in late 2018 and we have sharpened this focus in 2019 in collaboration with URG's Steering Group [a constellation with representatives from each of the participating organisations].

Karin notes that project maturity differs among the URG actors and this has affected what the project has been able to deliver:

Karin: To reinforce the project structure we have worked with collaborative meetings with every individual actor. The project owner has invited the actors to these meetings through the chair of the Steering Group. I feel project maturity has increased in most of the participating organisations through these encounters. Initially the meetings focused on reporting routines, but we have now shifted the conversation to include how we safeguard the effects of the project.

Perspectives from the North-East

Katarina was recruited to URG in August 2018, with Karin having joined the project a few months earlier. They knew each other previously as they had collaborated in an EU project. When Katarina came in as project manager responsible for two of URG's hubs in Angered [a socio-economically challenged area of Gothenburg], she found there were expectations in the city district of greater project-management staffing from URG:

Katarina: With all that needed to be done in the North-East there was a lot on my plate. It's a project that has incredible engagement from many people and there are lots of activities. I realised from the start that I must be more operative than strategic to enable more subprojects to continue. Many of the ideas are the brainchildren of our project-manager colleague. But he has so many of them and can't follow up all of them. So, the rest of us have to help realise this.

Katarina's and Karin's colleague became project manager with special responsibility for the Gothenburg suburb of Hammarkullen, which is part of the Angered City District:

Karin: The process of conducting a local economic analysis in Hammarkullen is picking up pace. Our colleague has been very active in preparatory work since spring 2018 and has helped secure a foothold for us in Hammarkullen.

Katarina feels that it is a major problem to make the city district administration understand the scope and complexity of URG. Many of the district's employees now working in URG were not involved in the application for the project:

Katarina: I can understand that it isn't easy. My boss in the city district comes to a job where there is very much expected of her that doesn't connect with URG at all. But in a way it is understandable that people's engagement is low when they haven't been in the project from the start and don't see the importance of it or what it might lead to.

The Angered City District has recently had a major reorganisation. This may have caused budget worries and other concerns, making projects such as URG seem less important, as such projects do not lie within the administration's core responsibilities:

Katarina: I hope we shall get better input to the administration in the remaining months of the project, for the most difficult thing I see is how on Earth what we have achieved in URG will survive after its conclusion. But this is what we are focusing on now.

Karin: There is a requirement for us to promote a development towards the project's goals. It is about green innovation and green business development. It is about collaborating with multiple actors and developing a city with a lower carbon footprint. We have to support the processes in the fieldwork to see the vision that helps us move forward. That's what I have put most effort into, making our common goal visible.

A thought Karin has given some consideration to is whether it might have been possible to do the project in a different way that would have yielded a greater effect?

Karin: What if you could have the regular staff from the municipality work in a project? If the organisation hires people specifically to work within a project there is a risk that there will be no anchoring in the regular structures. Then the project becomes isolated. But if you have great competence in defining the people who are to be part of development projects, you can ensure that there is a connection to the regular activities so that the staff can spread the knowledge they acquire within the organisation.

Katarina: I think there should be staff from the municipal administrations participating in writing the project application. You write an application because you really want something and see possibilities. And then, just as you describe, Karin, it will not become a project dangling as an appendix, but something that belongs to the organisation and connects with your assignment there, so that you get advantages from it. You get enormous development, and in conjunction with the business sector.

Karin: I think a lot has happened in this respect. URG has its main focus on the business sector. Above all, I think this issue has made its way into the city districts in a manner that we haven't seen previously. I think one has closed one's eyes for a while. But what I see is that the sooner youths have contact with businesses, the easier it is for them to enter the job market.

Katarina recalls how she was invited to inform the district administration management about URG. The district director seemed totally disinterested in the project:

Katarina: I think the director's attitude has a big impact on how the rest of the administration regard the project. However, there were politicians at the meeting saying: "What a project! Why haven't we heard of this before?" And these politicians were mostly business entrepreneurs.

The power of networking

Many new companies have been launched as a result of URG. Katarina says that starting a company is not the hard part. But if you are to grow in the least, even by just one employee, it is tricky:

Katarina: Going beyond 20 employees is very hard. Then you have to become much more organised. Here, URG has made many different efforts that support business development.

When they worked in the business sector, Karin and Katarina supported companies directly, for instance through helping them write business plans. In URG they point at various paths to business development, guiding companies further, for instance, to business advisory organisations such as Coompanion. Business counselling at a deeper level or establishing business plans is not URG's task:

Karin: We see what needs companies have and help them gain awareness of how they can develop their business. The networks are very important. We've worked a lot with this, gathering companies where we see they are interested in meeting for business development. They might be growers who need to meet restaurants in the city, or sustainability companies who have worked with other orientations that have created a network via us. These companies would never have met without this networking.

Katarina: We get a lot of appreciation for this. Companies meet others who do roughly the same thing, or at least they are all in the sustainability sector. They get inspiration from each other, as in a workshop about recycling we had last week.

Karin: We have recently formed a group with separate actors who are interested in reusing discarded things. We build these clusters so that they can find each other and collaborate. You and our colleague have worked a lot with this, Katarina, in the equine business, for instance.

Katarina: Yes. And we have also started working with industrial symbiosis where there should be no wastage, no matter what the activity. This means that the residue from an activity becomes valuable to someone else who can make use of it. I think many companies haven't thought much about this problem. I am hoping we can come up with some good ideas around this. This is something that both can reduce CO₂ emissions and help companies financially.

Karin would give URG a grade of seven on a ten-point scale. She feels inspired to be part of a development project that creates tangible value for society. One of her greatest sources of satisfaction is the many projects at the Angered Farmstead [an arena for education and innovation projects in North-East Gothenburg] where so much research, education and collaboration is taking place:

Karin: If we can make it a centre for green innovation and green business development in the future, it will definitely promote the issues raised in URG. It will be a meeting place and a development arena where companies can receive support. I also think it's very important that there is a research forum connected with URG. It brings legitimacy to the project.

Katarina is happy to be part of a project where she meets so many new people and is able to assist them in various ways:

Katarina: The activities in URG will not stop because the project ends. Companies that already existed and have interacted with URG have developed something new. I would give URG a very high grade, even though I know of some that are disappointed because we should have done more. "*But what are you doing yourself?*" is my response to this.

Katarina feels that if URG had been launched with actors who remained for its entire duration, the project would have attained even better results:

Katarina: If the enthusiasts were there at the start and remained for three years, I think it would give better prerequisites for the project not to sprawl in so many directions.

Karin thinks it has been a challenge to lead a project where many of the municipal actors initially gave it a low priority. However, she sees that their interest in the issues that URG encompasses has increased markedly:

Karin: The interest in contributing towards a transition to a low-carbon city characterises the collaborating parties in a completely different way than was the case just one-and-a-half years ago when I came to this assignment. The media's focus on the importance of sustainable development is helpful to us in promoting this insight in both individuals and in society at large.

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Two hubs and a food strategy

Inger Orebäck • Henriette Söderberg

Inger Orebäck is head of the Unit for Societal Development and Dialogue in the Angered City District. Henriette Söderberg has a PhD in sustainable urban development and is head of Urban Environment at the Environmental Administration of the City of Gothenburg. Both of their administrations are part of the cross-sector collaborative project Urban Rural Gothenburg (URG).

The Angered City District is the north-easternmost of Gothenburg's ten semi-autonomous administrative areas. Inger was head of development in this district when the project Development North-East (DNE), to which URG owes its germination, was underway. There was a pilot study within DNE that sought to explore whether a project focusing on urban-rural integration, specifically oriented towards eastern and north-eastern Gothenburg, might be feasible. The resultant URG was launched in January 2017 and since the Angered City District comprises most of the geographical area within URG's purview it was natural that the city district administration would take part.

In URG there are four hubs, selected areas of Gothenburg where co-creating structures are to be developed between residents, local associations, companies, public administration and academia. Inger is responsible for three of the hubs: Angered, Hammarkullen and the largely rural area Bergum-Gunnilse:

Inger: I have been involved in URG virtually since it started, and I am the boss of two of its participants: one of the three project managers and one of the sustainability strategists. They share an office in Angered with URG's communicator, who is not employed by us, but by URG's communications department.

Inger's first involvement in URG was via her previous job as head of Internal Service at the Angered City District, an area of responsibility that included public kitchens. This is a prominent part of URG since one of its aims is to provide more locally-produced food to schools and preschools.

Steering towards local produce

Henriette became head of Urban Environment at the Environmental Administration in March 2018. URG was one of the projects that existed at the department, thus she became part of it:

Henriette: The project was very much in line with what I have done previously, really all my life, with environmental and sustainability issues and with boundary-transcending work. That's where you could see the potential in URG.

Though URG is just a minor part of Henriette's job, the Environmental Administration also has an employee who is working full time with the project via her assignment to investigate how a sustainable food strategy for Gothenburg best can be achieved. Her recent report on this has suggested that an applied food strategy could be achieved in the form an action plan.

The URG Steering Group has representatives from each of the organisations that collaborate in the project: the project owner and coordinator Business Region Gothenburg, seven municipal administrations, the Research Forum at Mistra Urban Futures, as well as the business advisory organisation Coompanion. The Steering Group normally has three meetings per year to follow up on what has happened in the various URG subprojects and go through the financial reports:

Henriette: I thought it was relevant for me to be a member of the Steering Group because it's such an exciting project where we meet across boundaries and find solutions and ways forward.

Inger is also a member of the URG Steering Group. Apart from this, her role in URG is to ensure that as much as possible happens within the Angered and Bergum-Gunnilse hubs, supporting the work carried out there by the project manager and the sustainability strategist:

Inger: The project manager is propelling in terms of the work there and she is the sustainability strategist's supervisor, so I would be lying if I said I were familiar with all the parts of the project in these hubs. I'm not, because it's so incredibly large and complex. I know there's a lot happening, and I would want even more to happen because I am now mostly preoccupied with thinking how we can launch things that will endure after URG is concluded.

Henriette: Yes, this is the constant challenge. From our perspective we have deepened the understanding of some challenges. Sometimes one must have respect for the importance of small steps, such as the procurement issue where one has tested a little.

The Angered City District has started buying produce from a farmer in the Bergum area. This food is served at school meals. Inger says there is a person connected with URG who guides and helps project participants in understanding procurement regulations. Apparently, it is within the law to buy from local farmers:

Inger: There are lots of other municipalities that have done exciting things. Renting a farmer, for instance. I think this entailed a municipality buying cattle, then paying the farmer to take care of the animals. There are lots of things we refrain from doing because we don't know whether we can. Sometimes we hide behind the Procurement Act.

Henriette: Precisely.

Inger: And we say we are not allowed to. Because we know it is a bit difficult.

Henriette: The normal process in Gothenburg is not to purchase from local producers. The normal track is a different one, so you have to decide to deviate a little from it. It is precisely daring to deviate from the norm that projects such as URG contribute with.

Inger: We must dare to try new things. Maybe we'll get a slap on the wrist for it, but then we just have to change a little.

Inger notes that for small-scale growers to become suppliers there is a lot of paperwork involved. This is something where the municipal administration might consider lending a helping hand. One option for small-scale growers may be to form cooperatives. This is common in Italy, but in Sweden this practice has yet to become widespread.

Other problems are that growers may not be so savvy in terms of the best logistics solutions and that Gothenburg's public meals organisation is gigantic. There are no local producers as yet with this sort of capacity. Inger suggests that a possible solution might be to buy seasonal produce from a local supplier, then revert to the standard agreement with other suppliers when the small-scale supplier is unable to meet the required volume in produce:

Inger: I haven't been so involved in this type of agreement in Angered, but I previously worked in another municipality where we stipulated: "We can buy your potatoes until you don't have any more to sell." We might be able to do this, have deliveries to the schools from a local grower and buy the rest from our usual supplier, until the grower has scaled up sufficiently.

Steering document inflation

In propelling the city of Gothenburg towards sustainable food, Henriette thinks it would be wise to carry out an investigation as to how one can work with the steering issues:

Henriette: Since Gothenburg's programme for public meals is about to be revised, we had a discussion at the Environmental Administration around whether we can use the public meals programme as a linchpin to include environment and sustainability more clearly. I don't think we ought to have one document for public meals and a sustainable food strategy alongside it.

Inger: No, that could create policy conflicts.

Henriette: Precisely. And I am constantly wary of us working with steering documents to the extent that we don't have time to take the action they outline. We just sit and revise them and produce new ones. Here we could take inspiration from URG. We could use the project to find new ways of working within steering and management. So, yes there are policy conflicts between the steering documents. No one can keep track of them all and the various committees don't have time to read all the documents pertaining to their activities.

Inger: If you did read them all, you wouldn't have time to work.

Henriette: Precisely.

Not only are the municipal steering documents conspicuously numerous, but the action plans may sometimes become too ambitious. At Henriette's administration the action plan contains 184 separate measures that the entire city should work with in various ways:

Henriette: Simply managing all these measures in an Excel matrix requires too much time. So we may need to spend more time on prioritising earlier in the process.

Inger: And to prioritise the right things.

Henriette: Precisely. All our administrations do lots of work with their own documents. So we are back to the possibilities of a project like URG and cross-sector collaboration.

The hub that won't happen?

Overall Inger works around 20% in URG while the corresponding figure for Henriette is 5-10% though this may vary widely from one week to another. For Henriette it is mostly the case of steering group meetings, joint activities for the entire project and supervising the work with Gothenburg's local food strategy at the Environmental Administration.

For Inger, there are steering group meetings, preparing for the work therein and being in the URG Think Tank where participants discuss how the results and learning achieved in URG can

be taken further after the project has finished. An important part of her work is also supporting her project manager:

Inger: I have had a hard time finding staff who have been able to devote time to URG. This can in part explain why some things haven't been set in motion. But it's not just about that. There are so many things that happen in a city district.

The Bergum Farmstead, where there is animal husbandry and cultivation, was supposed to be the Bergum-Gunnilse hub, Inger explains. But it has been hard to establish this hub as planned:

Inger: The head of the farmstead left their job. When an enthusiast starts an activity and then departs, the whole project is at risk of faltering. And the next person coming in may wonder: "*What am I to do with this?*" It's also a question of money as the overall budget is troubling. It's hard for a city district to rent a large farmstead with buildings that are to be maintained and we neither have the money nor knowledge of how to run it.

Henriette: Yes, you need knowledge as well.

Inger: Yes. I think this has been, and still is, very tough.

Withholding the report card

Grading URG is hard, says Henriette. It's a bit too early. It would be more appropriate to do so at the closing conference in half a year's time:

Inger: The one day I might give it a grade of eight, out of ten, the next day a two.

Henriette: Indeed. It's a little bit like that.

Inger: It depends on what is happening at the moment and what challenges we are facing.

Henriette: Precisely. But there are very good prerequisites in the project and the thinking behind it is sound. I see URG as a venue for the possibility to try new things – an innovation project. So, it is about thinking in those terms.

Inger: And it relates to so many things we need to work with.

Henriette: Yes, absolutely.

Inger: To get people to come to Angered, for instance. I want tourism and a hotel here. There is so much beautiful nature. There are many who haven't been to Angered, while some who live in Angered hardly go anywhere else. So, we need to cherish the diversity and knowledge we have here.

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A view from the platform

Margareta Forsberg • Sanna Isemo

Margareta Forsberg has a PhD in social work and is a former director for the Gothenburg platform of Mistra Urban Futures (MUF) - a transdisciplinary international research centre for sustainable urban development. Sanna Isemo started as an intern in one of Mistra Urban Futures' projects and is currently working as project coordinator. Via their roles for MUF they have both been part of the Research Forum at Urban Rural Gothenburg (URG).

The Research Forum at MUF aims to ensure that the work carried out in URG is in accordance with scientific methodology. Sanna started her job at the platform in November 2016, just before Margareta came in as platform director. One of Sanna's first tasks was to recruit a research coordinator to run the Forum:

Sanna: When I started my employment there was a project plan for what the Research Forum would be, and much of what we became engaged in at this stage was to try to understand the thoughts behind the plan and get a sense of who would be suitable as research coordinator.

In early 2017 Margareta started her work as MUF's platform director. One of her first tasks was to employ the research coordinator, and to write down clearly what the Research Forum was to entail. The coordinator she hired chose to end his tenure after a few months, having received another job offer.

Margareta then conducted a new batch of interviews together with the head of the Project Group at URG. They appointed one of the candidates as the new research coordinator in September 2017. Alongside him a colleague from URG would be added in early 2018 so that there would be two coordinators working together.

Sanna's job as platform coordinator at MUF is to support all the ongoing projects. With regard to the Research Forum, she supports it administratively in terms of staff recruitment, working with the development of the project plan and dealing with some budget-related issues:

Sanna: I also support the Research Forum strategically, through discussions around how it should be run, without actually doing it myself. I just support them in their thoughts and decisions.

Leading through consensus

When Margareta came in as platform director at MUF she also became a member of the URG Steering Group as a representative from the Research Forum. She was later succeeded in this role by Sanna. The Steering Group also has representatives from each of the other organisations that collaborate in URG, including seven municipal departments, the business-advisory organisation Coompanion and Business Region Gothenburg, a municipal subsidiary which is the project owner and thus coordinates URG. The Steering Group normally convenes three

times a year to follow up on the project's financial report as well as its objectives and results.

Sanna has attended one meeting thus far in the Steering Group as she recently joined it. She is also a member of the URG Think Tank which focuses on how the learning and results of the project can be taken further after its conclusion. The reason for Sanna replacing Margareta in the URG Steering Group was that Margareta left MUF in February 2019.

When Margareta entered the URG Steering Group there were consultants present at the Steering Group meetings who gave feedback to the entire group with respect to what members of the group had said to the consultants in private interviews via phone:

Margareta: The central question the consultants posed was: “*What does this project need for it to be taken forward in a beneficial way?*” I think we had a good discussion around this and the consultants made a compilation of our answers and reported back to us in the Steering Group. They were hired because URG wanted an external function that followed the project.

Margareta recalls that there may have been occasions when the Steering Group would say: “*We'll do it this way,*” often in a consensus-oriented fashion, but their meetings were often concerned with general reporting about the various URG subprojects:

Margareta: I don't know how it was at the meeting where you were present Sanna, but at the meetings I attended the project managers would tell us: “*Now we have done this project, and this is how far we have come.*” It was interesting to listen to their accounts, and new discussions could also emerge around issues that weren't really related to our steering function. For instance, the Property Management Administration told us what they were doing in the project and how it was connected to their other work. In this way, we all gained more knowledge.

Sanna: Yes.

Margareta: And that became a context for our own knowledge development.

Sanna: I experience it that way too. I felt the cross-boundary nature of the work between various functions, above all within the municipality, but also with respect to us who come from the outside and from other sectors, gave us more understanding of each other's activities.

The coordinators that clicked

In early 2018, one of URG's project managers resigned. The person who succeeded her took on dual roles in URG as she was also the incoming coordinator of the Research Forum, working alongside her colleague in that capacity. She is an employee of Business Region Gothenburg while her colleague is a researcher employed by MUF. So, the Research Forum now had two coordinators with different backgrounds. How did this work out? Extremely well, Sanna and Margareta agree:

Margareta: When the two new research coordinators came in and started to work together and became much synchronised, the Research Forum really picked up pace.

Sanna: Absolutely. And it received more substance.

For Margareta and Sanna the main part of the day-to-day work in the Research Forum is the regular meetings within its internal ‘steering group’. Margareta describes the function of the group as a soft form of steering:

Margareta: The research coordinators would come to this group with material and questions, and you have also raised some issues, Sanna, of a more organisational and administrative nature. And we have said: “*This sounds like a good idea, go ahead*” or “*Hang on, we need to discuss this a little more.*” And we have then perhaps tweaked the idea in some fashion.

The purpose of the Research Forum is to consolidate and initiate research with connection to URG activities. In the period between autumn 2017 and the following spring it wasn't clear which researchers actually were connected to URG. When the new research coordinators came in they conducted a very systematic overview of this:

Margareta: The result of this overview was that the picture became much clearer. But it also revealed that there were much fewer researchers involved than we had previously got the impression of.

Sanna: Precisely. A question posed to these researchers was whether they had their own financing. The Research Forum has not been a financier. It has no money to distribute so the researchers have needed to secure that elsewhere. In many cases one may have done something previously and was interested in running a research project involving contact with practitioners, but then they would need to write an application for a suitable call, and have it approved.

Margareta: These are lengthy processes.

Sanna: Yes, so a problem in this may be the different time horizons for academics and practitioners.

Margareta and Sanna marvel at how well the research coordinators collaborated right from the start. Their survey of the research networks was necessary to later be able to resume the contacts with researchers:

Sanna: The coordinators poured so much effort into rebuilding these contacts that once had existed, but which were lost when various people at the Research Forum departed.

Sanna feels it has been very interesting to follow the collaboration between the research coordinators and see how they have propelled the Research Forum forward, particularly as they came to the Forum with different perspectives, the one with extensive experience of conducting practical projects, the other robustly anchored within academia:

Sanna: It has been exciting to see how these perspectives have met and enriched each other, and how the coordinators have succeeded in transferring this to other meetings between researchers and practitioners.

Co-creation is one of the methods meant to permeate URG, the others being local economic analysis and industrial symbiosis. Margareta feels this is one of the things at the Research Forum that has succeeded the best, where people in the municipal administration have become involved in research conferences:

Margareta: Some civil servants have been to these conferences and have made presentations, which is not a given, for there is resistance to the academic language and the academic context and they may think: “*What is my knowledge worth?*” And I feel the coordinators have worked very pedagogically with this so that practitioners' knowledge has been allowed into the academic arena, which of course is part of the co-creation process.

Sanna: Precisely. The coordinators have found forms for researchers and practitioners to meet and understand the exchange and see the value of different kinds of knowledge.

Margareta: Exactly.

Sanna: And they understand that one has to deal with these issues together if there is to be societal change, and that there is value both for researchers and practitioners in this encounter.

A concept to copy?

Sanna notes that in the type of role that many have had within URG, such as project managers, coordinators and platform directors, there has been a lot of networking involved. People in the project have had contact with a multitude of actors and the success or failure of the project has been very dependent on people and relationships. The networks cannot just be taken over by another person, since it takes time to build them. So, the project can suffer when people are substituted.

There have been major staff changes at the Research Forum during the two and half years Sanna has been active there. All the people she worked most closely with have been replaced, so it has been necessary for other people who have arrived along the way to administer the Forum's continued existence:

Sanna: I suppose that what the Research Forum actually has become isn't necessarily the same thing as it was originally conceived to be but has probably been shaped by the people who happened to be involved. I think this is interesting, how ideas are relayed and remorphed along the way. And this need not be negative. I think this is what reality often looks like and is part of our living in a changing world, and we need to relate to that. I think this is something remarkable and very interesting.

Giving URG a final grade is a bit tricky for Margareta as she doesn't have a sufficiently clear overview of all the activities in the project. It is easier for her to consider how well the Research Forum has succeeded and both she and Sanna are very positive to this construction:

Margareta: If one is to conduct a large sustainability project or an urban development project, I would recommend incorporating the idea of interconnected research to such projects. It is an excellent idea and model.

Sanna: Yes, it is a prototype one might say. It has been good to learn what has worked well or badly, and what could have been done better. Testing the concept of the Research Forum in other contexts would be very exciting. And I hope we will get the chance to do this in the future.

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**Transdisciplinary collaboration:
Assumptions vs reality**

Elma Duraković

Elma Duraković is acting platform director and coordinator at Mistra Urban Futures' (MUF) Gothenburg platform. MUF is an international transdisciplinary research centre for sustainable urban development.

The Research Forum at MUF is part of Urban Rural Gothenburg (URG) and aims to facilitate transdisciplinary academic-practitioner interaction. Elma had recently started working as platform coordinator at MUF when the idea of the Research Forum first arose in early 2016. She was part of drafting the first proposal for the Forum along with the then platform director and two representatives from URG's project owner organisation:

Elma: As platform coordinator I hadn't had much to do with URG until I became acting platform director early this year. As director I am involved in almost all our projects in one way or the other. URG is a rather big project since we are funding the book on URG [this book] heavily. As platform director I have a continuous dialogue with my colleagues here, and this book is perhaps what has engaged me most within URG, since it entails issues around agreements and other organisational matters.

MUF has several partners, organisations that fund its activities, including the City of Gothenburg and the city's two universities: Chalmers University of Technology and the University of Gothenburg. Though Elma is now acting platform director she also retains her role as platform coordinator alongside MUF's second coordinator:

Elma: My platform coordinator colleague often takes care of the administration work. The Research Forum's coordinator is responsible for its content. I am more of a sounding board for them, one might say. I lead the team here, work with strategies for the future and am responsible for the dialogue with our partners. I would say that my current job description is probably the most flexible one I have had in that I have been able to largely shape it myself, for better or worse. For it is easy to become a bit too engaged in things since the work is so stimulating.

Elma thinks the Research Forum's two coordinators have done a good job in working strategically vis-à-vis various researchers:

Elma: They have succeeded in building something that I would like to see continue in the future. What I initially thought the Research Forum would be, turned out bigger than I had expected. Through good project management and the right prerequisites, you can succeed with almost anything. My predecessor as platform director had done well in supporting the Research Forum, and in cultivating the relationship with our partners.

Towards a scientific paradigm shift

Elma feels that the Research Forum's coordinators have established a uniquely dynamic collaboration. This is particularly striking since their professional backgrounds are so

dissimilar, one being a PhD researcher and the other with extensive experience from the private sector:

Elma: Here at MUF we often mention the Research Forum as a very good example of how transdisciplinary co-production actually works in practice. This set up has contributed to a constant learning process within the Research Forum. Which is what we strive for, that people working in a project such as URG bring their newly acquired knowledge and work processes to their home organisations. And ultimately there may even be some form of culture change, even if it cannot be measured.

Elma encounters researchers who don't understand transdisciplinarity, as well as those who do see its value and the importance of working in new ways. Also, many practitioners tell her that there is a need to find a mode of collaboration that not simply entails them applying research, but rather that one continuously works with each other, building long-term relationships between researchers and practitioners. The collaboration might assume different forms. It doesn't necessarily have to be transdisciplinary by definition:

Elma: I would say the concept still is quite a new one. It has existed in other countries, such as Switzerland, for years. But in Sweden we're not quite there yet, though our partners here at MUF are very eager for us to preserve the transdisciplinary. And this makes us slightly unique. We may not always have a quick fix for a problem, but we have long-term learning and perhaps provide the long-term change we need in society to work more strategically vis-à-vis climate change and all the other challenges we face.

Thinking transdisciplinarily, says Elma, is not just a question of methods but a stance you adopt. It is to see things from different perspectives. This is not something you simply convince someone of. It takes time:

Elma: Ten years ago, it was probably hard to convince both the researchers and practitioners who today work in a transdisciplinary manner to choose this avenue. For the researchers, the prerequisites are often about constantly publishing new articles. This is the yardstick against which you're measured. So why spend time on transdisciplinary work when it doesn't further your career? We have also met researchers who've said transdisciplinarity is very time-consuming. They can't see what it delivers. Some say it has caused them to put their writing and research on hold.

Part of what makes transdisciplinary work time-consuming is building trust and understanding between actors, causing some researchers to put it aside and resume their regular work. However, says Elma, one can see that where transdisciplinary work has taken place, collaboration has been favourably affected and has continued long after projects have been concluded. This has resulted in more long-term collaboration and mutual learning.

Elma notes that there has been shared leadership in many of the research projects at MUF. In a few projects there have been a practitioner and a researcher working together to the extent that they co-write articles, while other forms of shared leadership have entailed the practitioner being part of the project and supplying feedback:

Elma: Some practitioners don't want to write while others are more comfortable with it. Researchers do of course use a style of language that is very different from how a practitioner would normally express themselves. But I know from experience that one of the big advantages of having taken part in a transdisciplinary context is that at last there was a legitimate reason to include practitioners in research projects. They could allocate this time and their bosses signed off on it, including funding it in their budgets. "

Elma senses that there may be a problem in that some practitioners consider their own knowledge as being of less worth than that of researchers, perhaps more conspicuously so when the practitioners are from the public sector. One sign of this is the scarcity of practitioners who turn up at research conferences:

Elma: I think we need to work more on this. I notice that there is a demand at many academic conferences for practitioners to attend. Because for whom are the researchers doing their work, if not the users of the results?

Defining transdisciplinarity

Elma says there are many definitions of transdisciplinarity and that various researchers use the concept in different ways. Multidisciplinarity most often refers to working between various disciplines within academia, while transdisciplinarity is a broader term:

Elma: When you initiate a transdisciplinary project, or when you think: “*What is going to be the subject of your research?*” you do it in conjunction with external parties, in real-life problems. You identify needs, problems and research questions together. Largely it is about producing research and knowledge that is of use and doing it together. And being able to communicate that. If you write an article, how do you make it relevant for a civil servant in Gothenburg so that they can absorb and use this knowledge?

Some view transdisciplinarity as constantly working with reflective learning, Elma notes. Thus, through being part of such a process one constantly learns new things that may not simply be research findings but instead new modes of thinking and solutions that may generate new ways of working. Nor need the conclusion of a project mean the end of the collaboration between the researcher and the practitioner, as it may continue long afterwards. Though various researchers may view the concept differently, the general idea is for transdisciplinary research to make a societal imprint:

Elma: In the area of urban development, there is often the question of solving complex issues, where there are no simple solutions. How do you build more housing while working to prevent social polarisation? You are building new expensive housing. But whom for? Where do the poor people go? And you want climate-smart housing, but that is generally more expensive. So, there are many complex issues we face, and neither a researcher nor a practitioner can solve this alone from their office but need each other to find the best solution.

Leading through listening

Elma has a bachelor’s degree in economics and is passionate about sustainability, which also has been a prominent part of her education:

Elma: It’s a pity that so few people study economics, for this is what largely underpins the functioning of our society. I wanted to understand this, how our economic systems are constructed and how they function. I noticed during my last years as a student that sustainability issues were becoming much more prevalent. I think there will be increasing demands for this. We will need to adopt new stances and other ways of thinking about economics as well. As a subject economics is very broad.

What you learn in first-cycle studies is merely simplifications of the world, Elma observes. Things keep getting more complex the deeper you go. Her studies taught her that there is no simple solution to our complex challenges. Her most important insight is perhaps that the world neither is black nor white.

Elma was chair of a student union during her university studies. She enjoys being a leader but still thinks she has very much to learn in this area:

Elma: I don't feel I need to be the one making all the decisions. Rather, I like to trust in people, enable them to feel secure in knowing what they are supposed to do through us having overarching strategies and plans for our work. I think leadership will need to change if we are to manage the challenges we face. Because all parts of the system need to change to create a sustainable future.

Being a platform director at MUF is enormously rewarding, Elma feels, above all leading in concert with so many partners, with widely different prerequisites, and still being able to find joint paths forward:

Elma: It is never simple, and I really like that. I think that is part of the allure of this job. It also means that there always will be conflicts since nothing is simple and we are so different, both as organisations but also as human beings. We try to have a culture where everyone feels free to speak their mind, including our partners, so that even the thorny issues are allowed to surface. But this requires a certain atmosphere and trust in each other, and you don't build that in a day.

Elma notes that MUF's partner organisations all are fairly complex. The City of Gothenburg, for instance, is a mammoth organisation, with various types of processes, steering documents and visions. Chalmers University of Technology has very centralised steering while the University of Gothenburg is highly decentralised, sprawling into many diverse faculties:

Elma: The working processes of each partner are also very different. When you gather this type of complex organisation, and they are to collaborate, you must realise they won't all be able to deliver the same things. They don't all have the same intentions. Because they are very different and in need of different things from the collaboration. In some situations, this has created some tension between organisations. But by understanding each other's prerequisites over time, we have been able to handle the conflicts that have arisen.

Transdisciplinary work in particular often entails the risk of conflicts on a personal or organisational level because of the many differences between actors. Elma has found it fruitful to listen rather than act in conflict situations:

Elma: I have never succeeded very well when I have been defensive. It has never led to anything good. It hasn't resulted in people on the other side understanding me. But when I have simply listened, not saying very much, the other person has felt that there is some kind of communication. We may not be in agreement but at least we have achieved some form of trust.

Elma would sum up URG as a lot of creative people attempting to find solutions to enormous problems using simple means:

Elma: I envisage that it will be committed individuals who together will address the challenges we face. There is no right or wrong way to go about creating this change. It is trial and error, daring to find solutions. And this is also a way for people to shoulder their social responsibility. This is how I view URG, local people actually doing something to address global problems.



The limbs:

STRATEGISTS

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Trusting constructive madness

Shelley Kotze • Inga-Lisa Adler • Ulla Lundgren

Shelley Kotze is a PhD candidate in human geography and was previously a project assistant at Urban Rural Gothenburg's (URG) Research Forum. Shelley also led one of URG's outreach programmes to promote green business development amongst immigrants in North-East Gothenburg (at a Caritas volunteer centre). Inga-Lisa Adler is a development manager at one of URG's hubs (Backa-Brunnsbo) in the North Hisingen City District [north-western Gothenburg]. Her responsibility is to develop a cultural meeting place with the aim to promote green business development amongst locals. Ulla Lundgren is development manager for Public Health for the East Gothenburg City District and has previously worked for URG in her assignment with a sustainable food strategy for Gothenburg.

URG is drawing to a close. So, what have its participants learned from the project and themselves during this journey? And how would they define it?

Inga-Lisa: This project is a constructive madness. It doesn't fit into the larger system, which can be frustrating. On the other hand, things can actually grow within the project and I believe it wouldn't be where it is today if it weren't for it being a little bit naughty towards the system

Inga-Lisa discovered URG in 2013 when it was a pilot study. She was searching for somewhere to conclude her sociology degree, delighted to find the project located in the largely rural area in north-eastern Gothenburg where she was born. She feels the area is a huge part of her identity:

Inga-Lisa: In the past my home village would supply food that was sold at a market in central Gothenburg. Now one is discussing the prospect of once again selling locally sourced food in the same square where my old relatives used to arrive with their horse and cart to deliver their produce.

After her internship with URG had ended and she had concluded her master's thesis Inga-Lisa started working in the city district of North Hisingen, taking the initiative to make this district part of URG. Her main task was to launch and develop a community centre, testing co-creative dialogue methods and approaches there:

Inga-Lisa: In my master's thesis I looked at URG in terms of co-creative democracy. The community centre in North Hisingen revolves around initiatives from the residents. Part of my role is to train project participants in co-creation. But initially I think the URG management had trouble letting go of their definition of the project. We lacked forums where we could discuss what co-creation really is. For a while I had the sense of not wanting to be part of the project.

Limitation with a silver lining

Shelley's route to URG also went via academia. She left school in the UK at 18 to work in a bank. After a year she went back to university for a degree in geography and education studies. She met her South African husband, moving with him to Cape Town and continuing her research there:

Shelley: The case study for my research was the only urban nature reserve there. I explored and questioned the way community-based values could be integrated into a management authority that was wrapped up in a lot of government red tape.

When Shelley and her husband moved to Gothenburg, she started attending a research group at Gothenburg University, from which she was introduced to Mistra Urban Futures [an international research and knowledge centre for sustainable urban development] and URG, now employed by the URG Research Forum as a project assistant. There she works with administration. She also does work revolving around a project at the Caritas Volunteer Centre. The project is about how trust, or really distrust, affects integration project outcomes:

Shelley: Caritas was a unique case study because of the intricacies surrounding its structure, history and leadership, and how this impeded our current and future work. I see a lack of trust between the people there, the people facilitating the project in different parts of URG and the immigrants themselves who are at the bottom of the trust food chain. In the media it has come across as a failed integration project, but the failure had nothing to do with the immigrants themselves.

Shelley feels her personal limitation vis-à-vis her job is that she doesn't speak Swedish yet though she doesn't feel it hampers the quality of her work. Part of her research methodology is to observe the activities at Caritas, its observation, not analysis of the content. Not understanding the context of people's conversations allows her to look more at their relationships, the way they physically interact with each other:

Shelley: We're also looking at the integration of immigrants, they don't speak Swedish either, and many have been here much longer than I have. Perhaps they're also working off some of the non-verbal cues that I am, and things that are often overlooked by those who understand the language. Because the only thing I have to go on is the way people are physically reacting to each other, I think my approach to this project has really shone some light on things that a Swedish researcher may have missed.

Grudging a burial

Ulla recalls that creating new jobs was one of the original ideas when URG still was a pilot study:

Ulla: Back then URG had several orientations. The focus was largely on involving many actors, making use of people's competence, which in some cases wasn't valued. I feel that people generally want to contribute to society. And this sentiment was initially also a strong current in URG.

The URG pilot study was embedded in Development North-East (DNE), a project to create more businesses and jobs and develop cultural life and meeting places in north-eastern Gothenburg. After its conclusion DNE was incorporated in the municipality's subsidiary

Business Region Gothenburg (BRG) tasked with creating favourable conditions for trade and industry. Ulla feels that URG morphed as it transitioned from a pilot study to a project with BRG as the project owner:

Ulla: URG focused more on green business when it came to BRG. I felt it lost the warmth that URG initially had. So it became green business development and what the initiator of the project had preached: integrating urban and rural areas.

When the project started in 2017 Ulla worked at the Environmental Administration as a process leader for sustainable food:

Ulla: I was tasked with developing Gothenburg's local adaptation of Sweden's national food strategy. This had been agreed between URG and the Environmental Administration, which was a project participant.

Because of a reorganisation at DNE and altered guidelines for municipal steering documents, plans were changed. Instead of a food strategy there was to be an enquiry of how to proceed with the issue. The enquiry was completed in April 2019. It proposed an action plan instead of the buried food strategy:

Ulla: Initially I worked with one of URG's project managers to complete the food strategy. We wanted to include feedback from practitioners, needs and wishes from those working with the food. We were going to involve academia and other actors who had relevant input: institutions, farmers and interest groups.

Ulla left Environmental Administration in 2018 and is now responsible for public health at the East Gothenburg City District. She feels regret that the recently proposed action plan for sustainable food has limitations in that it cannot encompass the broader collaboration with actors outside the municipality that she and URG had envisioned.

Workshop without windows

Ulla feels that media reports of her city district and Gothenburg on the whole generally miss the mark, as the reporting often magnifies problems and ignores the progress made in day-to-day activities:

Ulla: The City of Gothenburg is a workshop without windows. There is a lot of excellent work being done that the public don't know about. Our local school has seen an improvement in passing grades, which is wonderful. In the north-eastern city districts, election ambassadors have encouraged people to vote. We saw increased voter turnout in both these districts in the 2018 elections.

As for sustainable food, Ulla notes that the share of organic food served in public kitchens was 12 or 13% in 2010. By 2018 this had surged to 46%. The City of Gothenburg has also set a Swedish record in reduction of food waste, slashing it by 50% in just a few years:

Ulla: This Gothenburg model to reduce waste came from an initiative by municipal staff. At a workshop, suggestion from middle managers came up, to work with reducing food waste in the kitchens, as it's a much harder task to stop the guest throwing food away. The next step was to collect suggestions for measures to reduce kitchen and serving waste, from the canteen staff. These measures are now a part of the Gothenburg's model for reduced food waste.

Nebulous but beautiful?

Shelley feels many people in Sweden shy away from asking many of the big questions, especially about immigration:

Shelley: Within the project I have been allowed the freedom to ask those questions without anyone guiding me down a different political path, in part due to its Research Forum and its links with academia and researchers, but also thanks to the other people employed within URG and their ability to think out of the box and work more dynamically within their own roles.

Inga-Lisa: Because you're a foreigner?

Shelley: Yes, but I also think they might be slightly more open to it. I've been in meeting rooms where we were discussing it and people close the door because others don't want to hear you talking about immigrants and integration.

Inga-Lisa: Well, within URG we are talking about agricultural practices in other countries, for instance.

Shelley: Yes, like the Angered Farmstead [an arena for education and innovation projects in North-East Gothenburg], getting immigrants involved in farming there. Questions have been brought up about: How stereotypical is that? And the same with the camels in the previous project. It was an idea that was thrown out there, seemingly without very little consideration as to how stereotypical it was. I suppose that's part of the reason it wasn't carried forward into the current phase of URG.

Shelley says she can sometimes both love and hate URG in the same day, a feeling that can be rather confusing:

Shelley: I love the content and the big idea of URG, though I almost feel it's become too complicated. But I love the ability that it's allowed me to ask the questions that I feel haven't been asked before and to develop those. If you look at the way sectors work, everything in local government is silos, but URG brings everyone together, while also causing this confusion around what I feel everyone's roles are within it.

Inga-Lisa: Yes, during this whole project the big challenge has been the roles. With co-creation you have chaos or disorder but somewhere in this chaos you also have a structure, but there is a limit to the amount of chaos various people can withstand. URG is largely run on inspiration, and continually trying to involve more people. There was a time when I felt it was getting so big that the ship would sink.

So how would Shelley, Ulla and Inga-Lisa grade URG as a project now that it's nearing its conclusion?

Shelley: I feel it doesn't fit on a scale. Is it a project measured by its outcomes? I don't know, because possibly each district has its own tangible outcomes. Or as the success of a project that was maybe put in the system to rock the boat and see what happens? Then it's been successful in doing that and bringing out some of these different questions. My only worry is that when they evaluate it they'll come back with a lot of numbers and not the processes and the evolution that has occurred.

Shelley says that she is cautious about the ways in which projects 'count' and evaluate the numbers of participants they reach or see benefit from the project's activities. For example, does counting the number of people visiting the office to meet with a particular person within a project count as a participant?

Shelley: This would mean you were also counting people who were already associated with the project or not even meeting to discuss the project, it could be for some other reason entirely! Is that what you'd count as a participant and a tangible outcome? Are these the type of people that projects should be measuring as part of their outcomes? I don't think so.

Inga-Lisa: As always, when you're working with sustainability it's hard to measure things. I don't know how the food strategy is doing for instance. But Gothenburg didn't have a city food strategy before URG so if that's a measure of success it has been successful.

Ulla sees URG's endeavour to talk to citizens in the North-East as positive. The project has arranged workshops and other events, but how many have attended them? Not droves of people, Ulla says:

Ulla: Some people said in interviews: "*Why are we to grow crops? Only poor people do so. If we had wanted this, we could have stayed in our homeland.*" But still there has been a lot of collaboration in URG. Good things have come of it. URG has stirred itself into the casserole in a healthy way, the casserole is the City of Gothenburg, and this has brought a lot of new knowledge, experience, contacts, thoughts and feelings to our work. In my case, I now don't want to be without those things.

Shelley: I would definitely recommend the project design for others because of the way it brings together the different stakeholders throughout the public and private spheres, academia, street-level organisations and citizens. This is how the world has to be working now because of these big problems in sustainability. You can't just target one small thing.

Inga-Lisa: I completely agree. URG has contributed to Gothenburg because of all the networking. It's hard to grade it on a scale, but if I think in terms of bees in a beehive, I would give it a full hive. At least in terms of bravery it would get a high score. A very brave project.

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The logic of logistics

Magnus Jäderberg • Christoffer Widegren • John Wedel

Magnus Jäderberg is a business development strategist with responsibility for goods transportation at the Traffic and Public Transport Authority (TPTA) in the City of Gothenburg. Christoffer Widegren is a logistician working as a consultant for TPTA. John Wedel has a PhD in logistics and is responsible for infrastructure and logistics at Business Region Gothenburg (BRG). They are all part of Urban Rural Gothenburg's (URG) testbed [subproject] whose aim is to find solutions for more climate-smart logistics within the City of Gothenburg.

Christoffer has been a logistics consultant for TPTA for around ten years. When URG was launched it was natural for him to become part of the logistics testbed as TPTA also had signed up for the project:

Magnus: The work within URG is in line with what Christoffer and I should be doing anyway. When we were assigned the task of working with this testbed of developing carbon-cutting logistics solutions in Gothenburg we realised that we could include our ongoing concept *Urban Deliveries* in URG.

The recipient of a national innovation award, *Urban Deliveries* entails large delivery trucks in Gothenburg's city centre being replaced by small electric vehicles and electric bicycles. Many of the trucks used for the delivery of goods had only been half-filled. Replacing them with electric vehicles has benefited the citizens through lower emissions, less noise and safer traffic. Applying *Urban Deliveries* to URG meant scaling up the use of these electric vehicles to include areas of Gothenburg outside the city centre:

Magnus: Another aspect of URG, which is quite uncommon in projects, is that there are so many municipal stakeholders collaborating. There is BRG as the project's facilitator, which I think works really well. There are so many people with drive and enthusiasm at BRG. Then there are the Property Management Administration, the Environmental Administration and the city districts.

URG is the only project Magnus has seen where there are boundary-crossing activities of this kind, which he feels is extremely positive because one creates a platform to break down the silos, which are a classic feature in municipal administration:

Magnus: At TPTA we thought the platform for this project was sound so that's why we agreed to join it. Now, after a couple of years, we can see that this boundary-crossing collaboration has been very fruitful. But a problem I see is that there hasn't always been enough political pressure to have this type of innovation and development project.

