

Bridging Gaps

Sustainable Development
and Local Democracy Processes

JENNY STENBERG

Built Environment &
Sustainable Development
CHALMERS ARCHITECTURE
Göteborg Sweden 2001



THESIS FOR THE DEGREE OF LICENTIATE OF ARCHITECTURE

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Abstract

This thesis examines the relation between the notion of sustainable development and broad public participation in local decision-making – local democracy processes.

The empirical part of the thesis is comprised of a field investigation with the purpose of exploring the potential of the interviewed local professionals to work as transformers of the notion of sustainable development at the local level. The findings indicate that they do, however, there exist several obstacles that need to be overcome. One significant outcome is the observation of the obvious lack of influence of the inhabitants on local decision-making. Another result is that environmental issues are not extensively discussed by local professionals. Yet one more important observation is that the accounts of the respondents reflect a common criticism of the way that proceedings are implemented, i.e., mainly from the top. In this context the vision of sustainable development is not an exception. Taken together, all the problems that the respondents describe as main obstacles may be seen as forming a thorough description of the distance – or gap – between top-down management and bottom-up needs.

The theoretical part of the thesis is based on a review of the literature exploring the themes related to the problematic of bridging the gap between top-down and bottom-up perspectives. The review indicates new ways of perceiving this gap in itself. There exist, at least, four distinctive gaps which seem to obstruct positive local development: the gap between top and bottom; the gap between abstract and concrete; the gap between place and place; and the gap between the four dimensions of sustainable development. It is also discussed whether or not it is desirable to develop one single approach with the purpose of bridging all four gaps. Or if it is better to deal with this problematic by structuring for an assembly of methodologies constituting successive layers of transformation, each one bridging a distinct gap. In such a case, it appears essential to keep track of the whole chain of successive layers of transformation. Is such a comprehensive perspective of the different approaches – keeping track of the chain – that is lacking today? Is there instead a chain of discontinuities, i.e., a chain of gaps?

Keywords: sustainable development, local democracy process, gap, top, bottom, abstract, interlace, four dimensions, successive layers of transformation.

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In this context several persons have contributed to the development of the work. Foremost, I am grateful to my supervisor Professor Anne Marie Wilhelmsen. Her great interest, her observant follow-up and her encouraging support have been invaluable to progress in this work. During the past year, Lena Falkheden Ph.D. has been an additional assistant supervisor. Her carefulness and the extensive knowledge she possesses concerning the theme of this thesis have also been invaluable to the improvement of the work. Further, Assistant Professor Katarina Nylund has contributed with her knowledge at the conclusive seminar. Her opposition and suggestions were very valuable indeed and of great help to the completion of the work. Many thanks also to Jaan-Henrik Kain Tech. Lic. who has contributed with his commitment and knowledge throughout many interesting discussions, as well as by reviewing the language in various parts of the thesis.

During this period, Chalmers Architecture have has two visiting researchers who have contributed to the development of this thesis. In an early stage of the project, Professor Halina Dunin-Woyseth from the University of Architecture in Oslo gave helpful ideas for the project plans, and recently, Professor Patsy Healey from the University of Newcastle gave valuable criticisms of the text presented at the conclusive seminar. There have also been several persons who have organised and participated in seminars of importance for this project. The Department of Built Environment & Sustainable Development has organised a series of seminars concerning sustainable development. All of the participators have been of great help in the development of this thesis. In addition, Björn Malbert Ph.D. and Henriette Söderberg Ph.D. have contributed with criticism of the written material. Two additional seminars of importance for this thesis were the Urban Environment Management seminar at the Department of Urban Design and Planning, as well as the seminar concerning the work of Bruno Latour at the department of Space and Process. Finally, a national series of seminars have been conducted within the research program Mistra Bygg – Sustainable Building.

As this project encompasses a cross-disciplinary approach, there are also many persons from other institutions that have been of great help from time to time. Some of them have also taken a special interest in the development of the research project and have, thus, to a great extent helped to develop the ideas. Many thanks for this interest to Lasse Fryk Senior Lecturer and Bosse Forsén Ph.D. at the Department of Social Work at the Göteborg University.

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Göteborg Sweden June 2001
Jenny Stenberg

Democracy: in which you say what you like
and do what you're told

Gerald Barry

Introduction

“One of the fundamental prerequisites for the achievement of sustainable development is broad public participation in decision-making”

(UNCED 1992b: ch. 23.2)

THIS QUOTATION from the Agenda 21 document constitutes the basis for the research project outlined in this thesis. The project, thus, focuses on the relationship between public participation in decision making – local democracy processes – and the broad political vision of sustainable development. Additionally, the project has its focal point on suburban areas from the 60s and the 70s in major urban centres in Sweden.