John is an engineer who was an operative logistics manager for a major food company before he started working at BRG:

John: Since BRG are coordinating URG, and I have previously worked with Christoffer and Magnus with this type of issue, it was natural for me to become part of the project. And since it not only deals with logistics solutions but also with food, and I have a background in the food industry, it was a good connection.

What appeals to John about the project is that one takes a bird's eye view on national challenges, the greatest of which he feels is integrating urban and suburban areas. Addressing these problems is decisive for whether Sweden will fare well or badly.

A challenge to engineers

What distinguishes the assignment within URG from Christoffer's ordinary job is transportation solutions in connection with locally produced food, which he hasn't worked with so much before:

Christoffer: There is definitely room for improvement within this area, so this is why logistics vis-à-vis locally produced goods became such a tangible part of the testbed. There is a lot of disorganised transportation, one might say. Large-scale industrial flows have much lower environmental impact and are much more energy-efficient than the haphazard deliveries by the individual producer. The difference in this respect is extremely large.

Christoffer notes that there has been a boom for locally produced goods in Gothenburg and elsewhere. The producers can't quite keep up with the demand. He is pleased to see this surge but notes that small-scale Gothenburg producers' awareness of efficient logistics solutions was virtually non-existent when he entered URG:

Christoffer: One cannot be professional at everything, particularly not at logistics. The small-scale producers solve it in the simplest way possible but don't realise there are things they could do that would save them time and money, such as finding a way to jointly deliver goods to their customers, or to collaborate with some form of network or wholesaler. There are many possible solutions. So that was the specific assignment I had within URG, to help facilitate more efficient logistics in small-scale food production.

John: I think there is quite a lot one can learn from a project such as URG. I think the three of us came to it from the engineer's point of view of what a project is, that is seeing it as something that is rather well defined and then carrying it out. URG is some kind of social project where much of the time initially was spent on trying to define what it was.

As an engineer, John felt unfamiliar with the type of project he was entering, where social sustainability issues, and even social bonding exercises between URG participants, were part of the project. As URG is drawing to a close he notes that he, Christoffer and Magnus have been able to make some headway, though it took some time to get up-and-running. In the beginning, they were unsure of what they were supposed to deliver. There was a description of this in writing, but at such an overarching level that it did little to clarify their role:

John: The idea was for Christoffer, Magnus and me to carry out a physical distribution solution. But in order to do this you must have producers, you must have goods and you must have customers. And there must be a marketplace where information around this trade is exchanged. And those parts didn't exist initially.

Christoffer: No, you could say that there was a pronounced ambition with the various testbeds [subprojects] with certain orientations. When we started to get a tangible sense of what our testbed was supposed to entail, it turned out that it was just about logistics vis-à-vis local producers.

There quite simply wasn't that much to work with initially, so Christoffer, Magnus and John gradually widened their focus to include short-distance logistics in general, *Urban Deliveries*,

food deliveries and renewable energy solutions for vehicles. There was a rather long phase of defining where they could deliver most benefit while staying within the confines of the project as indicated by its overarching objectives.

Magnus notes that one of URG's problems is that it sprawled in so many different directions initially, and still does to some extent. His perception is that the project is both engineer-oriented and socially oriented, in terms of focusing on social sustainability. Marrying these two aspects is a delicate task:

Magnus: Logistics becomes more quantitative but the social part more qualitative. So two worlds collide and I don't really think one had paved the way properly for these two parts to work. And with this type of project it might be easier for those who are engineer-oriented since there is a clear finish somewhere. While I think social projects become a series of activities. There is perhaps no ending.

It is clear to Magnus that when the project is over, TPTA will want to have it continue in another form. He feels this is important for the socially-oriented part of URG as well:

Magnus: Of course, there is a huge difference between biological diversity and what we work with, industrial orientation vis-à-vis the transportation suppliers. These two activities are supposed to happen in the same project. I think the take-off run was long because of the initial sprawl. This is how it is sometimes. But I think we are more on track now.

Magnus feels another reason why URG was late in taking off might have been that the participants weren't agreed on certain aspects of it. There were also many participants who quit the project:

Magnus: These things happen, but a reason for it may have been the divergent views people had of the project at the initial stage.

Breaking down the silos

In addition to working with concrete logistics solutions Magnus is also part of two overarching URG constellations, the Steering Group and the Think Tank. The Steering Group has a representative from each of the organisations that collaborate in URG. It normally convenes three times a year so that the project's results and the financial reports, which are produced every four months, can be followed up:

Magnus: What I have noticed in the Steering Group is that various projects in URG seem to be a bit too far away from some of the objectives of the project. A steering group should have a bird's eye view of the project, but when you notice that people don't understand what you're taking about because the knowledge level is so low about others' activities, the Steering Group itself risks becoming silos-oriented. This is why I always return to the problem of the project's sprawl. This is really the only drawback. Aside from that I can only see advantages.

Magnus feels the most important thing about projects such as URG is how one safeguards what has been achieved so that it will endure, and how one can build on it when going forward. In the Think Tank one discusses this very issue. Many of the participants there are also members of the Steering Group:

The limbs: Strategists

Magnus: A common thread one can notice is that participants in the Think Tank see boundary-crossing as very positive. I have also started to raise this topic with politicians, that we must work in this manner, considering the challenges we have in the city.

In Magnus' own administration he feels there is a lot of working in silos. He actually finds collaborating with other administrations in URG easier than to work within his own administration:

Magnus: It's hard to have to admit it, but I think you have to speak bluntly, because this way of working creates a lot of inefficiency and decreased productivity when we have these silos-oriented arrangements. Therefore, I think there has been a certain stringency about collaborating in URG.

Magnus feels that people don't consciously want to work in silos. Changing this culture would entail changing the way administrations normally operate, which will make projects such as URG even more important in the coming decade.

A good report card

So, what has the logistics testbed delivered so far with less than a year remaining of the project? There have been two parts, developing *Urban Deliveries* and the area of locally-produced goods:

Christoffer: For *Urban Deliveries* we have had a number of sub-goals to make goods consolidation and zero emission distribution activities more well-functioning and raising its quality. A recent follow-up indicates that we are moving in the right direction in this respect. We have also prepared for more actors to use the services, as well as for future upscales. Within this, we have worked with advancing a platform for the management of goods information. So we have attained a few sub-goals within *Urban Deliveries*.

As for locally-produced goods there is no definite solution thus far, but Christoffer and his colleagues have worked with a number of businesses, including 60 or so restaurants who are oriented towards sustainability:

Christoffer: A few of these restaurants have shown some interest. It has rather been a case of creating networks, knowledge and commitment. But we hope to advance in this dialogue and attain, if not a concrete solution, then at least a few cases that may lead to something concrete in the near future. Perhaps new vehicles or new logistics solutions. However, it's not easy for minor customers, such as restaurants, to change a food producer's entire transportation system, even if it is a small-scale producer.

Magnus, Christoffer and John all give high marks to URG. There were a lot of time-consuming and confusing meetings early on and while the project was late in picking up pace, things are moving in the right direction now:

John: This project addresses one of the greatest challenges we have, the urban-rural issues. I think that when we work towards the really great challenges, some things may be allowed to be a bit looser, or one may go astray a little. You don't have to attain your objectives fully. For we must pour all our efforts into working with this. The project has found its way and will turn out well. And from something that was very loose in the beginning, we will be able to go onwards in something that is really good.

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Outside the silos

Kristina Fermskog • Annette Gustavsson • Martin Berg

Kristina Fermskog is environmental analyst and part of Urban Rural Gothenburg (URG) via her work with Gothenburg's food strategy at the Environmental Administration of the City of Gothenburg. Annette Gustavsson is project manager for the project Urban Farming at the Property Management Administration (PMA) of the City of Gothenburg. Martin Berg is planning manager at PMA. Both Annette and Martin are part of URG courtesy of their work with urban farming.

Gothenburg's local adoption of Sweden's national food strategy sprung from the environmental programme adopted by the city council in 2013. Its action plan provided a mandate to start working with the issue roughly at the same time as URG's project application stated that a local food strategy should be integral to an urban development project such as URG.

Kristina: Over the last 15 years the number of municipal steering documents has grown exponentially. This is tricky to deal with when civil servants set priorities for their work. Therefore, the Environmental Administration wanted to explore whether we really needed to produce yet another steering document in the form of a food strategy, or if we could find another way of working strategically to create a sustainable food system.

URG's application to the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth and its project plan included the objective of producing an applied local food strategy for Gothenburg, thus the collaboration between URG and the Environmental Administration has come to focus on this. Pursuant to this objective, Kristina has recently completed an enquiry demonstrating that the local food strategy can be implemented through using existing steering documents. The report suggests that there be an applied food strategy in the form of an action plan:

Kristina: This is how we connect all the steering documents to actual doing in the near future, and hopefully URG can help raise the ambition level in terms of collaboration across the silos.

Annette: We are running a test oriented towards public kitchens. At the Angered Farmstead [an arena for education and innovation projects in North-East Gothenburg] we have this model farm where one is cultivating crops in accordance with certain principles. We will calculate how much is being produced and assess whether it may be possible for some preschools to jointly employ a city-district farmer who delivers his produce to them. It's very exciting.

Martin: And pedagogical.

Kristina: What we for instance write in the report is that there are unique prerequisites for Gothenburg, in comparison with other cities. Part of Gothenburg's uniqueness is that the city has huge tracts of arable land. There is ongoing strategic work with this land that the Property Management Administration has been doing over many years in finding lessees and setting up sustainable contracts with them.

The limbs: Strategists

An ambition with the food strategy, says Kristina, is to broaden the perspective so that school meals aren't just about food and health, but an opportunity to learn about the origin of the food and its connection with the environment. Another idea is to have knowledge-boosting efforts vis-à-vis the staff in the 600 kitchens within the city and empower them in their roles as sustainable development agents.

Business almost as usual

Annette's and Martin's participation in URG is affected simply by doing their normal work within the Property Management Administration as they are engaged in facilitating urban farming, which is an important part of URG. Among current projects where the Property Management Administration and URG collaborate are the model farm at the Angered Farmstead and the pilot study for city district greenhouses. This study contains architectural drawings as well as a financial plan and a business model for the greenhouses:

Martin: We have been part of various processes in parallel. Some of them are part of URG. Some are in conjunction with the Swedish innovation agency Vinnova, and some are part of the EU's climate innovation initiative Climate-KIC. It is an advantage for us to be able to contribute to URG as it gives us some leverage in our day-to-day work at the Property Management Administration.

Annette: We have identified a number of areas where we need to collaborate in the future vis-à-vis Business Region Gothenburg (BRG). It concerns business development and the county authorities, for we reach out county-wide via BRG, which we don't normally do with our other networks. You reach out to the county authorities via BRG as well, don't you Kristina?

Kristina: Precisely.

A table for 35

An ordinary day at the office in terms of URG work for Annette, Martin and Kristina would normally entail attending various meetings. At the start of the project all the 35 project participants would be invited once a week for half a day's get-together:

Annette: Early on it felt bizarre with these long weekly meetings. Then they scaled it down to once every two weeks and I would feel: "*Wow, only once a fortnight,*" but later this felt a bit much too.

A seasoned participant at URG meetings, Annette says that not only were there too many of them initially but there was a lot of repetition of information, almost as though one had to start from scratch every time.

Kristina would have preferred monthly meetings with various themes, for instance of a more exploratory character, or thematic ones with a focus on this or that testbed [subproject] or hub [geographical areas where the project is particularly active]. She thinks the various municipal administrations became more involved in the URG process of getting up-and-running than was necessary. This work could have been carried out in a preparatory phase of URG by the project management.

Kristina also feels project participants have been uncertain of their own and others' roles in URG and different departments of the city administration. She has had to defend herself quite a lot from people saying: *"This is just public meals, why don't you care about social and economic sustainability?"*

Kristina: I say of course we care about all dimensions of sustainability. We all work in accordance with Agenda 2030. But the area of responsibility for the Environmental Administration is to impel and coordinate the ecological dimension of sustainable development and support other departments within the city's organisations.

A solar system of interacting projects.

Martin says that part of the work in the early days of URG consisted of putting out fires. URG has no mandate to grant the lease of land to anyone. This is the responsibility of the Property Management Administration who own the land. Yet some people received promises from URG management that they would be able to lease land for various purposes which caused a lot of chaos early on:

Martin: I'd say URG has gone from something that we thought was quite frustrating in the beginning to actually being rather good. Even if your mandate can be somewhat unclear at times, URG is building this network and transdisciplinary platform that I think has been its strength.

Apart from the many meetings with URG participants Martin also gets to work more actively within the project:

Martin: I have arranged some workshops with one of our sustainability strategists, so that has been part of a typical day.

Annette: And you two do this to a large extent from the perspective of LAB 190.

LAB 190 is a model area and interactive platform for sustainable development along County Road 190 from Hjällbo in North-East Gothenburg to the municipality of Essunga in the heart of Västra Götaland county. The road runs through two other cities in the county. These four municipalities are members of the interactive platform along with the county itself, the County Administrative Board, and a local federation of municipalities within the county:

Martin: We have a collaborative group with civil servants for these seven actors. We work with green business, sustainable tourism and infrastructure. Every actor only has an annual budget of 10,000 SEK [1,050 USD], but this process of collaboration is bearing fruit in a joint work process and is generating new projects that one does in concert, but with one or two actors as main applicants for funding. So, it's exciting.

Annette: Yes, so it's not a project, but a way to gather around a work process.

Martin explains that the current project at the Angered Farmstead within EU's climate innovation initiative Climate-KIC in part has sprung from LAB 190 and that parts of it are a pilot case within Climate-KIC. Through this collaboration actors from the four municipalities can take part in the cultivation incubator at the Angered Farmstead:

Martin: Hopefully we can build models in Climate-KIC that can be used along County Road 190, for we can work with generational renewal in agriculture and also revitalise the land and find new people and business models.

Annette: There is a political steering group in LAB 190 as well.

Martin: Yes. LAB 190 was one of the reasons we got Climate-KIC, but Europe also thinks our collaborative model is exciting, so you can work across political and geographical boundaries in this manner.

Meowing for structure

Annette feels that BRG perhaps have been too focused on big, flashy companies but if they in the future work more with small, green companies it might have major ramifications:

Annette: This is a very important issue for the City of Gothenburg, if one can work in this manner in the future.

Martin: Perhaps one can make BRG's and the Property Management Administration's collaboration permanent. Perhaps we can tie the business issues to land ownership?

Annette: And that BRG provides support with business advice and development. I think the Environmental Administration might get involved in more collaboration as well. I'm thinking of their regulatory role.

Kristina: That was my spontaneous thought. Four out of five food companies are small. You don't have a go-to person in your company to check up on laws and rules or how to expand your business.

Annette: One could offer knowledge around this, lectures and workshops; put together an education package for small food producers.

When Kristina thinks of URG she thinks of food as a tool for the transition to a sustainable society. The project has been grist to her mill in terms of this:

Kristina: URG is a bunch of hard-working people who are a little bit like cats wandering about meowing, needing some confines. Structures would have made things more productive. URG is also a little evaluation monster to me. So much reporting to do.

Martin: URG is an ethereal body. I don't feel this is my process.

Annette: Nor do I.

Should URG's project design be recommended for future sustainability projects? Kristina thinks it hinges on the four URG methods stated in the project application: industrial symbiosis, co-creation, local economic analysis and the URG method, where the latter – according to a former project manager – is a concoction of the three first methods. Kristina doesn't feel there has been much attention to industrial symbiosis, while local economic analysis has happened but rarely:

Kristina: As for co-creation we talked a lot about this at a Mistra Urban Futures conference in Cape Town. It shouldn't just be for co-creating information, but for co-creating doing. And we haven't really made progress here. In the best of all worlds, co-creation would enable different stakeholders to have greater ownership in this strategy work, but it has more or less just been used for information gathering.

How would URG fare if it were accorded a grade for its performance? Annette finds grading hard while Martin would give it a three on a five-point scale:

Kristina: I'd say average. There are lumps of gold there and there are times I don't feel so good about it. Time will tell what comes out of it.

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The road less travelled

Jenny Almén Linn • Šefika Ćorić • Joachim Keim

Jenny Almén Linn and Šefika Ćorić are sustainability strategists at Urban Rural Gothenburg (URG), providing advice in their roles as experts in sustainable business development. Joachim Keim works at Coompanion as a business developer, assisting URG as a resource person in various ways. Coompanion, at its core, is a cooperative development agency, a characteristic that sets it apart from other business developers.

URG seems to invoke different images for different people. However, Jenny, Joachim and Šefika agree that the project represents possibilities:

Jenny: To me it is opportunities, joy and involvement, but with impediments. It is no motorway, but a bumpy little road one must take to succeed. It entails possibilities and the more who venture down the road, the broader and simpler to travel it will become.

Jenny applied for the job as sustainability strategist at Business Region Gothenburg in 2017. It seemed exciting since the position combined much of what she had done previously:

Jenny: I have worked extensively in the tourism sector and with business development and am also very engaged in sustainability and integration issues. My two areas of responsibility in URG are helping develop the tourism sector in North-East Gothenburg and connecting local food producers with retailers, restaurants and hotels.

When Jenny first saw her job description, she understood her tasks as more or less exclusively being coordination, creating networks, arranging meetings and workshops:

Jenny: I felt this can't be the objective. What are we supposed to attain? Asking the then project manager, she replied: *"That is the objective, to facilitate people's cooperation and enable the movement to continue."* When I later saw a document with the objectives, I realised the person who had interviewed me had neglected to describe them. I wish I had been shown the project plan, though I would have accepted the job anyway.

The objective for URG is to provide support to at least 80 companies. Jenny's objectives are to ensure that there be a functioning organisation for the tourism sector that will enable it to live on after URG, and to test some business models in practice:

Jenny: I work with groups of companies that have a similar business orientation. I have arranged workshops for groups of tourism entrepreneurs for business counselling and network purposes. As for the growers who are to have contact with restaurants and hotels, I have met them as a group in workshops and seminars, and I have also met with the restaurants collectively, occasionally having one-on-one meetings with some of them.

An agronomist from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Šefika moved to Sweden in 2011, after having lived in London for some time. In March 2017 she became an intern at URG, then became a sustainability strategist for the project three months later, employed by the Angered City District. She has responsibility for two areas there, one largely rural region and the other is much more densely populated. Among Šefika's tasks she is to find and work with small and medium-sized enterprises with a focus on climate-smart and environmentally friendly companies that need support with sustainable business development. Business advice and networking are key methods to accomplish this:

Šefika: I work with companies individually and also with NGOs [non-governmental organisations], development groups and networks. But there is a lot of focus on helping companies, as Jenny says.

Joachim is employed as a business developer by Coompanion, which is an economic association helping people start new companies and develop existing ones, offering services within business development, economics, law and communication. Joachim entered URG because Coompanion is a partner in the project, his specific role is undefined and thus can be extremely varied:

Joachim: My assignment in URG is very broad as I am a ‘resource person’ who is drawn in when needed. I give advice to entrepreneurs, with a focus on business development, objectives and strategy. I have also taken part in workshops and I served as an interpreter when we had visitors from Hanover here, translating from German to Swedish.

Since Coompanion has a limited role in the project Joachim has tried not to attend too many meetings, instead using most of his time in assisting some of the 80 companies URG are to support:

Joachim: Initially it wasn’t entirely easy to work with the project since I don’t come in on a daily basis, so I didn’t get a full grasp of it. And this may also have been an effect of not so many others within the project understanding it either. What are we doing? What are we supposed to do?

Whom to help?

Identifying the possible recipients of support from URG has not been particularly hard for Jenny as tourism entrepreneurs, restaurants and growers are fairly easy to find:

Jenny: I work with the Property Management Administration in Gothenburg who lease land to the growers. These growers already had a network I could collaborate with in terms of cultivation and food production. There was also a budding network of tourism entrepreneurs, so I have perhaps had an easier time building my networks than you have had Šefika. I have tried to reach the actors I have identified but I don’t think we have advertised. Have you done so?

Šefika: No, not very much, and it didn’t succeed very well. I had more success once I started collaborating with Business Center in Angered who work with people wanting to start companies. So, if they find a person interested in green business they’ll mention them to me.

In an attempt to attract businesses Šefika organised a series of meetings in Angered [a socio-economically challenged Gothenburg suburb], informing companies and NGOs how they could apply for money from LEADER, which is a European Union initiative to support rural development. Her hope was to be able to work with these organisations in the long term:

Šefika: It’s not easy. Bergum-Gunnilse [a largely rural area in the Angered district] is a little different compared to Angered [the densely populated suburb]. There is a very active society for local development in Bergum-Gunnilse. We are collaborating with them and most companies within green business are members of this society, but in Angered it is tougher for us to find entrepreneurs.

In assisting would-be entrepreneurs with business development Joachim comes across a large variety of ideas. Some might seem hopeless at first glance, but others may work out if the

entrepreneur has the energy and drive to actually go out and test their idea. Then there are those who have superb ideas, but nothing ever happens because they don't have the motivation or simply don't do the work that is required:

Joachim: We can coach them and help them take steps forward, but they have to do the work themselves. It's not much fun to be working the soil in the spring when it's raining cats and dogs, hoping to one day sell vegetables at the marketplace in the city centre. But many of the growers succeed because they have fantastic drive. So hard work may trump a brilliant idea in some cases.

A major objective of URG is to boost green business development and low-carbon activities. However, exactly what this entails might depend on how the concepts have been defined. So has there been a clear definition of low-carbon activities within the project?

Šefika: No.

Jenny: No, but we have never helped businesses with environmentally detrimental activity. Nature, culture and sustainability-oriented tourism is by definition not particularly bad for the environment, so I focused on these. But we haven't measured CO₂ emissions. I'm not sure it's even possible to do so for these companies. But we are trying to find low-carbon transportation for the growers, so they don't have to drive their diesel cars into the city one by one.

Finding business models

It has been hard, Jenny says, to test new business models within the project. Should you create a new model or support an existing one through its development? What is a business model and how new must it be? Or is it enough to support an existing one and aid in its continued development?

Jenny: With tourism I know fairly well what to do, but business models involving retailers and restaurants are tricky. Restaurants are pressed for time. With retailers you have to find small outlets if they are to purchase from growers. There isn't a wide selection of small restaurants and retailers to choose from, so it is time-consuming to find good models around this.

Joachim: If you take the definition of a business model it is: "*How do we earn money from our business idea?*" There are a thousand ways to do this. Can people subscribe to our vegetables? Or buy shares in our produce? Let's say I accept part of the risk, investing in ten square metres [108 square feet] of carrots in the spring to possibly get X number of kilograms.

Joachim maintains that the tricky part is getting the entrepreneurs to understand the concepts that are put forward. After all, it's not certain that all who are good at sowing carrots understand the way some business developers talk about various models:

Jenny: And it's not just about buying and selling. A lot of administration and logistics is involved. How will it work out for the restaurant if I deliver 20 carrots once a week? There are so many parameters that must work in order to have profitability.

Outside the box

Among Šefika's tasks, there is a 90-minute session every week at Caritas' volunteer centre in Hjällbo [a suburb in Angered] where she is supposed to facilitate the introduction of immigrants into the job market. Part of the research side of URG, this is a difficult assignment for Šefika since most who come to the volunteer centre are in the process of seeking a residence permit, so it is hard for them to focus on starting a company:

Šefika: But I try to do something good with this. We have had some lectures at Caritas on green business, though it's hard to spark interest in them. And I am trying to arrange study visits to the Angered Farmstead [an arena for education and innovation projects in North-East Gothenburg], to do something tangible for this group.

It seems Caritas were very active a few years ago, Šefika says. Now there is not much activity. There are fewer visitors and most don't speak Swedish:

Šefika: They try a little at Caritas to prepare for 'real' school should they get a residence permit, but I think they will have to wait a few years. So, while they wait, perhaps they can find interesting projects to activate them, though my role in this is hard to grasp. The project was part of the collaboration with Caritas from a few years ago when there was more activity there. Most who are there now are from Somalia. I thought I'd arrange study visits and lectures. I'll try to find people from Somalia who have succeeded in starting companies to hold lectures at Caritas to inspire others.

A passing grade?

Jenny and Joachim would give URG a grade of 70 on a 100-point scale, Šefika opting for three and a half out of a possible five:

Jenny: I feel we are on the right path but perhaps haven't reached our goal yet. If it weren't for the slow first year we had, I might give it 90 instead of 70.

Šefika: URG has sparked a lot of activities, so it feels a bit sad that we don't have time for much more, but we hope for a continuation in one way or another.

For the project design to be recommended for future endeavours Jenny says it needs to be made clearer what is meant by 'support to companies.' The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth says it's sufficient if companies have attended one or two network meetings:

Jenny: We don't count that as support. If you ask the companies if they have received support from us, two years later they may even have forgotten that they were invited by us. We need greater clarity around what we should do and how to measure it.

Joachim, Jenny and Šefika take great satisfaction in the success of companies they have assisted. Jenny and Šefika have seen companies collaborate successfully without their active support. Sometimes simply inviting them to the same event will do the trick:

Šefika: We had collaboration between two companies in our network. They did it themselves, without Jenny and I taking any other initiative than inviting them to a workshop. This is when you feel you have made a tangible contribution.

Joachim: Off the cuff, I can't think of any concrete example of making a tangible contribution towards sustainability, but all these times when you see that the entrepreneur has taken a step forward. It might be a big or just a small one. They have taken a step and realise it themselves. I find this very satisfying.

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Democracy through entrepreneurship

Claudio Mc Conell • Nigar Ibrahim • Dragan Šako

Claudio Mc Conell is a former region developer at the Department for Regional Development within Västra Götaland Regional Council (VGR). Nigar Ibrahim is a human rights activist and lawyer who is currently working at an enterprise agency helping immigrant would-be entrepreneurs. Dragan Šako works as a business adviser at Business Center North-East, the local branch of Business Region Gothenburg (BRG) in north-eastern Gothenburg. All three have been involved as consultants in Urban Rural Gothenburg's (URG) outreach programme to promote green business development amongst immigrants in North-East Gothenburg.

In 2009 an honorary title was bestowed on Nigar as she was named Gothenburger of the Year, an award instituted in 1993 for a resident of the city who has done something commendable and has brought pride and joy to many. The award was for Nigar's work within a project where she educated young people to enable them to stand up to honour-related violence:

Nigar: This honour warms my heart and tells me that what I have done has been worthwhile. I was given validation for all the effort I have poured into this work.

Having been active in many organisations, including a women's network for human rights, Nigar still considers the work against honour-related violence the best thing she's ever done. As well as helping young people stand up for their rights, she has also helped parents understand the laws and rules that apply in Sweden and how to raise their children in accordance with human rights and democracy:

Nigar: From having been disorderly and doing poorly at school the young people I have educated have straightened themselves out and are now doing fine. I started this work in 2006, but in 2009 the project ended because it ran out of money and was mishandled by the organisation running it. So, I lost the possibility of educating more boys and girls. It irritates me a lot that this project had to be discontinued.

Among Nigar's biggest struggles are the problems of racism, xenophobia, undemocratic decisions and exclusion. She has seen a clear lack of service and fair treatment in some areas for certain groups and fears that democracy is starting to slip away:

Nigar: It annoys me because I left my homeland wanting to live in a democratic country. And when I come here, I see racists marching in the streets. It makes my heart cry. Many people think democracy is something we have won once and for all and that it is ours to keep. But democracy is something you have to nurture, or it will disappear.

Nigar's work at the enterprise agency entails helping newly-arrived immigrants who want to start their own business. At the agency they have the benefit of several mentors with diverse backgrounds who volunteer four hours of work a month for the programme they run there:

Nigar: They are wonderful. Most of them are old acquaintances of mine. I don't think people are averse to doing some work for free, but we have to find them and motivate them. I wish I could get the assignment to find these enthusiasts who can help build their local communities. Perhaps the City of Gothenburg could organise this.

Towards sustainability

Environmental issues have always been important to Nigar. She has worked to make many people aware of these issues, even though they may have been far from their agenda. She has endeavoured to make people think about how much electricity and water they use, what they do with their refuse and how to travel in an environmentally friendly way, such as opting for the train instead of air travel:

Nigar: We used to have a car. I sold it. And everyone asked: “*Don’t you have a car?*” I said: “*No I don’t, but I have trams and trains and I have a bicycle and legs.*” I want as many as possible of those who don’t normally think about environmental issues to do so.

Nigar was part of a project with the Chamber of Commerce in Stockholm. It was funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency:

Nigar: In many countries environmental issues are not on the agenda. So, we raised the issues about the water, air and land and everything else that is a prerequisite for our lives. I am very grateful that there are organisations in place who now do volunteer work around these issues.

Guiding clients

Dragan started his work at Business Center in 2006, having previously worked in a similar capacity for another organisation. Before he became a business adviser, he had been running several companies of his own:

Dragan: Our role here at Business Center is to create local networks and assist those wishing to start a company. Existing small companies can also receive assistance depending on what their needs are.

Dragan’s job can basically be divided into counselling and guidance. Counselling is for entrepreneurs who already have a detailed plan, while guidance is for those who may just have a hazy idea of the business they want to set up:

Dragan: Someone might say they want to import goods from a certain country, asking: “*How do I do this?*” It’s very broad so they need guidance. But if you have a specific idea, such as opening a café in the city centre, you need counselling.

Additional activities are available depending on demand. Business Center can give advice on such matters as tax, marketing, social media and homepages, in addition to which they also help entrepreneurs understand the complex system of organisations that might facilitate their way forward:

Dragan: Someone might want to borrow money, find suitable premises for their business or need a permit. None of this is our role. We chiefly guide people, making sure they take all the steps in the right order.

Business Center get an annual assignment along with a budget. The quantitative objectives are clear, including how many people they should assist, how many activities they are to arrange and how many clients should launch a company each year. Dragan thinks the large number of people starting their own business in Angered [a socio-economically challenged area of Gothenburg] and other parts of the city with a similar socio-economic structure may be a result of the high level of unemployment:

The limbs: Strategists

Dragan: The best argument for starting your own company is not that you want a job. If you have a job and set up a business on the side, you can do pretty much as you wish. But if you're on social welfare and are starting a company you should realise it's tantamount to getting a job, so you can neither receive unemployment benefits nor social welfare nor many other forms of support. We emphasise this when we talk to our clients.

From a financial aspect Business Center would seem a good venture considering the reduced costs for social welfare that are a result of unemployed people succeeding as business entrepreneurs. Dragan says the numbers he got from the social welfare administration a few years ago put the costs to the municipality at between 180,000 and 800,000 SEK [19,000-84,200 USD] per unemployed person per year, depending on their personal circumstances:

Dragan: If we estimate the average cost at 300,000 SEK [31,600 USD] per person we could multiply that by 20 people a year, out of the 40 we help, that start their own business. I work alone at this branch so financially Business Center makes sense.

Bring on the orchards!

Claudio is a human geographer who has contributed with experience and knowledge around integration efforts in the green sector in North-East Gothenburg. He recently had a three-year assignment working with Future Kitchen, a project for Region Västra Götaland, the county to which Gothenburg and 48 other municipalities belong. Future Kitchen is designed to meet the demand for public-kitchen staff by granting internships to immigrants who have recently received a Swedish residence permit. The interns receive mentorship while working. They also get on-the-job language training, with a special emphasis on 'kitchen Swedish,' terminology specific to their trade:

Claudio: In the long term we need to recruit thousands of new employees to Swedish school kitchens. For Swedish-born children who study for these professions at upper secondary level it is often their second or third choice. When most of them have completed their studies they never want to see a kitchen again.

In terms of staffing, cooks are the most sought-for in public kitchens. How can one work to recruit more of them? Claudio suggests there are good possibilities for those who have been catering assistants for many years:

Claudio: In the group of recently-arrived immigrants there are many who have worked in restaurants and kitchens. So, they have experience, but they haven't worked in a Swedish kitchen before. The question arises: "*Should they learn Swedish before starting to work?*" Should they study Swedish for immigrants for two years and complement the schooling from their native countries, then learn the profession? If so, six to eight years would have passed before they can work in a kitchen. This is why we launched this project Future Kitchen. It has been a success and there are people from other trades interested in applying it for their activities.

Claudio is pleased with Urban Rural Gothenburg's (URG) emphasis on locally-produced food and reducing Gothenburg's carbon footprint. The city's halving of food waste in just a few years is a promising sign. The municipality has plenty of steering documents meant to provide prerequisites for a sustainable development. However, Claudio feels many local resources aren't used to their fullest:

Claudio: In the North-East, a large section of the population is not part of the job market. There are also enormous tracts of land there that can be used to produce local food. At

my workplace, I see fruit baskets with bananas, apples and oranges from abroad, even though we had a bumper crop of apples last year in Sweden. Why aren't there apple and pear orchards between the residential areas? The missing link for increased local food production is for the politicians to firmly point out that this is a priority. The steering documents themselves don't seem to be having much effect.

Urban-rural development

Business Center is an external resource for URG. They have had some collaboration, such as a workshop in four parts with entrepreneurs from Business Center and some of those who have worked within URG with their networks.

To Dragan URG is a broad and exciting project where one is trying out new approaches, since there is a realisation all over the world that cities aren't functioning very well and must be made more sustainable. It isn't a classic project that one can complete in a couple of years:

Dragan: Urban Rural Gothenburg is, as the name betrays, about the city and the countryside and building bridges to interconnect them. For it to have real influence I think it ought to be made permanent in some way.

Claudio would give URG a high grade. He has seen enthusiasm, energy, and ingenuity in the project. One has brought academia into URG and people and ideas from many corners:

Claudio: I actually haven't seen much of this in the City of Gothenburg before. I think this city needs more input from the outside. It needs to learn what is happening in the rest of the world. I think some would oppose URG on the grounds that it aligns with the projectification trend, but I say that projects are good because there is a possibility of learning to do things in new ways by thinking differently.

When solving problems, the solutions often depend on what actors are involved in dealing with the issues; Claudio contends this citing evidence from the United Nations' initiative Global Network on Safer Cities. There, one has seen a positive trend when cities with a high level of crime have involved the health, youth recreation and cultural sectors:

Claudio: When one has broken the pattern of treating crime exclusively as a police matter and instead has allowed other actors to develop solutions, crime rates have dropped. I think this is something one can apply more broadly. What if URG for instance had involved the Education Department instead of the Environmental Administration? I think it is important to involve other actors than those normally taken for granted. At any rate, my message to the politicians is that we should have more of these innovative endeavours in Gothenburg.

Nigar is pleased that URG has afforded people who want to lease land this opportunity, enabling them to produce their own food. To her it seems a good approach without a lot of unnecessary bureaucracy. She reckons it will have positive effects in the long run for the environment, but it annoys her that 80% of the eggs consumed in Sweden are from Denmark, causing increased transportation and pollution. She is also critical of Sweden's large import of meat:

Nigar: Why not produce it here in Sweden? We used to be a country of farmers and basically, we still are. It's great that we have become a successful industrial country as well, but why did we lose the other part? I hope there will be more and more locally produced food in the whole of Gothenburg.

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First, do structure

Karin Eriksson • Simon Hedin

Karin Eriksson and Simon Hedin work with external communication at Urban Rural Gothenburg (URG), Simon as a project communicator, Karin as a business development strategist. Via films, web pages and printed materials they convey learnings, experiences, results and create calls to action with regards to activities.

Simon estimates that 80% of the perception of what a communicator actually does is a big misunderstanding:

Simon: People may say: “*I think it’s hard to write good emails*” to which someone might reply: “*Ask the communicator and get support from them.*” Or they may ask if I could come along to an activity and take notes. This is not our job. Everyone in an organisation has the responsibility of becoming a better communicator.

Simon moved to Gothenburg having previously worked with communication for a fibre optics and power distribution company in Sundsvall. His job there was very similar to what was in the ad for the job at URG, working with local groups and boosting commitment where needed. URG caught his eye because of its focus on sustainability and the social aspect of area development:

Simon: I have a personal interest in sustainability and green innovation and keep abreast of things like that. The ad asked: “*Do you want to be part of developing Angered [a socio-economically challenged area of Gothenburg] to make it more attractive?*” My answer was a resounding yes.

Karin is a business development strategist for Business Region Gothenburg (BRG) and has previously been market communications manager, raising brand awareness in the company. Her boss at BRG, being chair of URG’s Steering Group [a constellation with representatives from each of the participating organisations], asked her if she wanted to be part of the project to help bring structure to the organisation’s communications, making it clear there were problems in this respect:

Karin: I am business development strategist/communications strategist in the project. A major part of my work is making sure we do what we say we’re doing and what we’re supposed to do. So that is the branding part. I’m also very involved in how we deliver our services and am a supervisor to Simon and head of communications at URG.

A profile like Karin’s would normally be expected to enter an organisation expecting to simply help communicate. However, structuring communication requires implementing it in the organisation’s activities on the whole, so Karin set about doing this and found all participants extremely open to embracing structure, paving the way for efficient communication within the project.

Role confusion

Simon's job description says he is to facilitate valuable communication to URG's potential recipients of support, tasks he was excited about, though the nature of this communication wasn't entirely clear:

Simon: What were we to communicate? To whom, and why? With the lack of structure Karin mentioned I wondered: Do we perhaps want more people to receive our support, or do we want this person to cooperate with that person? Do we want this person to create an activity for their network? Or what?

As external communication lagged behind, an ordinary day at the office for Simon would entail considerable confusion. He didn't feel he had the mandate to tell his colleagues what the project was or wasn't about. People came from every direction offering a wide range of views of the project:

Simon: People would say this is a research project, this is business development project, this is an innovation project, this is a social integration project. Amid this cacophony of voices I was left wondering: "So what kind of project is it?"

Karin: And possibly all these individual views of the project may have been a case of personal preference.

Simon: Yes. But now the typical day is more structured. We have meetings to plan activities, well ahead of time. And we take care to write down exactly what has been agreed upon.

Brand awareness

Karin feels that communicators often are viewed as a production apparatus, but says the profession is not just about being good at writing. One also has to be able to analyse in order to know what to write:

Karin: What Simon describes in terms of others misconstruing his role is something I feel is very common within the profession. But we have worked a lot with building integrity for his role, enabling him to make demands. People are largely ignorant when it comes to communication in the context of one's brand.

According to Karin there are four touchpoints where other people encounter an organisation's brand, these being one's products and services, behaviour, appearance and communication. When one's brand is tarnished it is very seldom the case of flawed communication but almost invariably about products and services and how they are delivered, or one's behaviour. Karin entered the project with some trepidation amid the glaring structure deficiency since there was a clear risk of damage to URG's branding:

Karin: I come from a world where one works exploratively in some phases while there is still an overarching structure. One has a business plan, clear objectives and an overall strategy underpinning a communication strategy. If we don't do what is in our project plan it's an enormous threat to our branding. Another threat to the project is the huge number of parties involved and that there are people working 5% or 10% of a full-time position. You cannot work 5% with a project. You can barely read the weekly newsletter before that time is up.

Personal limitations

Karin's big challenge in the job was that her knowledge of North-East Gothenburg was limited, making it harder for her to grasp the project. Also, she only worked 20% at URG. The wide scope and nebulous character of the project, along with the fact that she wasn't very familiar with its details, nor how one works with environmental issues or green business development, caused some anxiety on her part. In the role she was given it was crucial to acquire a bird's-eye view.

Simon thinks he could have done things differently had he said no to more people. He felt it was difficult for him to do so since people were so committed:

Simon: I didn't want to disappoint them, so I suppose I put my relationship with them above the project itself, saying yes to colleagues because they were so enthusiastic. Karin helped me by saying: "*Let the question come to the project instead of you personally so you can look at the situation from the outside.*" I started doing this and it helped me a lot.

Karin: The thing is that everyone wants the best for everyone else. So, when someone makes a request, we tend to be open-minded and try to understand the idea someone is putting forward, though it actually might be directed at the wrong person, which would have been clearer to all of us had we sorted out more carefully our respective roles within the organisation.

Simon recalls how he often would say yes to a request, sit down in his office writing texts, then realise he hadn't the faintest idea what to write about the matter at hand. He'd phone people up to find out something about the study or report or whatever the request pertained to, finding out who knew something about the issues. Then he would be rerouted to a few other people, ultimately spending so much time on the matter that he had three pages of raw text in front of him instead of three succinct sentences:

Simon: When I said yes to so many things, I sent people in the wrong direction. They would see me as the go-to-guy for just about everything. Saying no sometimes instead of yes, only Karin gave me the insight to make that change. And I suppose at the outset I should have had more faith in my own profession.

Left in limbo

Simon says the period between Development North-East and URG was disconcerting for many. Before the pilot study one had spoken to countless people and concluded that there was a need for support in North-East Gothenburg within business development and that there was great potential there. The study was so broad and continued for so long that there was a period where many of the people who had received support were left in limbo and felt neglected. There was no organisation there that could provide assistance to them:

Simon: When the pilot study was launched I think we should have had a communicator on the team, ensuring that we deal correctly with the issues of what we communicate during the various phases, when the pilot study is ongoing, when it's concluded, when we apply for grants and when the project has been launched.

Simon suggests another possible source of confusion for the recipients of support might be that people on the URG team come from so many different organisations, making it imperative that

everyone say: “*I am from URG*” to safeguard the project’s credibility and reputation. Simon feels the team now has reached that point and that this is something future projects can learn from.

An audacious experiment

Karin is delighted that so many good examples have been set through the project, since many regions and cities have the same sort of problems as Gothenburg and will be able to learn from URG:

Karin: We were invited to the Hanover Trade Fair to demonstrate how we work. That we can be a best case for others to learn from makes me enormously proud.

Simon notes that there has been some positive media coverage of URG, and that there is a clear difference compared with the project’s nascent period in that team members now can explain the project in a more succinct way, allowing outsiders to more easily grasp what it’s all about:

Simon: I definitely notice that when there are presentations or activities, or when our colleagues in the project talk with others, they seem much more at ease in explaining the project.

Simon thinks of URG as an audacious expedition voyage, a brave new way of thinking, challenging well-worn municipal structures. Karin associates URG with its inherent potential:

Karin: There is the promise of financial, social and ecological sustainability. Since the project isn’t completed, I can’t give it a final grade. We are definitely on our way, but I wish it had been a five-year project. We have taken lots of baby steps and are still being nourished by our expectations of what is to come. On a scale from one to ten, it started at one and is now at six or seven.

Simon: For the city I would give it a five out of five. You can’t have a project that solely deals with social sustainability, business development or environmental issues. All these things must be interconnected. We can’t do something in one place that is beneficial there if it leads to negative consequences elsewhere. We have to take this big ship forwards together.

Neither Karin nor Simon would recommend the project as a model for future endeavours as its wide scope and multi-faceted nature makes it hard to grasp. Karin says there are parts of the project she might recommend, such as the Angered Farmstead [an arena for education and innovation projects in North-East Gothenburg]. Simon thinks there may be ramifications from URG in the form of a collaborative authority or administration:

Simon: Within public administration one usually works in silos. What is needed is communication across sectors. In Gothenburg nothing seems to happen because people don’t talk with each other or cooperate. Very few are competent in this respect, so this is an aspect that URG might be able shine a light upon.

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A passing grade?

Roland Lexén • Patrik Lidström

Roland Lexén and Patrik Lidström are consultants at Public Partner, a consultancy firm assigned to evaluate the project Urban Rural Gothenburg (URG) in its entirety. Their evaluation is carried out from the perspective that learning can lead to new insights and behavioural changes, thus allowing learning itself to become steering.

Part of running an EU innovation project entails recruiting external consultants to continually follow up how the project is faring. URG sent out contract documents in May 2017 to solicit offers from interested parties to perform the evaluation of its activities:

Patrik: We sent our offer to URG and it was deemed advantageous. We work broadly with a host of consultation services. Our main focus is on management and steering of publicly financed activities, so we work a lot with municipalities and regions.

A traditional audit, Roland observes, is about telling you what doesn't work. This can be delivered in different ways, but criticism can often be conveyed in a way that isn't conducive to improvement and development:

Roland: It is not our task to tell you what went wrong. When we evaluate, we do it with a supportive, learning perspective. We believe learning itself can lead to behavioural changes. People act differently when they have realised something. So, you need to work with enabling new insights to emerge and allow them to become steering. This is seldom done under duress, but perhaps by saying: "I see that you have these good qualities, could you perhaps do a little more of this?" Instead of saying: "You have made an error, you did not deliver on time."

There was some hesitation on the part of Roland and Patrik before offering their services to URG. Early in 2017 there had been several newspaper articles erroneously linking URG with a camel project in North-East Gothenburg:

Patrik: We were aware that URG was a rather roughed-up project when we came in, as it had been assailed by the media. We considered whether we might assist in strengthening the project. We had done a lot of research before we arrived at the conclusion that we wanted to try and see if we could be of assistance. Here the challenge is to make a system with many different actors, with their respective logics, attain good collaboration. This means you have to help the various parties and actors understand their role in this, to also be able to build a whole.

One thing that apparently was confusing, Roland and Patrik found, was that the launch of the project was unclear. As they entered the project a few months into it they found participants asking: "Has URG just started or has it been going on for a while? When did the project start?"

Roland: There was no clear project launch. There was an unclear project organisation, with unclear roles. This gave the project a rough start, especially in light of the negative media coverage.

Reversing the logic

The first order of business for Roland and Patrik was to assist the URG management and the Steering Group [a constellation with representatives from each of the participating organisations]. Especially in light of the negative media attention and criticism against the project, the evaluators thought the Steering Group should step forward to get the project on the road:

Roland: We felt that the Steering Group perhaps weren't clear about what was expected of them. URG also had two project managers that didn't work well together. Patrik and I felt some frustration that no one really saw that these two parts of the project simply must work, especially the project management. If this doesn't work, hardly anything will. We thought we might wait a little with the Steering Group, but we simply had to deal with the project management straight away.

Apart from not being very well coordinated with each other, the problem for the project managers was that they became too operative, Patrik contends. Their role is to lead, not become directly involved in the project's testbeds [sub-projects]:

Patrik: It is common in projects to have a project group and a steering group, but it doesn't always work. In our experience, the first thing you need is to describe and settle the roles. What is our assignment in the Steering Group? How are we to work? What people do we have around the table? They represent many parts of the municipality. What do the various administrations want from their respective roles? This wasn't shaped so the Steering Group needed to settle this.

A pivotal question was: How can the project managers lead the project? Roland's and Patrik's analysis is that the project managers became operative because they felt the project wasn't delivering vis-à-vis the actors in the various projects:

Roland: The project managers compensated by working themselves instead of leading the project. When you do this you immediately lose strategic height. When the project managers become operative, it means that those who are assigned various tasks don't have to do them, because someone else is already doing so. So, this was a classic project management pitfall and we felt they needed to work in a different way.

The problems Roland and Patrik saw in the project management and the Steering Group respectively seemed interconnected. The work method that initially prevailed between these two constellations was that the project management came to the Steering Group and showered them with lots of information:

Patrik: A steering group should steer the project from their perspective and the project management should lead from their responsibility. In this project the Steering Group never got the chance to take their role and give directions to the project management. So, we reversed this entire manner of working and got the project management to go to the Steering Group and say: "*What do you think we should do?*" So, there were some quite fundamental project managing logics that we needed to sort out initially.

Breakthrough

A pivotal moment for Roland in the process of making the Steering Group and the project management interact efficiently was also a very moving experience for him:

Roland: I think what has given me most satisfaction during this project was when I helped one of the project managers meet the Steering Group in a different way. We rebuilt the entire logic, from him reporting about all the good things that were happening, to sitting down in front of the Steering Group with a tinge of soul-searching and say: “*This is something we haven’t been able to achieve. We need your help with this.*” He addressed every single member of the group, asking if they could help him with something. And virtually everyone said: “*Absolutely, of course we can do this.*” From that day on he had a completely different way of working with the Steering Group.

This change from an earlier logic to this new mode of collaboration proved enduring in terms of the relationship between the entire project management and the Steering Group:

Roland: What this project manager did when he asked the Steering Group for help was to get them engaged. They realised for the first time what it meant to be a member of this group. They became validated and energised and the project manager was able to feed off this energy in his work.

The one-on-one factor

Apart from the initial confusion around one’s role in the project, perhaps most amply exemplified by the relationship between the project management and the Steering Group, there were problems such as personality clashes and self-censoring of views among some project participants. One of the most important tools used by Roland and Patrik in evaluating URG is the phone interviews they conduct with the project management, the Steering Group and the recipients of URG’s support [e.g. business entrepreneurs]. It became clear on a number of occasions that members of the Steering Group had opinions and emotions that were not expressed at the group’s meetings. These did, however, surface in the phone interviews with Roland and Patrik:

Patrik: Interviews are made continuously by us evaluators. It is up to the project management how they want to collaborate with us and use us as a resource. We have given feedback from the interviews to the Steering Group. They have then had to work with the type of experience that emerges within their group and with the findings that emerge in the interviews, including those conducted with recipients of URG’s support.

The idea behind the interviews, workshops and other processes initiated by the evaluators is that they are to lead to incremental behaviour modification:

Patrik: People should come to realise that perhaps they have to do something in a slightly different way, reinforce this or that behaviour, stop doing something or do something they haven’t done before. So, we want to be a source of continuous support and learning to help the project find its way.

One of the members of the Steering Group said in an interview with Roland that she was a little worried how the information she had divulged would be handled. She had offered some criticism of certain aspects of the project:

Roland: When we report to the Steering Group on what individual group members have said to us in private interviews, we always treat what they have said as confidential. When we report, we talk about the information in such a way that the source will not be disclosed. But we use that information to enable the group or the system to learn from it.

The member who had offered some criticism in the phone interview with Roland noticed during the following Steering Group meeting that she wasn't alone in this. There were many others who shared her views, though these opinions had not been expressed at the group meetings. Apparently, many were not confident to say what they felt in front of the whole group:

Roland: An organisation that is secure, that is clear on its assignment, its roles and its mandate, can harbour conflicts and different viewpoints. And I would say that a measure of an organisation's maturity is the ability to harbour dissimilarity. For an organisation becomes good when all the expressions that exist within it actually are allowed to be stated, and people dare speak their mind. An organisation that is mature handles conflict or divergent viewpoints. In an immature organisation personal conflicts, at worst, become devastating for its ability to deliver results. In URG the organisation was initially undeveloped in that it crippled much of the work that otherwise might have run smoothly in a better-functioning organisation.

A fruitful collaboration

Although Roland and Patrik on the whole are pleased with their evaluation work and how URG has responded by creating a more efficient organisation, there are perhaps things they could have done differently:

Patrik: I think expectations, from some in the project, was for us to do a classic evaluation. We are doing what was in our offer, which is how The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth says you should be working. So, we work very close to our outsourcers, because we believe those work methods yield the best results. I suppose what we could have done better when we initially put our thermometer in the project, is to have made firm demands: *"This you just have to shape, this isn't working"*.

Patrik admits that URG might have taken shape earlier if he and Roland had said: *"Change this, or we can't work with you,"* but what Roland and Patrik saw was a responsive organisation that displayed a good learning curve:

Patrik: As it turned out, the project was able to correct itself. We saw potential in the people but not in the way they worked together. We didn't think: *"These people will never manage this."* When we succeed in our assignment, it is because we form a relationship. To do this you must be curious, interested and receptive. And we felt URG needed us.

Roland sees URG as a project that perhaps was a bit ahead of its time. The people in URG saw something that was in line with the spirit of the time in a very interesting way, though the project became rather discredited:

Roland: Basically, they had a very good thesis around what they envisioned. But they were not equipped to drive and lead this. They couldn't administer it. But my sense is that this will happen elsewhere. URG was early in doing what it has done in Gothenburg; and being early – costs. My feeling is still positive, though we can't run around saying: *"We will do everything."* We must prioritise and be clear about this. Our meta-perspective is

The limbs: Strategists

that this is something more ought to work with, but in a good structure, with a clear organisation and project management.

Patrik feels URG is a very exciting project in terms of its content and what the participants do and stand for. They are very much in line with what is needed in order to build sustainable societies, integrate urban and rural areas, attain fossil-free logistics and achieve cross-sector collaboration between organisations sharing the same goals:

Patrik: It has been a very stimulating project to follow from that aspect. It has very large ambitions and what they're doing is something new. Sometimes I have felt that it's hard to capture the soul of the project, which has been frustrating. It took some time before I realised what we were seeing in front of us. So, it's been an exciting project to be part of, but also difficult.



The heart:

LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

(25)

A budding marvel

Monika Carlsson • Kristina Magnusson • Lena Nordblom

Monika Carlsson works in the City of Gothenburg's preschool administration as development leader in preschool environmental work, Kristina Magnusson is a coordinator of the public meals organisations citywide, while Lena Nordblom is head of Internal Service in the Angered City District. They're all involved to some extent in Urban Rural Gothenburg (URG).

Monika's first encounter with URG was back in 2012 when the project was still on the drawing board:

Monika: I thought: "What a visionary project! How could this possibly materialise?" And to this day I say that it's fantastic. We all just have our own little parts in it, but when you see the whole picture, I think it's marvellous that it has become as great as once was envisioned.

Monika was assigned her task within URG when working for the East Gothenburg City District administration as an environmental coordinator, though she has since moved on to the preschool administration, City of Gothenburg:

Monika: With respect to URG, our task was to find a suitable preschool to connect with the project, one that already was engaged in composting and gardening. I selected a suitable preschool and my role there is supporting the teachers in their pedagogical work with their garden and compost.

Lena was assigned the task in URG via her role as head of internal service in the Angered City District, which includes meals at preschools, schools and for the elderly, as well as cleaning and maintenance of the district's premises.

Kristina first heard of URG through the grapevine. There was talk of a big project that was to launch and of a testbed [subproject] for public sector meals. She thought it prudent to inquire about the project and see if the meals organisation in Angered and East Gothenburg could take part in it since meals and testbeds were mentioned:

Kristina: I asked for a meeting with the project manager and the then area heads for the meals organisation in the Angered and East Gothenburg districts. I was curious to find out what this was and in what way might we become part of it.

Confusion in spades

Lena's entry into URG was sudden. When she stepped into the role as area head for internal service at Angered, the URG assignment was part and parcel of it. The person who was supposed to be the URG project manager from Angered had vanished. Lena was never told that she was supposed to lead Angered's work with the project:

Lena: I think many expected us from Angered to take a leading role as some form of project management, precisely because the old project manager disappeared, but this was never communicated to us. And it was lucky in a way that we didn't know what was expected of us since we still had our day-to-day assignments, which were considerable.

Lena also felt it was hard to pinpoint just who was running the testbed for public sector meals and how the project management were thinking around the various roles within it.

Kristina attended a kick-off meeting for URG where everyone in the project gave a presentation of what their role would be and how they viewed them. From her coordinating function at Gothenburg's citywide administration she had to anchor her role there with her role in URG. Her role was to be a supportive function vis-à-vis Angered, assisting them in their work, and contact person for procurement and procurement management:

Kristina: I got the impression that URG's project management initially thought that I would make decisions for the meals organisation in Angered. I have been able to explain to the project management that the districts are self-governing, which means that the meals organisation decides for themselves how they will work with the test bed public meals.

When Monika was asked if she would be part of URG, the job description she was shown said she was to support the preschool with its gardening project and earth compost. However, she later understood that both the area and sector heads in East Gothenburg hadn't been fully briefed by the URG project managers:

Monika: As Lena says, a position vanished from Angered and we got insufficient information about it. This is an enormous project and initially it was hard to understand who does what within it and how we are to connect the small steps we take at the preschool to the larger whole.

Compared to their daily work for the City of Gothenburg the assignments that Monika, Kristina and Lena have for URG are minor, just a fraction of a full-time position. Monika's role is basically to attend the preschool teachers' workplace meetings, inspire them and, above all, help spread the word elsewhere of the work they are doing:

Monika: The teachers are very grateful for our help and our promoting their work, and though they were already working well with their composting and gardening, I feel they got fresh momentum through our collaboration.

Lena's work for URG is limited, however, still she feels the work there is very rewarding:

Lena: We have taken trips to local growers, so it has been like in-service training days. We made a deal with one of them, buying shares in his produce for our public meals.

Dishing out the veggies

Lena says there has been a considerable transfer of knowledge between people thanks to URG, much of which she can use in her continued work. Looking back, she can see how far Gothenburg has come in increasing plant-based food and reducing meat consumption in schools. Early on there was criticism from some parents who didn't think vegetarian food was sufficiently nourishing for their children, nor made them full. However, this criticism seems to have abated. Now Angered schools have a vegetarian dish every day and in principle two meat-free days a week:

The heart: Local stakeholders

Lena: Most have learnt to appreciate the food we serve today. The process has continued for so long that we've hardly noticed the gradual changes. But it is a bit like that with URG as well, starting with small steps that require a continued process for success.

Monika: In East Gothenburg, they served meat only one day a week at the preschools and fish one day a week. This is how it has been in East Gothenburg over the last few years.

Lena: I think they have done it this way to an even greater extent in Angered and East Gothenburg than in the rest of Gothenburg. There are many pupils there that never eat meat unless its halal, but they eat fish and vegetarian food. Instead of having special food we have a vegetarian dish every day. And virtually all soups are vegetarian. I think you have a similar policy in East Gothenburg, don't you?

Monika: Yes, we do. And how the food is presented is also important. And the teachers eat with the children, which is also important from a pedagogical perspective.

An amoeba-shaped organism

Lena thinks URG has been markedly lax in governance in many ways, allowing project participants to make what they want of it. And it is clear that they have done just that in the Angered district. She feels it has been great for her personal development. There have been many interesting events bringing variation to her job, such as trips to farmers and breeders who sell their produce to their local communities. Applying for funding for greenhouses is also stimulating, discussing how a greenhouse can become a treasure trove to children and enable them to feel the importance of the cycles of the Earth system:

Lena: Those parts have been very rewarding, I feel. So, there is a freedom in this that has been positive. I haven't evaluated what shortcomings there might have been or what I have disliked. The orders we have received within these amoeba-shaped confines, we have followed, and we have after all been able to do pretty much what we want.

Monika takes heart from all the new contacts she gets at meetings and conferences, and how inspiring it is to meet the preschool teachers. The soil compost had not been in use for a while but when she started spending so much time with them and focused on their environmental work, they got it up and running:

Monika: They often say thank you to me, but they're the ones teaching the children. I just coordinate and spread the word to others about the good work they do. I am so delighted that they have been inspired enough to step up their environmental work and I enjoy how beautifully they have introduced this into their pedagogy, how the entire thinking around preschooling has been elevated through this focus on the environment. Children growing plants, looking at their compost peering down into the soil to discover what animals are crawling about there. This has been introduced into the pedagogical work in a fantastic way.

Monika feels that even if it only happens to be a pair of flower pots in a window or a pallet rim in the yard, most preschools are in the process of working with gardening, be it on a small or large scale. And many are clearly connecting this work to the Curriculum for the Preschool.

Urban–rural innovation

URG may evoke different images and emotions for different people, depending on what their relation to it happens to be. For Kristina, the word innovation springs to mind:

Kristina: URG is immensely innovative and I suppose that is the general idea of the project, nudging us to step across boundaries and discover how we can make progress on this or that issue, and also to collaborate across sectors. So, I suppose the challenge now is: How do we take this forward in a thoughtful manner? I think a future success factor will be how URG is to be presented to policy-makers. All the parties should have access to a full evaluation of the project and then decide what the path forwards will be.

Monika: The first word that pops into my head is also innovation. And future. Transcending boundaries, thinking afresh. People meeting people.

Lena: I would say it is breaking new ground. Being allowed to. To have a room where you can experiment.

Perhaps the spirit of Urban Rural Gothenburg can be condensed into a single image. Monika recalls how a father of a four-year-old girl left his daughter at the preschool as Monika was arriving for a visit. The girl was excited, telling her teacher: “*Miss, Miss, I found this ash tree in the forest*”.

Monika: The girl had an ash tree bud in her hand. The child was four. I didn’t even know what an ash tree bud looks like. And I think: “*What marvellous work these teachers and parents are doing together.*” That’s when I feel the future is bright.

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From the land of milk and honey

Olle Olsson • Susanne Forsman

Olle Olsson is a farmer of organic produce in north-eastern Gothenburg, practicing regenerative agriculture in his business 'Lilla jordbruket' [the Little Farm]. Susanne Forsman is a beekeeper in the city's north-western area. Both of them have been recipients of support from Urban Rural Gothenburg (URG).

Olle was raised on a vegetable farm in Jämtland County in northern Sweden. Organic vegetables have been grown there since 1988:

Olle: My father took over the farm in 1972 and started to shift from milk to vegetable production. I grew up there and my interest in growing vegetables was awakened towards the end of my time there. The last two seasons I worked on the farm I got the chance to run it with my father and my sister. Being able to take decisions around the production of vegetables gave me the idea that it would be exciting to run my own farm.

In 2011 Olle moved to Gothenburg. A few years later he heard about URG's predecessor project Development North-East (DNE) which sought to bring about more vegetable production in north-eastern Gothenburg:

Olle: There were four of us who latched onto this. We asked the initiator of URG, who then was highly active in DNE, about possibilities to grow vegetables in the North-East. He directed us to the Property Management Administration's unit for urban agriculture.

The little farm that could

Olle and his colleagues were able to lease a plot of land in North-East Gothenburg and launch the organic farm. Two of his former colleagues have since taken other paths so now there are only Olle and his current colleague running the business. Olle works full-time on the farm while his colleague works part-time there:

Olle: My colleague is a social worker oriented towards nature-based rehabilitation. Our plan was to have this rehabilitation activity on the farm in parallel with our vegetable plantation. But we haven't been able to get this up-and-running because of her other social work and because we haven't figured out how to get funding. It's still a long-term goal though. We also have a gardener now and are about to start a flower plantation.

Olle and his colleague work with a specific model called 'market gardening' which entails growing a large variety of crops on a small area and cutting out the intermediaries when selling the produce:

Olle: Finding customers has been the easiest part. There is great demand for locally produced and organic food. We have a list of customers queuing to buy from us. It's just a question of being able to deliver to all of them.

The heart: Local stakeholders

The farm has solved the logistics issue through its business model which entails so-called community-supported agriculture (CSA). They deliver bags with a variety of vegetables every Thursday to a parking lot in central Gothenburg, spending two hours there distributing the produce to private customers who have subscribed to vegetables:

Olle: We don't have a permit to sell vegetables in the city centre. Everything is paid for in advance. But it's a rather tough model even so. You promise to deliver vegetables before they're grown. I don't think it's a model that you should start with as a vegetable grower. But once it's in place you will have close contact with your customers. We care about our customers and they care about us. We know how many vegetables we should grow and deliver every week, so the business is predictable.

A linchpin of CSA is that one shares the risk. In its original version this entails that if a farmer has a poor yield, customers may receive less vegetables without a price reduction. The sharing of risk may vary depending of what mode of CSA one chooses:

Olle: We collaborate with some of our neighbouring farmers to reduce our risk. This year some of our crops failed because there was frost in late May, so we added tomatoes from one of our neighbours to complement our bag of vegetables, which works splendidly.

Thanks to URG's work in the city district where Lilla jordbruket is located, Olle has an assignment to deliver two bags of vegetables every week to a local preschool:

Olle: We enjoy delivering to them and they are also very pleased. They use the vegetables for cooking and in their teaching.

The regenerative method of cultivation is beginning to enter commercial agriculture, Olle says. The movement for this method is now starting to burgeon more broadly and particularly in the United States:

Olle: To me it means that you try to build biodiversity and resilience in the soil you cultivate. Organic farming strives to keep nutrients and soil in balance. After you have harvested your crops, you replenish the nutrients you have removed so that the farmland is kept in balance. Regenerative agriculture also wants to do this but aims to add more biodiversity. So, one wants to restore a more natural biodiversity than often exists in organic agriculture, and in particular large-scale organic agriculture where you also have the monoculture issue.

The problem with monoculture, says Olle, is that bees don't have any flowers to pollinate and there will only be a subgroup of living organisms and insects thriving there, in particular pests. Regenerative agriculture, on the other hand, strives to create habitats for the pests' predators so that nature lends a hand in keeping pests in check, while boosting fungi and microorganisms:

Olle: It is hard to sum up regenerative agriculture in a few words, but by not disturbing too much and adding more than we take, we create a richer life in the soil.

Mother Nature's gardeners

Susanne and her husband run Nollhaga Bee Farm, a beekeeping company that sells honey, beebread and beeswax. They also lease beehives to companies, maintain them and harvest the honey for the companies. Their beekeeping is based on organic principles, with no pesticides or artificial additives. From starting with just one, they now have around a hundred bee colonies:

Susanne: I began beekeeping because I wanted to pollinate my garden. It's rather big, with many flowers and fruit trees. I've always felt, even if I was having a bad day, that it's very calming to go to the bees. And there is the environmental benefit of having them. This is also a reason why we lease our hives to companies who want to be environmentally friendly through increasing the number of pollinators.

Susanne got a letter in the mail one day from URG's sustainability strategist in North Hisingen, Gothenburg's north-westernmost city district. Apparently, there was money from LEADER [an EU initiative to support local development projects] to apply for:

Susanne: I phoned the sustainability strategist to check up on this. Apparently, though we live just outside the border of the area in which one could apply for this project money, our bees were on the right side of the border. So, we applied in May 2018. This was how we came in contact with URG.

The funding Nohaga Bee Farm received was for harvesting the beebread, which is the pollen that the bees have fermented and put in the wax cakes:

Susanne: On the Swedish market beebread is largely unknown, but in the Baltic countries you can find it in virtually every food store. Everyone eats beebread there and knows how good and nutritious it is. In Sweden people eat pollen. This is what they know about, but pollen is what you harvest outside the beehive and is not as nutritious as fermented pollen.

The LEADER funding covered the lion's share of the cost to invest in a beebread harvesting machine. It also covered expenses for getting a web shop up-and-running and costs for Susanne to acquire more knowledge about beebread, including taking a study trip to Lithuania:

Susanne: There has been a lot of work for us around this new activity with beebread and URG's sustainability strategist has encouraged me and showed me what paths to take. I didn't even know URG existed before this.

The sustainability strategist told Susanne about an organisation connecting businesses with university students who assist entrepreneurs as part of their education. Ever since, Susanne has received support from students who have worked with gift packages for her beebread and honey jars.

In light of the increasing incidence of Colony Collapse Disorder [bee death when worker bees leave the hive en masse] Susanne's bees have been remarkably healthy:

Susanne: Perhaps we have been lucky because we live near the forest. And our colonies are spread around wooded areas. There are no big fields there. If someone wants pollination services from us, I never bring my bees to a field where they use pesticides. I suppose bee death must afflict us too, sooner or later. But since we are located between two rivers there may not be many infected bees coming here. I don't know. It's just a theory I have.

Susanne's perhaps biggest struggle in developing her business is to write the various texts required for her company, be they forms, brochures or texts on her homepage. Finding the right words to put in writing is arduous and extremely time-consuming:

Susanne: I would have preferred to have someone writing the texts so that I didn't have to do so myself. And I actually did get help from a friend when I made the brochure for the beebread.

Another friend of Susanne's who is adept at writing, read her application to LEADER, remarking that she couldn't understand what it was about:

Susanne: When my friend read my original application, she got the impression that beebread was some type of bread. It was great that she read it because it meant that I had to make it much clearer.

Two sides of the coin

Virtually all the assistance Susanne has received from URG has been through the project's sustainability strategist in North Hisingen:

Susanne: She has been a rock. She guided me when I had problems with the application to LEADER, helped me create a Google account to make our company more visible there and gave me lots of other tips. I'd give her the highest grade possible. She is fantastic.

The sustainability strategist who had assisted Susanne departed URG in December 2018. Susanne is pleased with all the support she has received from URG but thinks the project should have appointed someone new in her stead:

Susanne: It was a bad decision not to replace her, as she was so important. But someone from URG contacted me recently and invited us to a meeting which I was unable to attend. I said: "*I am still very interested in knowing what help we can get in the future.*" I have also been to some other very good networking meetings URG has invited us to.

In having contact with URG, Olle sometimes feels that it's hard to find out exactly what the project is supposed to do or what the purpose is of its various activities:

Olle: In concrete terms, our collaboration with URG has been the delivery of vegetables to the preschool. I have also held a course in vegetable-growing for preschool teachers. There have been some workshops over these years and study visits where various groups have come to our farm. URG has also arranged a network meeting between vegetable growers and restaurant chefs, where we got the chance to meet potential customers. This was a very good meeting. So, this side of our contact with URG has been positive.

There is another side to the contact between URG and Lilla jordbruket. Olle feels that URG hasn't been able to do anything tangible for farmers. Arranging meetings is all well and good, but URG hasn't been able to build or invest in anything in the project:

Olle: It has been toothless in the sense that all we can do in our contact with URG is to talk about green business. In view of the project's size I think that URG has had scant results.

There are considerable resources spent in URG on promoting the development of food production and green business, but Olle feels there are ten civil servants working to favour this business for every grower they reach out to:

Olle: The people working in URG have strong drive and a will to work for a green transition, so I am not critical of the individual people in the project. But they haven't been able to do very much since their hands seem to be tied behind their backs. They are not allowed to support us tangibly as then you would be tinkering with the market and you're not allowed to do so by law. Or perhaps there simply haven't been any ideas of how one should translate will into concrete action. What if one had used all this money to employ some vegetable growers? I think that would have yielded more results.

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Entering the fourth dimension

Erik Bick • Alfredo Torrez • Wenche Lerme

Erik Bick is chairman of BGU (Bergum-Gunnilse Development), an association for sustainable development in Bergum-Gunnilse. Alfredo Torrez works as a process leader for The Swedish Union of Tenants in Hammarkullen. Wenche Lerme is urban planner and development manager in the Angered City District. They have all been partially involved in Urban Rural Gothenburg (URG).

The Angered City District is the north-easternmost of Gothenburg's ten administrative areas. Both Hammarkullen and Bergum-Gunnilse are within the district's limits. While Hammarkullen is a socio-economically challenged suburb with a large, multicultural immigrant population, Bergum-Gunnilse is a sparsely populated rural area predominantly inhabited by native Swedes.

Erik recalls a meeting in Bergum-Gunnilse with URG's initiator:

Erik: There was an URG pilot study before the actual project was launched. In 2012, there was a workshop in our area where some of us met URG's initiator. At this meeting we agreed: "Let's get going and develop our area." So, we started BGU in 2014 for the development of Bergum-Gunnilse. Our association is a party in URG, along with the various municipal administrations in Gothenburg.

Erik was recruited as an hourly employee for URG in Bergum-Gunnilse. The basis for Erik's assignment was to conduct a local economic analysis (LEA) for the area. LEA is a tool to show how the local population can create jobs and further local sustainable growth from an economic and environmental perspective:

Erik: I had done maybe 20% of the LEA when URG ran out of money for my particular role in the project. The LEA is much like a market analysis, but for a community; instead of being carried out for a company or a product.

Erik's job at URG lasted around half a year. During that time, because of a conflict of interest, he wasn't allowed to be active within BGU. When his job at URG ended, he continued doing LEA, along with others in BGU. He was by then basically doing the same job pro bono that he was previously paid to do.

The LEA was completed in the summer of 2018 in the form of an extensive report, in part based on a number of workshops and a survey distributed to the local residents. It suggests five focus areas: (a) Health and Activities, (b) Local Service and Increased Business Enterprise, (c) Networks for the Exchange of Knowledge and Services, (d) Local Food Production and Increased Housing as well as (e) Improved Infrastructure. These areas are seen as pivotal in laying the ground for long-term sustainability in Bergum-Gunnilse.

Where's the social checklist?

Alfredo came in contact with URG through its initiator, who is also one of URG's three current project managers, with a special responsibility for working with Hammarkullen. Alfredo's employment in the Swedish Union of Tenants (SUT) includes working with URG in their efforts to support green business and a sustainable development in Hammarkullen. SUT take a broad view of their tenants' interests and their environment by supporting various community-building efforts:

Alfredo: I attended a meeting where the initiator of URG presented the idea for this project, which I thought was exciting since there hasn't been much work done on these issues in Hammarkullen. But I saw that the groups that were there listening, who were actually interested in cultivation, didn't share the visionary thoughts that were presented at the meeting. The idea was too big for them.

Some of the participants at the meeting asked: "*Why haven't we been able to share ideas from the beginning, before this project was presented to us?*" This seems to be a common sentiment among residents:

Alfredo: After this initial meeting between Hammarkullen residents and URG, I met its initiator more often. He and I have collaborated, arranging workshops together. I tell him about the various groups in Hammarkullen and give him advice on how to hold meetings.

Alfredo feels the issues raised by URG are very important, though they don't fully resonate with Hammarkullen residents. For instance, they don't talk about cultivation in the terms laid out by URG. Growers tend to do this individually, not with other growers:

Alfredo: From URG we initially heard about farming, economics and a green checklist. I said: "*Yes we can follow this, but we should also have a social checklist.*" For in this respect we are very strong, cultural. URG say they have tried to produce such a checklist, but I haven't seen one yet.

Alfredo notes that trust in people who don't live in Hammarkullen isn't very strong among the suburb's residents. When URG would announce a meeting, there weren't many attendees. But when Alfredo arranged one himself more people turned up, and sometimes he included the initiator of URG. This has helped create more trust in URG among residents. Alfredo reckons trust also can be boosted if URG would ask the residents: "*What can we do for you?*"

So what has emerged at the meetings between URG and Hammarkullen's residents in terms of expected assistance?

Alfredo: There is only a little interest in cultivation. But there has been much more interest in social cooperatives, for there are associations that work with cooking and handicrafts, for instance. The question from these associations has rather been: "*How can we work with the financial side?*" This is what we're doing now.

Wenche: So, with URG's focus on cultivation, and seeing there is more interest in handicraft and food, where does cultivation enter? Does one try to incorporate everything in what is already ongoing?

Alfredo: In Hammarkullen it has gone in the direction of us discussing an increasing number of issues. This is basically good, but our prerequisites aren't the same as in Bergum-Gunnilse where there is so much you can do in terms of cultivation. In Hammarkullen there are just a few pallet rims here and there.

Erik: But I have the problem in our organisation to get those who should work with green business to cooperate with each other to increase the market, even though there is a great potential to develop. Some new farmers who started in the city council cultivation testbed [sub-project] two years ago, last year they scaled up their farm, are expanding it further this year. But there are perhaps just one or two neighbours they can talk to. Others disrespect them because they're immigrants.

Social inclusion and place identity

What is required for Hammarkullen to achieve social sustainability? Along with a human geographer Wenche has researched this and produced a report:

Wenche: There are poorer conditions for those who live in certain areas of Gothenburg, such as Hammarkullen. There is a perception that the problems lie in the physical area itself. But actually, there is less investment in these areas than elsewhere in the city. So, it is more a question of the municipality not prioritising them.

In their report, Wenche and her colleague use a method developed by the Swedish Delegation for Sustainable Cities. The method has a focus on improving social inclusion and place identity. Social inclusion concerns issues such as affordable quality housing, preventing homelessness and breaking the social stigma of an area. Place identity includes improving an area's aesthetic qualities for better quality of life while still maintaining its local identity.

An example of working with place identity is the upgrading of an indoor swimming pool in Hammarkullen, as described in a 2019 scientific article by Wenche and two colleagues. From ideas emerging from a citizens' dialogue with some local women, an artist collaborating in the upgrading project brought an art installation into the swimming pool. Wenche and her colleagues conclude that the aesthetic quality introduced in the project mediated the communicative processes between project coordinators and citizens.

In the early 2010s Wenche had a conversation with URG's initiator. He asked her and a colleague of hers: "*How would you feel about working with urban-rural and green issues in a project?*"

Wenche: We thought it was very good, so we supported his idea on the part of the Angered City District, and later followed the work with the pilot study. I was part of a steering group [a constellation with representatives from each of the participating organisations] around this pilot. We saw that although we have segregation and serious equality issues in Angered, we also have fantastic resources since there are so many green areas here, and we recognised the need to build bridges between the urban and rural areas.

Wenche's role in URG is to analyse the results the project has produced and to determine how these can be used in future activities in the Angered City District. What worked? What didn't work? What can the city district do differently?

Wenche: This is important specifically around Hammarkullen: How do we include the social sustainability dimension? We should give this more consideration. And I also see that from the work URG has done with Bergum-Gunnilse, it has helped Hammarkullen, Bergum-Gunnilse and Hjällbo become more interwoven.

The fourth dimension

Alfredo prefers to talk about four dimensions of sustainability, rather than three, adding cultural to the traditional economic, social and environmental dimensions:

Alfredo: In a project with URG here in Hammarkullen we are working with all four dimensions. The cultural dimension is strong here in Hammarkullen.

Wenche: In what way is it strong?

Alfredo: There are so many different cultures here. And Hammarkullen also has a culture all its own, which cannot be described as belonging to any nation. So, it is about bringing people together.

There are a number of issues where Alfredo works with tenants, since they are the ones who can express in words what cultural sustainability actually is. He also arranges workshops with the local associations where they discuss the concept:

Alfredo: It may for instance be that we work with activity-based things, such as celebrating Christmas, or celebrating Eid.

Erik: So this means increased trust in other cultures as well as your own then?

Alfredo: Precisely.

Wenche thinks the concept ‘sustainability’ alone is a challenge. In the Angered City District they primarily work with the social dimension of sustainability:

Wenche: Since it is so context-bound you have to ask yourself what social sustainability means in Hammarkullen, in Bergum and so on.

Where’s the dialogue?

Erik feels that it is tricky to recruit new active members to BGU when residents don’t see the advantage of collaborating and having a broader outlook than the personal sphere:

Erik: There are around 2,300 households in Bergum-Gunnilse. We ought to have a thousand members, but there are only 150 or so of us, though I am happy about every single member. Many choose to be on Facebook and opine about this and that. Instead of complaining about things online they are welcome to join our association. We send emails to some of them: “*You’re welcome to join us.*” There is usually dead silence.

Alfredo says engagement is substantial in Hammarkullen. There are around 9,000 residents and 200 registered associations. There is particularly strong commitment when residents feel a boundary has been crossed, where one has not been allowed to be participative in processes. In such cases people can protest: “*Why have we not been part of this, why has this happened?*”

Alfredo: It is hard to get the city district officials to think the way I do about participation. I feel there has always been resistance from them before there is dialogue with our residents.

Wenche: Can you describe this resistance?

Alfredo: Well, if one talks about converting tenants’ apartments to condominiums, for instance, instead of asking them: “*Do you want to buy your apartment?*” The political

decision in the municipal housing company has been made before the tenants are even informed.

Wenche: But how has the city district shown resistance?

Alfredo: One example is that residents felt the public square in Hammarkullen was unsafe. Many tenants tried to get assistance from the city district, who weren't sensitive to their concerns about security. People wanted to borrow the red cottage in the square for various activities, so that there would be more people in this area. There are often things like this where residents ask the city district to take action, with no result.

Wenche: But do you defend the city district or say this is typical of them?

Alfredo: I have lived in the area, so I can say: "*This is how things are done in the city district, unfortunately.*"

Wenche: I work in the city district and I don't really recognise this.

Though Alfredo, Wenche and Erik feel URG has contributed in significant ways, it is hard to give the project a final grade:

Alfredo: We're not at the finishing post yet, but on our way there. A five out of ten? Half way there, perhaps. Unfortunately, too many resources may have been wasted, and one has not come as far as planned. In Bergum-Gunnilse it was self-evident that they work with soil, and that URG ought to lend them a hand in this. But in Hammarkullen it was completely different. URG should have said: "*Okay, we have these resources, how would you like to work with them?*"

For Wenche one of the big challenges for Angered is for the city district to have more housing:

Wenche: To work with proper urban development you need to interconnect the various areas in the district. One of the most important things is to connect the centre of Angered with Hammarkullen through much more housing so that Hammarkullen won't be so isolated. We also need to get the heavy truck traffic off County Road 190 because of the noise and air pollution.

Erik: There are plans that will increase haulage transportation on Road 190 eightfold and also for two new landfill sites in our area. As residents we can always try to protest.

Wenche: In this struggle I think it is important to rely on research and on national and international objectives with which these plans are in conflict.

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Foodprints in the city

William Bailey • Jonas Lindh • Jonathan Naraine

William Bailey and Jonas Lindh are urban farmers in the heart of Gothenburg. Jonathan Naraine is an architect and co-founder of the architectural bureau The Foodprint Lab. Not part of Urban Rural Gothenburg (URG) per se, they still see themselves as included in a greater network where URG is an important actor.

Jonathan has come in contact with URG several times via its initiator whom he sees as a propelling force in much of what is happening within the project:

Jonathan: We have met in sundry contexts and he has invited me to several meetings with various actors. It can be someone wishing to have a rooftop garden or wanting to discuss green tourism. Or we may have discussed smart transportation solutions involving the city of Hamburg where he, the initiator of URG, wants some sort of collaboration with The Foodprint Lab.

William: We received a group he brought to our farm for a study visit.

Jonas: Yes. For William and me – even though I am the one who have had most contact with him – it has been similar to what you describe, Jonathan. An occasional phone call or an email: “*Do you want to be part of this?*” He often tries to connect us with people, including a lot of researchers, which is fun. We have met some of them. We’ll see where that leads.

Jonas recalls that thanks to URG he and William got in contact with the Eco-Agroforestry Centre in North-East Gothenburg. He wouldn’t say they feel like a big part of URG, rather that they are part of a network where URG is a clear driving force.

Green architecture

Jonathan launched The Foodprint Lab with two other architects three and a half years ago. They work with real estate developers, cities and communities to design and co-create public places, including turning unused spaces, such as rooftops or lawns, into urban farms and gardens:

Jonathan: Our vision when we launched The Foodprint Lab was to be able to have more cultivation in the cities, on surfaces that aren’t used, both roofs and unused green and grey areas.

Jonas: You were involved in the slow food movement as well.

Jonathan: Yes, I was. And in the permaculture and urban gardening movement. I felt I did this on a pro bono basis for quite a long time. I serendipitously met my future colleagues and sensed that we complemented each other.

Jonathan and his colleagues decided to give The Foodprint Lab a try for at least a year to see how it would fare. One of the first assignments they got was a collaboration with the City of

Gothenburg and the Gothenburg Green World Year, a year-long botanical exhibition by the major parks in the Gothenburg area. Jonathan and his colleagues arranged a few temporary green areas with some seating, so-called pop-up parks, on Gothenburg's central avenue, as this famed street is rather sterile. They also made a map of Gothenburg's urban farms and arranged guided tours to them:

Jonathan: The upshot of this project was that we felt there was a need to do more than the City of Gothenburg were doing in terms of offering farmland also from private and corporate landowners, as there were many people who wanted to farm and who were lacking the land.

As arable land may be hard to find for would-be farmers, Jonathan and his colleagues applied for and were granted funds from Business Region Gothenburg (BRG) – URG's project owner – to develop a first prototype of the digital platform which would become *Grow Gothenburg*. The platform connects would-be growers with people who own land, be it a large tract or just a small plot, and are willing to let it for cultivation:

Jonathan: Nowadays we work a lot with *Grow Gothenburg*, but the platform is still under development. Our vision is to enable as much cultivation as possible, a little bit like yours, Jonas and William, with an urban farmer on every city block. We want to lower the thresholds for growers through this platform.

William feels that it is much easier in Malmö, in southern Sweden, to become an urban farmer and break even compared to Gothenburg where it is more of an uphill struggle. At least in terms of buying directly from farmers Malmö residents have shown more interest than people in Gothenburg:

William: I think, however, that when there are more of us, producers, it will sort itself out.

Jonathan: Precisely.

The quayside farm

In 2015 Jonas and William started their life as urban farmers on the south bank of Göta Älv, the river that runs through Gothenburg. They formed an economic association but soon decided to turn their business into a limited company. Their first farm was just 45 square meters [484 square feet]:

William: We had both been hobby growers and had studied human ecology. We wanted to be urban farmers and try it out in practice. We phoned up chefs and started to sell vegetables to fine restaurants. By and by we have increased our cultivation and now we have 1070 square metres [11,517 square feet]. The area we lease is much bigger, so we have the possibility to expand our farm if we want to.

Jonas and William were fortunate that the City of Gothenburg wanted farming to be tested within its limits. They received support from the municipality in the form of a cheap land lease in 2016 and 2017. There was an enclosed area designated for them and the Parks and Landscape Committee of Gothenburg built wooden boxes for their cultivation and filled them with soil:

Jonas: We leased the soil from the municipality for two years until we moved to our current location. In 2017 we also launched a rooftop farm at a big hotel in the city centre.

Jonas and William grow 20 different vegetable sorts in their current farm on the northern bank of Göta Älv. Their farm is located in Lindholmen, in the south-central part of the island Hisingen. Their perhaps greatest challenge is that they want to cultivate all their own soil which

would require access to much more organic matter than they have at present:

William: It is possible to make excellent soil from the food waste and biomass that the city produces, which now is just thrown away. We have tested this in our rooftop farm at the hotel.

The soil in the hotel farm is produced through bokashi, a composting technique using a fermentation process. William and Jonas aim to scale up their soil manufacturing and feel that all urban farmers should make their own soil. Above all, they don't think farmers should introduce a lot of soil from outside the city, since it causes unnecessary transportation:

Jonas: We want to develop a local composting model where we chart the nutrient sources in the immediate local environment, food waste from local restaurants and workplaces or residual products from nearby industries.

William: For a commercially viable business model you have to produce 5 to 8 kilograms [11 to 18 lbs] per square metre [10,8 square feet] and have a farm around the size we have now, or slightly larger, and sell everything you grow.

Jonas: And you must find a good sales model for that, cutting out all the intermediaries and selling directly to the end-customer. You must do it efficiently, so you sell everything and don't expend too much energy during the growing season on selling, but instead try to find local customers.

William: Lindholmen is our local market. We have 22,000 people there, so we have all our customers around the corner.

William and Jonas envisage that the water from Göta Älv can be used in the future for the irrigation of their farm. Their long-term plan includes producing their own energy using wind turbines. William suggests that what needs to be done next is to interconnect all this technology, put it in one place and make it affordable so people more easily can start an urban farm:

William: There should be an entire kit for how you make your local area a little smarter. The alternative is that you are left with dead surfaces with rainwater just running off. The important thing is that this works commercially, but we're not quite there yet.

A constant struggle

Jonas and William recently received funding from the Swedish innovation agency Vinnova to develop a sales model. Although they are increasing their cultivation area year-by-year, constantly learning and developing their business model, it's still a challenge to make ends meet. It can be taxing to constantly feel so vulnerable and endure various misfortunes. Currently they have hymenopterans [insects] devouring their pak choi [a vegetable], making it impossible to sell it:

William: We can only watch and see it happen, and so our vegetable bag to customers has to be postponed. That is a very concrete problem for us at the moment.

William bemoans the fact that people don't realise how dirty the food system is, for instance with respect to CO₂ emissions. In the climate debate there has been a lot of focus on meat while other food issues are ignored. Mass communication can never go into detail, so it is hard to explain to people why the entire food system needs to be transformed:

William: For instance, if you don't plough the soil, fungi have a greater chance of coexisting with roots. But that knowledge is not available to the broad public. Changing

the system is necessary, but I don't think it will work. With China building 500 new coal-fired power plants, what does it matter if I throw a few banana skins into a compost?

Notwithstanding the frustration they live with, Jonas and William feel that they are gaining more insight, starting to see what is lacking for them to really succeed. They have a four-year lease on their plot of land at Lindholmen:

Jonas: We have to make it within these four years. We constantly have to show that we're serious and we need to involve actors to make the norms shift slightly, make people realise that we can collaborate and find solutions together. There's a lot of networking involved for us, just as for URG.

Jonathan: I think you have been very good at networking, Jonas and William, getting the word out, giving lectures. I can't say that my activity is as tough as yours, because you're so dependent on the weather. I have great respect for the problems you face.

Jonathan has a consultant-based activity in his role as an architect with The Foodprint Lab. He feels he and his colleagues have created a niche that didn't really exist, as there haven't been many architect bureaus working with urban farming. 'Grow Gothenburg' is more of a visionary project than The Foodprint Lab, a sort of IT start-up, entailing other challenges:

Jonathan: Our aim is for the digital platform to be available to everyone. We don't want to charge users to get an account in order to log in and find a plot of land. So, we have to find other business models to get some income from this platform. Maybe in one or two years we have cracked the code, and then we can scale up.

As for the plans to scale up their soil cultivation, William has considered the huge amount of horse manure at Gothenburg's big city park which could deliver great benefit to their farm if only it could be shipped to them:

William: Now we want to pitch an idea to decision-makers in the city. We have always thought: "*How can we fetch 20 cubic metres of horse manure from the park on a freight bicycle?*" We shouldn't think like that. We should be thinking: "*How can we get someone to deliver it to us, without someone losing out?*" That part of logistics shouldn't be run by us. The manure is driven off somewhere by the municipality, why not let us make soil from it?

Jonathan: I agree. From having followed you, I feel you have had to make all the investments yourselves, the soil and scaling up the size of your farm. There are after all huge barriers as well as investments that many people cannot afford. So, we want to make it easier for people who take on such a venture to at least get lower thresholds and have other actors, be it the municipality or someone else, to make these investments, at least in part.

What is URG to someone who basically looks at it from the outside? Jonathan feels they dare to be visionaries, focusing on food and sustainability and making the urban-rural connection that in many ways has been a non-issue:

Jonathan: Often one has a focus on either the city or the countryside. They are depicted as two extreme opposites. There is value in how URG want to raise the issue of integration between them.

Jonas: I see URG as an eternal network. They are not afraid of trying new things. Fearless.

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Sowing the seeds

Mårten Sundblad • Anna Ternell • Jan Anderson

Mårten Sundblad is the former head of adult education at the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) at Västra Götaland Regional Council (VGR). Anna Ternell, a consultant for the consultancy group PE Teknik & Arkitektur, is involved in the Angered Farmstead [an arena for education and innovation projects in North-East Gothenburg] via an EU-funded climate innovation project. Jan Anderson works at DNR and is responsible for the activities at the Angered Farmstead.

The Angered Farmstead is a three-year project to promote integration through helping residents with immigrant backgrounds lead a rich and fulfilling life, including enabling them to support themselves and utilise their education and vocational skills. The project also addresses issues of natural resources management within the context of urban-rural development. The Angered Farmstead is part of an endeavour by DNR to address the integration assignment the county council has given them:

Jan: Integration is not a problem. It's a gigantic possibility. I sometimes reflect upon the words of an associate professor at the University of Gothenburg. He held a lecture where problems of integration were discussed, asking: "If we who are sitting in this room have a solution or an idea, did you ever consider that with the 30 nationalities represented here, we can spark discussion in 30 countries within an hour?"

Mårten says that he saw early on, when there were major flows of immigrants to Sweden, that it was hard for DNR to reach out to them. One reason for this was the difficulty for immigrants to travel to the countryside, where DNR has two schools for management of natural resources:

Mårten: At both our schools we discussed how we could help these immigrants into green business and give them a place in society.

Jan: We started looking at doing something in Gothenburg. After a reorganisation within our schools had been concluded in 2015, we approached the Property Management Administration about starting education programmes within natural resource management at Lärjeåns Trädgårdar [Gardens of the Lärje Stream], a green area of arable land located near Angered Centre in North-East Gothenburg.

The upshot of this was the 25-week integration project at Lärjeåns Trädgårdar called *Green City Farmers* launched in the summer of 2016. The educational programme was oriented towards newly-arrived immigrants to Gothenburg and those who had lived in Sweden for some years and who for various reasons weren't able to enter the job market. Some of them were women who had been at home with their children for almost a decade. Thus, the project clearly met the objective set by the county council of promoting integration of immigrants:

Mårten: It took some time to get through all the municipal bureaucracy, but in doing so we received extremely valuable help from Urban Rural Gothenburg's (URG) network and the Property Management Administration. So, from my viewpoint, the establishment of our education programme in Gothenburg was very rapid.

Originally DNR had planned to continue at Lärjeåns Trädgårdar. However, there was a problem in that the area wasn't very large. There was a need for indoor premises. In December 2017 the

decision was taken to establish an integration project at the Angered Farmstead which was leased from the Property Management Administration.

Modules to serve as classrooms were placed at the Angered Farmstead on 20 July 2018 and the first education programme, which was within outdoor environment care, started a few weeks later. It is a joint endeavour between DNR and a school in Angered:

Jan: It is a one-year education programme, to be repeated next year. It includes a large part about integration, with newly arrived participants from a number of countries. This mix of participants and nationalities is an important part of the Angered Farmstead initiative. We also have other programmes planned for long-distance learning to enable half-time students to do something else in parallel. One of our educational programmes is about agroforestry. It is the first of this sort in Sweden in that we want to focus on taking high-level expertise within the area and allowing it to be applied within an educational programme. That is: How do we get agroforestry to actually happen?

Kick-starting innovation

In 2016 Anna met the initiator of URG, learning about this project to be launched in 2017:

Anna: I thought it was very interesting. Upon brainstorming together, he and I decided to write an application around agroforestry, since the company I worked for back then was a member of Climate-KIC, an innovation centre within the European Union that provides financial support to innovative climate mitigation and adaptation projects.

URG were already working with food, tourism and green business development, but they hadn't yet included the agroforestry sector. Anna travelled with URG's initiator to Copenhagen where they pitched their idea, which originally emanated from URG but had been elaborated upon for this project application. They received 15,000 Euros [15,800 USD] to launch the project. Buoyed up by this success, they applied for and received financing in 2017 to carry out a more in-depth study, adding more collaborative partners in the process:

Anna: There are several steps in Climate-KIC to be well-prepared for the larger projects. In 2018, we got more funding, this time to establish a business plan. In 2019, we took the next step when we secured additional funds to demonstrate our business plan. In this current demonstration project, URG are not an active partner, as they were for the first three applications. There have been different partners in this project and its various steps in the Climate-KIC process, but it all started with an offshoot from URG, or an extension if you will.

The current pilot project is carried out at the Angered Farmstead. The funding is for cultivation, education and an incubator, i.e. an organisation to help people start new companies. Once all this is in place, the project will create a so-called toolbox, probably in the form of a digital platform on a home page in conjunction with other European projects so that there can be exchange of knowledge between countries:

Anna: The original idea has evolved into a larger demonstration project where we test the models and actually provide food to schools and the elderly, which is very exciting.

Impediments to integration?

Mårten notes that Swedish research around integration and vocational education shows that the most efficient way to learn Swedish in a short period of time is to combine vocational education

with language support. This entails conversing with others with respect to one's profession. Mårten notes that there is also more relevant exchange between people when they are studying or working within the same profession and share an interest, as they are talking about things they really care about:

Mårten: On the whole, regardless of what projects you're looking at, where there is vocational education combined with language support, the entry to the job market has been more rapid than otherwise. A student at one of our schools said: "I have learnt more Swedish in the past half year than I learnt in the previous four years." He is a guy who came to Sweden four years ago.

A problem with providing education at DNR's schools is that there are certain entry requirements for Swedish, English and mathematics that have prevented some would-be students from being admitted:

Mårten: At DNR we are looking at the possibility of finding another application system or quotas system that would allow more students who do not meet the normal entry requirements.

Another impediment to DNR educating more students within natural-resource management is the tendering procedure. There are several actors vying for contracts to conduct education. Often it seems that the choice of words in the tendering process can be decisive in gaining interest from the organisations who procure educational services:

Mårten: We haven't been adept enough at writing the sort of showy text that often decides who wins a contract. This language sounds good, but one actually promises nothing. We have lost out in some tendering processes because of our unfamiliarity with this language. Preferably you should know who is going to read your offer and hone the text so as to pique their interest.

The importance of using this glossy language becomes a brake in the system, Mårten contends. Instead, why not let civil servants or employment service officials decide what individuals are good candidates for studies, and then follow them up regularly? Mårten thinks this would lead to more people entering the job market quickly rather than relying on the current tendering process and the points system used therein.

Accolades from the heart of Europe

Agriculture and forestry practices vary across the world depending on local circumstances, Jan observes. In other parts of the world there may be a focus on preventing soil erosion. One might, for instance, use reforestation as a method to reduce evaporation, which may not be the main focus in Sweden:

Jan: In the long term the agricultural production we have today isn't sustainable. So, it is interesting to consider permaculture, for instance. Perhaps, if we let the soil work without human intervention, we could achieve much greater productivity.

Anna: In our demonstration project there is a focus on food production. Locally produced food is burgeoning, creating urban resilience and reducing transportation. Our project focuses on the peri-urban areas and urban-rural interaction. Much of the peri-urban land is unused, so there is potential to use the land better and to create activities and jobs in the suburbs.

The heart: Local stakeholders

Anna is delighted that Climate-KIC have been enormously supportive of the project, even telling her “*Gothenburg is at the forefront of Europe in this area,*” indicating the urban-rural connection, where EU policy is lagging behind:

Anna: They were referring to all the work done in Gothenburg within this area. They also mentioned the fact that we are so many actors collaborating in this, pulling the ship forwards together.

Lowering thresholds

The incubator at the Angered Farmstead is run by a company working with social entrepreneurship. There have been a number of network meetings between people who want to be professional growers. All small-scale growers cannot create their own businesses, Jan observes, but may be able to make a livelihood through pooling their deliveries and reaching consumers via the wholesale chain:

Jan: It is also possible to test your way forward without having your own business. You can grow your produce, sell and invoice through a company that acts as an intermediary, receiving your salary through them.

According to Jan this is an excellent way of lowering thresholds. Someone who is interested in starting a business might balk at the prospect thinking: “*I will have to get a VAT certificate, have lots of correspondence with authorities and all that,*” but if you start on a small scale this is a good way to take a few steps:

Jan: If you feel you really want to do this, you have to take the bull by the horns. But the priority for us is to give more people the chance of cultivating a plot of land.

The Angered Farmstead has a testbed [sub-project] where growers are active. There is room for more who want to try their hand at it, and if they feel they want to scale up they may be able to lease land elsewhere more appropriate to their needs:

Jan: The Property Management Administration are a very important part of this entire network. Without them and the openness they have had over the last few years we wouldn't be where we are today.

The power of inspiration

Mårten, Jan and Anna would be willing to recommend URG as a model for future sustainability projects, giving it a very high grade:

Anna: They have been crucial in getting the ball rolling and are enormously important as they see the significance of networking, thus giving rise to new projects and possibilities.

Jan: URG is a symbol of daring to challenge old platitudes, providing a positive image of an area that largely has been depicted in a negative light in the media.

Mårten: What has given me most input from URG is the drive and spontaneity of the people. I am rather unaccustomed to people constantly contacting each other with all these ideas, turning up at meetings and spreading joy. I think URG should get credit for having interconnected all these people and having created so much trust, even though everything may not have worked out. I feel a lot of joy whenever I've been down at the Farmstead for meetings and I leave there with so much energy and a thousand new ideas.

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A hump in the road

Géza Nagy

Géza Nagy is a retired university teacher and researcher within the social sciences. He is one of the initiators of Angered Camel Centre, the project with which Urban Rural Gothenburg (URG) was erroneously linked through a spate of newspaper articles in 2017.

Géza says that he has travelled extensively during his academic career, among other things doing research in Sri Lanka and India, and participating in international conferences on social mobilisation and social work:

Géza: But most of my professional life has been spent teaching. In Sweden I taught at university level in both Gothenburg and in Östersund [a northern Swedish city]. I moved back to Gothenburg in 1998 and as I was interested in living in a multicultural area I settled in Angered [a socio-economically challenged area of Gothenburg], upon returning from Östersund.

Géza recalls that his first job in Angered was as manager of a sub-project oriented towards intercultural competence, in a three-year city district development project. Having concluded this project, he launched an association to further interculturalism [Intercultural Resource Center]:

Géza: You might say that the ideas behind the Camel Centre emerged within this association. We started discussing how one could work with immigrant groups and societies in a meaningful way. One of the ideas emanating from these discussions was a camel park since there are many Somalis in Angered who have worked with camels. Another project idea I had been working on, together with some architects and other enthusiasts, was about a ‘world village’ in Angered. Our idea was that it might be something along the lines of Skansen [an open-air museum and zoo in Stockholm], but with an international orientation. Its architecture would be influenced by that of various countries and if it were to be realised, why not include a camel centre?

The ‘world village’ project never got beyond the idea phase. However, after a rather lengthy gestation period, Géza and others decided to launch the Camel Project in early 2013, using a newly-formed association, Angered Camel Centre, as a vehicle for this purpose. Camels already existed in several locations in Sweden, so the Camel Centre certainly wasn’t a novel idea:

Géza: It took some time before we came upon a good location for the Camel Centre, but eventually we found a place near Angered Centre owned by the City of Gothenburg and were able to lease this land. Aside from a stable for the camels we envisioned a greenhouse, a henhouse, an activity centre with both a library and a café, along with some offices. In the Camel Centre we would have a few double-humped Bactrian camels and alpacas to start with.

Not just camel keeping

After lengthy planning, the Camel Centre was set to get off the drawing board in the summer of 2016. However, just as construction was about to commence, Géza says, the project was notified of the County Administrative Board's planned investigation of the possibility of extended shoreline protection for the nearby river Lärjeån:

Géza: Building plans were halted for a few months in case the investigation would conclude that a building permit was needed for the camel stables. Up until then we had no reason to believe it would be required. The investigation was completed in January 2017, showing that our building plans were allowed to go ahead. But just a few weeks after this there was a series of newspaper articles about the Centre.

Géza says that there were many erroneous statements made by the *Gothenburg-Post*, and subsequently other media outlets, including claims that there had been no activity at the Centre whatsoever and that some of its members had cited scientific evidence of camel milk curing autism:

Géza: We never claimed camel milk could cure autism, merely cited scientific reports indicating it had beneficial health effects. And though we never got the chance to build the stables, the Camel Centre comprised more than just the Camel Centre.

Apart from the camel keeping, the other areas of activity Géza lists are tourism and events, production and sales, as well as information, research and education:

Géza: Production and sales of products from or relating to camels were ongoing. Camel milk had been imported from the Netherlands. It was sold at various markets in Gothenburg and elsewhere along with T-shirts and alpaca wool products. We also had activities within information and research, trying to learn as much as possible about camels. We had internal seminars and attended conferences. We had both researchers and practitioners in our association, including two agronomists carrying out a study funded by the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry, the point of this being to conduct a pilot study on camel keeping in the Nordic countries. So, there was research afoot and we were about to seek further funding.

The Camel Centre also had plans to produce a series of fairy-tale books on camels, along with a textbook:

Géza: We collaborated with authors and an artist who was to illustrate the books. We constantly increased our knowledge of camels, learning a lot about their history, biology and camel keeping.

Cold-shouldered

Géza recalls that before the *Gothenburg-Post* unleashed the first in their series of critical articles about the Camel Centre in February 2017 there had been fairly neutral, or even positive, reporting on the project in local newspapers. Strangely, in the same paper there was also an article about URG where the journalist sounded a fairly critical note. He offered three quotes from Gothenburg citizens, all of them negative towards URG. The article also supplied a web link to one of these citizens' veritable diatribe against URG:

Géza: The fact that these two articles on the Camel Centre and URG respectively appeared in the same newspaper on the same day seems to have caused people, including journalists and politicians, to confuse the two projects with each other. When other newspapers and social media copied what was in the *Gothenburg-Post* and piled on with even more fabrications, the story became distorted beyond recognition.

Once the media onslaught on the Camel Centre was in full swing, the attacks on URG abated. Instead, financing pertaining to URG was transferred in the minds of many to the Camel Centre. This was spectacularly demonstrated in a Gothenburg city council debate where a councillor claimed in an interpellation that the Camel Centre had received 31.8 million SEK [3.4 million USD], an obvious mix-up with URG:

Géza: This claim wasn't refuted in the debate, leaving the assembly to infer that the councillor's figures were accurate.

The Camel Centre also had to endure accusations of animal cruelty on Facebook after the *Gothenburg-Post* on several occasions had published an image of the Centre's proposed greenhouse, indicating that it was meant to house the camels and alpacas:

Géza: I wrote to the journalists of the *Gothenburg-Post* requesting them to retract this and all other inaccuracies in their reporting. But they didn't.

Géza recalls an encounter the Camel Centre had with local politicians in North-East Gothenburg. It was a meeting with the Deputy Chair and Second Deputy Chair of the Angered City District Committee:

Géza: They listened to our presentation and seemed to understand our point but just said: "*Well, it's too bad, but things are the way they are.*" They didn't see the relevance of our project, and they couldn't connect it to the development of Angered. I and my colleagues had envisioned the Camel Centre as a way for Angered to become more pleasant to visit and live in. It would embrace Angered's cultural diversity, create local jobs and make residents proud of their community. All this seemed lost on the politicians. Eventually, we decided to file for bankruptcy, which came into effect in 2018.

International publicity

The Camel Centre was reported on in foreign media, including an organisation affiliated with the alt-right movement in the United States. Géza reckons it was probably through this that it spread to Ireland where there was a radio show on the subject, and some other countries, including Hungary:

Géza: There were also lots of articles about the Camel Centre in other countries around the world. They were poking fun at Swedes for using camels in an integration project. But there was no factual discussion.

Géza thinks there may have been something symbolic about camels. Most of the media outlets latching onto the story were Right-wing. Some of them were clearly xenophobic and racist:

Géza: Someone wrote: '*First they bring the Somalis here, then their camels*'. The ironic misunderstanding is that we were planning to have camels from Somalia. We weren't planning on getting any dromedaries nor intended to import camels from outside the EU, as this isn't allowed under EU law. Our plan was simply to bring some double-humped, Bactrian camels from another farm in Sweden, as well as buying alpacas in Sweden.

Retirement

Although there were personal attacks on him in the media, Géza says he's not resentful:

Géza: I wish I had been younger and had the energy to soldier on in this struggle. I'm not going to spend the rest of my life on this, but had it been 30 or 40 years ago it would have been different.

Particularly after he was elected chairman of the Camel Centre, Géza reckons there was too much weight on his shoulders. He didn't have a wide network of contacts to help him in his struggle, so he had to try to build a network from scratch, which was taxing. Still he feels he is richer in many ways for the experiences he has had during the project, now understanding the workings of politics and the mass media better:

Géza: The most positive thing of having to give up this project is getting time for other things. Had I continued with this project I could have spent the rest of my life on it. Maybe it was just too early and in the wrong place.

The 'world village' was an even more visionary project. Géza thought of the Camel Centre as being a possible first step towards the 'world village' idea:

Géza: It's possible this will happen in 20, 30 or 40 years, a 'world village' in Angered, if someone else picks up the thread and looks at our old notes.

So why camels? Did Géza have a personal interest in them before launching the project?

Géza: No, not really. But almost all others in this association [16 persons altogether] were enthusiastic about camels because they had experience of them, in one way or another. I was there to help the project along and became a bit of a camel expert myself. They have been around for 40 million years and they have developed properties that have enabled them to survive under many different conditions. Humans have had a relationship with them for thousands of years.

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Where's the salt?

Gun Holmertz

Gun Holmertz is a former healthcare professional, lay judge and politician who converted to Catholicism in 1960 and founded Caritas Gothenburg. She continues to run the Hjällbo Volunteer Centre in North-East Gothenburg where she has worked for 25 years, the centre is also the base for one of Urban Rural Gothenburg's outreach programmes to promote green business development. She has received the Order of the Golden Spur, a Papal Order of Knighthood, for her many years of social work with vulnerable people, and an award from the City of Gothenburg for significant contributions to the city.

Hjällbo Volunteer Centre organises a host of activities including language training and self-help groups, support to asylum seekers, culture groups where people share their experiences of traditions and customs, and health-promoting activities such as stress management, walks and swimming.

At the volunteer centre there are two rules everyone must follow. The first is that all communication is in Swedish, the second that everyone has the same worth and must be respected. When Gun started her work there in 1994, she couldn't imagine that one would speak a hundred languages in Hjällbo, but that virtually no one would speak Swedish:

Gun: Many residents have interpreters, even though they have lived here for 25 years. Now there is a plan to convert some buildings to cooperative housing, but would Swedes really want to buy an apartment here?

Gun recalls how the municipality tried to get students to move to Hjällbo 10–15 years ago. It didn't work. She says people who don't know Hjällbo only know it as a vulnerable area and that it has become one of the “*big export markets for ISIS*”:

Gun: The municipality have never held a public meeting here that I know of to talk about this with the people living here. We would just hear that this or that person had joined ISIS, or that someone has come back in a body bag.

Having noticed signs of radicalisation, Gun voiced her concerns in the ‘*Gothenburg-Post*’. This resulted in a threat on her life in 2012:

Gun: No one, neither politicians nor all these municipal administration people called me, with one exception. I don't want to think they didn't give a damn about me, though many actually don't for I'm not an easy person to get on with, not even for my family. So the time wasn't ripe to sound alarm bells back then.

Gun is critical of the municipal housing company who, she says, knew a lot about what went on in the basement mosques, but who never dealt with the matter. When her criminal complaint against the man who threatened to kill her was tried, it turned out that the time was not ripe for a victory in court:

Gun: He had the world's best attorney. Listening to him it took me back 15 years to when I worked with the shelter I built with other women and we finally got women to report their assailants. Their defence attorney had the same tactics I was met with ridiculing women as moody and irrational. The prosecutor sought a one-year prison term. I said: "Drop it, all of Hjällbo will laugh at you. You'll never even get a half-year sentence. Can't you see what Gothenburg looks like?"

Tentative beginnings

Gun founded Caritas Gothenburg in 1987 and became chair of the board. They did volunteer work, initially oriented towards penitentiaries and asylum issues:

Gun: I started to ask myself: What is happening in the so-called suburbs? I'm born in Mölndal, just south of Gothenburg. When I came here, I was still living there. But I have always had this notion that in order to be really credible you need to live within the community you are working for. So, I moved to Hjällbo.

Gun was drawn into some ecumenical work where they were supposed to study what the churches actually do. It was a new world for her as she didn't have a Christian background but was raised in a communist working-class home. Becoming a Catholic, she thought she could help make some changes within the church:

Gun: The Christian world seemed madness. I still don't understand it. I often joke, saying there is only one thing that is important: Christians should be the salt of the Earth. And I am still looking for that salt.

Attending a church meeting where a bishop held a talk on the Catholic social teaching, she was then told to take part in a group discussion, a format she disliked intensely:

Gun: In these discussions you have to listen, but I felt I had been listening to everyone. So what is the next step, to cry even more? Or to actually pull yourself together? Everyone cried over all the good things they claimed to have done, wondering how they were to continue. Then it turned out they were angling for money. So, I felt there was no salt.

In the early 1990s Norwegian volunteer centres were all the rage with Swedish politicians and civil servants. Gun, who had previously entertained the same thoughts, went to Norway and was very impressed by the volunteer centres there. At the time the *Gothenburg-Post* regularly had articles about Hjällbo:

Gun: Leading politicians were talking about the ghetto Hjällbo. They said we had everything: brothels, drugs, alcohol, lazy people... What I reacted so strongly against is that no one living here was quoted in all these articles. I was still chair of Caritas and said that if there is somewhere, we ought to be, if we believe in our statutes or how we are supposed to work, it is in Hjällbo, with the people who live there.

The Caritas committee agreed to Gun's proposal for a volunteer centre. She was employed as head of the centre and started her job knocking on doors all around Hjällbo bringing a leaflet with an invitation to open house meetings at the nascent volunteer centre:

Gun: No one even knew what an open house was. It was a total culture clash. I visited 2,300 apartments. From all this there were just 52 people who came to our meetings. I thought it was a paltry showing though some said it was a good number.

The 12 disciples

During the open-house meetings, the participants were asked whether they wanted to see her again. Most said no. Out of the 52 people, and possibly as a result of rumours that had reached others, there were 12 men returning to the centre:

Gun: I called them my 12 disciples. The task I gave them was to answer the question: “*How are you doing here in Hjällbo?*” They said: “*Not good.*” Their chief concern was: “*Why are all the Swedes leaving?*” to which I said: “*I don’t know, they are still here, aren’t they?*” There were around 500 or 600 in 1994. Back then I couldn’t imagine that in 25 years virtually all Swedes would vacate Hjällbo.

The conversations with the 12 men gave rise to the volunteer centre’s assignment. The issues they raised provided Caritas with three things to deal with, the bad social environment, the problems with the schools, and caring for the elderly. The 12 men asked Gun to help them improve the schools. They objected to Swedes not striking their children. How could children learn if they weren’t beaten sometimes? The men also asked Caritas to take care of the elderly:

Gun: I explained that this was not what we do at the volunteer centre but that there was room for activities and the elderly were certainly welcome to participate in them.

Initially Gun was alone at the centre three days a week, and when she later left her job at the hospital, she spent considerably more time there. After a while some of the men came by with their wives, dropping them off at the centre:

Gun: Initially we were a female domain aside from the 12 disciples. And this may have been good for us. After all, our activities at the centre won approval from the municipality.

The centre started receiving interns from all corners of the globe. Gun told them they could join a pre-existing group or start one themselves if they considered themselves good enough to lead one:

Gun: They were supposed to only speak Swedish to each other. They signed a paper to that effect, but occasionally I’d hear them speaking in Arabic and had to admonish them.

Caritas pioneered after-school programmes where pupils could get assistance with their homework. During her time as a peace activist Gun had become friendly with several teachers. Many of them were nearing their retirement and they thought the after-school programme was important, so they were the first ones who helped Caritas with this programme. It was popular and ran for five years or so.

Local politics

Before 2011, Hjällbo was part of a city district called Lärjedalen. As the result of a major citywide reorganisation this district was then amalgamated with its northern neighbour Gunnared to form the new district Angered:

Gun: As far as I know, there were never any natural points of contact between Lärjedalen and Gunnared. I am not just being nostalgic, but there was a different spirit in Hjällbo before we became part of Angered. We knew which civil servants would be willing to listen to us.

There are 22 politicians in the Angered District Committee. To the best of Gun's knowledge, all the political parties have tried to find Angered residents to fill those positions, but she doubts whether they have succeeded. There is no legal requirement that committee seats be occupied by residents of the district:

Gun: I attend their committee meetings when they deal with matters of concern to us in Hjällbo. People only go to political meetings when they feel abandoned or hear rumours and want to find out whether they are true.

The last time Gun attended a committee meeting in Angered a man addressed the committee with a question about canoe rental at the local nature reserve:

Gun: I didn't feel they gave him a proper answer and they seemed quite ignorant about the issue he raised. So how can you call this democracy? You go to these meetings because you're angry or want to learn something, and every time I go there, I can't see any difference in the politicians' attitude. Their decisions seem to have been made already, even if they haven't been formally taken.

Gun says it's visible to all that Hjällbo Centre, which used to be an eyesore in the nineties, has been extensively refurbished. It was given its makeover in the early 2000s. Looking at the apartment blocks though, she feels that nothing much has happened. In Angered Centre, a new hospital was built. This she sees as definite progress, but it's hard to explain to people why the hospital closes down every Friday afternoon:

Gun: We have heard that COPD [chronic obstructive pulmonary disease] is the deadliest disease in Angered, followed by heart attacks and obesity. They have set up special units for this which is good, but these people have their traumas. They don't become healthy here since the big problem, I see, is that no one deals with segregation. We have been spoon-fed the notion that we should be integrated. Whom should these people integrate themselves with?

Gun is sceptical towards the many projects that have been launched in North-East Gothenburg, such as Development North-East and Urban Rural Gothenburg. The planned camel centre in Angered infuriates her:

Gun: How unbelievably stupid can you get? Most people, when they realised what the project was all about, said: "*We have never seen a camel, we don't want camels here.*" And I haven't seen anyone who's accounted for what all this has cost. The fence is still not up. When the Västra Götaland County Administrative Board heard about this and started to do the math, the money for the camels didn't suffice. And the claim that camel milk would cure autism was preposterous. This project is shameful.

Gun reckons the most important thing Caritas have achieved in Hjällbo is that they have stuck to Swedish as a common language, although there have been native speakers of 17 languages at the volunteer centre:

Gun: I have learnt a lot from the people I have met here, and I am so happy to have worked with them in the spirit of Caritas.



The lungs:

RESEARCHERS

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Making two worlds meet

Mirek Dymitrow • Karin Ingelhag

Mirek Dymitrow and Karin Ingelhag work as research coordinators at Mistra Urban Futures (MUF), a centre for sustainable development at Chalmers University of Technology. Together, they run the Research Forum at MUF, a platform through which they coordinate all research within Urban Rural Gothenburg (URG).

Karin: Mirek and I didn't know each other at all yet were supposed to work so closely together and in such a short time deliver in accordance with our job descriptions. We are fortunate to be collaborating so well. If you meet a person where you feel: "*We are far apart in our way of viewing this issue*"; it drains time from you. This is the way it is in all human processes. It is the encounter with the person you're doing something with that really becomes what you do, your results.

Mirek: It's easy to forget, but a project is just people who are in contact with each other. You can write the most fantastic documents, but if you don't like the person you work with, you won't get much done. Although staff turbulence may halt a project's processes, a change may also spark a new synergy, causing the project to accelerate. So it cuts both ways.

Mirek became part of URG through working at Gothenburg University where he had done research on rural–urban issues, above all conceptual ones, with respect to how assumptions about the meaning of these concepts have a rather substantial impact on political decisions. These issues had long interested him and were the subject of his dissertation:

Mirek: When I saw an ad for a research coordinator for a project called Urban Rural Gothenburg, I thought: "*This is just what I'm looking for; a chance to get away from theoretical matters for a while and see what this means in practice.*"

Mirek was vaguely familiar with URG. Its predecessor Development North-East drew some scepticism from him:

Mirek: I didn't like the way URG initially handled the concepts 'rural' and 'urban'. For instance, there were beliefs that 'rural people' are much more close-knit than 'urbanites', and if you just transfer 'rural practices' like farming into the cities you will obtain a higher level of social integration. My own research on rural-urban issues points to the opposite results. Moreover, such reasoning disregards socio-cultural and demographic factors and their role in whether integration will become a success or not. I thought this was a chance for me to sort out the key concepts and perhaps contribute with some theoretical knowledge in structuring this project.

Employed by Business Region Gothenburg (BRG), Karin had just wrapped up a project for them in December 2017 and was ready to take on new challenges. Her boss asked her if she wanted to join URG and the Research Forum at MUF:

Karin: I didn't know much about URG but was eager to take on the assignment. I was offered a job description but was none the wiser for it. It was more of a fright than a much-needed clarification of the job.

The piece of paper in front of her placed great emphasis on the scientific aspect of the Research Forum. She wondered what she possibly might contribute with. The Research Forum was a new invention so there was no one who could tell her what to expect:

Karin: This was uncharted territory for me. The litany of items comprising the job description just said do this, do this, do this. What value was this supposed to create?

Mirek: We had virtually the same job description. This was strange since we have entirely different backgrounds and were to complement each other in our various tasks. What I reacted to was that the Research Forum and our job descriptions weren't based on specific needs of the project, but on the view that science is intrinsically good.

The paradox of a supposedly transdisciplinary project such as URG resting entirely on a scientific foundation is not lost on Mirek:

Mirek: Science is just one of the five pentahelix pillars, so that's a contradiction, isn't it?

Karin: Absolutely! There is a clear emphasis on this 'scientific foundation'; it is the constant drumbeat, presumably meant to impart gravity.

Mirek: And why not the practitioner's perspective?

Karin: Precisely. Well, over time we just decided to do what we think is right and let the chips fall where they may.

A tale of 25 researchers

If the job description was disconcerting, Karin and Mirek were soon in for even more perplexity. At the first meeting between the two, they were told of a bunch of research projects seemingly tied to URG, which they were supposed to evaluate for continued collaboration.

It took Mirek and Karin a month to do a very thorough investigation with matrices, criteria, and by looking at the issue from various aspects. Mirek focused on the theoretical part while Karin did the fieldwork to match the project's need with the available 'expertise'. It soon became clear there were barely any research projects. Sometimes it was just a phone conversation someone had had with someone else.

Mirek: I don't think they purposefully led us astray, but it could have been motivated by creating more legitimacy for the project, perhaps trying to prove to themselves that URG was more important and performing better than was the case by name-dropping researchers and research projects. Karin and I wondered what we were getting into. Where were all these projects?

Karin and Mirek held one-on-one talks with researchers to see if they had research that was relevant for URG:

Karin: We ensured that the researchers that were to be affiliated with URG had a personality that was suitable for encounters between theory and practice, in order to pave the way for knowledge production.

Not only were many of the 25 researchers on the original list disinterested in working in a transdisciplinary manner or unsuited to it, but some of them had no external funding, thinking MUF would finance them:

Mirek: Many researchers mix up Mistra Urban Futures with the similarly sounding Mistra Foundation, thinking that MUF have a lot of money, so there was considerable interest

early on. In the end only 6 or 7 of the original 25 became affiliated with URG. They were able to either do their URG research as a case study within their existing research projects, or meet a need in URG that they were able to seek funding for.

Karin: Moreover, some of these researchers were to form a reference group to the Research Forum. I said: “*How can I evaluate them? I don’t know who they are or anything about their achievements.*” The MUF boss stepped in to halt this saying: “*Let’s end here, this won’t lead to anything good.*”

Impediments to transdisciplinarity

Even though URG is a transdisciplinary project, Karin recognises that there has been some progress with the municipal administration in some areas, including the meals organisation:

Karin: There is ongoing research within the project Klimat 2030 on new kinds of food, more vegetarian dishes, prevention of food waste, and we have beans that are grown in Västra Götaland that they want to test in practice. The meals organisation in Gothenburg are interested in being part of this climate project led by Västra Götaland Regional Council and the County Administrative Board.

Karin believes that had there been an assignment in their day-to-day activities to work with continuous knowledge production for more sustainable meals, the municipal meals organisations would have been forced to prioritise this, but since there isn’t, they don’t consider it very important. Instead they cling tightly to the city’s core assignment, which might be translated as business-as-usual, running the city in the way it has been run for ages, which doesn’t seem to involve knowledge production in the spirit of transdisciplinarity.

Mirek and Karin decided to introduce researchers and practitioners into each other’s environments, so that they would be nudged out of their comfort zone a little. Practitioners such as sustainability strategists were sent to scientific conferences. This turned out to be more of an uphill climb than Karin and Mirek had anticipated. People were nervous: “*Who am I to think I have something to contribute at a research conference?*” seemed to be a lingering concern for many:

Mirek: Practitioners may see their knowledge as being of less worth. And vice versa. When we try to connect researchers to existing projects in, for instance, Angered [a socio-economically challenged Gothenburg suburb], practitioners have more confidence in their own ideas. There is also a risk that researchers push their own agendas, which may be okay per se, but if you are to take transdisciplinarity seriously you must be more sensitive.

Mirek and Karin are writing a chapter about the transdisciplinary processes within the Research Forum for another MUF book. During this process they have had occasion to consider how they view the encounter between researchers and practitioners. They came to the conclusion that it isn’t always advantageous to aggregate knowledge:

Mirek: Sometimes the various forms of knowledge are so different that all you get out of it is scrambled eggs. Taking the best of two worlds doesn’t always work. Sometimes the knowledge that exists is enough to solve at least some problems, so we shouldn’t destroy it by forced coproduction just because it works well in certain contexts and under certain conditions.

Academia and practice

There is a challenge in running a Research Forum in that research, by definition, is critical of taken-for-granted assumptions of reality and thus in constant pursuit of unbiased truth. Ideally, one that stands above various political agendas. When working transdisciplinarily with politically controlled organisations, however, the difference in perspective becomes pronounced:

Mirek: The contents and the initial title of this very book, for instance. There were lengthy discussions why the book's orientation should be the way Karin and I suggested.

Karin: Eventually a conflict arose. In a politics-governed organisation, political correctness sets the agenda. And in the scientific world, your world, Mirek...

Mirek: ...we instead strive to learn from controversy.

The initially proposed outline of the book, including its title, caused trepidation among certain people involved in the decision process out of fear of the media stirring up yet another frenzy. In such a scenario, one can either dissemble past misconceptions or simply take the bull by the horns:

Mirek: A co-produced, transdisciplinary book like this one is the perfect forum to explain what misunderstandings have led to the past controversy and take back control over the issue in a professional, scientific manner, using first-hand stories of the original actors involved.

Karin: In the best of worlds, that would be optimal. In our world, the difference in cultures between the politically correct and the 'not-so-correct' science became very tangible.

Karin and Mirek see this incident as a concrete example of the difficulty of co-producing new knowledge. Even after several talks with the concerned actors there wasn't much progress towards mutual understanding. This is a real challenge, not only for isolated things – like this book, but for more general knowledge production in the interface between academia and practice:

Karin: For us as research coordinators, this was an enlightening experience. And our organisations are still trying to find each other.

Karin and Mirek agree that political correctness, as a societal phenomenon, stands in opposition to the concept of transdisciplinarity, because the former is not a question of true or false, that is, 'correctness', but of conscious avoidance of consequences:

Mirek: In fact, as Ben Shapiro once said, anytime we put a modifier in front of a term that is inherently good, we turn it into a perversion of itself.

Transdisciplinarity is not a business deal. And it is not a display of unconditional democracy. It is a tricky form of collaboration that takes time, energy and trust to understand. And this level of maturity may be difficult to obtain during such brief a project as URG.

Inside the yarn

Looking at URG from the outside, Karin sees a big ball of yarn with various threads, touching, yet isolated from each other. It is this ball of yarn in which URG is active. The various threads

are in movement and all of them are entangled in themselves. They need to be structured into a collaborative endeavour to maximise future performance:

Karin: There are many people in URG, constantly moving about, who have will and ambition, each of them in their own unique way. The question is: Is this project for most of us more complex than we generally have the capacity to comprehend?

Mirek: As an Occam's razor¹ person, I don't believe that complexity should necessarily be addressed with complexity. A simpler approach might not solve everything, but it is more likely to solve something. But you could also say that it is an inherent aspect of process-oriented projects that you during the process cannot notice what is happening. It is very confusing. But the result shouldn't arrive here and now, even though we have instructions saying we should assist 20 stakeholders, publish a special issue and arrange six seminars. You must have this for something to happen, but maybe the result shouldn't be evaluated at the end of the project but in ten years? It sounds logical, but when you work in such a structure you may not feel good about it every day.

¹ Occam's razor is the principle that in explaining a thing no more assumptions should be made than are necessary.

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Backcasting into the future

John Holmberg

John Holmberg is professor of Physical Resource Theory at Chalmers University of Technology in Gothenburg. In his 1995 doctoral dissertation he developed principles for sustainability that were disseminated internationally through the global organisation The Natural Step. He has been an adviser to the United Nations in preparing Agenda 2030 with its 17 goals for sustainable development. John has no formal connection to Urban Rural Gothenburg (URG) but was a keynote speaker at the project's halftime conference in August 2018.

How can we work with sustainable development? This is the question John has been particularly focused on recently:

John: One has problems in distinguishing between various logics in the work with sustainable development. The UN's 17 sustainability goals are colourful, and you will soon be able to find them in every foyer of every respectable organisation. When we established these goals, we were wary of them being seen as a checklist to be included in one's bookkeeping, then continue more or less as usual. The point of the goals is the broad process behind them and to try to integrate them.

In the UN resolution 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' there are three concepts that John considers key in describing how we can achieve sustainability: 'transformation,' 'integration' and 'universality':

John: 'Transformation' represents the conception that we no longer can be content with marginal changes of systems, for instance reducing emissions from traffic by 10 or 20%, which can be done within our current system. If we instead were to reduce emissions by 80 or 90%, it would require us to think beyond our current system, to transform it.

John's second key word from the UN resolution is 'integration'. This entails that when we for instance are making the necessary changes in Gothenburg's transportation system, we cannot do it from the notion that we should reduce emissions, and then add: "*But will this work for everyone? Is it socially acceptable?*" These questions should be included from the beginning.

Working with several perspectives simultaneously and integrating them is something we are poor at, John notes. Often this will mean integrating actors since the issue becomes wedged in the space between these actors, necessitating new forms of collaboration:

John: The third key word is 'universality' which the UN describes as 'leaving no one behind'. Thus, there need to be consideration to what a local solution will mean in a global context.

These three key words are in some sense even more important to John than the UN's 17 sustainability goals, as the goals (not only) say what is to be done to achieve sustainability in certain areas, while the three key words say how it should be achieved.

Cruise or expedition?

Looking at how organisations function, John makes a distinction between two different logics. The first is that of the cruise. This is what we normally do. We know roughly where we are going and strive to optimise activities, set targets, control and measure activities and trim them optimally. However, we are now approaching uncharted waters and will encounter the need for changes of a kind we haven't made before:

John: It is no longer a case of trimming the way we previously have done, but we have to find new ways forward in these waters. So, it may be a smart move to dispatch an expedition for the purpose of learning what works and what doesn't, so that you don't risk the entire ship running aground.

The purpose of the expedition is learning, both from success and failure. John emphasises that the cruise and the expedition entail totally different logics. For the cruise there is a point in having routines and budget confines, having measurable objectives, optimising and trimming the activities. However, in expeditions those structures are obstacles, for there one needs to think beyond the present, occasionally even beyond one's organisation since the solution lies in collaboration with someone else:

John: You cannot measure and follow up an expedition with the same tools that you use to follow up a cruise logic. This is actually what kills a lot of expeditions. Because you dispatch the expedition and then follow them up with the same standard that you would apply in your day-to-day activities. With the cruise you are not interested in the learning of the expedition but in how much carbon dioxide has been reduced or how many jobs you have created, and so on. But this is erroneous thinking. We should be asking: "*What did we learn from our expedition?*" A cruise often entails solving problems, implementing solutions, removing something undesirable, while an expedition is about creating something new.

John emphasises that it is important to distinguish between the two logics so that one understands that an expedition's leadership is largely about facilitation, ensuring that there is trust and openness between the participants. In a cruise leadership it is more about the ability to take decisions:

John: Apart from comprehending the difference in logic, it is also extremely important to connect these logics to each other. The cruise should not be abolished. This is the main activity which should be chugging along. We need both the expedition and the cruise. So we have to interconnect them.

Most of the expeditions John has seen in the public sector are totally disconnected from the organisation's core activities. People working in cruise mode feel that what occurs in the expedition isn't relevant for day-to-day activities:

John: It is seen as a sort of playhouse for people who want to have fun. It doesn't concern us. We ought to spend the money on core activities instead.

On the other hand, those working in expedition mode might feel it's so exciting to be at the new frontier that they never bother to give feedback to their organisation. So how does one safeguard that experience and learning from expeditions will benefit the cruise? How does one ensure mutual learning between these? John reckons this is a crucial challenge:

John: How do you build structures for this mutual learning? I would say the public sector is extremely bad at it. Companies have long been wrestling with this. They have been forced to earn money in traditional ways while preparing for new markets. Research in

this area shows that if you integrate the new completely in the old, the new will die because it is devoured by the norms and structures that exist in the old. If you disconnect the new from the old, it will be like a new company. You need to allow it some seclusion so that it doesn't die, but at the same time connect it with the old.

So how does one manage to allow this seclusion and connection to coexist? John thinks it often has to be connected at the highest level, so that it becomes an issue for top management. The managers have to be committed to these expeditions and be eager to see what results they will yield:

John: I think this needs to be developed in the public sector and there is no time to waste because of the rapidity of the emerging technology. Transformation will happen no matter what. The question is whether politics and the public sector can control it in a sensible way.

In his research John is developing a methodology for how one can think and work with this type of vision for the future so that one can analyse and think beyond today's system, seeing not just symptoms, but root causes.

Think big, start small

Why are people often inclined to take a cruise, while at other times keen on an expedition? John sees a rather exciting connection between these two logics in relation to a theory developed by the Japanese psychiatrist Shoma Morita:

John: He was active at the same time as Sigmund Freud. Morita argues that every human being struggles with two contradictory forces, one that wants security and comfort and another that seeks development and self-actualisation. We struggle with this all the time. You can see it in a little child who is outside exploring the world for a few minutes and then runs home to mum and dad to tank up on security, then running off in a further loop to explore again. Children struggle with this, back and forth.

These contradictory forces are at play from childhood to adolescence and beyond. But as one enters professional life something happens. Many workplaces are designed so that one above all should avoid making mistakes. It is deeply ingrained in many organisations, especially those that are controlling and accustomed to constantly measuring things. John notes that research on where the most creative environments can be found indicates that trust actually is the most important factor. There needs to be so much trust that it is okay to make mistakes. But if there is tribalism, inner competition at a workplace, it often stifles creativity:

John: If you provide a space where it is okay to explore, and you are with others who are also allowed to explore, you give each other security. So often it is a case of creating this space and you can see that certain workplaces have really endeavoured to do this. IKEA have done so to a great extent and it is inherent in Google. And I have experience myself of having created this space, which is called 'challenge lab', where students are allowed to experiment and grow enormously as a result.

A very important part of exploration is to be allowed to make mistakes. In the challenge labs there is a motto: 'Think big, start small, act now, learn fast':

John: Actually, I would add ‘fail fast’ as well. The methodology we developed more than 20 years ago to work with these conversion processes is backcasting. It entails starting in the future and creating the framework for this future. So that’s the ‘think big’ part. If we really succeed, what characterises the framework of our success? Having created this framework you then work with expeditions to get to this future state. When I look at the literature on very exciting, large transformative processes, it is often this combination of thinking big and starting small that yields success.

John feels there are too many people today thinking without acting, and people acting without having thought first:

John: If you take the example of Mahatma Gandhi, he had very robust guiding principles for what he wanted with India. People’s equal rights. Non-violence. A set of clear principles. But then his whole life was about experimenting, the Salt March and everything else. His autobiography bears the title ‘The Story of My Experiments with Truth’. So, his entire life was experimentation, but he never let go of his principles. The combination of having guiding principles and experimentation yields a very large transformative power, I think.

Challenge lab dissemination?

John is currently advising counties and municipalities in Sweden on sustainability issues. In a medium-sized municipality neighbouring Gothenburg, the top-level politicians are preparing to set up challenge labs and will include the civil servants:

John: The politicians there realise that this is necessary in order to safeguard democracy, to get closer to the citizens. For the citizens have their own political power, not via membership of a party but through social media. And we must have conversations with them or else there will be polarisation.

John is part of a project with three Swedish counties that along with other European regions have received funding to find ways to transform their industrial sector towards sustainability. In this project there will be experiments with the challenge lab methodology to see how it can be used. If there is learning around this, it will be disseminated to other regions in Europe:

John: But it’s a learning process and this might be important with respect to Urban Rural Gothenburg, if one sees that at least large parts of what this project stands for is precisely this experimenting approach. And if you don’t understand the value of this, it will just die as a project. But if you do understand the value of it, you can explore whether there is something to learn from it and continue experimenting around, or if there even is something in this which we can use to influence our ongoing activities. But then you must be interested in the learning emanating from the project, and not measure how many jobs were created or much carbon dioxide was emitted.

The learning gained by experimentation within a project is not something that URG’s financier, the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, measures or factors in as an achievement. However, John is currently in talks with them, and there is discussion on new appropriation directions from the government around these very issues:

John: The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth are thinking about whether it may be possible to include something around experimentation in their project criteria. I am going to help them arrange a workshop around this. But today it is still largely about measuring, controlling and steering.

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Old habits die hard

Helena Kraff • Eva Maria Jernsand

Helena Kraff and Eva Maria Jernsand are researchers at the University of Gothenburg. Helena is assistant associate professor at the HDK-Valand – Academy of Art and Design. Eva Maria is a tourism and marketing researcher at the Department of Business Administration. Their field of study and transdisciplinary methods have a lot in common with Urban Rural Gothenburg's (URG) mandate and orientation, though they are only tangentially involved in the project.

Helena has a background as a designer while Eva Maria was a business economist for 20 years before becoming a researcher. The two met when they were studying for a master's degree in business and design:

Helena: Within design and artistic research you talk about the design process or the artistic process in itself as being inquiring. We work with participatory methods, incorporating visual and practical elements such as participants being asked to sketch how they see things, build prototypes or act out something through drama or role playing.

Helena emphasises that when working in groups, relying only on the spoken word can make things very abstract. Instead, visualising your thoughts, through drawing and sketching, makes them easier to remember and for others to build upon. Saying something is one thing, but what you can draw may be entirely different. Perhaps you will trigger a thought by doing something with your hand, get some fresh ideas:

Eva Maria: And if you don't know the language other tools can be really useful. As in a project we have here in Gothenburg with people who don't speak Swedish. The visual methods Helena mentioned can be good as a complement to language.

Connections with Urban Rural Gothenburg

Helena and Eva Maria did their doctoral studies in Kisumu in western Kenya for a project in a fishing village where they worked with small-scale ecotourism and participatory processes. They came into contact with URG when its application for funding was to be written:

Helena: We participated in a workshop because the URG initiators wanted to interconnect Gothenburg and Kisumu. So, there was a discussion about the possibilities of such a connection before they actually wrote the application for the project.

URG received funding and was launched, but Helena and Eva Maria haven't been very active within the project apart from a workshop they held in Angered [a socio-economically challenged area of Gothenburg], along with a few other meetings where they've also participated. They had neither a clear role in URG nor funding from the project though their own research has many themes in common with URG's endeavours, such as participatory processes and small-scale, community-based tourism:

Eva Maria: We can benefit from URG's networks, as can URG from ours. We tend to turn up at the same kind of events, meet the same people. We use each other's networks and competences. And as researchers we are free to delve into whatever we feel is beneficial to our project.

At the workshop Helena and Eva Maria held in Angered, there were members of a network seeking to work within green business and tourism in North-East Gothenburg:

Helena: We had a pilot study in our research which explored how the tourist information centre can be developed into an innovation arena, and what it might mean to an area such as North East Gothenburg, but also how it could benefit the entrepreneurs who are focusing on development of tourism products.

There were three possible scenarios for the information centre. One was a mobile venue, which is a fairly common variety, venturing out into the community to the tourism entrepreneurs. The second scenario sketched a thematic venue where a tourism information centre might be doubling as something else, for instance a maritime centre. Such centres do exist, but Helena and Eva Maria envisioned it to be scaled up to include test environments for tourism. The third alternative was a multi-purpose venue where there would be various societal functions in conjunction with the information centre, allowing different stakeholders to benefit from others' competences and work methods:

Eva Maria: While holding this workshop in Angered, we raised the issue of possibly having such a multi-purpose venue there, at their cultural centre for instance.

Helena: And this is something that we might take further in another research project on the role of tourism in multi-cultural societies, perhaps in collaboration with URG.

Eva Maria: Yes. There are possibilities of synergy effects if we don't become too possessive about our own projects, but rather view it as though we are creating the project together.

Helena: This is basically how we view transdisciplinary research; that you are open with your research, inviting others to contribute instead of saying: "*This is mine*". And I think URG is a good partner to collaborate with. They have the openness we cherish.

Old financing structures die hard

Amid the views and methods, they share with URG, Eva Maria still finds the project a bit vague, also feeling some unease about the turbulence within the project and the bad reputation it occasionally seems to have had. Early on, some project members were quitting, and new people were coming in. Another problem was that the project management wanted to include research but couldn't pay for it:

Eva Maria: We needed financing early on when they asked if we could contribute. So we said: "*Yes but if you don't have anything to offer us, what do you want from us?*" Now we do have other financing, so this is no longer an issue.

Eva Maria says they have the same problem when applying for research grants. They are often expected to have financing from other sources which entails an assumption that all public or private organisations they collaborate with are to donate their time because Helena and Eva Maria cannot finance their participation within their research project:

Eva Maria: This is an impediment to transdisciplinary research.

Helena: Exactly. There are still old systems in place that are not adapted to the new mode of research, which the financiers themselves often want us to employ.

There are legal obstacles with regard to competition law and some forms of municipal law that prohibit researchers from assisting companies since tax money isn't supposed to be used that way. In many EU projects you are expected to collaborate with others, but the structures are not adapted for it.

Another example of a structural obstacle to collaboration can be seen in how Eva Maria's and Helena's financial prerequisites when doing research in Kenya differed substantially from the other doctoral students there:

Eva Maria: We were paid full time while the doctoral students who were working in Kenya were expected to do teaching full-time and then do their research on top of that. But it also has to do with traditions. They are largely working in accordance with the old English university system, how one is to write and how one is allowed to conduct research.

Participatory research methods

Another possible problem with transdisciplinary projects is that researchers only are experts in their own field while the project may have expertise from a broad array of subject areas:

Helena: If you go to a meeting or a workshop, you can't be well-versed in all the issues discussed there. Ideally you would want to find a common language among the participants and understand each other fairly quickly.

Eva Maria: Also, as a researcher you can be accused for not participating. I was recently present in a context where I wasn't doing any research, but if you say you're a researcher someone might snap: "*Well, why aren't you contributing?*" It is as though you are expected to be something you're not just because the word 'researcher' has a particular meaning to someone.

Generally, Helena and Eva Maria are seldom observers at events since their research largely is action-based which means they also are doers in this context. In Kenya the practical purpose was to develop ecotourism in the community, so they did practical work in terms of business development with the local guide group and development of their guided tours, also bringing in a women's group so that they too could act as guides. They also worked with issues such as infrastructure improvement.

Eva Maria and Helena have been engaged in the same manner with a project for community-based tourism run by an organisation for local development in North-East Gothenburg, assisting them in their business and product development. Since they have been doing this over a long period, they can also see the results from their participatory methods:

Eva Maria: We can gain a different understanding of the activity when we become so deeply involved ourselves. The same goes for the workshop we held in Angered. Holding a lecture and leading a workshop is not your usual definition of research. But there are many different ways of working as a researcher.

Helena: If I think about my own research, it is constantly about reflecting on my own research process.

Eva Maria: And creating structures yourself in what you do. At the same time, you shouldn't be too fixated on certain steps but should rather let things happen. For this is when the unexpected and most noteworthy things occur, when one lets a project be driven by what really is interesting. So that one doesn't think: "*Well, I've written this in my application, so I have to do exactly this.*" That can be very hard at times.

The elusive project

Helena notes that there has been criticism towards URG for not having particularly clear objectives even though the project costs a considerable sum:

Helena: Ultimately something has to come of it. This is a difficulty with these types of projects. How do you ensure that something tangible really happens, while also keeping an open mind? So, it's a balancing act. To a great extent it is a question of how clear you are about the nature of the project. At least you should create clarity around what the project stands for.

Both Helena and Eva Maria say that when they think about URG it brings North-East Gothenburg to mind. So, the project clearly has strong geographical connotations:

Helena: I also think of the openness that can create ambiguity sometimes. So, it cuts both ways.

Eva Maria: And there aren't any really strong actors there but a host of small things that one is trying to put together in some fashion. So, it feels rather fragmented.

Co-creation requires good facilitation, Helena observes, because participatory processes don't run automatically. Facilitation in a project such as URG could in part come from the outside. A group that have gathered to do something together might not benefit from having a facilitator from their own group. Rather, it would be more appropriate to opt for someone from the outside, who can come in and take the process forward, someone who is more neutral:

Helena: This is akin to how we researchers act when we enter various groups, such as the guide group that we worked with in Kenya. We are in some sense outsiders there and are able to say things a group member might not say. If you come from the outside, you're not part of the power structure, and you bring your particular experience to the project. When we work in Kisumu, for instance, we are a sort of facilitator who offers own ideas and input to the process.

Eva Maria: It was good to have this long-term collaboration with Kisumu. On the whole, foresightedness is beneficial, and this is the problem with projects. There is a risk that they won't endure, that one must keep thinking about the next step. What do we do for this to live on after the project is over? Do we seek new project funding? Do we find a small part of the project to take further?

Helena: A problem with projects is when there constantly are people coming and going, particularly if it is a big project such as URG with great complexity and a huge number of actors. If someone enters the project in its final year without the full picture, they may simply repeat someone else's mistake.

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From farm to table

Linea Kjellsdotter Ivert • Kristina Liljestrand

Linea Kjellsdotter Ivert and Kristina Liljestrand are logisticians holding doctorate degrees, with an orientation towards circular economies, locally produced food and waste reduction. Linea is a researcher at the Swedish National Road and Transport Research Institute. Kristina is a researcher at Chalmers Industriteknik.

Tangible success in your work is pleasing to most, Linea and Kristina being no exception. As a food logistician it is not uncommon to see some concrete results from one's endeavours:

Kristina: As a researcher, sometimes you work close to reality and sometimes further from it, but I get more satisfaction when I am closer to it. I have just been to a grocery store looking at surplus food that has been saved there and I know that it's put to good use at a restaurant. This gives me enormous satisfaction.

Linea's research has been fairly diverse, focusing on production planning, circular economy, food and e-commerce. She has also been active within project management, operative work and networking. Kristina's research has largely been within food logistics, circular economy, as well as reduction of food waste and climate impacts from transportation. She currently conducts research on how one can get surplus food from shops to restaurants and also on how consumer education can help inspire people to change behaviours by reducing domestic food waste.

Kristina is currently on an assignment for a network of small-scale food producers in Västra Götaland, a county in western Sweden, including Gothenburg. The project is looking at logistics solutions in getting food from small-scale businesses to restaurants so that they will be able to source from producers in their vicinity to a greater extent.

Linea feels there is much work to do within the logistics areas to make both urban farmers' and small-scale food producers' products more available on the market. In finding the best channels to market one's products, one may occasionally have to think outside the box, such as being part of an organisation allowing individual consumers to buy food directly from local producers, thus shortening the food chain:

Linea: In the digital channels there are lots of exciting ways to find each other. And this should be matched so that the physical flow also becomes efficient.

Kristina: I agree, and it takes a lot of collaboration to make these systems work. It's perhaps a case of producers cooperating. You have to find the right transportation and logistics companies, and also learn to adapt. Previously there have perhaps been large wholesalers facilitating producers' and restaurants' adaptation vis-à-vis each other, but when it comes to the smaller systems, I think it's very important to have frequent dialogue and build efficient systems.

Linea: Yes, now there are so small flows that you may have to compensate for the storehouse with some form of information, keeping each other updated and finding ways to handle the vulnerability within these systems.

What is logistics?

Kristina explains that logistics basically is about the flow of materials, for instance from a small producer to a restaurant or a shop. It can involve transportation solutions, management of stores of goods, information sharing, how much and how often you dispatch:

Kristina: When you look at the small producers today, many of them think logistics is a struggle. Naturally, it's important to have environmentally friendly transportation, but primarily logistics should be the enabler of this small producer to grow their business and market their products through various channels.

Another aspect touching upon logistics, notes Linea, is cash flows. This is also germane to the issue of business models which she and Kristina have worked with as well:

Linea: There are issues such as how to create incentives and what might some major barriers to business opportunities be. This is also something we take into consideration in logistics research. So, logistics is a broad area. We quite often look at fairly great value chains and I think it's important that you have this systems perspective.

In their research, Kristina and Linea alternate between zooming in on smaller parts of the value chain and zooming out to get the broader systems perspective. For example, they are currently studying how various transportation systems might be designed on a national level to enable a circular economy of various flows.

A good example of circularity is the food waste project Kristina is currently engaged in, where three grocery stores in Gothenburg and a food service company are involved. The latter prepare the food in a kitchen in central Gothenburg and use freight bicycles to deliver the meals as breakfast or lunch to customers around the city. After making their deliveries they cycle past the grocery stores, picking up surplus food for the preparation of the next batch of meals:

Kristina: This works very well for them since they have their freight bikes, so one should use the strength of this solution and build on it, but the next actor may not have bicycles but perhaps own a restaurant, so you must look at how they can use the larger systems.

Linea and Kristina agree that the one-size-fits-all mind-set doesn't work in today's market. For instance, it won't be possible to provide one logistics solution that will fit all urban farmers in Sweden. Some should perhaps niche themselves towards restaurants while others might move towards bigger, or perhaps smaller flows. In preparing for the Vinnova application Linea and Kristina talked to a few urban farmers, discovering that some of them are content with the current size of their business and are happy having this as a side-line:

Linea: You have to understand the prerequisites for producers and potential customers and match them.

A burgeoning business

Kristina finds the small-scale food producers she has encountered in her research very open-minded, willing to break with the culture of working in silos. There are around 300–400 of them in the association for locally produced food in Västra Götaland:

The lungs: Researchers

Kristina: With urban farming some do see it as a way to finance a hobby, so there are probably exceptions. But many people want to see more of these companies and for them to expand.

Linea: Absolutely. I don't see a contradiction there. I don't think you have to lose what was unique or special – which you may feel as a small-scale food producer – just because your business is growing.

Kristina and Linea have had extensive discussion around the energy and environmental aspects of food production in terms of traditional agriculture being large-scale with long-distance transportation and considerable efficiency. Would small-scale solutions generally be costlier for the environment because of their lack of efficiency?

Linea: I really don't believe so. And as we have said many a time, there is so much else that is positive about locally produced goods. In a start-up phase you can be somewhat kind and forgiving towards someone who is not using the most efficient means of transportation in order to enable small businesses to survive.

Linea reckons that the large systems that have been up-and-running for so many years have had plenty of time to become more efficient. Small-scale business will also increase its efficiency over time if this sector is allowed to burgeon:

Linea: A report I read says that small-scale food producers is the fastest-growing business in terms of start-ups, so there is a lot happening.

Health and traceability

Amid the not-too-distant scandals of contaminated food, Swedish consumers seem to have become increasingly engaged in knowing what the causes are:

Linea: It was quite some time ago one talked about it in the garment industry, understanding what happens along the way: “*If I buy this, are there child labourers at the other end?*” Or in terms of food: “*How are the animals treated?*” This is becoming increasingly important to us.

Having recently met with restaurant owners, Kristina was struck by the care with which they sourced their products. They try not only to ascertain that the food comes from Sweden but also want to know the name of the Swedish producer and where they are located:

Kristina: With such ambitions, traceability becomes a very important factor. Then you can also tell this story that what you eat comes from here, so it creates a lot of value. But then we have to solve the logistics issue, and we can.

Linea: And I feel the will is there, really everywhere, so this is incredibly positive. We have been in other lines of business where we suggest solutions, but there are companies with their arms crossed who don't want to change. This is not what I experience here, not even with the big convenience stores, there too is will.

Kristina: The issue is hot as chili now.

What Kristina likes about being in food logistics is that it's such a broad area. You cannot merely be a logistician, for food is a product that requires you to know about its quality, traceability and many other aspects, so that you can carefully plan and optimise your logistics flow. A sweater will not rot if it is delayed two days, but food can:

The lungs: Researchers

Linea: It is like patient flows within health care. It adds an extra complication or challenge.

Kristina: I would say, as a logistician working with food, it makes it exciting but challenging to have to relate to so many aspects.

The fruits of one's research

Finding logistics solutions that enable people to eat environmentally smart and locally sourced food gives Kristina the sense of making a tangible difference. Linea also sees concrete results from her research. In her current job at the Swedish National Road and Transport Research Institute she feels she is close to reality:

Linea: We are doing applied research. It is probably a different story if you are doing basic research.

Kristina: We always have companies involved in our projects, responding to clear needs they have. There is someone who can make good use of the findings when the project is concluded. And we also work extensively with disseminating the findings outside the orbit of our project partners.

Although their interaction with URG has been rather limited, through participating in workshops, both Linea and Kristina perceive the project as having many enthusiasts:

Linea: I haven't met many of the project participants, but of those I have met I'd say there is a lot of energy there.

Kristina: We were at one of their workshops and enjoyed it very much.

Linea: Generally, I think it's a challenge in projects that you're starting a little bit from scratch, for there are new project managers and new participants and they are to acquire the knowledge that the previous project had, so there will be strange overlaps.

Kristina: There must be a recipient for the findings of the project.

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Community-based passion

Lasse Fryk • Ulla Gawlik • Helena Hansson

Lasse Fryk is an associate university professor who is conducting research for the Swedish Union of Tenants in the Angered City District suburb of Hammarkullen. Based in the north east of Gothenburg, Ulla Gawlik and her colleagues run Tikitut Community-Based Tourism, an organisation using community-based tourism as a tool for developing a sustainable society. Helena Hansson is a doctoral candidate in design and lecturer at the HDK-Valand – Academy of Art and Design, at the University of Gothenburg. All three have been involved with Urban Rural Gothenburg (URG) through community-based projects.

Looking at some photos one day sent by a friend of his, Lasse said to himself: “*This is Hammarkullen.*” He was entranced by the constantly shifting patterns of the starling murmuration he beheld:

Lasse: When I look at Hammarkullen I see so many exciting patterns. There are people who speak more than 100 languages. They have roots in more than 80 countries. So, I wonder how is it possible that there can be a society with such an openness towards the world, with such constant change, that still manages to remain a local community?

Lasse says URG has been a very important collaborative partner as an external network of resources in relation to Hammarkullen. Himself, he feels very much part of the local context, that is, with people who live and work in Hammarkullen:

Lasse: I think a lot of expectations from people in Hammarkullen have been: “*Why isn’t anything happening after all the meetings we have had with URG?*” I have tried to see where these external resources can latch on to dynamic networks in Hammarkullen.

Lasse has scaled back his work at the University of Gothenburg and now mainly works for the Swedish Union of Tenants where he conducts research in conjunction with URG. His current assignment is to describe whether there is something one might call ‘the Hammarkullen model’ for society-building. Currently, another part of the Angered City District called Gårdsten is in focus as it is seen as a ‘beacon of hope’. People are talking about ‘the Gårdsten model’. In the 1990s, it was a run-down suburb with thousands of empty flats. Now there are people queuing to live there. Crime and unemployment are markedly down:

Lasse: I compare three local communities in the model I am to present within my assignment. These three suburbs are Djursholm, Gårdsten and Hammarkullen. Djursholm is where those who propel the social process, we’re currently experiencing are being bred. When reading research about the area their values really frighten me!

In comparing these three communities Lasse has posited a number of challenges they face: the environment, equality, diversity, migration and the local economy. How do the three communities handle these challenges?

Lasse: What I discovered was that Djursholm only care about their local economy. They say: “*Don’t change the system. We definitely don’t want diversity and equality!*” Their model is about seclusion and preserving their resources. Gårdsten are trying to gentrify their society, and ‘the Hammarkullen model’ addresses all these six challenges from a

perspective of openness and solidarity. When people in Hammarkullen become more in control of and more aware of their advanced model of community building this will attract a lot of attention. And tourism!

Tikitut community-based tourism

Ulla and two others launched Tikitut Community-Based Tourism in 2013. The urban renewal programme Development North-East (DNE) started the same year. Through a course within entrepreneurship arranged by DNE, Ulla and her colleagues came in contact with the initiators of URG who were active in DNE at the time.

Tikitut work with social sustainability, developing locally produced sustainable tourism to create incomes from local resources. Different local experiences have been developed up to now, the most popular are the Tikitut city and nature walks, and Tikitut dinner experiences (where groups cook and dine together with fellow Gothenburgers):

Ulla: We want to complement the image of Gothenburg so that people see it's something more than the city centre. It is still the case that if someone comes to the North-East, East Gothenburg or the archipelago they say: *"Wow, is this Gothenburg? Why don't people come here?"* They can't understand how these parts of the city have become vulnerable areas.

One of URG's sustainability strategists, with plenty of tourism experience, explained to Ulla that URG is an eagle hovering in the sky, providing an overview which can benefit the recipients of URG's support. URG's view is that a competitive attitude might not be so fruitful when you are working with community-based tourism, a view that is aligned with Tikitut's philosophy:

Ulla: We are endeavouring to do away with competitive thinking. If someone opens up for sustainable tourism in our area, we don't see it as competition. It is someone who strengthens this part of the city and then it becomes stronger. And I sense this is an area where URG have grown by seeing that small organisations shouldn't view each other as competitors.

Lasse: Another thing that's important is to understand the URG model.

Ulla: Yes, if you don't understand it, you may feel URG are working against you: *"Why are the people up there doing what they're doing, why are things happening in all these other places but not in our part of the city?"*

Lasse: URG are entering a historical process. This is another project in a long line, and the project participants in URG may hear: *"Oh, here they are again, coming to save us"* from the local population.

Ulla says Tikitut lost contact with URG for a while after East Gothenburg decided not to have a hub [geographical areas where the project is particularly active] in this city district. Contact between Tikitut and the project increased again when URG started to buy dinner experiences from Tikitut. After the dinners the URG project leader understood the bridging purpose of the activity, both through their own experience and also because the international guests recounted this dinner activity to colleagues and friends when they returned home.

For these dinners people gather to cook and eat together. They come to this event as a team, be they a group of friends or colleagues:

The lungs: Researchers

Ulla: The important thing is that people really cook together, thus getting acquainted with those who live in the local community. And you get a different sort of contact with your colleagues or friends through this experience.

The team leaders at the dinners get paid half a day's salary. Tikitut plan to scale up this activity, facilitating an increasing number of people being paid through this activity so they can see that there are many different paths to the job market. For some people who say: "*I will never get a job*" this can be a first step.

Frugal innovation

Helena conducted her PhD research on the banks of Lake Victoria, in Kisumu, Kenya. It started by investigating how a social, environmental and economic threat – the invasive water hyacinth – could be transformed into a livelihood opportunity. The development process came to involve a variety of actors, from Sweden and Kenya, and the design focus was how to build local capabilities through in-depth cooperation. The research led to the creation of a form of 'conversation tool' which facilitated a reflexive practice between researcher and practitioners. With support from the tool it was possible to discuss collaborative complexities faced in practice where different voices could be made heard.

Helena was invited to collaborate with URG in Gothenburg's North-East by the project initiator. Currently, she is working alongside the leaders of Eco Agroforestry Center (EAC) at Linnarhult [a small community in the Angered City District]. EAC is a collaboration between two organisations who both have roots in agroforestry in East Africa. EAC rents a forested area from the municipality to serve as a meeting place and social institution. Mainly run by a group of women with East African heritage and now resident in Gothenburg, EAC is visited by both native Swedes and immigrants.

Helena's role has been to facilitate the development process and she has used design education as a platform to explore new collaborative potentials:

Helena: Because of my fieldwork experience, I understood the women at EAC, who have their cultural roots in East Africa; I could sense what they were talking about. They said to me: "*I can see in your eyes that you understand us.*" I also knew the Swedish system, and I could see that the two voices were not connected.

Through her research around frugal innovation in Kenya, Helena has learnt that collaboration can only be successful if a common language can be developed in-between the different parties, where people still can speak with their different voices, here explained as a 'boundary object'. Central is to find a least common denominator, a 'design thing' which can bring the various actors together, and in the collaboration with EAC this initial thing was food:

Helena: All parties, in this case myself [both as a researcher and as part of URG], the design students and EAC, have to come in with something that can start the conversation. At first, it wasn't obvious what this thing was. But it was shown that women at EAC are super good at cooking, and they had also constructed a stove with a design from Uganda. This became an important anchor point around which conversations started.

One of the key activities for EAC is to create a meeting point where people can grow together. They also see great opportunity to provide outdoor recreation and education activities, particularly to children, which is another interesting boundary object to be explored. Helena recalls a discussion with the women at EAC about the Swedish outdoors:

Helena: Some of the women told me: “*We have great apartments, but we are too much indoors, and we don’t meet and interact with other parties.*” There is a process of re-education that takes place. Many East African immigrants come with the preconception that nature is dangerous, because in Africa it is, there are, for instance, snakes and crocodiles.

In this context, Helena sees EAC as a form of transition zone where children and adults from different parts of the city can meet, learn and discover the local environment together, for example facilitated by the design students’ artistic design explorations and materialisations. EAC are now establishing a platform for growing and learning things together to help the children (and adults) to develop a relationship with the outdoors, and people.

Challenges

For Lasse URG represents coming to Hammarkullen, not with a megaphone, but with hearing aids to better understand what people are saying:

Lasse: They have resources and a visionary mind-set. They come to local communities in a spirit of curiosity and ask: “*What can we do to give Tikitut more wind in their sails?*”

Ulla: Yes.

Lasse: This is URG for me.

Ulla: Though it hasn’t always been so, I think URG have become more and more understanding. They have also been a complement to the civil servants. There needs to be someone who can point out where the municipal silos should assist people, for within the silos one doesn’t think along these lines.

For Tikitut there is a constant challenge of securing funding. The administration that is necessary to run the project cannot be expected to rely on non-paid work. Two years ago, Tikitut cooperated with a Gothenburg housing company for the city walks they arrange in Bergsjön for the purpose of showing tourists and Gothenburgers areas outside of the city centre environment. The housing company’s staff were able to do the walk during working hours:

Ulla: The walk goes through many different areas and while we are strolling a guide is telling us about how Bergsjön has become an example of Gothenburg’s and Sweden’s cultural heritage.

It is clear to Ulla that people who do the walks benefit from learning local history. She feels the civil servants the City of Gothenburg ought to be able to take such a walk, through Bergsjön or another part of the city, during their working hours, however, procurement procedures create a barrier.

Tikitut want to be the platform where other actors can market themselves and develop together with their local community. URG has been important in this networking, especially since their new sustainability strategist with rich experience from the tourism sector entered the project:

Ulla: Up until she joined URG I didn’t feel they had any specific tourism competence. Her sensitivity is important to us. She focuses on how we can develop sustainable tourism. At the start URG placed a big emphasis on sustainable food production, through agroforestry, for example. Now the emphasis has moved to urban farming, but I don’t think the concept is sustainable in the long-run. The market will soon be satiated. You can’t promise that everyone will be able to make a living from urban farming.

Helena sees URG as being very influential in opening a lot of doors and offering support to create new linkages between different organisations and initiatives in Gothenburg's North-East, which has helped the local networks grow. However, what Helena saw as shortcomings was both a lack of dedicated personal time invested from URG, and a lack of dedicated financial means to prototype ideas together in a hands-on way:

Helena: I think that more time and money should have been spent on site, for example through participatory prototyping. This could have supported the establishment of new relations and developed new synergies in a more sustainable way. As it is now, EAC (and the students) had to do all this work by themselves, which is costly and time consuming for a small, recently formed organisation. To form a smaller development group, including a few organisations with access to a prototype budget, which was facilitated and monitored by URG could have, possibly, been a better solution.

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Side-streams, aquaponics and press cakes

E. Gunilla Almered Olsson • Marie Alminger

E. Gunilla Almered Olsson is professor of human ecology at the University of Gothenburg. Marie Alminger is professor of biology and biological engineering at Chalmers University of Technology. Though not truly part of Urban Rural Gothenburg (URG) their research is germane to the URG objectives of green business development and a low-carbon economy.

Gunilla has had plenty of contact with URG and has a fond memory of her first meeting with its initiator.

Gunilla: It was in conjunction with Sweden's national food strategy being presented at a number of meetings with Sweden's then minister for rural affairs. I came across URG via its initiator. We were both excited by the possibilities of working with local and regional food production.

The encounter between Gunilla and URG's initiator led to several meetings arranged by URG in North-East Gothenburg around food production and green business development. Gothenburg's city council had decided to launch a national food strategy for the city:

Gunilla: We met with the Environmental Administration in Gothenburg who had received this political assignment. It turned out there was a lot of uncertainty around what this strategy would entail. Then we had a meeting where you joined us as well, Marie.

Marie: Yes. Since I work with food and health, I was eager to take part in the discussions. We tried to jointly apply for grants.

Gunilla: Yes.

Marie: But unfortunately, none were approved.

The Gothenburg implementation of the national food strategy was temporarily stalled. Gunilla's impression is that the handling of the strategy generally has been very unstructured and that it may have political causes that are hard to grasp for those outside the orbit of politics.

Research interests

A human and plant ecologist, Gunilla, has over the latest years worked with sustainable aspects of food production, specifically with respect to regional development. She also leads a network at Mistra Urban Futures (MUF) [an international research and knowledge centre for sustainable urban development] called Urban Food. The discussions there revolve around reducing global dependence in the food system, striving for more regional food production, not just on city rooftops but on land outside the city:

Gunilla: One of the research coordinators at URG has made a great achievement in terms of contacts with researchers. She has contributed to Urban Food in a very positive way, and she has even made sure there is some funding for the network because she thinks this activity is so important.

There was an EU project where Gunilla led a sub-project on food grown close to cities, in so-called peri-urban areas. After this project was concluded she contacted MUF with the intention to build on and develop the knowledge achieved from the EU project. At her initiative a research programme was formulated in 2018 with the regional authorities and with URG via one of its research coordinators. This application was in response to one of the open calls within sustainability:

Gunilla: We didn't receive any funding, but I have written several scientific articles with the research coordinator for the Research Forum at URG around these issues of food and regional development. We had some thoughts on how food production might be part of integration activities. Particularly in North-East Gothenburg there are many who have experience of food production. And this was part of the planned project.

Marie's research is on food, health and sustainability. She largely focuses on sustainable diets and on how to use raw materials in a better way. An important issue within this field is how to use side-flows, by-products from the food industry, in more efficient ways than simply turning all this into biogas, spreading it on cropland or using it as animal feed. Marie is currently researching side-flows from the production of juice. When juicing berries and fruits there is residue in the form of a press cake:

Marie: This cake constitutes around 30% of the original fruit. It contains very nutritious things such as fibre, bioactive substances and protein. Since it's a moist material it's sensitive, so one often doesn't bother to take care of it, yielding so-called waste. But it isn't waste, it is very useful. And there are many such examples. If you instead tried to use it in food, how might that work out? We are doing a lot of research on this at the moment.

Gunilla: What can you use it for?

Marie: Well, these press residues have been dried and ground to flour and we are engaged in a project where we are introducing this flour into healthy snacks. We use a process called extrusion which is used to make puffed products [for example, rice cakes]. These products have a long shelf life. At the moment, we are mainly testing berries.

The products made from the press residues have a very low sugar and fat content, with plenty of fibre and nutrients. Marie notes that children seem to like these products, which for instance can be used as ingredients in a range of applications, such as bread, cake, yoghurt and ice cream. The anthocyanins in the press cakes can reduce the risk of diabetes and cardiovascular disease as they contain vasodilating properties:

Marie: In some of our research applications, URG's initiator and I also wrote that we might use URG testbeds [sub-projects] and perhaps produce food in new ways. Here it is important for us to be able to measure what is produced, fish and vegetables, and ensure that it is of good quality. We have written a research proposal to carry out studies on aquaponics systems here in Gothenburg.

The term aquaponics refers to any circular system that combines conventional aquaculture [raising aquatic animals such as fish, crayfish or prawns in tanks] with hydroponics [cultivating plants in water] in a symbiotic environment. The objective is that fish feed should come from a by-product in the greenhouse within which the system is enclosed and that this by-product be of good quality as it affects the health of the fish:

Marie: I don't think this system is very well-studied. One tries to recirculate nutrients as much as possible. There is no discharge from the fish farm, which is the case in traditional

fish farming where the discharge can cause eutrophication, but here it is circulated to the plants which receive nourishment. So, it's a fantastic system.

Climate change and economic growth

Gunilla has worked extensively with biodiversity for many years. She feels there has been far too little attention on the environmental issues in societal discourse, but if there is one issue that has caught the public eye it is climate change. Gunilla finds it crucial to question whether economic growth should be the overarching objective for humanity. She recalls that ten years ago you weren't allowed to say this, but today, in the shadow of climate change, it is more accepted:

Gunilla: For many it is self-evident that we should question the objective of economic growth and some groups have only just begun discussing the issue. We need a transition that isn't just about recycling waste and cycling to work, but a serious discussion that affects all the environmental and social dimensions. Perhaps URG might be able to do more here. But it is very political, though I feel it ought not to be.

Another issue that is related to climate change is biodiversity, which has been muted in the public debate:

Gunilla: For example, when one is talking about energy, which is part of the climate issue, people are once again discussing nuclear power. It is totally idiotic, not just because it makes no sense financially, but how can you talk about sustainability when there are 100,000 years of ramifications from it? We finished this discussion 30 years ago, didn't we? So, it's not just that biodiversity has been on the back burner, but our memory seems to be very short, and this affects biodiversity of course and thus all of us.

A tough call

The hardest part of Marie's job is securing funds for research. Gunilla also sees this as the overarching challenge. She notes that for some branches of research there seems to be a fairly steady flow of money, for instance for those who work within industrial issues or management issues of for example fisheries:

Gunilla: The governmental research agencies issue research calls, and the majority of researchers have to compete with each other in the calls for funding which is intended to promote research quality. Occasionally the government has a special push for particular areas of research.

Marie: The government did this in 2018. There was special money available for research connected with sustainability and food. They did it then but not this year. The areas they choose can vary quite a lot.

In 2018 Gunilla applied for funding for a project within sustainability and food. To push for the theme an open seminar was organised by the Swedish Research Council in February. She asked them specifically if they would be interested in regional food systems with a holistic perspective and got the answer: "*Yes, that would be very suitable.*" However, the application was not funded:

The lungs: Researchers

Gunilla: The funded projects were on very specific and more technical dimensions of food production. There is a committee of researchers examining the applications, and I suspect that they were experts on these specific issues – not on sustainable food systems.

Marie: It is important to evaluate one's own area of competence, for if you don't have good knowledge of what is described in the application, you cannot assess its quality. So the process then unfortunately will be more arbitrary. Often you cannot predict the outcome of a research project even if you think it matches the requirements in the call very well.

Part of the problem, says Marie, is that even though a call has been issued, the funding organisation can take a decision to prioritise applications dealing with something totally different, thus suddenly creating new rules that have not been made clear earlier.

Leading the way

Gunilla and Marie believe they have been able to contribute to a sustainable development in various ways:

Marie: I think I help further this development through teaching sustainable diets and sustainable food production, and through our ongoing project on making use of side-flows.

Gunilla: I think I am contributing at the university with my courses and supervision of master's theses on sustainable food production and regional work. And through the Urban Food network and the research projects that have been carried out. But also through those that didn't happen. The very fact that we worked with them and discussed things is important.

Gunilla and Marie are impressed with Gothenburg's endeavour to shift their public meals to more vegetarian, organic and locally produced food. The development in these areas has been fairly rapid. Marie also notes that the municipal administration has put due emphasis on reducing food waste:

Marie: Gothenburg has become a model for Sweden, reducing waste from meals by 50% or more in a very short time frame. This is something the municipal administration should be proud of.

Gunilla: Yes, both Gothenburg and URG, who have been very active in this, should be proud. We recently had a meeting here with local producers and an overarching organisation for locally produced food in the region, and some others. URG were there and contributed very productively, so I think that through individual people and their enormous interest and commitment URG have come to have great significance.

Marie: Yes, without these enthusiasts we wouldn't have made this much progress in Gothenburg.

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A place to grow

Magnus Ljung • Christina Lundström

Magnus Ljung and Christina Lundström work at RådNu [AdviceNow], the National Competence Centre for Advisory Services which supports the development of high-quality advisory services. RådNu sits within the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in Skara, a small town in the outer region of Gothenburg. Magnus has a PhD in agronomy and is principle extension officer and Christina is a project coordinator.

Mistra Urban Futures (MUF) is an international research and knowledge centre for sustainable urban development whose Research Centre is part of Urban Rural Gothenburg (URG). Magnus says the encounter between himself and MUF came about via URG's initiator:

Magnus: He and I were in a meeting discussing possible joint projects with some other actors. He saw connections between RådNu and MUF. And the issues you had worked with were relevant to our discussion, where the food comes from and how one can use soil and agriculture as a resource for learning. That was what you worked with, Christina, while I have been more involved in collaborating with URG in connection with the Angered Farmstead [an arena for education and innovation projects in North-East Gothenburg]. So our focus was somewhat different. What's your recollection of how you became involved?

Christina: I think you told me a meeting with MUF might be fruitful for us since I was interested in the issues you mentioned. So, we met with the coordinators of the URG Research Forum at MUF for a preliminary discussion.

Both Magnus and Christina work with applied research. RådNu, the group they belong to, is a national competence centre whose assignment, in terms of both research and education, is to support the development of high-quality advisory services. They also develop new methods, in particular those that make actors collaborate in ways that stimulate new modes of thinking, change or innovation:

Magnus: It isn't classic communication research in the sense that we try to understand how communication comes about, but rather applied research where we look at how new tools and new methods can make us go from words to deeds, connected to issues that often are rather complex and conflict-ridden.

The group at RådNu all have a natural-science background but their research and education focus is on learning, communication and development. Each of the members has their own orientation within this field of study:

Magnus: My orientation is connected with the collaboration level where we have multiple actors cooperating in a room. Their task is to find joint paths forward. So this involves process-leading aspects. You have a somewhat different focus in your research, Christina, one might say, at least so far?

Christina: Yes, my main focus is digitalisation and decision-making in agriculture, and how this affects the farmer. How should technology function optimally from their perspective, and also from other aspects? But I have previously done research around

pedagogy with respect to cultivation and food production. How can one use food production in primary school pedagogy? So, these are the tracks I'm interested in.

The need for an integrated curriculum

Christina learned that there were preschools in Gothenburg interested in cultivation and considered whether to seek funding for doing a project with them. However, it turned out that the preschool she contacted basically were interested in practical support to get their garden started. This was not what Christina had in mind:

Christina: Initially what they wanted help with was: “*What shall we sow, when and how should we do it? Can someone buy pallet rims for us and fill them with soil?*” My role is rather: How can we work with the children? How can we talk about these things so that we connect them to the goals in the Curriculum for the Preschool? How can you use a preschool garden to connect practice and theory so that children attain a deeper understanding?

The preschool Christina talked to simply weren't at the stage where she could collaborate with them. She talked to one of the heads of preschools in Gothenburg. They agreed to stay in contact about future possibilities for Christina to work with a preschool. A long time elapsed before Christina recently was notified of a possibility to collaborate in a project at the Angered Farmstead:

Christina: The Property Management Administration has employed a gardener who contacted me, via one of URG's project managers, to see whether I and she might do a project based on her three-year assignment at the Angered Farmstead. She is to cultivate for preschools and there are pedagogical facets to her assignment. So, I actually haven't done anything with URG yet. I have just talked to various people.

Magnus: A reason we think this important in a larger context is to understand how one can create learning around complex issues. Our hypothesis is that one in primary school can understand how things are interconnected, in terms of ecological systems, complexity, and our dependence on natural resources. Through this type of context everything becomes much easier to understand, not least if the children become actively engaged.

Christina: There is yet another aspect. If children are worried about climate change or environmental degradation, you bring hope to them and they see that they can influence their environment through cultivating or planting trees. They get a connection with nature through food production that can give them hope. They have told me so in interviews I have done with lower secondary school pupils. I think this is exciting and incredibly important.

Magnus thinks pupils' study visits at farms is all well and good, but one needs to take the pedagogy much further through integrating these activities in the curriculum and see nature as a pedagogical resource, as e.g. the Norwegians do. But this thinking requires very strong engagement from school teachers in moving from words to deeds. It also requires courage from the teachers, Christina notes, as they are often unaccustomed to this form of pedagogy:

Christina: In Norway they work a lot with children with special needs. One has seen that children who care for animals feel a sense of importance. They see that the animals appreciate being fed. Children may produce carrots or potatoes and can offer them to others. They can count the potatoes and understand the concept of weight in relation to what they grow. There are so many things that also make children grow when they've

produced a pound of potatoes. Children tell me: *“I throw away less food now, for I know what a struggle it was to produce those potatoes.”*

Where’s the metalevel?

Magnus and Christina see the physical place where learning occurs as an important element in pedagogy. A place as a basis for learning entails that it isn’t possible to distinguish things too much from each other, but one must try to see the whole picture. This is basically the starting point for Magnus when he works with multiple actors around a place such as the Angered Farmstead:

Magnus: The Angered Farmstead is an area where one wants to generate many different values. The development of this place entails a number of objectives. At the same time, the various administrations work with their different parts in this. Even though they act in the same place, they optimise their own part of the system, which means that we never get a sustainable place development.

When Magnus came to the Angered Farmstead, he saw all the exciting projects there and realised that every single sub-project basically presumed various forms of collaboration with other actors. He asked himself: *“Where is the joint vision and the collaboration between all the various initiatives?”* The metalevel seemed to be missing. Then he got the idea: *“Perhaps we [RådNu] should have a project of our own where we look at how we can interact around place development, where there are many exciting activities occurring simultaneously?”*

Magnus: This is of general interest because I think much of sustainable development in the future will be about place development and sustainable land use. It will be necessary to develop new business models and there will also be policy conflicts. A lot of projects will be financed. The money won’t be given to the actual places where the projects occur. So a large part of the success factor will lie in the ability to handle all the sub-initiatives so that the whole is sustainable.

Magnus wrote an application to the Swedish innovation agency Vinnova in concert with URG around social innovation with regard to the Angered Farmstead. There was no funding in this first attempt, but they are planning to develop this further and apply anew:

Magnus: Our application is based on finding a collaborative level that incorporates many different local initiatives, but where the overall direction of all these initiatives will be beneficial. At the Angered Farmstead this image, the vision of the whole, is owned by two or three people, one might say.

The fact that but a small number of people share an overall vision of the development of a place such as the Angered Farmstead risks reinforcing a project culture, Magnus suspects. Projects may run for two or three years but what happens after their conclusion?

Magnus: With this type of project culture there is no cohesive force pointing out the long-term direction for places where many different actors meet. But the starting point is exactly the same as for schools. There, teachers, pupils and others have to develop knowledge and complexity from a place perspective. It is the same for URG and the area of Gothenburg where they are active. And I think what we are doing at RådNu is to create sustainable place development irrespective of scale.

Perhaps the vision for a place and its development exists at a deeper level in more people than the few that can give an explicit account of it? Magnus recalls a conversation with a participant in projects at the Angered Farmstead:

Magnus: When I read between the lines, I felt he had a vision, an ambition that never quite found an expression in him. But when I pressed him on this, it turned out he had an image in his head of how this entire green area URG is attempting to create could come to fruition. But I have never seen it expressed this way before.

Considering the image described to him, Magnus offered the idea that landscape-architect students, whom he educates, could get an assignment to think about how one might develop the area around the Angered Farmstead from the perspective of accessibility, mobility, learning environments and sufficient variation. The area should be designed so that both families with children, the elderly and people of various nationalities can benefit from the environment, while also including the aspect of biodiversity:

Magnus: If we know what values we want to realise with the landscape the next step is: “*How do we actually realise those values?*” We may need to introduce further competences that aren’t found in the existing actors. And that’s why I introduced the landscape architects as a potential resource. But the foundation for development is that we can express what values we really need to create. I prefer to talk about values rather than objectives.

Setting an example

RådNu have an assignment to look over the entire Swedish knowledge system about beekeeping. Their largest project in this area revolves around developing this system, entailing how knowledge development occurs and how knowledge is disseminated and becomes part of an education structure. The focus of the project is not on studying bees but on how there can be altered behaviour from landowners so that measures that benefit pollinators are taken. This has entailed Magnus doing interviews with beekeepers in URG to see what their needs are in terms of advisory service and developing their activity.

Although Christina hasn’t worked actively in URG yet – her likely collaboration with the gardener at the Angered Farmstead still being at the planning stage – she is pleased to have been in the project’s periphery:

Christina: I am happy that all this is happening, that these thoughts exist in Gothenburg.

Magnus: At a personal level, it has been incredibly rewarding to meet all these people. URG has brought together all this competence in a new way and these encounters have created new thoughts and ideas.

Christina: Absolutely.

Magnus: I wrote a small piece in our own newsletter about the conflict between urban and rural areas, as it often figures in the societal debate. I think that URG has succeeded very well in showing that this is a chimera. The conflict doesn’t exist at all. What I think is so exciting about what happens in URG is that there is an ability to rethink and to innovate.

Christina: This has given me new thoughts in other contexts. This is what they do in Gothenburg. Why can’t we do the same thing in the countryside and in smaller cities?

Magnus: This is exactly what I say. I often refer to what is happening in Gothenburg, just to make others see that it’s possible.



The finale:

PUTTING IT ALL BACK TOGETHER

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Anatomy of a 21st-century project: A critical analysis

Mirek Dymitrow • Shelley Kotze • Karin Ingelhag

Introduction

In 1959, Columbia Pictures released Otto Preminger's seminal film 'Anatomy of a Murder'. Considered "*one of cinema's greatest courtroom dramas*" (Rotten Tomatoes 2019), the success of this widely acclaimed film lies not only in its directorial finesse and brilliant acting, but foremost in its thought-provoking approach to the issue of human nature (Jerome 1973). The film lends gravitas to the human components in the judicial process, by elevating the role of the differing positions on what is right or wrong, and of the varying perspectives on integrity, justice, morality and ethics (Thomas 2006). What determines the anatomy of a murder, thence, is not the aura of 'factual objectivity' that perforates the legal process, but the human factors that create, maintain and manipulate that 'objectivity'. In other words, if we do not dissect the organisational body of a societal project to the level of individual accounts, we will never fully understand how its *anatomy* is held in place as a structurally organised living system.

Likewise, with this book we chose to focus on the human factors to shed light on what a 21st-century project might look like from within. Adopting such a non-essentialist perspective to project-making, we at the same time acknowledge that the notion of human nature is blurred, dynamic, changeable, heterogeneous, and internally riven (Nathan 2015). The human condition, hence, always dictates what ontological position a project adopts regarding its subject matter, execution and end results. In this respect, with this book we commit to an open-ended normativity: normative by reluctantly accepting the bias of the project formulas as we have defined their ability to shape the contemporary world, but open-ended with regard to a constant awareness that all knowledge is constructed, fluid and flawed, and that the insights here presented are only some of many possible interpretations (cf. Dymitrow and Brauer 2018). That said, we do not believe that plurality of opinion is intrinsically useful for creating 'good projects' – we believe it is an overused statement (cf. de Botton 2019) – but plurality of opinion is possibly the only way to unravel how a project operates and what keeps it afloat, including its silent triumphs and hidden pathologies.

Since values and value systems can differ even within very small entities (Nathan 2015), to truly understand the inner workings of a project requires covering all its nooks and crannies. This methodological approach – autoethnography – is represented in the vast empirical section of this book – top to bottom, side to side, the results of which will be discussed in the ensuing nine subsections. Whether it is enlightenment we bring or a poisoned chalice, will be up to you, dear readers, to decide.

On projectification:
Does the end justify the means?

As Fred (2019) observes, public sector organisations are often portrayed as rigid and obstinate. Such a development has spawned different organisational solutions motivated by a desire to break away from earlier habits to promote innovation and change. A typical example of this are temporary project organisations with – what it has entailed – the spread of the *project* as a solution in terms of organisational format. This phenomenon, referred to in scholarly literature as the *projectification* of the public sector has shed surprisingly little light on how its inner processes unfold in practice, not least at the local government level. This insight was also one of the major points of departures behind initiating this book project, in a wish to delve into the experiences of project actors struggling to work their way through a vast and complex project.

In his insightful chapter, Fred (2019) takes a look at how projectification reveals itself in practice and what consequences project logic may incur upon the public sector. The author pays particular attention to local government organisations, not least the employees involved through three interrelated aspects of projectification that help understand the phenomenon itself. Firstly, proliferation of projects implies less ordinary work, and more temporary work. Secondly, pre-existing ordinary administrative structures can be transformed or adapted to project form. Lastly, projectification may spawn a new form of organisational capacity-building, a project logic of sorts where specific values, compartments and demeanours prevail.

In relation to this book's rich empirical material, a number of recurring patterns occur. For one thing, projects create new ways of working, both in the process of working and the legalities of employment. For another, in contrast to Fred's (2019) suggestion, existing administrative and organisation structures are unable to adapt to projectification. Lastly, there is a recognition within the empirical chapters that projectification is a platform for building organisational capacity.

Orebäck and Söderberg (2019) suggest that the City of Gothenburg's method of working through steering documents indicates that the project Urban Rural Gothenburg (URG) has introduced new ways of thinking and practice that may increase the speed at which the city's administration works, and ultimately improve the outcomes that the administration seeks to achieve. The suggestion is that by aligning, or even mainstreaming, strategies, such as sustainable food strategies, through the various steering and committee policy documents, conflicts may be avoided, and a more streamlined and efficient process of working will be produced.

Whilst Orebäck and Söderberg (2019) acknowledge URG spanning across silos, strategies and policies within city-wide organisations as a benefit, Ingelhag and Lindfors (2019) see a potential problem in the way in which team members participate and are employed within the project itself. This suggestion echoes Fred's (2019) observation that projectification creates more temporary work. In this specific context, there are two conflicting, or cumulative, factors that influence how temporary the work becomes. Firstly, as with all projects, they are defined within a timeframe; for URG, this was three years. Secondly, in the context of Swedish labour laws, an employer is unable to temporarily employ someone for more than two years, as after two years of temporary employment the employee will become a permanent employee (cf. Unionen n.d.)

As such, projectification in the Swedish context creates a dilemma for the project owners (employers). The result is a conflict of temporariness. This is because much of the participation in the URG project is offered ‘in-kind’, with staff contributing as part of their activities within their respective administrations or departments (Runsten, Lindau and Albihn 2019). Whilst this approach helps ensure that expertise and knowledge remain within the associated administrations, it also raises the question of how highly the project’s activities are valued within the day-to-day work of these ‘in-kind’ employees (Fermskog, Gustavsson and Berg 2019; Runsten, Lindau and Albihn 2019).

Eriksson and Hedin (2019) raise the issue of the ‘in-between’, that is an unavoidable factor when working with projects: what happens to the ‘in-between’-participants when one project stops and another one takes over? The problem of ‘in-betweenness’ has been present in the URG case study also, in-between its pilot and precursory projects. This phase, Eriksson and Hedin (2019) remark, led to participants feeling disillusioned and lost with the project approach. Furthermore, it begs the question, why continue working in projects if one project simply morphs into another?

The empirical evidence offers an alternative to Fred’s (2019) suggestion that existing administration structures will be able to adapt to projectification and its ways of working. Lexén and Lidström’s (2019) comments suggest that using the format of a project management group and a steering group didn’t work out within this project context. This happened not only because some personalities clashed, but because neither party were fully clear on their respective roles, responsibilities and functions within the project (Forsberg and Isemo 2019; Rydberg and Rundkvist 2019).

Whilst Lexén and Lidström (2019) are critical of the lack of initial understanding within URG, Holmberg (2019) sees these stumbling blocks as a learning process. Furthermore, Holmberg (2019) emphasises that the experimental approach is a key characteristic of the URG project as a whole, and that unless the project’s course is understood, valued and assessed as part of the project’s outcomes, then the project will ultimately die. The assessment of the project as a learning process itself comes with a precursor, that is, that one cannot measure its outcomes based on numbers of jobs created or businesses helped, but rather provide assessment of the learning that has emanated from the project. However, this then questions whom does the project benefit? Is it those individuals, entrepreneurs and small businesses striving for green business development or the administration staff who seek to build their own professional capacity (Carlsson, Magnusson and Nordblom 2019)?

Projects have both pros and cons. Breaking away from the grips of bureaucracy by seeking novelty is one commonly cited positive function of projects. On the other end of the spectrum, the very same reasoning may impose more bureaucracy through greater fragmentation and ‘technicalisation’. Whatever stand we may take on projectification, the project is an organisational function, as Fred (2019) elucidates, we live in a project society and it could be assumed that the project is here to stay.

The key question is then how to ensure that lessons learnt from the project format have been safeguarded to avoid projects falling into the same traps again. However, this in itself can be a challenge. As Runsten, Lindau and Albihn (2019) suggest, it is fine to see the project as a process whilst working within it, but as the project enters its end stage, there is need to provide evidence of its concrete outcomes. This is not only important for reporting to funding authorities, but also to ensure that the project outcomes become transferrable between different organisations, departments, and project contexts. The inability to share overall visions for development projects, Ljung and Lundström (2019) argue, runs the risk of only reinforcing a project culture with no tangible long-term outlooks.

On sustainability:
Dancing on the tip of an iceberg?

Obtaining functional and inclusive societal organisation is not a simple matter of just ‘doing it’ by subscribing to winning formulae, as there are many choices to be made in the process (Dymitrow, Biegańska and Grzelak-Kostulska 2018). Given that conceptual frameworks always guide thoughts, judgements and actions, how we relate to ‘sustainability’ specifically becomes relevant if we aim to achieve a more liveable society. The concept of ‘sustainability’ is itself mobile, slippery and elusive to pin down precisely. In essence, it is a quest set for humanity to attain the long-term continuity of that which is valued in the world by maintaining the best of what is there already, but also by allowing and even promoting changes for the better (Dymitrow and Halfacree 2018). Commonly termed ‘sustainable development’, adopting it entails a “*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*” (cited in Adams 2005: 286).

While enticing and inspiring, sustainability is not that easy to attain. In her informative chapter, Valencia (2019) offers both a historiographical and critical exposition of the sustainability buzz that currently impregnates almost every, officially sanctioned, societal endeavour. Valencia (2019) brings forth reservations regarding the impossibility of reaching the assumed line of development under the current capitalist economic system, but also that the concept of sustainable development could be considered an oxymoron in the context of a planet with finite resources upon which the current economic systems depend. Valencia (2019) also educates us about the importance of occasionally shifting the stress from ‘what is to be sustained’ to ‘what is to be developed’, arguing that development is a notion construed largely by Western societies and their incumbent value systems – sustainable or not. Valencia (2019) also raises the important issue that current sustainable development goals (in view of Agenda 2030) are not designed to be implemented straightforwardly at the local level, which can be seen as both an opportunity (in terms of adaptability to local context) and a curse (in terms of exploitation due to vagueness). This, then, takes us back to the role and competency of local projects in fulfilling sustainable development goals. How much of their scope is realistically attainable and how much could be considered greenwashing¹ towards *other* means?

Echoing Valencia’s (2019) concern around the SDGs, Holmberg (2019) is wary of the goals becoming implicit in the greenwashing of organisations. Whilst Holmberg (2019) suggests that organisations and projects need to be cautious of SDGs becoming merely a ‘tick-box’ exercise for practitioners and marketers, it could be argued that the goals’ appeal lies within their broadness, and therefore their ability, to be integrated into the widest diversity of local settings.

Fermskog, Gustavsson and Berg (2019) provide one example of the way in which URG is working with the SDGs in a local context through the exploration of how public meals can be made more ecologically sustainable. This is done through sourcing traceable local produce, the buying of shares in a local organic farmer’s produce and introducing more vegetarian options to the menus, ultimately shortening food chains, reducing CO₂ emissions and developing local businesses (Carlsson, Magnusson and Nordblom 2019; Fermskog, Gustavsson and Berg 2019; Kjellsdotter Ivert and Liljestrang 2019). At the other end, the City of Gothenburg’s slashing of food waste by more than 50% in just a few years is a further example of how one can work locally when implementing the SDGs (Kotze, Adler and Lundgren 2019).

¹ *Greenwashing* is a form of spin in which green PR or green marketing is deceptively used to promote the perception that an organization’s products, aims or policies are environmentally friendly (Greer and Bruno 1996).

Bick, Torrez and Lerme (2019) concur that the SDGs need to resonate with the local communities; however, the suggestion is that, perhaps, the issues adopted by URG do not do so in the communities in which Bick, Torrez and Lerme are practitioners. This, Torrez (in Bick, Torrez and Lerme 2019) suggests, is because URG has failed to successfully translate their overarching goals and issues into ones that are understandable within the local context. For instance, in Hammarkullen [a suburb in the North-East of Gothenburg] there is a great focus on economic, agricultural and ‘green’ checklists, but no acknowledgement of the need for a social or cultural checklist, which is deemed to be of inordinate significance in the super-diverse context of Gothenburg’s North-East (Bick, Torrez and Lerme 2019).

As Valencia (2019) notes, sustainable development as a concept can be considered an oxymoron, and this is reflected in two overarching aims of URG: to both lower the city’s carbon footprint and to promote green innovation and green business development. Whilst the focus on public meals, as previously alluded to, seems to meet both these overarching aims, Almén Linn, Ćorić and Keim (2019) are critical of the focus on reducing CO₂ emissions. In discussions around nature, culture and sustainability-orientated tourism, the question was raised as to whether it is even possible to measure CO₂ emissions for such businesses, and even if it were, would there be enough financial justification to do so (Almén Linn, Ćorić and Keim 2019)? In contrast, Ingelhag and Lindfors (2019) do not consider sustainable development an oxymoron when approached from the perspective of industrial symbiosis, a process that can both reduce carbon footprints and facilitate economic growth.

If one were to be overtly critical of URG’s focus on a low-carbon economy, one must return to the concept of greenwashing. As Ingelhag and Lindfors (2019) allude to, a move towards a low-carbon economy characterises the project and its collaborators in a different light to its predecessor (Brauer 2019; Ingelhag and Lindfors 2019) This, perhaps, signifies a strategic move away from more controversial projects which previously attracted negative media attention (Brauer 2019). Or, this may be attributed to the media attention that the subject of sustainability and reduction of CO₂ now warrants (Kjellsdotter Ivert and Liljestrand 2019). Ingelhag and Lindfors (2019) suggest this the new direction of the project, towards a low-carbon economy, has helped in the promotion of the project’s sustainable development agenda to individuals beyond the project’s original scope (Melandar 2019), but what purpose does the dissemination to individuals serve? What motivated a shift towards reducing CO₂ emissions, particularly so when project members feel it is unattainable? Is it just a simple case of rebranding or providing the public with what they expect?

We live in times of rapid changes and unpredictability, and great social challenges of today no longer come one by one (United Nations General Assembly 2015). What makes them great is their ever-greater entanglement in one another and across multiple levels. This also means that “[s]ustainable long-term solutions ... will require a rethink to the existing dominant models of containment and charity” (Al-Husban and Adams 2016: 451). This should naturally also pertain to the design of contemporary projects in terms of their explicit appeal to sustainability. Socio-technical solutions to sustainability transitions are not always the way to go as, following O’Brien and Sygna (2013), “*the line between business-as-usual and transformation is easily blurred within this sphere*”. Politics, on the other hand, is both a facilitator of sustainability and a battleground for different conflicts of interest (Forsyth 2003). This means that sustainable development pursued solely through technological and political avenues is likely to be exploited or routinised. What needs to be addressed foremost is the personal sphere, i.e. where the individual and collective beliefs, values and worldviews can be transformed (Torbert et al. 2004). It is within the personal sphere where ‘seeing’ systems and structures in new ways truly takes place, and – importantly – this process cannot be forced (O’Brien and Sygna 2013: 6). Understanding culture as the sphere of intercommunication, in which socially accepted

meanings of value are transmitted by socialisation, can help prevent the creation of closed, potentially destructive and unsustainable systems from evolving (Bauman 1996; Rykiel 2014). In this book, elevating *the individual* within a project to a position of authority has helped unravel at least some of these potential pitfalls.

On transdisciplinary co-production: Plurality or competence?

It is increasingly appreciated how all societies contain ‘wicked problems’ or socio-cultural challenges that are multidimensional, hard to pin-down and consequently extremely challenging to solve. The professional’s job was once seen as solving problems that appeared to be definable, understandable and consensual. Today, the ‘easy’ kind of problems (like building roads, providing clean water or averting hunger) are – at least from a technological perspective – virtually solvable, which means that we are instead “*renewing our preoccupation with consequences for equity*” (Rittel and Webber 1973). Those ‘new problems’, however, are much stubborner due to their very nature. Expectedly, this notion saturates and affects today’s projects, which have become – at least nominally – more participatory, collaborative and democratic in their design.

In their informative chapter, Hemström and Palmer (2019) foster explorations into the complex territory of transdisciplinary co-production, including its motivations, processes of knowledge creation and key parameters to reach results. What works and what doesn’t work? What are the consequences of decisions? How can we use reflexivity for greater gains to democracy (the right to problem formulation), epistemology (plurality of viewpoints) and legitimacy (accountability and relevance)? According to Hemström and Palmer, the core of transdisciplinary co-production lies in “*the inclusion of diverse perspectives and actors to better inform knowledge production and decision-making*”, with the key ingredient being deliberative knowledge integration. But how do these assumptions play out in practice?

Transdisciplinarity, at its core, seeks to be both synoptic and synergistic. It is synoptic in that it seeks to understand the ‘problem’ through the insights of each component part, and it is synergistic in that it also wants to understand the relationship between the parts that produce the whole. Through a preponderance of empirical data, it is evident that traditional organisational structures are adapted to working in a synoptic manner, that is, working in silos and departments, with little overlap between the component parts (Fermiskog, Gustavsson and Berg 2019). URG has attempted to introduce synergy to the research process; however, as Kraff and Jernsand (2019), Dymitrow and Ingelhag (2019b), and Jäderberg, Widegren and Wedel (2019) suggest, synergistic transdisciplinarity within URG has not been as successful as expected, on several fronts.

Kraff and Jernsand (2019) highlight that immense value has been generated by URG through their ability to create networks (see also Almén Linn, Ćorić and Keim 2019; Fryk, Gawlik and Hansson 2019) that allowed them, as researchers, to “*delve into whatever we feel is beneficial to our project*” (Kraff and Jernsand 2019). It could be suggested that this serves to reinforce a hierarchy of decision-making, which is further evidenced by Dymitrow and Ingelhag’s (2019b) comments with regards to URG’s Research Forum. It is suggested that the Research Forum was founded on the assumption that scientific knowledge is intrinsically good. However, Dymitrow and Ingelhag (2019b) argue, this is a contradiction of the point of working in transdisciplinarity manner within a pentahelix structure.

Furthermore, Kraff and Jernsand (2019) highlight the issue that the Research Forum, and URG generally, has been unable to provide any funding to support its associated researchers' activities. This creates a situation where researchers are unwilling to share their projects and ideas out of fear of raising competition for funds. This possession of research ideas and participants creates a barrier to working transdisciplinarily (Kraff and Jernsand 2019). In contrast, insights from several empirical chapters have suggested that URG has been successful in working in a synergistic way, particularly through creating value in new and different types of knowledge. This is evident in Forsberg and Isemo's (2019) remark that the Research Forum has been successful in involving practitioners into the academic arena. It is suggested that, through the attendance at conferences and seminars, practitioners have been able to recognise the worth of their knowledge within academia, which then reinforces the synergistic nature of transdisciplinary research (Duraković 2019; Forsberg and Isemo 2019).

Whilst the Research Forum has been instrumental in providing an environment for actors and stakeholders to come together in a transdisciplinary manner, Duraković (2019) acknowledges that it takes time for both practitioners and researchers to become familiar and comfortable with this working method. The perceived reluctance may be due to transdisciplinary collaboration being time-consuming and not necessarily producing the tangible outputs against which both researchers' and practitioners' careers are measured (Duraković 2019; Dymitrow and Ingelhag 2019a).

Jäderberg, Widegren and Wedel (2019) question how difficult it is to facilitate transdisciplinary research, particularly with regards to aligning engineer-orientated (quantitative) and socially-orientated (qualitative) research efforts. The great diversity of stakeholders within URG is also seen as a potential problem by Lexén and Lidström (2019), who suggest that an immature organisation may not be entirely capable of dealing with the divergent opinions and potential conflicts that exist when working in a transdisciplinary context. Thus, it could be suggested that efforts at synergy become selective within the dominant synoptic structure, meaning that synergistic networks are only offered to those stakeholders who 'fit into' the project's (or project owner's) own assumptions about the project (Nagy 2019).

The introduction of projects from the top-down is associated with the idea of 'social washing', which has been alluded to within several empirical chapters (Bick, Torrez and Lerme 2019; Holmertz 2019; Fryk, Gawlik and Hansson 2019; Kraff and Jernsand 2019), all indicating that there has been a potential under-recognition of needs and opinions of the residents of Gothenburg's North-East when designing and implementing projects. Holmertz (2019) suggests there has been very little involvement of local residents within any decision-making processes about projects, or even acknowledgement of the capabilities or residency status of the citizens being targeted by subsequent projects. This has been particularly evident in an outreach subproject that URG has run at a local street-level organisation with regards to the integration of immigrants in green business innovation. The low levels of engagement in this subproject can be attributed to a lack of relevant understanding of the immigrant participants' needs, requirements or limitations with regards to their residency permit and visa status (and the limitations they impose upon working condition) and cultural constraints.

Regardless of whether we choose to call it co-production, co-creation or co-design, multi-stakeholder, participatory or transdisciplinary collaboration, projects based on those assumptions are becoming the staple of the 21st century. Indeed, multifaceted participation brings forth first-hand stories of people's everyday lives that can assist us more than any other form of representation in understanding projects and project-making from within, including their changeability over time and role as exclusionary devices (Dymitrow and Brauer 2017).

However, while participation is considered a key tenet of the 21st-century project, it faces difficulties relating to people's needs and may fail to engage them. One (if not the main) aspect that is often overlooked is the question of who has the right to define people's needs in the first place. For instance, if policymakers look for problems in 'rural areas', they will find 'rural problems' (cf. Law 2004). This, in turn, impacts the value of participation, because whenever there is a crevice between perceived needs and problem formulation, it gives rise to exclusion from setting the agenda, with experts' values transposed onto the 'world out there' to be lived, performed and embodied (cf. Dymitrow and Brauer 2017). To avert such paradoxes of 'projected participation' we must stay vigilant to tacit top-down approaches (including 'social washing') as counterproductive in the process of letting people define their problems.

Another problem in this dimension is excessive 'inclusionism', one that is often politicized. As Dymitrow and Brauer (2018: 205) observe, social sciences and humanities are currently at the vanguard of a political climate that promotes left-inclined, socially progressive views, including feminism, multiculturalism, civil rights, political correctness and identity politics (cf. Carl 2015; Fein 2001; Haidt 2016; Hoff Sommers 2001; Rothman, Kelly-Woessner and Woessner 2010). This avenue tends to support inexorably inclusive approaches to various concepts and ideas (cf. Bauman 1992), including calls for 'fluid', 'flexible', 'porous', 'permeable', 'negotiable', 'more-than-representational' (and so on) perspectives (cf. Dahlberg 2015). Put differently, we are more and more catechised to abstain from being too sure or overly prescriptive, let alone normative. There is a side-effect though: a bow to social justice may give way to 'wicked solutions' (cf. Dymitrow et al. 2018) in terms of academic rigour and intellectual debate (Collins 2009; Kuntz 2016; Pinker 2003). This brings us to the question: what is the best way to define, understand and resolve societal needs: through plurality or through competence?

On economy and planning: The good ol' scramble for money?

*Money makes the world go around, the world go around, the world go around.
Money makes the world go around; it makes the world go 'round.
A mark, a yen, a buck or a pound, a buck or a pound, a buck or a pound
Is all that makes the world go around.
That clinking, clanking sound can make the world go 'round.*

– Fred Ebb, 1928–2004

Some things never change. From 30 pieces of silver in the Garden of Gethsemane to multimillion-dollar companies like Apple, Amazon and Aramco, the road to acquiring revenue by way of strategic planning has been winding and long. Nevertheless, that familiar social domain called *economy* continues to haunt us in our feeble pursuits of happiness, resources, fame, power and peace.

The close interconnection between economy and planning Hallén (2019) illustrates through two vivid historical accounts, one from London and the other one from urban Sweden. Because of constant societal transformations, decline of human settlements due to depopulation, economic stagnation or autonomy erosion (cf. Aydalot 1987; Clark 1989) is a common process around the world (Dymitrow 2013). Between 1790 and 1840, many English towns lost their urban status due to deteriorating service provision and lack of industry (Hann 2005). In India, numerous settlements were eliminated from the town list in 1961 in the face of competition

with the larger urban centres (Bhattacharya 2006), while deposit depletion in the 1960s contributed to loss of urban status of several Soviet gold-mining settlements (Kaser 1983). Contrarily, human settlements can also form, grow or re-awake due to endogenous and exogenous factors, such as an economic boost from industry, new technologies and infrastructures or demographic oscillations prompted by changes in the quality of life (Brauer and Dymitrow 2014; Fridlund 2011; Krzysztolik et al. 2015, 2016). All in all, the fate of humans is dependent on the character and quality of the projects launched around them and societal projects are, in one way or the other, economically motivated, no matter the content.

In the case of URG, the issue of economic motivation resurfaces throughout several chapters. The overarching assumption is that projects are economically propelled, even if the discourse says otherwise. Furthermore, the economic dimension can be seen within different contexts of project-making. For instance, Kraff and Jernsand (2019), Kjellsdotter Ivert and Liljestrand (2019), and Almered Olsson and Alminger (2019) speak of the ways in which the availability of financial resources, to a greater or lesser extent, directs academic research processes. Sundblad, Ternell and Andersson (2019) suggest that the tendering process in public administration is partly driven by the availability of project money. Whilst Holmertz (2019) speaks of the ways in which practitioners acquire money through non-profit social organisations, Olsson and Forsman (2019) deliberate the impact of economic resources on small-business owners and entrepreneurs.

Duraković (2019), a professional of economics with an interest in sustainability transitions, observes that economics is what underpins and drives our society. As such, the economic mindset is ever-present within the discussion of both projects and transdisciplinary research methodologies. To this end, Duraković (2019) provides one clear example, the discussion of new housing and the impact it has upon the societal and environmental sustainability of the area being developed. The issue of housing provision also echoes through Holmertz's account (2019), particularly in her description of the way the demographics of Gothenburg's North-East has changed. Most notably, this societal shift has resulted in native Swedes moving away from Gothenburg's North-East, the area now being largely populated by immigrant communities. Whilst she acknowledges there have been attempts to reintroduce Swedish natives to the area through student housing schemes, these have proven fruitless. It is suggested that attempts are unsuccessful as they are deployed as short-term projects with a limited time span and with scarce resources.

The process of gaining financial backing is decided upon through, most commonly, a tendering or competitive process, where money is made available to projects that meet the prescribed selection criteria, such as dealing with a specific problem, within a specific geographical area, with a predefined population group, with a specific methodology, or a combination of these. As Kotze (2019) discusses, the social, economic and geographical dimensions of projects are not dependent on each other, and, as such, projects often operate within the same geographical location even if they have different predefined conditions.

As Sundblad, Ternell and Andersson (2019) suggest, the process of procuring financial means through a tendering process is relatively new to their sector of working, i.e. the public administration. Consequently, some practitioners are not well skilled in writing proposals with 'showy text', a factor that is decisive when procurement agencies allocate financial resources. Furthermore, the skill of writing successful proposals (that is, those that receive funding) is lacking amongst small-business owners and entrepreneurs (Olsson and Forsman 2019; Sundblad, Ternell and Andersson 2019). Frustration has been expressed with the design of the project, in that the project funding is tied to specific activities and cannot be distributed beyond that. So, whilst URG has been very proficient in providing support, the fact that they are unable

to assist in securing financial resources can result in the project being described as “*rather toothless*” (Olsson and Forsman 2019).

The ownership of project ideas and control over participants has been discussed by Kraff and Jernsand (2019); this can be explained through the rife competition that exists within the academic funding arena. This competition is echoed by Almered Olsson and Alminger (2019), who offer a discussion as to the difficulties of funding new research projects, as there is a clear requirement to meet the expectations of a funding-board or committee. Within the academic arena the idea of competing for funding is not new (cf. Brauer, Dymitrow and Tribe 2019); however, in public administration and entrepreneurship the concept is less familiar.

Further to the issue of competing for resources, Kraff and Jernsand (2019), and Fryk, Gawlik and Hansson (2019) also highlight the impediment organisational structures impose upon the allocation of financial resources. Organisational structures can be seen to restrict collaboration, which projects actively seek to encourage (particularly EU-funded projects). The main barrier to collaboration is that projects do not provide the means through which collaborators can be compensated for their time within the project (Kraff and Jernsand 2019)². Furthermore, the organisational structures do not allow stakeholders and participants to assert any kind of control of the project funds, thus reinforcing hierarchical structures of power (Fryk, Gawlik and Hansson 2019).

Almered Olsson and Alminger (2019) suggest that the overall objective of economic growth is something that URG has grabbed onto, as seen with its overarching aims of green business development. However, the discussions within the empirical data have called for the development of new business models to better meet the demands of a society transitioning towards environmental, social and cultural sustainability (Almered Olsson and Alminger 2019; Kjellsdotter Ivert and Liljestrands 2019; Melander 2019). Towards this aim, Ingelhart and Lindfors (2019) suggest that public administration should view the business sector as a driver for environmental and social change towards sustainability, a perspective that is not present in the current conventional ways of thinking.

The interaction between planning and economy is visibly around us, while the ability to remember the past when planning for the future is part of human success. The question is how do we know that the economic investment in projects *now* will be seen as worthwhile when looking back in time? Will the concept of ‘*sustainability project*’ in the 22nd century be viewed as a heroic human act against imminent planet destruction in the nick of time, or as yet another quirky business model relegated to the dustbin of history? Is there even some indisputable measure of economic success for human and planetary well-being?

Difficult questions usually have no short answers. But one thing is certain. We humans have this inexorable ability to meddle economic gain in *any* concept, even in the most innocent ones. Greenwashing, astroturfing³ and fossil fuel lobbies are only some of the most disturbing anathemas to sustainable development due to the presence of malicious intent (Cho et al. 2011; Dobin 2009; Emmons 2016). But how about all us do-gooders who truly believe in the future of sustainable economies? Are we too indirect cronies of a system that generates ‘jobs for

² It should be noted, however, that project money acquired from the European Regional Development Fund (as in the case of URG) cannot be used for educational efforts or individual research projects. Nevertheless, collaboration within research and innovation can be supported by funding, for instance, physical investments in testing and demonstration environments, analysis of the relative strengths and weaknesses of research and innovation environments, as well as mapping of international partners and collaboration development.

³ *Astroturfing* is the practice of masking the sponsors of a message to make it appear as though it originates from and is supported by grassroots participants. It is intended to give the statements credibility by withholding information about the source’s financial connection (Lyon and Maxwell 2004).

sustainability' even though their tangible effects cannot be measured simply because they lie so far ahead? Is the 21st-century sustainability project a money catapult for those who are quick to learn the discourse? Only time will tell.

On the spatiality of things: Land or people?

The concept of 'space' is not a given, and it is not neutral. 'Space' is an abstraction with multiple meanings and significations. It also comes with a burden of implications. In other words, ways in which we classify space will have an immense impact on the different paths of development a geographical area will be subjected to, be it 'urban', 'rural', 'suburban', 'peri-urban', 'exurban', 'natural', or any other assumed spatial conception. Clearly, depending on what spatial definition is chosen, the synesthetic⁴ outcome will become diametrically different. In his chapter, Dymitrow (2019) approaches this dilemma from several perspectives: philosophical (what space is), semantic (how space is understood), theoretical (how research explains spatial interdependencies), psychosocial (how we learn to think spatially) and empirical (how assumed mental schemata are reified in materiality).

At the core of Dymitrow's (2019) analysis lies the notion that the problem of spatialising development projects carries the embedded risk of *concept-induced harm*, i.e. indirect harm caused not by actions, but by conceptual presuppositions triggering those actions. An 'urban development project' is not 'just' a project designed especially for urban areas to best further their development. It is foremost an isolated (individualised) set of assumptions turned into a rigid steering document with the power to govern areas of visible and invisible diversity. More worryingly, such a 'one-size-fits-all solution' is taken out from a huge *dispositif* [container] of truncated pools of knowledge (Foucault 1977) on what 'urban' might be, mean and impel, seconded by contradictory empirics of uneven value, few commonalities and questionable whereabouts. Effectively, the state of fidelity and purposefulness such an 'urban development project' represents is questionable, unless we can warrant that its launching was preceded by sufficient degree of thinking.

Now, how much thinking has preceded the development of Urban Rural Gothenburg (URG)? While only those in charge of that phase can exhaustively answer that question, URG, as the name tells, is a highly spatialised project: Gothenburg is a place in/of 'space', while 'urban' and 'rural' are spatialities (socially constructed kinds of space). This brings us to the question why the project's name only consists of spatial designators and no indicators of intent, interest or action?

This could suggest that the spatial designators are imbued with certain, not readily visible, assumptions, and that these assumptions form the undercurrent of the project's scope and plan of action. Indeed, statements about connecting the city and the countryside, the so-called rural-urban interface, resurface in many of the empirical chapters (Bailey, Lindh and Naraine 2019; Bick, Torrez and Lerme 2019; Carlsson, Magnusson and Nordblom 2019; Dymitrow and Ingelhart 2019b; Jäderberg, Widegren and Wedel 2019; Kotze, Adler and Lundgren 2019; Ljung and Lundström 2019; Melander 2019; Sundblad, Ternell and Anderson 2019). There were even, eventually abandoned, attempts at devising an esoteric 'urban-rural method'. But is this rural-urban talk just a learnt mantra reiterated 'on demand' to create a sense of alignment

³ *Synesthesia* is a perceptual phenomenon in which stimulation of one sensory or cognitive pathway leads to automatic, involuntary experiences in a second sensory or cognitive pathway (Harrison and Baron-Cohen 1996).

with the project's promulgated goals, or – worse – to appease the sponsors (cf. Brauer, Dymitrow and Tribe 2019)? Or is there some deeper level of spatial understanding beneath the words?

In our analysis, at least three trains of thought undercut the spatialisation of URG. Firstly, it is argued that the city of Gothenburg encompasses different landscapes: 'urban' (built-up areas) and 'rural' (green areas). Bailey, Lindh and Naraine (2019), for instance, remark on a focus on sustainable food that has driven to the fore a discussion about urban and rural connections, an issue that has been a 'non-issue' in the past. Furthermore, it is suggested that the concepts of rural and urban have been discussed as polar opposites, and URG has been seeking to integrate the two arenas (Bailey, Lindh and Naraine 2019; Bick, Torrez and Lerme 2019; Jäderberg, Widegren and Wedel 2019). However, within Ljung and Lundström's (2019) text it is suggested that URG has been successful in demonstrating that the conflict of urban and rural does not exist at all, a thought that is more in tune with contemporary theoretical perspectives (see Dymitrow 2017 for an overview).

Secondly, it is argued that by introducing 'rural economies' (such as agriculture) into 'urban areas', we are creating new synergies. Dan Melander, one of the initiators of the URG project, suggests that, in its most basic form, URG is "*about building a society bottom-up, through co-creation, involving citizens and businesses, and building our community through cooperation between urban and rural areas*" (Melander 2019). As the empirical chapters have demonstrated, the URG project contains both sides of the urban-rural synergy; those who have sought to bring new businesses to rural areas, most notably through tourism experiences (Almén Linn, Ćorić and Keim 2019; Fryk, Gawlik and Hansson 2019; Kraff and Jernsand 2019) and those who aspired to make their business from agriculture in an urban context (Bailey, Lindh and Naraine 2019; Nagy 2019; Olsson and Forsman 2019; Sundblad, Ternell and Andersson 2019). However, both approaches have been restrained by lack of political will and resourcing (Rydberg and Rundkvist 2019). An example of this is provided within Bailey, Lindh and Naraine's text (2019), proposing that the City of Gothenburg could help provide urban farmers with manure for making soil at no extra cost to the municipality, thus suggesting a possible win-win situation.

Thirdly, taking into account the demographic composition of North-East Gothenburg, mostly immigrant populations from developing countries who have not participated in any form of tertiary education, it is argued that new employment opportunities can be created for them through engagement in those familiar primary economies. As Sundblad, Ternell and Andersson (2019) discuss, a focus on skills development in the food production sector has proved a suitable place of entry for some newly arrived immigrants, as they are, nominally, familiar with the skills required to gain employment in this sector. The preparation of food also provides a 'common ground' or so-called 'boundary object'⁵ (cf. Hansson et al., forthcoming), and is a skill with which many are familiar. The preparation, and subsequent eating, of food together provides a common ground around which conversations can take place, and, as such, aids the process of integration (Fryk, Gawlik and Hansson 2019).

The reasoning that migrants from developing countries are likely to be skilled in the primary sector of the economy contains a ubiquitous syllogistic error, demonstrated by Dymitrow and Brauer (2017) in the context of "rurality", namely the conflation of *spatial delimitation* with *activity delimitation*. When departing from a spatial delimitation, we usually focus on certain material manifestations of rurality (e.g. remoteness, open landscape, or 'nature'), yet the entire

⁵ A *boundary object* is a concept in sociology to describe information used in different ways by different communities. Boundary objects are plastic, interpreted differently across communities but with enough immutable content to maintain integrity" (Star and Griesemer 1989)

variability of activities in the given area becomes rural by extension, normalising its definition through a morphological contingent (what it looks like). When departing from an activity delimitation, on the other hand, ‘rural activities’ are often identified from a preconceived traditionalist understanding of rurality (e.g. farming, hunting, mining, etc.), whereby any area exhibiting those traits is made ‘rural’ by extension, effectively normalising rurality’s definition by the actions of a few. And when *land* gets conflated with *people*, it may give rise to inadvertent consequences, including territorial stigmatisation, resource wasting and disillusionment (Dymitrow and Brauer 2016). No wonder the media frenzy that struck URG in early 2017 went for this particular jugular (cf. Brauer 2019) – this was just too much a low-hanging fruit to be missed: “*Green, locally grown intercultural waste*” (Bred 2017), “*Some kind of exotic circus with immigrants, animals and cultivation plots*” (Verdicchio 2017) or “*Had I wanted to work with animals or farms I would return to Namibia*” (in: Jörnmark 2018: 67). Even now, four years later, the same type of regurgitation continues (cf. e.g. Siwe 2015; 2019).

‘Rural’ and ‘urban’ are concepts under duress (Gilbert 1982; Halfacree 1993; Hoggart 1990; Jones 1995; Newby 1986; Sher 1977). They are also riven with inconsistencies (Biegańska 2019; Brenner 2015; Cloke and Johnston 2005; Dymitrow and Halfacree 2018; Stenbacka 2011). Due to their complexity, chequered history, global disconformity, conceptual overlapping, and an ever-greater subjectivity stemming from that overlapping – they are becoming increasingly difficult to handle in practice while their sanctioning ties up considering resources (Dymitrow 2018). Still, we witness a tendency slanted towards upholding the status quo by piecing together shards of logic to make objectionable concepts stick (cf. Dymitrow 2017a). Ultimately, the incursion of ‘rural/urban’ into the domain of *sustainability projects* affects the quality of its outcomes. The take-home lesson from our URG experience is that *spatialisation* of problems through targeted projects comes at a price. That price is tacit acknowledgement of the importance of the spatial dimension, when no or little such importance is warranted. Many wicked problems – like deprivation, unemployment or discrimination – occur independently of some overarching spatial matrix, hence no wonder they remain unresolved (cf. Dymitrow, Grzelak-Kostulska and Biegańska 2018; Servillo, Atkinson and Hamdouch 2017). As Dymitrow and Brauer (2018: 18) put it: “*Everything is certainly located in ‘space’, but if we keep elevating the role of space by way of ill-devised, self-denounced concepts, we slowly but surely undermine trust*”, in whatever we think we are doing.

On gender and integration: The black sheep of projects?

In her chapter, Kotze (2019) opens up for a debate about gender mainstreaming that has failed to bring out the levels of equality between men and women, of which the concept has promised so much since its launch in Beijing in 1996. By proposing three important critiques on gender mainstreaming, Kotze (2019) offers food for thought about how projects can make best use of the concept in providing gender equality in both their outcome and working processes.

Gender norms, as a phenomenon, are insidious. They have been described as a social boundary that discourages from crossing or mixing assumed roles and viewpoints, or from identifying with three or more forms of expression altogether (cf. Pile 1994). It should be noted that this point of view has since been criticised by some contemporary psychologists, arguing that what comes to define gender is conditioned by both biological and cultural factors (e.g., Baron, Dougherty and Miller 2015; Dicey Jennings et al. 2015; Lubinski and Persson Benbow 2006). Culture takes from biology but blows it up to proportions that are beyond what is relevant from

a functional and survivalist point of view. In some cultures, expressions of sexual dimorphism are more pronounced than in others, for example, in Islamic countries and in Hollywood (although in opposite directions) compared to Scandinavia, where they exist but are more uniformised. This also affects the level and magnitude of *political mainstreaming* with regard to gender. In richer, safer, more educated and more equal countries, the pool of opportunities towards autonomy and self-realisation is bigger, hence lesser reliance on traditional gender roles and gender expressions. It is also easier to adopt more far-reaching mainstreaming doctrines when little is at stake. The problem that arises is that the ease of adopting doctrines conflicts with the degree of empathy towards them. And that brings us to the precarious issue of gender; something many of us would subscribe to idealistically, but not necessarily pursue actively.

Writing about issues of gender within URG has proved to be the most challenging of all. Could this be a reflection of why gender mainstreaming has failed in its goal of achieving gender equality? Or, could it be that Sweden is just so darn good at it anyway that it does not warrant or require any further recognition? After all, Sweden is considered one of the best places in the world to be a woman... (Equal Measures 2019).

As there is no specific mention of gender within the URG project it is hardly surprising that within the empirical chapters there is little mention of projects that focus specifically on women. And why should there be projects aimed specifically at women if there are no projects aimed specifically at men? However, although there is little mention of gender from the leadership of URG, there is some discussion amongst the practitioners (Bick, Torrez and Lerme 2019; Fryk, Gawlik and Hansson 2019; Holmertz 2019; Mc Conell, Ibrahim and Šako 2019). It is further argued that all the mentions of gender relations within the case study are positive, that is, that they prescribe to the rhetoric of gender mainstreaming and are pursuant to the aim of reaching gender equality.

For example, Ibrahim (in Mc Conell, Ibrahim and Šako [2019]) talks about a project aiming to tackle honour-based violence, a crime where the overriding majority of victims are female. This project sought to educate both men and women about the issue, and thus formed a 'ticked box' for gender mainstreaming rhetoric. In one of North-East Gothenburg's suburbs, Hammarkullen, there was a group of women instrumental in saving the community swimming pool complex from closing (Bick, Torrez and Lerme 2019). And Holmertz (2019) comments on how both women and men became involved with the local Caritas centre, with the men openly suggesting that the women in their community also take part in the centre's activities. It could be suggested that her ability to attract both men and women to her volunteer centre is because she is a woman and acted as a matriarch to her '12 disciples', all of whom were male. On the flipside, as Kotze and Dymitrow (2019) discuss, her position of trust authority over a vulnerable community may also be interpreted as maternal, and as such reinforces gender norms.

Now, just to be overtly cynical about the issue of gender mainstreaming, imagine if we were to produce a list of all the times men were included within a URG project? The fact that men were participating in projects was hardly mentioned, except in those cases when their involvement was discussed alongside the involvement of women. Is this because URG mainstreams gender, and thus eliminates the need to mention or target women specifically? Or, does gender mainstreaming water down the issue so much that it is no longer visible?

A similar logic pertains to the issue of immigrant integration in Sweden and other countries that embrace the doctrine of multiculturalism, mobility and open borders. Following the post-2011 'migrant crisis', many European countries have become increasingly multicultural and diverse, often being described as 'super-diverse'. Policy, mandated from the EU and prescribed

at the country level, has focused on *integration*, a contested term that has been hotly debated (Castles, de Haas and Miller 2014).

A focus on integration, however, has resulted in an almost uncountable number of projects being launched at national, regional and local level to assist in the process of integration for immigrants (Ager and Strang 2008). In its crudest sense, governmental policy in Sweden seeks to integrate migrants through the labour market, whilst efforts in the country's regions and municipalities are responsible for ensuring social cohesion through, for example, provision of adequate housing, reducing segregation, improving educational attainment, and ensuring access to health care (Bijl and Verwij 2012; Dymitrow and Halfacree 2018).

However, at the macro, meso and micro level, integration efforts predominately take the form of projects which target a specific population group (the migrants) or a specific geographical area. As Kotze (2019) acknowledges, the determining socio-demographic factors are so intertwined that a needs-based, group-based or area-based approach most often targets the same people in the same places. As such, Kotze (2019) suggests that enacting the concept of mainstreaming within integration processes may prove more successful in achieving equality than gender mainstreaming has proven to be.

Within URG, whilst gender, has shown to be elusive, the concept of integration has been more widely commented upon. Is it perhaps because URG is working within Gothenburg's North-East, an area with a majority immigrant population (Dymitrow and Halafree 2018), or because integration mainstreaming is the new 'trend' within projects (cf. Środa-Murawska, Grzelak-Kostulska and Dąbrowski 2019)?

As would be expected, given Sweden's overarching focus on labour-market integration and URG's goals towards green-business development, most of the discussion around integration came within the context of employment. As noted within Mc Conell, Ibrahim and Šako's text (2019), both entrepreneurship and internships are described as means of achieving labour-market integration. One such project is the 'Future Kitchen', which seeks to develop the culinary skills of newly arrived immigrants whilst learning the basics of the Swedish language. Mc Conell (in: Mc Conell, Ibrahim and Šako 2019) describes how this project both fills a gap in the labour market which was not filled by native Swedes, but also provides newly-arrived immigrants with an income and opportunity of learning Swedish. However, Future Kitchen is a project, so what happens when the project is finished? And aren't we merely upholding stereotypes by incessantly placing immigrants in low-skilled jobs and women in the kitchen?

In a move away from projects, Mc Conell, Ibrahim and Šako's (2019) chapter speaks of business development through entrepreneurship, which is championed by URG as a meaningful part of the integration process. However, Mc Conell, Ibrahim and Šako (2019) as well as wider literature (cf. Hjerm 2004) are cautious of this approach, highlighting that entrepreneurship is seen as the last resort for many migrants who have not been successful in entering the labour-market through other openings. This is reflected in the higher levels of entrepreneurship among migrants than in 'native' Swedish populations (Hjerm 2004).

Vocational education and skills development are being used as a method for integration within the agriculture sector, as discussed within Bick, Torrez and Lerme (2019), and Sundblad, Ternell and Andersson (2019). Whilst there has been success in this approach, that is, that production (and thus income) has increased for some clients within cultivation, a distinct barrier to integration exists as the 'local' farmers are unwilling to communicate and coordinate with their immigrant neighbours (Bick, Torrez and Lerme 2019). Although we can highlight attempts to put a positive spin on integration, describing it as "*...not a problem [and] ... a gigantic possibility*" (Sundblad, Ternell and Andersson 2019), we would question why

projects, such as the Angered Farmstead, seek to address integration if it were not a problem. Then whom is it really trying to attract?

Could it be that integration mainstreaming is already falling into the same murky waters gender mainstreaming has immersed itself in; that in a failure to specifically address a problem (as it is addressed in the mainstream) it becomes lost in a sea of trends and projects? Furthermore, how do you deal with population groups who do not share the aims of an equal society which the axiom of mainstreaming seeks to achieve? As is evident in Bick, Torrez and Lerme's (2019) text, there are some communities who seek seclusion and preservation of their resources, but how do you include diversity when diversity goes against the mainstream?

Lastly, let us return to the concern that Kotze (2019) raised in her theoretical chapter, namely that the mainstreaming of migrant integration could result in the 'integration' theme being diluted in projects in the same vein as gender mainstreaming. What this discussion of empirical material has attempted to show is that Kotze's (2019) critique of gender mainstreaming is reflected in the practices of URG, that there is a lack of acknowledgement of gender-specific programmes and that it is not the 'correct' way of doing things anymore. Put differently, gender is mainstreamed so there is little need to acknowledge it at the project level. However, migrant integration remains a 'hot topic' and is clearly visible within URG. Whilst we would not like to attribute this difference solely to the process of mainstreaming, it certainly is a contributing factor.

On trends:

'Trending now' vs public good?

Trend is the defining characteristic of today's projects. The word itself has several meanings. It can denote a tendency (in chemistry), a trajectory (in marketing), or a technique (in data interpolation), but perhaps the most common rendition of *trend* is that of a fad. Several upmarket periodicals have embraced the concept using namesake titles, as have TV- and radio programmes, record labels, building- and IT companies. *The Trend* was the name of a Marxist-Leninist political movement in the United States. *Trendies* was a cutting-edge teenage subculture amongst the millennials in Europe and USA. Today, even Google maintains a website that analyses the popularity of its top search queries named *Google Trends*.

Semantics notwithstanding, the concept of trend – an inclination in a particular direction – is replete with positive connotations, not indicative of anything nefarious that should be corralled. Looking for new resolve, Środa-Murawska, Grzelak-Kostulska and Dąbrowski (2019) in their daring chapter outline the dominant trends in project-making by paying attention to the problem of mindless and blind replication of projects in different parts of the world. Środa-Murawska, Grzelak-Kostulska and Dąbrowski (2019) divide trends in current project-making into urban, social and bottom-up projects, all of which fit into the scope of URG. Strengthened by the growth of social platforms and spreadability media, "trending now" has become a staple expression on Instagram, YouTube and a host of news outlets, while "going viral" through hashtags, churnalism, content farms, memes and clickbait has solidified a much more dire exploration into the pressures on people to seek popularity by creating and sustaining performative identities (cf. Dymitrow and Brauer 2017; Dymitrow 2014).

Our contemporary world consumed with "*networks, connections, flows and mobilities in constituting space and place*" (Woods 2011: 40) facilitates the dissemination of trends. For instance, as first noted by Krzysztofik (2006), urbanisation in Poland happens not by way of quantitative and qualitative changes, but simply by changing a settlement's legal classification

from ‘rural’ to ‘urban’ because some other village in the vicinity has recently been successful with it (see also Dymitrow 2012: 43). This trend of ‘becoming urban’ through legal manipulation gains traction amongst ambitious Polish villages with every year and is clearly visible on maps through dense clusters of ‘new cities’ – some as small as 300 inhabitants (cf. Dymitrow 2017b). The phenomenon of *cultural diffusion*, first conceptualised by Frobenius (1897) and later developed and popularised by Hägerstrand (1953) and Rogers (1962) as *diffusion of innovations*, dwells on some primordial aspects of human nature: curiosity, utility and mimicry (cf. Perkins [1986] 2013). The very fact that other people do something en masse is in itself an indicator of quality, regardless of whether it is needed, tested or compared. And this is how external denotations of social status such as fashion, luxury items and cutting-edge technology are allowed to flourish. So, are we no more than a large click farm feeding into our innate urge for narcissistic supply (Fenichel 1938) and co-dependency on being en vogue?

Fortunately, ‘trend’ is a concept of both negative and positive connotations, something Środa-Murawska, Grzelak-Kostulska and Dąbrowski (2019) lay out in their oeuvre. Whilst a ‘trend’ can be positive in generating interest in a particular theme, most commonly within social and bottom-up projects, their sprawling nature can lead to the mindless spread of projects. This is particularly evident when funding agencies also jump on the ‘trend’ bandwagon, and only fund ‘trendy’ projects.

One of the most positive trends to be adopted by URG is that of sustainable food and cultural tourism. Fryk, Gawlik and Hansson’s (2019) chapter highlights the assistance that URG has provided with the appointment of a staff member with a specific understanding of food and cultural tourism. The success of the projects that the authors discuss demonstrate how a trend, such as sustainable tourism, can generate financial development, cultural integration and a wider social understanding between the city’s super-diverse population groups.

The trend towards small-scale sustainable food and cultural tourism is interlinked with the trend of urban farming. The aim is to use urban agriculture projects to supply the ‘materials’ to the food and cultural tourism projects, thus generating further local economic benefits and shortening the food chain (and reducing carbon footprints). This is a trend described by Środa-Murawska, Grzelak-Kostulska and Dąbrowski (2019), and a phenomenon nested in the greater discussions about food systems (cf. Haysom et al. 2019).

At the start of the project, URG’s focus was on sustainable food production. This can be seen through the project’s interaction with agroforestry at the Angered Farmsted (Sundblad, Ternell and Andersson 2019) and the Eco Agroforestry Centre (Fryk, Gawlik and Hansson 2019), as well as URG’s direct involvement with urban farmers (Bailey, Lindh and Naraine 2019). However, following the vogue, URG’s focus has later shifted towards greater engagement with urban farmers, a trend which Gawlik (in: Fryk, Gawlik and Hansson 2019) suggests is unsustainable. Although Kjellsdotter Ivert and Liljestränd (2019) describe the trend right now as ‘hot as chilli’, Gawlik (in Fryk, Gawlik and Hansson 2019) fears that the markets for the products of urban farming will soon become saturated as the demand for such produce does not currently exist. Elsewhere, for example within Bailey, Lindh and Naraine (2019), Melander (2019), and Olsson and Forsman (2019), practitioners and farmers suggest that they are unable to meet the demands that exist for their local organic produce. This divergence of views is a demonstration of the challenges that exist when working in trendy projects with transdisciplinary stakeholders.

The trend towards urban agriculture does not only address the shortening of food chains, within its wider food system’s approach; it also seeks to diversify employment opportunities stemming from those traditionally associated with rural or urban contexts. For example, this includes developing new tourism businesses in more sparsely populated locations in an attempt

to diversify tourism experiences beyond the city centre; or increasing opportunities for urban farming. A key focus of URG has been to use the untapped green (disused farmlands) and social capital (unemployed residents) in Gothenburg's North-East. Again, following the trend of urban agriculture, this has been done through creating opportunities for entrepreneurship and skills development within the fields of agriculture and food production.

Whilst some organisational engagements, such as Business Center North-East⁶ and Yesbox⁷, seek to promote labour-market integration of immigrants through entrepreneurship (Mc Conell, Ibrahim and Šako 2019), others take a 'trendier' approach through urban farming programmes. Projects such as the Angered Farmstead want to develop the vocational and Swedish language skills of the North-East's immigrant population through agricultural education programmes (Sundblad, Ternell and Andersson 2019). Others still move down the 'food chain' and seek to integrate newly arrived immigrants by putting them to work within public kitchens (Mc Conell, Ibrahim and Šako 2019).

However, these projects can succumb to the same critique, in that they fail to address the needs of the immigrants residing in Gothenburg's North-East (Holmertz 2019). Drawing on her extensive experience within the districts of the North-East, she is sceptical of projects which hold integration as their aim, given the lack of a needs-based approach; their inability to consider both native Swedes and immigrants in their proposals; as well as the use of stereotypes within the scopes of the projects. These failings have been evident in the controversy surrounding one such project, the Camel Centre, where they have contributed to its ultimate termination (Holmertz 2019; Nagy 2019).

The failings of projects within segregated contexts are most often, and most easily, laid at the door of the immigrants themselves (Kotze, Adler and Lundgren 2019). The culture of trends then allows projects to quickly move onto the next wave of trendy projects with little regard to the part they play within the project's demise.

All human activity reciprocates with a discursively inferred state of mind or *situationism* (Mischel 1968). Situationism implies that changes in human behaviour are influenced by external, situational factors rather than internal, personal traits or motivations (Upton 2009). Accepting that notion implies that, unless we don't want to go rogue, trends are the 'safest' way towards successful acculturation. But how about trends in project-making, is it good or bad that projects are becoming more and more similar? Are we heading towards a homogenisation of society, one that ticks boxes and clocks in on the right buzzwords to stay in the limelight (Kotze and Dymitrow 2019)? And how does originality fit into the picture?

The discussion about originality in this context is important, in that originality is a vague and private concept (Said 1983: 129). In strictly psychological terms, 'originality' has been found to be "*related to independence of judgement, (...) to the preference for complexity in phenomena, to self-assertion and dominance, and finally to the rejection of suppression as a mechanism for the control of impulse*" (Barron 1955: 478). In the context of project-making, however, originality becomes tricky. Going rogue by breaking conventions would most likely be frowned upon, while drawing heavily on others' ideas wouldn't be accepted without extensive referencing. These requirements seem contradictory, and instead support the much-criticised (e.g. Kuhn [1962] (1970); Latour 1987; Law 2004) conception of knowledge-making as an enterprise run in a cumulativist convention: as "*an undisturbed sequence of successes*"

⁵ Business Center North-East is a physical meeting place that offers knowledge and contacts to create the necessary conditions for business development. Business Center North-East is part of the Business Region Gothenburg organisation.

⁶ Yesbox is a collaborative project between a number of actors in guidance, counselling and education aimed at entrepreneurs and innovators who seek support and help at the beginning of their business.

(Rykiel 1988). This ontology, adopted by many 21st-century projects, is socially safe, but inadvertently constrains originality. And that's how trends take over the rest.

Ending their chapter, Środa-Murawska, Grzelak-Kostulska and Dąbrowski (2019) assess future trends, undeveloped paths and unresolved issues that need further attention. Two specific areas of trend development are: a move towards transport investment and the recognition of an ageing population, spurring an outbreak of elderly-centred projects. The authors affirm that the project trend in itself is not under threat. As with all trends, however, change is expected, and this will be driven by technological advancement, particularly with regards to the availability of data. It is expected that the provision and speed of greater access to data will lead to quicker reaction times to problems and a further increase in wider society's involvement with decision-making processes. Furthermore, an increase in participatory decision-making processes may pave the way for a trend towards co-responsibility.

Środa-Murawska, Grzelak-Kostulska and Dąbrowski's (2019) discussion of both advancing technology and globalisation, allows us to consider how projects of the future may be better equipped to address problems, specifically wicked problems. If globalisation means that multiple places, communities and institutions are facing similar problems, and technology will allow us to access context-specific information in a more efficient way, then projects may not only sustain but increase in popularity.

On politics: *"Necessary evil"?*

Since society and politics are created by 'irrational humans', they are intricately enmeshed in one another along semantic watersheds that reflect and shape trains of thought in line with prevailing Zeitgeists (Dymitrow and Brauer 2018: 205). This crucial, yet inextricably sensitive, relation affects, accompanies and impacts projects throughout the world and throughout history. In his distressingly dystopian yet refreshingly straightforward account, Tahvilzadeh (2019) paints an intense collage of politics within place-based development programmes. Moving across various timelines, geographical contexts and ideological framings, Tahvilzadeh (2019) argues that all projects launched by city governments are justified as necessary steps to realise the public interest, with redistribution of resources to marginalised people being officially motivated as a means to empower and revitalise these environments under the guise of 'sustainability'. And while there is consensus over the aims of sustainability, the means to achieve them remains a matter of dispute.

Distraught over the results and progress of the current development in the social sustainability dimension, Tahvilzadeh (2019) seeks to attach this failure to paying too much attention to what sustainability and anti-poverty projects are *officially declared to do*, rather than to what they *actually do*. In an attempt to explain this phenomenon, the author offers five interrelated propositions about the political functions of place-based development projects in socio-economically deprived areas of cities (cf. also Dymitrow and Brauer 2014). According to Tahvilzadeh (2019), such development projects are politically effective because they function as: (1) means of dealing with the democratic deficiencies of urban governance; (2) apparatuses of pacification that neutralise mobilisation amongst the poor; (3) actions that mitigate risks of social upheaval due to fraught exclusion; (4) policies exploited by nationalistic, racist and authoritarian sentiments that other 'the immigrant' as a threat to 'normality'; and (5) mystifying operations that encourage the marginalised to compete against each other by collaborating with the local government. Now, how do these images find reflection in the case of URG?

Although not a key focal point amongst URG's project aims, its initiator, Dan Melander, sees URG as working towards repairing a fragile democracy in Gothenburg. Melander (2019) also points towards the traditional city administration's lack of ability to deal with issues of democracy in line with business development and innovation (see also Ingelhart and Lindfors 2019). Mc Conell, Ibrahim and Šako (2019) stress that democracy should not be taken for granted, even in a constitutional context like Sweden, as democracy is something that should be worked on. This is never more important than in a country dealing with the impacts of migration and the prospects of integration (Sanandaji 2015) Furthermore, in reference to Tahvilzadeh's (2019) first point (dealing with democratic deficiencies within urban governance), Melander (2019) argues that the lack of willingness to change approach from civil servants "*will further increase the segregation between the municipal administration and the population, as well as the segregation both in our cities and between urban and rural areas*".

Olsson and Forsman concur with Tahvilzadeh's (2019) second point, that projects can neutralise mobilisation, in this context, amongst small-scale businesses. This is done by providing support on a grand scale, but the support fails to address the issues within the Swedish Procurement Act, which prevents opening the market to small, local businesses (Carlsson, Magnusson and Nordblom 2019; Fryk, Gawlik and Hansson 2019; Olsson and Forsman 2019).

Holmertz (2019) is also in agreement with Tahvilzadeh's (2019) assertion that projects are politically motivated in their attempt to mitigate the risk of social upheaval due to exclusion. In her autoethnographic account, Holmertz (2019) cites several attempts to address levels of segregation and quality-of-life measures within Gothenburg's North-East; however, she is overtly critical of the projects' lack of tangible results. Therefore, it could be suggested that the aim of such projects is to mitigate the risk of social upheaval (Tahvilzadeh's [2019] third point) through the public administration's overt display of attempts to address key issues within the area. However, this is always set against a backdrop of a political and medial framing of Gothenburg's North-East as a 'dangerous' area (Stromme 2017) Indeed, the area is on the police's 'watch list' (Grefberg 2017), which serves to reinforce wider public expressions of nationalism and segregation along racial grounds. However, it we should also question whether the segregation of communities has solely negative effects.

In their discussion about different communities and neighbourhoods within Gothenburg's North-East, Fryk, Gawlik and Hansson (2019) suggest that not all wish to integrate; rather, competition for resources, particularly project funding, has resulted in communities becoming possessive of their resources, both cultural and environmental. Furthermore, as Kotze and Dymitrow (in progress) have observed, migrants themselves are often viewed as a resource by street-level organisations, as migrant numbers are the determining factor upon which organisations receive their funding. As such, some funding models create an element of competition for migrant participants. In addressing Tahvilzadeh's (2019) fourth point, it could be suggested that such seclusionary actions by immigrant communities could potentially lead to political representations of immigrants as the 'other'.

Throughout the empirical material (and Brauer's [2019] theoretical text), there is the suggestion that the URG project has been used for political means and has been subjected to political attacks both through a lack of understanding and as a means for politicians and parties to serve their own political interests (Holmertz 2019; Nagy 2019; Rydberg and Rundkvist 2019). This has been particularly evident through the media treatment of the Angered Camel Centre project and has resulted in particular individuals feeling ostracised along the way (Nagy 2019). Rydberg and Rundkvist (2019) submit that the political storm cloud that hangs over URG has meant that politicians have become fearful of projects that also seek to include 'problematic'

communities, such as in Gothenburg's North-East (cf. Rittel and Weber's [1973] tenth wicked problem).

We cannot escape the fact that we live in an age of migration and socio-cultural intermixing (Al-Husban and Adams 2016; Castles, de Haas and Miller 2014; Papademetriou 2017). Sweden has become a country widely noted for its policy of relative border openness to immigrants. Although with a population of 10 million, it received 340,000 refugees between 2013 and 2017 (Migrationsverket 2017). Yet, these refugees do not generally dissipate into an abundant, accessible and welcoming society but become embroiled in the challenges posed by the quest for a better life (Dymitrow and Halfacree 2018). Entanglement of refugees to Sweden with the country's challenge to attain socio-economic sustainability is well demonstrated in Gothenburg. As is the norm in Sweden, refugees granted residence permits typically wind up in specific city districts where apartments may still be available, but which may be very challenging from other perspectives, such as possibilities of finding suitable employment and establishing rewarding community relations. This, in turn, often results in the emergence of clusters of far-reaching poverty, poor living conditions, ill health, social unrest and dire future outlooks (Göteborgs stad and SCB 2016).

Unsurprisingly, many local projects directed towards immigrants, by necessity, are place-based. But how helpful are they? Is the migrant problem an insolubly wicked one? Or are we merely playing bingo with catchy phrases and socially redeemable themes while procuring earmarked money to create jobs for a flurry of non-migrant administrators, regardless of how well their job efforts play out in practice to the benefit of the projects' true recipients? In the interface between theory (Sanandaji [N] 2015; Sanandaji [T] 2012; Tahvilzadeh 2019) and autoethnographic accounts portrayed in this book, there is a maelstrom of opinions, and as editors of this anthology, we are equally torn. There is no doubt that the undertaken projects are benevolently motivated, but even the purest of intents may turn into routine, an esoteric jargon and endless meetings where the talk does not meet the walk.

Perhaps the answer to this discrepancy is not that far-fetched, as the current socially-minded ethos clashes with the fundamental tenets of human nature and the associated principle of *rational egoism* (Baier 1990). According to rational egoism, an action is rational if – and only if – it maximizes one's self-interest (Shaver 1998). As Dymitrow and Brauer (2018: 209) outline, various survival strategies (monetary incentives, career building and social networking) (Latour 1987), forms of ego investment (pride, fame and power) (Schaffer 1994) or even dogmatism (conviction, honour and deference) (Stewart 2009) place the self before others. And we are quick to learn the rules of the game – the game called *politics*. However, as Greta Thunberg (2018) alleged at the 2018 COP24 summit, “*Until you start focusing on what needs to be done rather than what is politically possible, there is no hope*”.

On knowledge production:
“*Garbage in, garbage out*”?

Creation of new knowledge takes place everywhere and at any time through a process known as *knowledge production*. While knowledge production may denote any form of new knowledge emerging through social and cultural interaction, the concept is commonly associated with the related activities clustered in a higher-education institution, a research centre or any enterprise professionally creating new knowledge (cf. Latour's [1987] ‘centres

of calculation'⁸). The main characteristic of a centre of calculation, though, is its ability to legitimise knowledge; not because it is better, but simply because it has passed through certain institutional rites. The obvious crux is that formalisation is not necessarily the same as quality, although formalisation very often is interpreted as an indicator of quality. And even if certain aspects of quality are at stake, the formalised academic rites are designed so that the influx of information into the hinterland (accumulated expanses) of academic knowledge (cf. Brauer and Dymitrow 2017) meets minimum levels of filtering, or purification. Now, in instances where rules and regulations are vague, more undesirable material is likely to funnel through; in other words, the grid of the filter becomes overly porous, and our brains will have difficulties determining what is sound/true/valid/desirable/beneficial – and what is not (Dymitrow and Brauer 2018: 211). One such environment is represented by *development projects*, whose design is not necessarily based on scientific facts but on culturally appeasable themes. This in turn is likely to trigger controversy of opinion. What can we do to avoid it?

Brauer (2019) highlights this problematic in his intrepid account of how knowledge production can cause controversy using a concrete example from Gothenburg. More specifically, Brauer (2019) proves his point using five analytical lenses: (1) misuse of criticism; (2) multiplicity of different purposes; (3) ignorance and identity; (4) iatrogenesis (unintended consequences of benevolent actions); and (5) hyper-complexity of wicked problems. Brauer's (2019) interpretation thus partially aligns with Tahvilzadeh's (2019) and Hemström and Palmer's (2019) analyses in this book, with regard to points 4 and 5, respectively. Ultimately, Brauer (2019), concedes that only by acknowledging our own and others' shortcomings in how we perceive reality can there be hope for constructively engaging in problem-solving. Simplification and mischaracterisation are to Brauer (2019) a tenet of reality, which – if not governed well – will continue to stir up conflict and controversy. The author finishes his chapter on an Aurelian note⁹, citing Feyerabend: "*A friend is someone that you allow to disagree with you.*" The question that remains to be answered is what to do when the person disagreeing with you is *not* your friend because the power of values vested in the difference of opinion is stronger than any outlook on consensus. And how does this translate into 21st century project-making?

Knowledge production is (and has been) present both within the URG project and exerted upon by external parties, most notably the media. Knowledge production also stems from the activities within URG's Research Forum. The Research Forum's founder, Peter Rundkvist, argued for its existence as it would provide a test- and demonstration environment (in: Rydberg and Rundkvist 2019) by allowing for research activities to be piloted within 'real-world' settings (cf. Forsberg and Isemo 2019). The Research Forum's ensuing coordinators, Dymitrow and Ingelhag (2019b), echo this sentiment, suggesting that the basis for the Research Forum is to support the day-to-day activities of municipal administrations with knowledge production.

However, there are two key issues with knowledge production within the Research Forum: its inability to provide funding and a lack of understanding of the methodology amongst some participants. Given the economic backing required to support research activities (Kraff and Jernsand 2019), the motivation for transdisciplinary research and involvement in the Research Forum perhaps only exists for those researchers who see value in its process, and who are not

⁸ The notion of 'centre of calculation' was developed by Latour (1987) to denote venues in which "*knowledge production builds upon the accumulation of resources through circulatory movements to other places*" (Jöns 2011: 158). The term is generic to the emergence of 'modern knowledge', with scientific and economic centres of calculation being "*inextricably linked to the rise of European science, capitalism and imperialism*" (Jöns 2011).

⁹ "*Does what's happened keep you from acting with justice, generosity, self-control, sanity, prudence, honesty, humility, straightforwardness, and all other qualities that allow a person's nature to fulfil itself? So, remember this principle when something threatens to cause you pain: the thing itself was no misfortune at all; to endure it and prevail is great good fortune.*" — Marcus Aurelius, [c. AD 175] (1792).

striving for more tangible outcomes such as publications (Duraković 2019). Furthermore, as time is money, and transdisciplinary research considered time-consuming, the availability of time can prove a barrier to knowledge production in this context (Duraković 2019).

Whilst knowledge produced in the Research Forum can be difficult to translate into administrative settings (Duraković 2019; Dymitrow and Ingelhart 2019b; Fermskog, Gustavsson and Berg 2019), knowledge produced through media outlets is another beast entirely. As Brauer (2019) has alluded to, knowledge production through the media, most notably the daily press, is all too easily translated into words that the municipal administration and wider society understand (apparently).

Nagy (2019) presents this argument within his empirical chapter, discussing how the media was able to conflate two different projects by publishing critical articles on his Camel Centre within the same daily publication. This confusion presented a problem for both projects, the Camel Centre and URG's namesake predecessor, the pilot *Stadslandet*, as they both became tarred with the same brush. However, one was able to exert power over the other through administrative structures, and thus the produced knowledge was transferred from one project to another (Rydberg and Rundkvist 2019). It is therefore suggested that whilst knowledge produced by the media may start a smear campaign (Nagy 2019), it is political relations or exertion of power that are to steer the smear in one direction or another.

Another observer, Holmertz (2019), also comments upon the influence that knowledge produced in the media has had upon the public's perception of the districts of North-East Gothenburg, which have, in themselves, become somewhat of a self-fulfilling prophecy. The author resignedly asserts that media representations of Gothenburg's North-East, and its residents, have only served to further increase their seclusion and segregation (cf. also Bick, Torrez and Lerme 2019).

Whilst our analysis of Brauer's (2019) theoretical exposition has so far positioned knowledge production in a somewhat negative light, we would also like to acknowledge that within Ljung and Lundström's (2019) and Olsson and Forsman's (2019) texts there are rays of hope for the mode of knowledge production in the context of URG. Ljung and Lundström's (2019) text suggest that the Angered Farmstead is a good example of knowledge and complexity development between various actors collaborating within one specific 'place'. from a place perspective. Furthermore, URG have moved on to seek collaboration within another project that not only wishes to develop knowledge within beekeeping, but also to understand how knowledge is produced, disseminated and employed within the educational structures (Ljung and Lundström 2019).

Knowledge does not hatch in a vacuum and is always anchored somewhere. That 'somewhere' is fed to us by our concepts, our language and the society that gives us both; in other words, we are all products of conceptual activity that constantly goes on around us (cf. Hassard 1999). According to Haraway (1988), knowledge is specific to a particular context, or situation, and is thence 'situated'. Developed to reveal positionality and, by that, partiality of any one observer, Haraway's concept of 'situated knowledge' stems from the limitations of the human perception. Regardless of context, however, knowledge production is a process of praxis (Dymitrow and Brauer 2017). The implication is that although philosophically contradicting knowledge claims cannot be achieved, in praxis it is perfectly possible (cf. Collins and Evans 2002). In social sciences and humanities, increased focus on modes of knowledge production (a view that 'irrational humans' cannot explain the actions of other 'irrational humans') is less and less aligned with 'explanation' but adopts a more personal stance on various things (cf. Boyer 2015). Haraway (1991), for instance, prompts "*a tradition of thought which emphasises the importance of the subject in terms of both ethical and political accountability*" (Braidotti

2006: 197) through greater calls for reflection. Reflection, in turn, is the best tool we have for dealing with conflicts of interest without resorting to acrimony and aggression.

In an age of short-term projects there is often no or very little time for reflection. The fast pace of projects, greater division of labour, scope creep¹⁰, multiplicity of actors and other modern permutations of project-making give little room empathising with our colleagues, learning to understand their roles, and hopefully making sense of how all this ‘madness’ is meant to work together (cf. Kotze, Adler and Lundgren 2019). Instead, we develop a form of tolerance, trusting that everyone knows what they are doing while hoping for the best project outcomes. Limitless tolerance, however, is dangerous in that it entrains a paradox: if a society is tolerant without limit, their ability to be tolerant will eventually be seized or destroyed by the intolerant (Popper 1945). This, in turn, often leads to controversy (Hassard 1999). Noticing, reacting to, and making the best of diverse knowledge production in project-making is a skill that takes time and devotion to develop. The trick, so it seems, is to constantly reflect on “What am I doing?” and “Why am I doing this?”, and from time to time try to put yourself in your (equally confused) colleagues’ shoes. Knowledge is never ‘right’ or ‘wrong’, it is just knowledge. What makes it feel ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ are the points of reference we attach that knowledge to.

Understanding a project from within

The word *project* (from Latin *proiectum*: *pro-* ‘forward’ and *iacere* ‘to throw’) means basically ‘something thrown forth’. Used originally around year 1600 in the sense of *throwing forth ideas* (hence the successive development: ‘mental plan’ \Rightarrow ‘proposal’ \Rightarrow ‘scheme’), it eventually – in the 1930s – came to denote a “*collaborative, designed and carefully planned undertaking*”, foremost in the context of housing (Barnhart 1988). Today, both meanings of the word *project* remain operative. However, with the advent of projectification, there seems to be a discrepancy between ‘throwing forth ideas’ and actually turning them into collaborative, designed and carefully planned undertakings. More specifically, the first definition is easy, cheap and light on resources, the second – the exact opposite. The discrepancy seems to lie in the quality of ideas expected to be delivered at ever-greater frequencies and quantities, with ever-greater expectations on thematic scope, timeframe and format, and with ever-greater push for cultivating specific discourses entrenched in political and scientific correctness. Some things seem indelible. Acknowledging this development, our book has fostered explorations into new territories of project-making from which we may learn. This, we believe, involves thinking differently, even if such thinking must sometimes both provoke and cauterise dissent, but also to revisit divergent standpoints in order not to dismiss out-of-hand ways towards supposedly common goals (cf. Dymitrow and Halfacree 2018).

Out of efforts to transit to a more sustainable society, sustainability projects have taken centre stage in the Project Kingdom. Project-assisted transformation into sustainability, however, is a complex process that entails “*changes at the personal, cultural, organizational, institutional and systems levels*” and “[i]t is not always clear what exactly needs to be transformed and why, how, in whose interest, and what the consequences will be” (O’Brien and Sygna 2013: 1). And while research on the role of human agency in transformation processes has gained significant attention through literatures on values, worldviews and self-efficacy, research on the role of human agency in transformation processes has remained in the wake of research on systems

¹⁰ *Scope creep* (also called *requirement creep*, or *kitchen sink syndrome*) is the continuous or uncontrolled growth in a project’s scope, at any point after the project begins. This can occur when the scope of a project is not properly defined, documented, or controlled. It is considered harmful (Lewis 2002).

thinking and complexity science (cf. Raskin 2001; Westley et al. 2011; WBGU 2011). The need to strengthen the role of human agency is perhaps best illustrated through Sharma's (2007) model of three spheres of transformation. The *practical sphere* represents both behaviours and technical solutions. The *political sphere* includes the social and ecological systems and structures that create the conditions for transformations in the practical sphere. Lastly, the *personal sphere* includes individual and collective beliefs, values and worldviews that shape the ways that the systems and structures (the political sphere) are viewed, and that influence what types of solutions (in the practical sphere) are considered 'possible'. This book zeroed in on the personal sphere, because "*transformations in the personal sphere are considered to have more powerful consequences than in other spheres*" (O'Brien and Sygna 2013: 6).

While systems-thinking helps understand the components and relationships of a problem, *experience* has always been key to understanding how that problem is kept in place, and possibly how it can be set off. The continuing importance of personal experience in changing the world arises out of "*the tensions and conflicts over what is made of experience in our understanding of the social world*" (Pickering 2008: 6). Similarly, the greatest significance of experience in cultural analysis is "*as an intermediary category coming between ways of being and ways of knowing*" (Pickering 2008: 6). This connects with how lived experience is to be approached methodologically, both from the perspective of individuals and social groups, but also by stressing the centrality of *culture* in making sense and meaning of this experience. In this sense, reflective autoethnography forms an *informal accountability procedure* (cf. O'Brien 2012) within project-making that can help project members scrutinise their roles, positionalities and agencies within the project, while offering self-help and guidance how to create and curate knowledge about and for sustainability. With this book, and its rich theoretical and empirical material, we hope to fillip such an informal accountability procedure.

Coming into the orbit of 21st-century projects is not easy. Being thrown forth, '*pro-...-jected*', into the rat's nest of wicked problems, into the petri dish of job insecurity, and in the crosshairs of competing stakeholder interests, navigating through a sustainability project can be a challenging, morally fastidious experience even for the toughest. Moreover, every glittering project has a political system anchored in its dark edges (cf. Arsovski et al. 2018) in a Machiavellian world of jockeying and positioning for power and success. This stands in brazen defiance to the lightness and obviousness of project descriptions, which we are supposed to charter buoyed by our presumed confidence and wherewithal. Every day, we submit ourselves afresh to the unexplored territory of project-making while rubbing shoulders with an uncertain future, leaving behind a carnage of unresolved questions. And yet, we are expected to act in a systematic, dispassionate fashion. We learn what to say, we learn how to revel in the attention of our supervisors, we learn how to ride high on the coattails of sustainability... But what are we really accomplishing as events come to a head?

When things are whipped up into a sustainability frenzy with a flurry of divergent messages, it is easy to lose track of goal and purpose. For change to happen, we must dare to open a can of worms and find each other in the disenchantment of our broken world. Such is sustainability's discursive power even we must watch our backs not to fall into the pit of thoughtless regurgitation. The battle against unsustainability is a war of attrition: words against deeds – and both are enclosed in *projects*.

On this thought, we end our odyssey into the inner makings of a 21st-century project.

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The finale: Putting it all back together

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**The future of sustainability projects:
Flights of fancy or a threnody to a lost age?**

Karin Ingelhart • Mirek Dymitrow • Shelley Kotze • John Wright

Introduction

Every living organism has an anatomy necessary to sustain life. An organism is nothing but a well-oiled machine with all its gear running like clockwork. Take out one part, and failure occurs, sometimes with grave consequences. Depending on where the failure sits will affect its severity, degree of reparability and speed of recovery.

Every living organism has a life span and a life cycle. Its nascent phase is naïve and vacuous yet full of energy and enthusiasm. With time, the organism develops, gaining maximum efficiency and efficacy in its middle phase. Towards the end of its course, the organism matures, and while it might not be as vivacious as in its beginnings, the level of experiential maturity compensates for the losses in agility.

Every living organism also has a purpose. Purpose is a tricky concept in that it is so deeply affected by the adopted ontology. Is the purpose of the human body to produce offspring and disintegrate (biological ontology), to be a good Samaritan and obtain eternal after-life (Christian ontology) or to generate a fortune by protecting one's trademark no matter what (corporate ontology)? And while purpose and meaning are not interchangeable concepts, there is always some internal logic that propels a living organism.

Just like a living organism, also the project has an anatomy, a life span and a purpose. A project has its given actors, given timeframe and phases, and a given goal. Towards the project's completion, all these factors must intertwine perfectly, otherwise the project's success will be challenged. Uncovering how these intricacies are held in place has been the epistemological foundation of this book. However, rather than relying on formal project descriptions, reports and evaluations, we chose a different way, autoethnography. By exploring the implicit knowledge that emerges during the process of running a complex 21st-century sustainability project, we wanted to better understand what makes it tick, halt or change its course.

Taking cue from the various project actors' personal reflections on their own role within the project has helped illuminate a complex transdisciplinary co-creation process from the perspective of the individual. This journey has been as enlightening and rewarding as it has been broad and variegated. And while many of our insights have been discussed in-depth in this book's analytical chapter (Dymitrow, Kotze and Ingelhart 2019), when conclusions are to be drawn, an epistemological challenge arises. How does one generalise so vast a pool of knowledge without losing specificity of experience? Perhaps you just... don't.

Just like the anatomical components of the human body have their specific functions (and functional limitations), so is the case with *the project*. There will never be a common structural base for everybody, there cannot be, because – to be successful – a project dwells on

heterogeneity: division of labour (expertise), economy of input-output (communication), and plurality of perspective-optics (values). And since expertise is often myopic, communication flawed and values obtuse, generalisation is not to be encouraged. This also means that contribution should be sought for elsewhere.

Affinity, Bravery, Curiosity

Despite a plurality of insights, there is, however, a common ground that emanates from the book in its entirety. And that common ground is related to certain personal virtues that embrace the good side of human nature, the creative and constructive one, the one that makes humanity progress into higher echelons of human potential. Without those virtues, a project may run its course, it may look good on the outside, but not necessarily create value or generate enough change to garner that much-needed sustainability transition. Those virtues, we argue, are necessary for the successful execution of *future* sustainability projects, where complexity, unpredictability and desperation will become a staple component.

So, what are those virtues? We have chosen to focus on three of them. The number '3' has been deeply entrenched in the human culture. Three-way classificatory divisions have long been pursued by philosophers. Many world religions contain triple deities. In music, a triad is considered the most harmonious set of stacked notes. In writing, 'the rule of three' suggests that things that come in threes are inherently more satisfying than other numbers of things. And so, the motto of the French Revolution – *liberté, égalité, fraternité* – is a trichotomy; the very foundation of Christian faith – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – is a trinity; the metaphysical frame of Science – ontology, epistemology, methodology – is a trilogy. The Three Musketeers, the Three Little Pigs, and Chekhov's Three Sisters – *omne trium perfectum*; even the European Union, since the Lisbon Treaty, has been run by a triumvirate.

In the same vein, our selection is tripartite: *affinity, bravery, curiosity*. These underrated yet palpable ABCs of human virtue are, we argue, the spiritus movens of future projects, worthy of aspiration:

Affinity – the art of establishing a project culture that favours relationships is something we all talk about but are not always successful with. Elevating affinity to the level of supremacy in projects will provide us with the much-needed détente when ontologies and opinions diverge to the point of mutual destruction. In such instances, Paul Feyerabend's maxim "*A friend is someone that you allow to disagree with you*" will become the simple advice we all can take to.

Bravery – the will to confront danger, uncertainty or intimidation is a much-underrated aspect of project-making. Acting rightly in the face of opposition, discouragement or scandal is a virtue many of us cherish but few can mobilise when cajoled into silence or gaslit into the zugzwang of risky decisions. Duplicity, lack of personal integrity, or pursuit of secondary values like salary development, office size or trademark immaculacy in the face of pressing planetary crises is one of the most serious threats of our times. Because, in Winston S. Churchill's words, "*Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts*"

Curiosity – the virtue of willingness to learn is what makes us stay on top of things: inquisitive explorative, investigative. It is the driving force behind not only human development but also behind developments in science, planning, and industry, all done in projects. "*The absence of evidence is not the evidence of absence*", Carl Sagan once said. Let this powerful insistence be the much-needed antidote when routine kicks in or when emotions darken the window to a higher ground.

The future of sustainability projects

Thinking far ahead yet remaining in the present..., thinking way past everyday affairs while carrying out everyday chores..., thinking beyond the comfortable and familiar yet handling the insecure... – that’s what characterises *the future of sustainability projects*.

If understanding the world is changing it, then thinking about change in new ways must involve questioning the assumptions underlying formal practices that shape contemporary societal organization. To break away from the grip of idle, unstable and suffocating projects, we need to be prepared to think the impossible, without canonical tables of values. This is particularly important whenever the culture of project-making sees over-formalisation and subsequent desensitisation. Not only can this then contaminate the intended function of projects – to generate societal good, but it may also create an artificial barrier to sustainability transitions.

Culture matters, what goes on in people’s minds, their outlooks and beliefs is the primary source of social progress or regression. One cannot solve a ‘wicked problem’, like sustainability, with the same level of thinking that created them. We argue that while the social problems of today have gone wicked, we still tend to imagine them as if they were tame. Tame approaches to wicked problems, however, are likely to spawn ‘wicked solutions’, that is, purported counteractions that are so conceptually unsuitable for the problem at hand that they can even overwhelm the wickedness of the wicked problem. This makes the problem so much more difficult to resolve.

If we truly want to attain sustainability transitions, then the organisation, the methods and the modes of thinking utilised in projects must differ from the traditional ones. But reaching a breakpoint for behavioural change *must* be rooted in interactions where the participating individuals and organisations have a common understanding of the complex challenges that are entailed in running a sustainability project in the 21st century. Flights of fancy or a threnody to a lost age? Only time will tell.

*If you want a life of purpose by inverting the notion
that everything happens for a reason – redefine it.
Not as some future explanation for terrible tragedy or glorious achievement,
but as validation of the deliberate choices
that lead us to these critical junctures in the first place.*

*Assert authority over chance, fate and destiny,
because everything does happen for a reason.
And that reason is you.*

*To attain success, you must be willing to make the hard choices,
do the unpleasant things, risk your most valuable assets,
and do away with the shackles designed by society to limit us,
above all, the uninvited imposition of lesser people’s moral agendas.*

*Because nothing worthwhile is ever achieved without sacrifice.
And true greatness only comes to those willing to pursue it.
At any cost.*

– Mike Kelley: What/If (2019)



Appendix:

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Glossary

Agenda 2030 – a resolution of the United Nations General Assembly containing a collection of 17 global goals (17 Sustainable Development Goals) adopted by world leaders during the historic 2015 UN Summit. *“This Agenda is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. It also seeks to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom. We recognise that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.”*

Angered – one of Gothenburg’s ten city districts, located in the city’s North-East. Angered has an exciting mix of apartment buildings, residential areas and traditional countryside. A magnificent nature just a stone’s throw from community service, cultural offerings and shopping. Here about 53,000 people originating from hundreds of different countries, give the area an international feel.

Angered Camel Centre – a non-profit association that leased land from the City of Gothenburg in Angered. The centre’s four main business areas were: camel care; tourism and events; production and sales; information, education and research. The Camel Centre ran from 2013 to 2018.

Angered centre (*Angereds Centrum*) – an area in Gothenburg (second-tier division), containing the commercial and infrastructural hub of the Angered district. The area is the main public transport intersection for the district, surrounded by shops, restaurants and main services. Public services include a high school, primary school, library and cultural centre, hospital and police station. The area constitutes one of Urban Rural Gothenburg’s hubs.

Angered Farmstead, the (*Angereds Gård*) – a three-year project funded by the Agricultural Administration of Västra Götaland Regional Council, with a focus on adult education and integration. The farmstead also enables for testing projects such as the model farm within Climate-KIC.

Backa-Brunnsbo – two areas in Gothenburg (second-tier division), in the North Hisingen district. Their total population is circa 16,000 people. Housing is dominated by low and high-rise multi-family apartment buildings. Together they form one of Urban Rural Gothenburg’s hubs.

Bergsjön – a neighbourhood in Gothenburg consisting of East and West Bergsjön (second-tier division). Bergsjön has a total population of 17,500 people. The area was developed during the 1960s to provide housing for a booming workforce in Gothenburg’s inner city and port.

Bergum – an area in Gothenburg (second-tier division), in the city’s North-East. As of 2011 it forms part of the larger Angered district. It is home to approximately 5,000 people, in predominantly detached single-family homes (villas). It forms a URG hub alongside Gunnilse.

Business Center North-East – a physical meeting place that offers knowledge and contacts to create the necessary conditions for business development. Business Center North-East is part of the Business Region Gothenburg organisation.

Business Region Gothenburg (BRG) – a non-profit company working to strengthen and develop trade and industry in 13 municipalities within the wider Gothenburg region. BRG are wholly owned by Gothenburg City Hall, which is part of the City of Gothenburg.

Caritas Angered – a multicultural meeting place where inhabitants of Angered meet, regardless of nationality, religion or sexual orientation. The aim of the centre is to develop voluntary social work and increase visitors’ participation in civic processes and democracy.

Chalmers University of Technology (*Chalmers tekniska högskola*) – a privately owned Swedish university that conducts research and offers education in technology, science, architecture and maritime engineering. It employs over 2,500 staff members and educates over 11,000 students per year.

Chamber of Commerce (of West Sweden) (*Västsvenska Handelskammaren*) – a private, politically neutral organisation working to strengthen the region's business community.

City of Gothenburg (administration) (*Göteborgs Stad*) – an organisation comprised of administrations and companies, employing more than 50,000 people. The municipality is divided into 10 city districts, each being responsible for community services for the people living in the district. These services include municipal pre-schools, compulsory schools, care of the elderly and libraries. For the city itself – see Gothenburg.

Climate-KIC – a knowledge and innovation community (KIC) which works to accelerate the transition to a zero-carbon economy. Supported by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology they identify and support innovation that helps society mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Community supported agriculture (CSA) - CSAs are partnerships of mutual commitment between a farm and a community of supporters that provide a direct link between the production and consumption of food. Supporters usually cover a farm's yearly operating budget by purchasing a share of the season's harvest and, in some cases, they assist with the farm work. In return, the farm provides, to the best of its ability, a healthy supply of seasonal fresh produce.

Coompanion – a Swedish organisation with several offices around Sweden, which supports entrepreneurship where people realise ideas in jointly-owned and jointly-governed activities – cooperatives.

Co-production – an umbrella term that refers to collaborative approaches to knowledge production that draw upon interactive and participatory research methods for societal problem-solving. In other words, co-production is a research approach that creates new knowledge by combining different sources of knowledge to increase the social relevance of the knowledge produced for policy/practice action and for new academic practices.

Development North-East (department) (*Utveckling Nordost*) – a department (2017–2019) within the non-profit company Business Region Gothenburg (BRG), created as a successor to the Development North-East project, running 2011–2015.

Development North-East (project) (*Utveckling Nordost*) – a project running from 2011 to 2015 which sought to be a catalyst for new employment opportunities in Angered and East Gothenburg. The project was an initiative from the City of Gothenburg supported by European Regional Development funding, before becoming part of Business Region Gothenburg.

East Gothenburg (*Östra Göteborg*) – one of Gothenburg's ten districts, which includes the suburb of Bergsjön. Approximately 50,000 residents live in East Gothenburg, 60% of whom identify as having an immigrant background. In the district there is everything from Gamlestaden's industrial-historical settlement to Bergsjön's hilly and beautiful landscape.

Eco-Agroforestry Centre – a project financed by the European Youth Fund for Rural Development, the Agricultural Administration and the local LEADER development. It is a meeting place and social integration centre built on the four pillars: agroforestry, integration, education and impermanence.

Environmental Administration (*Miljöförvaltningen*) – a public office within the City of Gothenburg that ensures laws relating to the environment are followed. They also monitor the state of the environment in Gothenburg and are proactive in communicating their knowledge on environmental issues, seeking to actively change behaviour and consumption patterns to minimise environmental impact.

European Union (EU) – The European Union is a union bound by treaties between 28 European democracies and is the most far-reaching supranational collaboration in the world. The Union was established 1 November 1993, replacing the European Communities.

Foodprint Lab, the - is an organisation that works with real estate developers, cities and communities to design and co-create farms, parkour parks or anything that can bring life again to the area and perhaps, at the same time, bring some edible delicacies to the working place, school or restaurant in the nearby area.

Future Kitchen – a project, which seeks to develop and maintain industry-specific skills of newly arrived immigrants to Sweden. Through internships in public kitchens, alongside language training and personal tutoring, the project seeks to both provide integration into Swedish language and culture for newly arrived immigrants, and a human resource to meet the current and future demands of the public meals service.

Gothenburg (*Göteborg*) – Sweden's second-largest city, fifth largest in the Nordic countries, and capital of the Västra Götaland County. It is situated by Kattegat, on the west coast of Sweden, and has a population of approximately 570,000 in the city centre and about 1 million inhabitants in the metropolitan area. Gothenburg is home to many students, as the city includes the University of Gothenburg and Chalmers University of Technology. Volvo was founded in Gothenburg in 1927; other key companies are SKF and Astra Zeneca. The city hosts the Gothia Cup, the world's largest youth football tournament, alongside some of the largest annual events in Scandinavia. The Gothenburg Film Festival, held in January since 1979, is the leading Scandinavian film festival with over 155,000 visitors each year.

Gothenburg local food strategy – a strategy developed from the City of Gothenburg's work with the Environmental Programme (adopted in 2013). It is both a central part of the URG project, and works to realise the National Future Strategy, which started in 2018.

Gothenburg's North-East (*Nordöstra Göteborg* or simply *Nordost*) – an imagined or non-formal conglomerate of city districts north-east of Gothenburg, namely Angered and North Hisingen (*Norra Hisingen*) and East Gothenburg (*Östra Göteborg*), that share similar characteristics with regards to immigrant population numbers, educational attainment, unemployment, crime and poverty.

Gothenburg-Post (*Göteborgs-Posten*) – Gothenburg's largest newspaper, that reaches six out of ten inhabitants of Gothenburg every day, through digital channels and printed magazines.

Grow Gothenburg – a digital platform where landowners and growers can meet to exchange services, share knowledge and exchange ideas with each other.

Gunnilse – an area in Gothenburg (second-tier division) in the district of Angered located just south of the Lärjeån River. The small town is where 1,500 call home. Together with Bergum it forms one of Urban Rural Gothenburg's hubs.

Hammarkullen – an area in Gothenburg (second-tier division) in the Angered district of north-eastern Gothenburg. In Hammarkullen, major investment is currently being made to provide sustainable living environments for increased well-being and improved health. The area is one of Urban Rural Gothenburg's hubs.

Hjällbo – an area in Gothenburg (second-tier division), incorporated into the Angered district in 1967. During the late 1970s over 2,500 apartments were built in the area. In 2018 almost 90% of its 7,700 residents identified as having an immigrant background.

Hjällbo Volunteer Centre – see Caritas Angered.

Hub – a term used within the URG project to describe a geographical location that shares similar demographic characteristics. URG operates in four hubs in Gothenburg, three in Gothenburg's North-East and one in Hisingen.

In-kind – in economics and finance, in kind refers to goods, services, and transactions not involving money or not measured in monetary terms.

Industrial symbiosis – a way of collaborating where companies in innovative collaborations find opportunities to use waste from one as raw material for others. This also includes by-products or shared utilisation of equipment or resources. It promotes economic growth, whilst simultaneously generating environmental benefits.

LAB 190 – a long-term collaboration platform for creating a model area for sustainable development. The focus is on green industries, sustainable tourism and infrastructure to connect the landscape along road 190 between Hjällbo and Nossebro.

Law of Jante (*Jantelagen*) – sociological term commonly used in the Nordic countries as a term to denote a condescending attitude towards individuality and personal success. The term refers to a mentality that denigrates individual achievement and places all emphasis on the collective.

LEADER (*Liaison entre actions de développement de l'économie rurale*) – a European Union initiative set out to support a local development method used to engage local actors in the design and delivery of strategies, decision-making and resource allocation for the development of rural areas, with the overall aim of job creation.

Lilla jordbruket (*lit. 'The Small Farm'*) – small-scale organic vegetable farm with farm shop, situated in Bergum, Gothenburg.

Local economic analysis (LEA) – a comprehensive investigation describing what the local population can do to create jobs and sustainable local growth, amongst other things, in their own area where they work and/or live.

Malmö – Sweden's third largest urban area and the sixth largest in the Nordic countries with its 316,588 inhabitants.

Market garden – a small commercial plot of land where fruits, vegetables and flowers are grown and sold to the public. Unlike large-scale farms, market gardens generally have a wider range of seasonal crops and are less industrially intensive.

Mistra (*Stiftelsen för miljöstrategisk forskning*) – the Swedish Foundation for Strategic Environmental Research, investing around 200 million SEK (circa 19 million euro) per year in various research initiatives. One of its current projects is Mistra Urban Futures.

Mistra Urban Futures (MUF) – an international research and knowledge centre for sustainable urban development. The centre believes that the co-production of knowledge is a winning concept for achieving a sustainable urban future and creating accessible, green and fair cities. Mistra Urban Futures is integration within the structures of Chalmers University of Technology and the University of Gothenburg.

Monoculture – the cultivation of a single crop, plant or livestock species, variety or breed in a field or farming system at a time.

National food strategy (*nationella livsmedelsstrategin*) – concrete measures put forward within a governmental action plan in order to meet the objectives of Agenda 2030. The

strategy is a foundation to encourage change within the entire food chain, including with as many stakeholders as possible.

Nolhaga Bee Farm (*Nolhaga bigård*) – a beekeeping company, situated north of Gothenburg in the Kungälv city district, which sells honey, beebread and beeswax.

Non-governmental organisation (NGO) – an organisation that operates independently of any government, typically with the purpose of addressing a social or political issue.

North-East (*Nordost*) – see Gothenburg’s North-East.

North Hisingen (*Norra Hisingen*) – a district administration which is home to about 51,000 inhabitants. Here you will find a varied housing offering of detached houses, rental and condominiums, urban environment and traditional countryside. It is close to several nature and recreation areas, while there are good connections to the centre of Gothenburg from the larger residential areas.

Pentahelix – a simple discussion tool to map interests and explore ways of keeping a project balanced. The model is very useful for managing actor-based complexity, between the business, capital, knowledge, society and administrative sectors.

Peri-urban – a general definition of a kind of space exhibiting traits conventionally associated with both urban and rural areas.

Project group (within URG) – a congregation of project members within Urban Rural Gothenburg (except the project board), consisting of EU-funded employees. Their function is to reinforce skills that are relevant to both the individuals and the group as a whole, for example, breaking up and delegating complex tasks, planning and managing subprojects and the giving and receiving of feedback on performance.

Property Management Administration (*Fastighetskontoret*) – part of the administration of the City of Gothenburg, which is responsible for land usage, land management, housing and accessibility. The City of Gothenburg is the municipality’s largest landowner, owning about 55% of the municipality’s total area. This includes areas, which have been planned in detail, such as streets and parks, the city’s land reserve, as well as new areas for development of accommodation.

Public Partner – a Swedish consultancy firm assigned to evaluate the project, Urban Rural Gothenburg, in its entirety.

RådNu (*AdviceNow*) – a centre for expertise and counselling based at the Swedish Agricultural University in Skara. RådNu builds a national collaboration platform and develops a new working model for how rural research needs to be captured, processed and turned into concrete research and development projects, if needed. Their goal is to be a partner for research and skills development in counselling within the rural and agricultural sectors.

Regenerative agriculture – a system of farming principles and practices that increases biodiversity, enriches soils, improves watersheds and enhances ecosystem services. Regenerative Agriculture aims to capture carbon in soil and aboveground biomass, reversing current global trends of atmospheric accumulation. At the same time, it offers increased yields, resilience to climate instability, and higher health and vitality for farming communities. (<http://www.regenerativeagriculturedefinition.com/>)

Research Forum – a transdisciplinary model of collaboration between academics and practitioners. The ‘Urban Rural Gothenburg Research Forum’ constitutes MISTRA Urban Futures’ contribution to the project ‘Urban Rural Gothenburg’, forming its academic component within the pentahelix methodological model.

Stadslandet (EU project) – see: Urban Rural Gothenburg (URG).

Stadslandet (pilot project) – a pilot project (2013–2017), concerned predominantly with urban farming, launched during the final phase of the larger EU-sponsored project Development North-East (2011–2014). The pilot project was the predecessor to the EU-project Urban Rural Gothenburg (URG), in Swedish also *Stadslandet* (2017–2019).

Steering group – an advisory body within a project made up of senior stakeholders or experts who provide guidance on many different issues that could face the project. A steering group is part of Urban Rural Gothenburg’s organisational structure.

Sustainable development goals (SDGs) – a collection of 17 global goals for sustainability set by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 for the year 2030.

Sustainability strategist (*hållbarhetsstrateg*) – within Urban Rural Gothenburg, an advisor who is supposed to execute strategic working within sustainable business development.

Sustainability transition – a concept signifying a radical transformation towards a sustainable society as a response to a number of persistent problems confronting modern societies.

Sweden (*Sverige*) – a Scandinavian Nordic country in Northern Europe with an area of 450,295 km² (173,860 mi²). It borders Norway and Finland, and is connected to Denmark by a bridge-tunnel. The capital city is Stockholm (965,000), and the two other largest cities are Gothenburg (570,000) and Malmö (340,000). Sweden has a population of 10.3 million, of which 2.5 million have a foreign background. It has a low population density of 22 inhabitants per km² (57/mi²) and the highest urban concentration is in the central and southern half of the country. Sweden is a constitutional monarchy and a parliamentary democracy. Sweden maintains a Nordic social welfare system that provides universal health care and tertiary education for its citizens. It has the world’s eleventh-highest per capita income and ranks very highly in quality of life, health, education, protection of civil liberties, economic competitiveness, equality, prosperity and human development. Sweden joined the European Union on 1 January 1995, but declined NATO membership, as well as Eurozone membership following a referendum. It is also a member of the United Nations, the Nordic Council, the Council of Europe, the World Trade Organization and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (SAERG) (*Tillväxtverket*) – a government agency under the Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation that focuses on fostering sustainable growth and competitiveness in all parts of Sweden.

Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) (*Styrelsen för internationellt utvecklingssamarbete*) – A government agency of the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs responsible for organisation of the bulk of Sweden’s official development assistance to developing countries.

Swedish Procurement Act (*lagen om offentlig upphandling*) – in Swedish legislation, a law that applies to procurements conducted by contracting authorities. Procurement covers measures taken in order to procure supplies, services or works through contract award.

Swedish Union of Tenants (SUT) (*Hyresgästföreningen*) – a multi-level union of members working towards ensuring everyone has the right to good housing at affordable cost.

Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) (*Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet*) – a Swedish university in Uppsala, Alnarp (near Malmö) and Umeå that specifically seeks to develop the understanding and sustainable use and management of biological natural resources.

Testbed – a physical or virtual environment where companies, academia, public organizations and other stakeholders can collaborate in developing, testing and introducing new products, services, processes or organisational solutions in a closed and controlled setting.

Traffic and Public Transport Authority (TPTA) (*Trafikkontoret*) – the municipal administration that offers customers sustainable mobility options.

Tikitut Community-Based Tourism – an organisation that offers accommodation and experiences for private individuals, organisations and companies. It offers a global meeting place where interaction occurs between those who live in the city and those visiting. They are based in Gothenburg's North-East.

Think tank – a group of experts brought together to develop ideas on a particular subject and to make suggestions for action.

Transdisciplinary collaboration – a type of collaboration that refers to inquiry that cuts across disciplines, integrating and synthesizing content, theory and methodology from any discipline area, which will shed light on the research questions. The paradigm involves non-academic participants as equal participants in the process to reach a common goal — usually a solution to a problem of society at large.

University of Gothenburg (*Göteborgs Universitet*) – a Swedish state university in Gothenburg that was founded in 1891. It has eight faculties, 47,500 students, of which 26,000 are full-time students, and 6,400 employees.

Urban farming – a trend that can be defined as the growing of plants and the raising of animals within and around cities. The distinguishing feature of urban farming is that it is integrated into the urban economic and ecological system. Urban farming includes the use of urban residents as labourers, use of typical urban resources, direct links with urban consumers, direct impacts on urban ecology, being part of the urban food system, competing for land with other urban functions, being influenced by urban policies and plans, etc.

Urban Rural Gothenburg (URG) (*Stadslandet*) – a three-year project aiming to create conditions for green business development and innovation through the utilisation of unused skills, initiatives and natural resources between the city (urban) and country (rural), for the sustainable development of local communities in northern Gothenburg and a low-carbon society. The project is co-financed by the City of Gothenburg (through Business Region Gothenburg) and the European Regional Development Fund.

URG (*Urban Rural Gothenburg*) – see Urban Rural Gothenburg (URG)

Västra Götaland (*Västra Götalands län*) – a county on the western coast of Sweden, the country's second largest in terms of population (1,616,000). It is subdivided into 49 municipalities. The formal capital and seat of the governor of Västra Götaland County is Gothenburg while the political capital and seat of the Västra Götaland Regional Council is Vänersborg. The county formed on 1 January 1998, following a merger of Älvsborg County, Gothenburg and Bohus County and Skaraborg County.

Västra Götaland Regional Council (*Västra Götalandsregionen*; VGR) – the governmental administration mandated with ensuring that all residents in the county of Västra Götaland have access to good healthcare, as well as working with culture, public transport, growth and sustainable development in the region. The capital is in the city of Vänersborg.

Västra Götaland County Administrative Board (*Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland*) – one of Sweden's 21 government agencies, led by a governor. The seat is in Gothenburg.

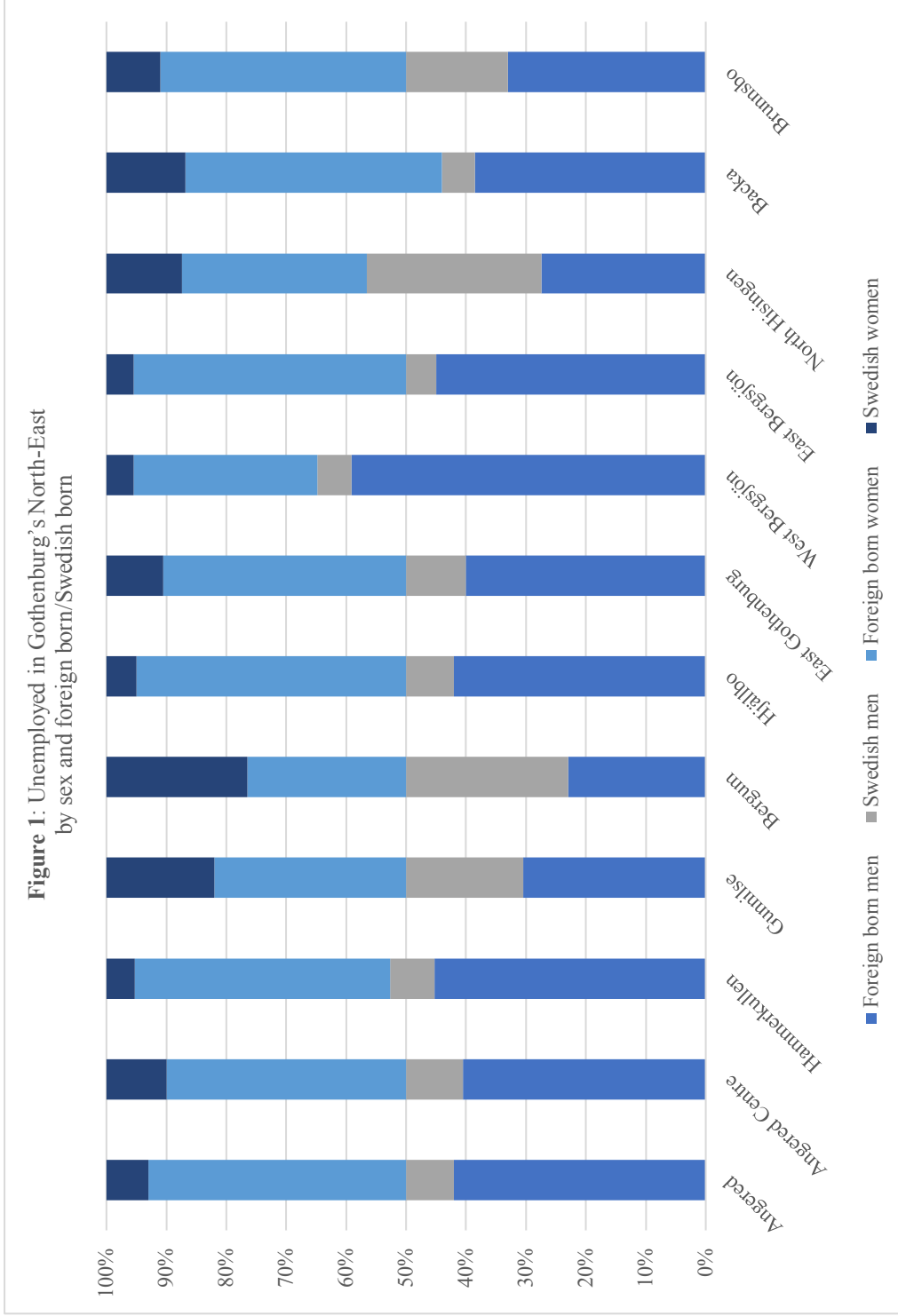
Vinnova – a Swedish innovation agency. Vinnova finances research and innovation projects, and provides support in the form of networks, meetings and analyses.

Yesbox – a collaborative project between a number of actors in guidance, counselling and education aimed at entrepreneurs and innovators who seek support and help at the beginning of their business.

Area	Total population	Country of birth other than Sweden	Having one or more foreign-born parents	Average annual income (SEK)	Unemployment levels	Highest level of education - compulsory schooling to 18	Highest level of education - three years post-compulsory
		(% of total district population)	(% of total district population)		(% of total district population)	(% of total district population)	(% of total district population)
Gothenburg City (Göteborg Stad)	571,868	26.3%	36.1%	346,000/268,800		10.5%	36.0%
Angered District	53,758	52.7%	75.4%	249,700/187,000	11.3%	24.5%	15.9%
Angered Centre (<i>Angered centrum</i>)	3,985	50.3%	76.0%	258,900/216,700	7.9%	21.4%	18.6%
Hammarkullen	8,271	58.9%	85.2%	208,100/156,400	14.6%	32.7%	13.8%
Gunnise	1,568	24.8%	34.4%	365,300/288,400	4.2%	11.0%	26.3%
Bergum	5,061	16.3%	24.3%	378,900/302,000	2.6%	10.5%	25.1%
Hjällbo	7,731	59.2%	89.7%	217,900/160,700	12.8%	30.2%	14.3%
East Gothenburg (Östra Göteborg)	50,621	43.8%	59.5%	257,000/203,100	9.5%	18.3%	24.8%
West Bergsjön (<i>Västra Bergsjön</i>)	8,048	54.6%	73.3%	228,200/171,800	11.6%	23.6%	18.2%
East Bergsjön (<i>Östra Bergsjön</i>)	9,492	63.3%	87.2%	202,600/142,700	14.9%	30.2%	13.8%
North Hisingen (Norra Hisingen)	51,343	28.9%	40.5%	333,300/256,400	5.3%	11.8%	25.4%
Brunnsbo	7,600	38.3%	52.5%	304,200/237,300	7.1%	12.6%	29.0%
Backa	8,180	40.2%	57.7%	282,400/223,000	7.6%	15.9%	23.2%

Table 1: Population demographics for locations in Gothenburg's North-East (2018)

(adapted from Göteborg Stad's Göteborgsbladet 2019, available from: https://gothenburg.se/wps/portal/enhetssida/statistik-och-analys/gothenborgsbladet/hantastatistik/faktablad/gothenborgsbladet/tur/p/z/1/04_sj9cPykssy0xPlMmMz0vMAfHj08zITyZcDQy9TAv9_L3MDQwCvYyMXXzcQ00cv4z0w8EKAgxDHAINgA0MPAzdDBwDXc38e1NNDAX8TPWjNFVgAIDZyCjJyMDQze_Y21049HQRSQ8egW6RkthoaGoi0qAgByP_ykuv/dz/d5/L2DBISEVZ0FBIS9nQSEH/)



(adapted from Göteborg Stad's Göteborgsbladet 2019, available from: https://goteborg.se/wps/portal/enhetsida/statistik-och-analys/goteborgsbladet/hamta-statistik/faktablad/goteborgsbladet/tut/p/z/1/04__Sj9CPyKssy0xPLMnMz0vMAHj08zITYzcDQy9TAy9_T3MDQwCvYMLXXzcXQ0cw4z0w8EKAgxdlHAIN_gAoMPAzdDBwDXc38g1xNDAX8TPWjiNFvgAIGDZyCjJyMDQzc_Y21049HQRSg8cgW6RlkhoaG0roqAgByPyku/dz/d5/L2dBISEvZ0FBIS9nQSEHj)

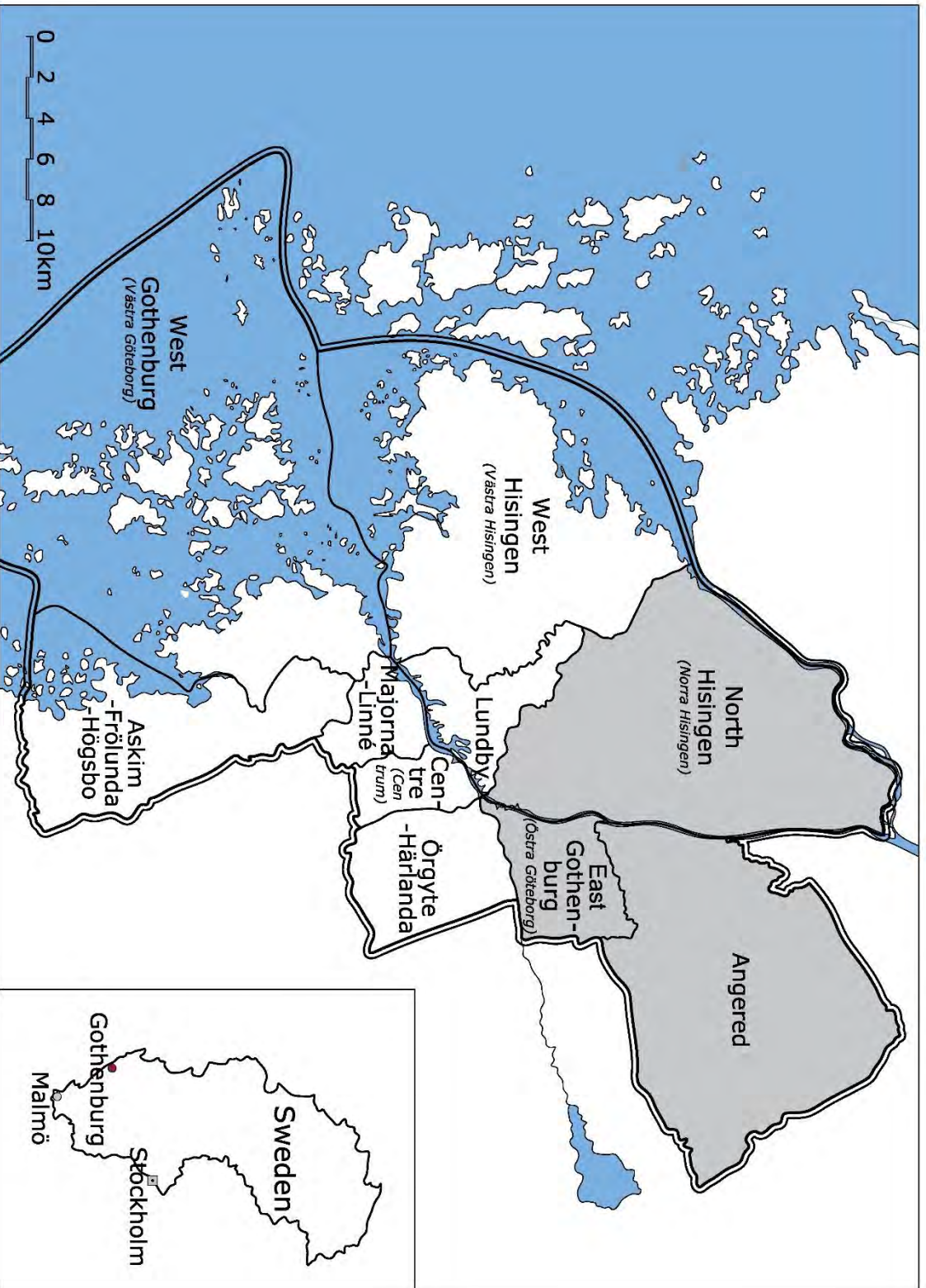


Figure 2: Map of Gothenburg's 10 city districts

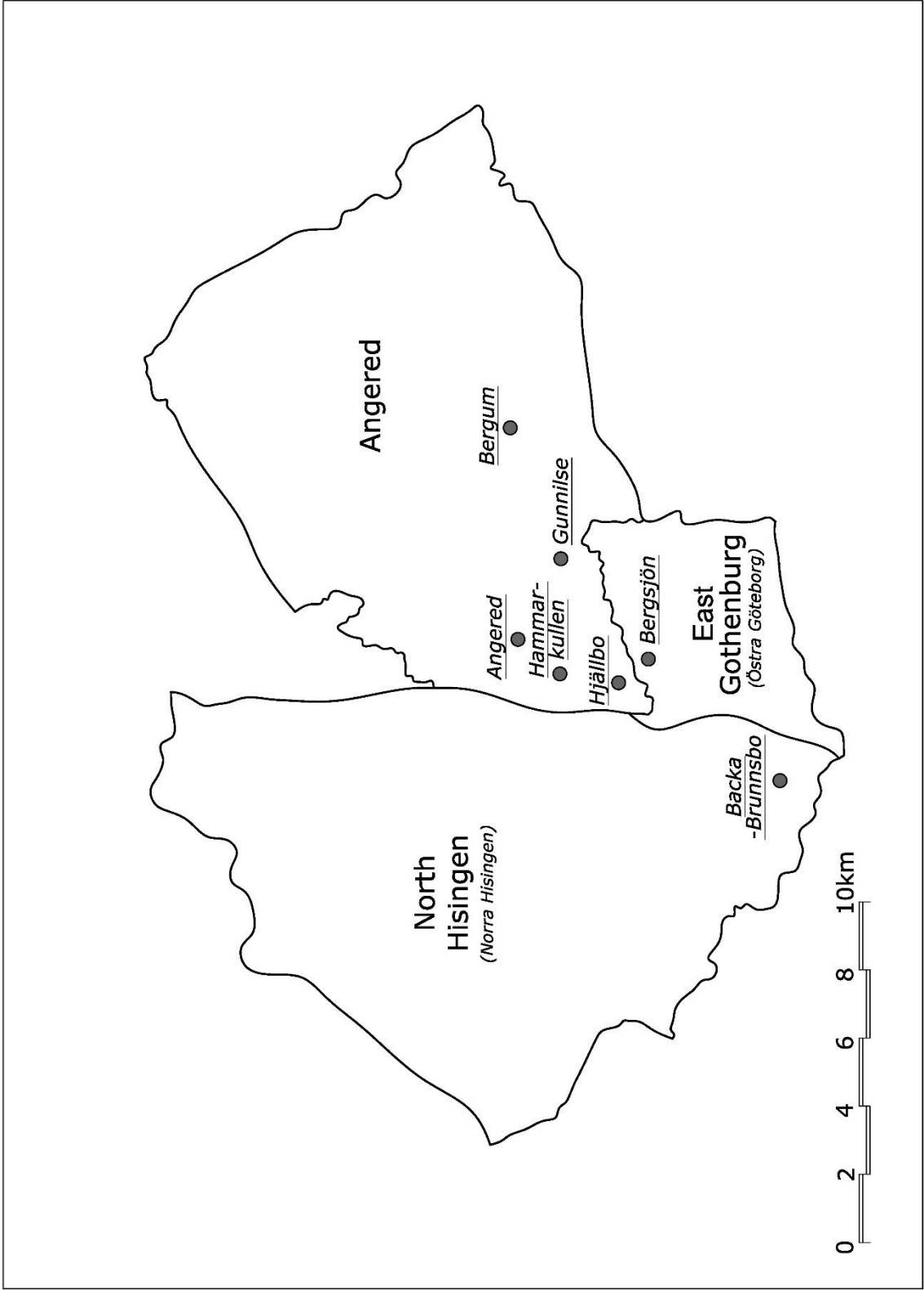


Figure 3: Map of Gothenburg's North-East

Contributors

Adler, Inga-Lisa – is a development manager at the North Hisingen city district [north-western Gothenburg] responsible for Urban Rural Gothenburg's (URG) Backa-Brunnsbo community centre. Inga-Lisa has launched and developed the centre where co-creative dialogue methods and approaches are explored. She has previously worked as a development strategist for URG's predecessor project, Development North-East.

Albihn, Eva-Lena – is deputy CEO at Business Region Gothenburg (BRG). She has been active at BRG since 2014. She is on the board of Coompanion, Drivhuset Göteborg, Nyföretagarcentrum Göteborgsregionen, Brewhouse Göteborg as well as Framtidsfröna. She has a degree in economics from the Stockholm School of Economics. She has been chair of Urban Rural Gothenburg's steering group since 2017.

Almén Linn, Jenny – is a sustainability strategist at Urban Rural Gothenburg, employed at Business Region Gothenburg (BRG) working with business development in Gothenburg's North-East. Her focus is on tourism and green business. Her background is within communication and marketing, business development, sales and leadership, in private companies, the public sector and non-profit organisations.

Almered Olsson, E. Gunilla – is professor in human ecology with a PhD in plant ecology, at the School of Global Studies at the University of Gothenburg. Her interdisciplinary research is on the use and management of natural resources, and biodiversity in socio-ecological systems in agricultural landscapes in Europe and Africa. Current research and activism is on food systems linking urban and rural regions, leading to sustainability transitions.

Alminger, Marie – is professor in food science and vice head of education at the Department of Biology and Biological Engineering at Chalmers University of Technology. She obtained a PhD in food science in 1995. Her research focuses on bioactive compounds in foods and how processing and gastrointestinal digestion affects bioavailability of dietary compounds. The research is also related to sustainable food production systems, especially considering use of raw materials and co-products for more resource-efficient value chains, as well as global food security.

Anderson, Jan – is a development manager for Västra Götaland Regional Council's Department of Natural Resources (DNR). He is responsible for the department's activities at the Angered Farmstead, an arena for education and innovation projects in North-East Gothenburg. DNR has a three-year project at the Angered Farmstead to promote integration through helping residents with immigrant backgrounds lead a rich and fulfilling life, including enabling them to support themselves and utilise their education and vocational skills.

Arsovski, Slobodan – is an architect with a MSc from the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, North Macedonia, associated with the Chamber of Certified Architects and Engineers. Slobodan's research focuses on environmental pollution and sustainability transitions with regard to urban planning and construction. He has been involved in several major urban development projects in Macedonia and internationally. Outside of his ordinary work, Slobodan undertakes assignments in cartography, historical geography and art design.

Bailey, William – is a gardener with a bachelor's degree in human ecology. He has been active in urban farming since 2015, initially in community gardening and later with the urban farming company Kajodlingen. He is interested in the complicated dynamics between man-made economical systems, especially between cities and nature.

- Berg, Martin** – is a planning officer at the Property Management Administration of the City of Gothenburg. He has a master's degree in global studies and works with farming-related issues in an urban and peri-urban context. Martin's focus is on creating opportunities for commercial farmers in Gothenburg by developing models of land-lease, business models, educational projects, matchmaking, networking with private/public/academia/citizen stakeholders on different levels.
- Bick, Erik** – is an electrical engineer with an education in economics and marketing. He has more than 25 years of experience as a sales engineer. During the last 10 years he has been active as founder and developer of cluster companies for sales and marketing, as well as stormwater management. He is one of the founders of the society Bergum-Gunnilse Utveckling and project manager for a Green Local Economy Analysis.
- Brauer, Rene** – is a research impact officer at the University of Hull, UK. Both his bachelor's and master's degree are in human geography, awarded from the University of Gothenburg. His PhD is from the University of Surrey, UK. His research interests lie within the epistemology, ontology, axiology, methodology, psychology, sociology and assessment of research.
- Carlsson, Monika** – is development leader in preschool environmental work, for the City of Gothenburg's Preschool Administration. She is a trained chef, in addition to which she also has an education in pedagogy. When she worked as a chef at a preschool, the environmental work had focus on both the meals and teaching activities, for example growing vegetables with the children and teaching them about composting.
- Ćorić, Šefika** – is a sustainability strategist for Urban Rural Gothenburg (URG), employed at the Angered city district of Gothenburg. Her degree is in agronomy, from the International University of Sarajevo, and has worked as an educator, coordinator and manager previously. She has a special interest in agricultural development related to new business models, innovation and making organic production more accessible for everybody. Her passion is to make a difference and to contribute to making things better.
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Holmertz, Gun – is a former healthcare professional, lay judge and politician who founded Caritas Gothenburg. She has been running the Caritas Volunteer Centre in North-East Gothenburg for 25 years and manages a centre, which is the base for one of Urban Rural Gothenburg's outreach programmes to promote green business development. She has received the Order of the Golden Spur, a Papal Order of Knighthood, for her many years of social work with vulnerable people.

Ibrahim, Nigar – is a human rights activist and lawyer who is working at an enterprise agency that helps immigrant would-be entrepreneurs. She has been named Gothenburger of the Year, an award for extraordinary achievements of a resident of the city. The award was for Nigar's work within a project where she educated young people to enable them to stand up to honour-related violence.

Ingelhag, Karin – is a project manager within business development, and a former educator. Karin's current engagements include running the EU-project Urban Rural Gothenburg as well as coordinating research in collaboration between the City of Gothenburg and Chalmers University of Technology. Karin's academic background in psychology and behavioural sciences recurs in her ongoing work with sustainability transitions.

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Jäderberg, Magnus – is a business development strategist with responsibility for goods transportation at the Traffic and Public Transport Authority (TPTA) in the City of Gothenburg. He is part of the steering group at Urban Rural Gothenburg (URG), and his

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Keim, Joachim – a business developer at ‘Coompanion’, a cooperative development agency, which sets it apart from other business developers. He assists Urban Rural Gothenburg (URG) as a consultant, mainly as a business advisor. Joachim is a certified trainer in developmental leadership, including planning, organisational change projects and coaching.

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- Magnusson, Kristina** – is a citywide coordinator of public meals at the City of Gothenburg. Her education from the University of Gothenburg is as an administrative dietitian, which includes training in leadership, business administration and meals service. She has also studied pedagogy at University West in Trollhättan and business administration at Borås University. She takes great interest in societal development, especially within the areas of food and health, climate, environment, energy and competence development.
- Mc Conell, Claudio** – is a human geographer who has contributed with knowledge about integration efforts within the green sector in Gothenburg’ North-East. He recently had a three-year assignment working as a region developer with Future Kitchen, a project for the Västra Götaland Regional Council. Future Kitchen is designed to meet the demand for public-kitchen staff by granting internships to immigrants who have recently received a Swedish residence permit.
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- Nagy, Géza** – is a retired university teacher and researcher within the social sciences. Géza has travelled extensively during his academic career, among other things conducting research in Sri Lanka and India, and participating in international conferences on social mobilisation and social work. He is one of the initiators of the Angered Camel Centre in Gothenburg, the project with which Urban Rural Gothenburg was erroneously linked through a spate of newspaper articles in 2017.
- Naraine, Jonathan** – is an urban farmer with a passion to create more local and regenerative food systems. Jonathan co-founded The Foodprint Lab Architects and the Grow Gothenburg platform in 2016 with his colleagues Victoria and Cristina. Apart from studying architecture at Chalmers University of Technology, he has been engaged as a food activist in the slow-food movement during 2010–2015. He took a Permaculture Design Certificate in 2012.
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- Rydberg, Stina** – works as project manager at Johanneberg Science Park at Chalmers University of Technology in Gothenburg. She has extensive experience within sustainable (urban) development and has worked in development projects within electricity production and organisation. Her experience also covers technological development and

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- Šako, Dragan** – is a business adviser at Business Center North-East in Angered. His education is in building engineering and he has been running his own businesses since he was 25 years old. Dragan has been an entrepreneur within various branches, including marketing and book publishing. He has written several books about business and development.
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Widegren, Christoffer – is a logistician with an MSc in mechanical engineering and industrial logistics. He has been working with sustainable transport systems for cities, comprising clean vehicles, optimization of goods flows, regulation systems, and stakeholder networking for 13 years. A major part of his work tasks have been on commission from the Traffic and Public Transport Authority (TPTA) at the City of Gothenburg. He also runs his own logistics company oriented towards developing efficient and sustainable transport solutions for public and private activities.

Wright, John – is a translator and proofreader with a bachelor's degree in English and linguistics from the University of Gothenburg. He is a former Gothenburg substitute city councillor and city-district committee member. His passion is musical theatre and he has written books, lyrics and music to several musicals performed by amateur theatre companies in Gothenburg.

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stakeholder research ⇒ *participatory research*

steering group – **12**, 14, 15, 16, 19, 23, **24**, 39

strategists ⇒ *practitioners*

support ⇒ *learning*

sustainability – 1, **3**, 8, 11, 14, 15, 17, **21**, 29, **33**, 35, 36, **37**, **39**, 40

sustainable development – **3**, 4, 8, 11, 23, 27, 33, 38

Sustainable Development Goals (*SDGs*) – **3**, 4, **33**, 39
– SDG washing – **3**, **33**

sustainable food system – 15, 18, **20**, 25, **28**, 35, **37**

sustainable infrastructure – 8, 11, **19**, **20**, 27, **35**

sustainable planning – 3, **5**, 6, 8, 31, 38

sustainable tourism – **21**, 27, 28, 30, 34, **36**

T

transdisciplinarity – 1, **4**, 16, **17**, 19, **32**, **34**, **39**

tourism ⇒ *sustainable tourism*

transport ⇒ *sustainable infrastructure*

trends – 1, **8**, 28, 36, **39**

U

urban ⇒ *urban-rural integration*

urban agriculture ⇒ *urban farming*

urban development – **5**, 6, 8, 11, 27, 28, **38**

urban farming – 8, 11, 20, **21**, **26**, **27**, **28**, **29**, **35**, 36, **37**, 38, **39**

urban-rural development ⇒ *urban-rural integration*

urban-rural integration – **6**, 8, 11, 15, 19, 20, 27, **28**, **29**, **32**, **36**, **37**, 38, **39**

urban-rural segregation ⇒ *urban-rural integration*

V

Västra Götaland – 20, 22, 29, 31, 32, 35,

W

ways of working – 1, 2, 10, 14, 17, **20**, 23, 24, 33, **39**

wicked problems – **1**, **4**, 6, 7, **10**, 39, 40

wicked solutions ⇒ *wicked problems*

“This book opens up a crucial dimension in the quest to achieve sustainable urban-rural development – the different positions and interrelations among project participants and stakeholders. It is policy analysis grounded in the real world and how people engage with one another to construct that reality. Hearing from these 73 contributors, one can obtain a lifetime of experiences and perspectives on how and why urban projects succeed or fail.”

Janis Birkeland
Professor of Architecture, Planning and Law
University of Melbourne, Australia

“This book decompartmentalizes disciplines by exploring the actor-individual from an autoethnographic perspective. From this very rich subject, sharing the points of view between researchers and practitioners, the authors present the constituent elements of a project’s ‘anatomy’. For the authors, the link between individuals and their territory is organic. A sustainable project is not just a development project. It is also a project that is carried out together. I hope that this book will become a reference for all operational approaches to sustainable development but also for the environmental sciences.”

Pierre Pech
Professor of Geography
University Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne, France

“This innovative volume merits a wide international audience amongst development practitioners, urban scholars and sustainability researchers.”

Christian M. Rogerson
Professor of Human Geography
University of Johannesburg, South Africa

“This book is a must read for everyone who is interested in our contemporary social problems that are not easily accommodated within the administrative structures nor that of traditional research disciplines. In one single book, one is presented with all of these contradicting views on the same reality, as well as the Sisyphian effort that is necessary to get them to harmonize in the face of overbearing complexity.”

Rene Brauer
PhD, Research Impact Officer
University of Hull, UK

“This book is completely unique as a product of research and co-production. It is so rich, well-structured and gives one the possibility to submerge in a river of voices by its approach to convey the complexity of the work process. The book is engaging and very exciting, which invites continued reading. And – not the least – the book offers new knowledge on the complexity of transdisciplinary research, vital for future sustainability project challenges.”

E. Gunilla Almered Olsson
Professor of Human Ecology
University of Gothenburg, Sweden

“This volume provides one of the few cogent treatises of elusive concept of ‘sustainability’. By bringing together scientists, practitioners and stakeholders, the book not only provides a critical and encompassing overview of the state-of-the-art in this field, but also brings these different perspectives into a useful and much-needed dialogue. This is a must-read for anyone interested in this topic and can serve as both an introduction to the field as well as review of current knowledge and praxis.”

Ben Derudder
Professor of Urban Geography
Ghent University, Belgium

“As societal development progressively has taken the shape of “the project”, it has increasingly become necessary to study and understand “the project” as a social complexity in itself. This work commendably does precisely this by uniting no less than 73 authors in one book, deconstructing an empirical case with “real” people and “real” stories, to understand a contemporary, transdisciplinary, pop-scientific phenomenon in minute detail. The book cleverly mixes theoretical and practical knowledge so that no vantage point may dominate but rather allows for a rich and deep overall analysis. And the employed auto-ethnographic method brings both victories and dangers of the micro-scale, aspects that would otherwise remain unattended, to the forefront. A highly recommended read.”

Alexander Bard
Philosopher and influencer
Stockholm Sweden

“It gives me great pleasure to introduce this book because of its highly distinctive contribution to transdisciplinarity and co-production. Indeed, while self-reflection and reflexivity are key elements of all good research and especially the various forms of co-production, this volume breaks new ground in terms of the depth and diversity of individual autoethnographic perspectives integrated around a single project. This book explores the implicit knowledge created during the process of running a complex sustainability project, in order to understand better both its value and limitations in the context of rapid change. It highlights a complex co-creation process from the perspective of the individual in a transdisciplinary context. In so doing, it sheds light on the silent triumphs and hidden pathologies of everyday transdisciplinary project-making as a microcosm for solving the wicked problems of our time.”

David Simon
Professor of Development Geography
University of London, UK

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What does a sustainability project look like in the 21st century? Not the glossy version, but the naked truth? Tired of manicured, over-theorised accounts of the ‘musts’ and ‘shoulds’ of sustainability transitions, we got to the bottom of things; actually, to the very bottom of the project hierarchy: the individual.

Our point of departure is that projects are nothing but temporarily interconnected people. This means that if we don’t know what people do and what they think about their work, we will never be able to create a deeper understanding of the project, its rationale and future impact. Making use of the autoethnographic method, this book provides critical insights into what it’s like being part of a 21st-century project.

Building on unfiltered first-hand contributions from 73 authors representing the five organs of a project’s anatomy – the brain (theoreticians), the skeleton (leaders), the limbs (strategists), the heart (local stakeholders) and the lungs (researchers) – the book covers all the important aspects of contemporary project-making: (1) projectification as a societal phenomenon; (2) sustainability as the main project buzzword; (3) transdisciplinarity as a hot working method; (4) economy as the invisible project propeller; (5) space as the contextual project qualifier; (6) gender and integration as the obstinate orphans of project-making; (7) trends as the villains of thoughtless project mimicry; (8) politics as the necessary evil of projects; and (9) knowledge production as the cornerstone of all project work.

The book ends with an extensive critical analysis of what makes a project tick and how to avoid project failure. We infer that talking about project outcomes and impacts is just that... talking. What makes a difference is what can be done to the project in itself. Three important virtues – the ABC of project-making – emanate from this book’s 40 chapters: building good relationships (Affinity), having the guts to make a change (Bravery), and showing willingness to learn (Curiosity). These are the basis for the successful execution of future sustainability projects, where complexity, unpredictability and desperation will become a staple force to reckon with.

The original contribution of this book is shedding light on the silent triumphs and hidden pathologies of everyday project-making in an effort to elevate individual knowledge to a level of authority for solving the wicked – yet project-infused – problems of our time.

Foreworded by

David Simon and Pierre Pech



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