Background

The definition of sustainable development has its origin in a report from 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development, the so-called Brundtland Commission: “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED 1987: 43). From an overall perspective, the aim of the notion may, thus, be considered as quite clear and it is, therefore, easy for all countries to share the vision. It is the present environ-

mental threats, on the one hand, and material and social poverty on the other, that constitute a need for a vision of a better world for all people. At the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro 1992 the notion of sustainable development was further expounded and five documents were accepted by 120 heads of state and government. Even if the documents clearly state the overall goals for sustainable development and how this is going to be implemented, the notion, taken together, may still be perceived as rather indefinite. The Rio Declaration states that, “human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development [and] they are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature” (UNCED 1992a: pr. 1). The declaration also stresses the importance of amalgamating social and the economic dimensions with the environmental dimension of sustainable development (UNCED 1992a: ch. 8.2). Such an amalgamation requires an interdisciplinary approach.

The notion of sustainable development, thus, is a broad and extensive vision, which includes most aspects of human life. However, as this research project focuses on the questions concerning participation and democracy, further treatment of the notion will be concentrated mainly on these issues and from documents mentioned here only specific parts relevant to the subject will be chosen.

One of the agreements made in Rio de Janeiro resulted in the Agenda 21 document. This is an action program for the management of environment and development concerned with a global partnership for sustainable development (UNCED 1992b: ch. 1.1). Its successful implementation is first and foremost the responsibility of governments, but the importance of involving citizens in democratic participation is emphasised in several points. In the chapter concerning decision-making, for example, it is pointed out that, “the overall objective is to improve or restructure the decision-making process so that consideration of socio-economic and environmental issues is fully integrated and a broader range of public participation assured” (UNCED 1992b: ch. 8.3). Further, in the chapter about planning it is argued that the authorities “should establish innovative procedures, programmes, projects and services that facilitate and encourage the active participation of those affected by the decision-making and implementation process, especially of groups that have, hitherto, often been excluded, such as women, youth, indigenous people and their communities and other local communities” (UNCED 1992b: ch. 10.10). Concerning strengthening the role of major groups, it is stated that “non-governmental organisations play a vital role in the shaping and implementation of participatory democracy” (UNCED 1992b: ch. 27.1). Earlier in this section there is a clarification which mentions that issues of non-govern-

mental organisations “must apply equally to all major groups” (UNCED 1992b: ch. 23.3). There is also a text about the responsibility of the municipality and the city district:

Each local authority should enter into a dialogue with its citizens, local organisations and private enterprises and adopt a local Agenda 21. Through consultation and consensus-building, local authorities would learn from citizens and from local, civic, community, business and industrial organizations and acquire the information needed for formulating the best strategies (UNCED 1992b: ch. 28.3).

This is quite a strong incentive for participative democracy that is pointed out in the Agenda 21 document. The need to involve non-governmental organisations and other major groups is even more emphasised in the Habitat Agenda, the report from the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements in Istanbul (Habitat II 1996: ch. 12).

Activities in Sweden

A Swedish National Commission on Agenda 21 was appointed in 1995 with the purpose of developing, deepening and establishing the agenda in Sweden, and to report the national situation to the United Nations. The final report of the Commission, from 1997, describes local participation and cooperation as a preferred mode of working for local authorities in the future (SOU 1997: 105). The Commission also stress the importance of giving value to all dimensions of sustainable development together; the social, the economic and the environmental (see fig. 1) (SOU 1997: 14). A fourth dimension, the institutional, has also been included to be equally valued (CSD 1996). In Sweden, a National Commission on Agenda 21 and Habitat was appointed in June 2000 with the responsibility of supporting and developing the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Habitat Agenda. The experiences of the Commission will be reported at two future United Nations conferences, first, the five year follow-up of the Habitat Agenda in New York 2001, and second, the ten year follow-up of Agenda 21 in Johannesburg 2002.

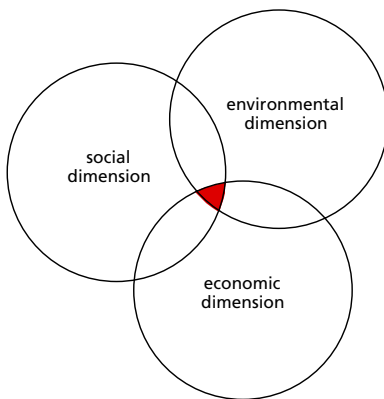


Fig. 1. Sustainable development (SOU 1997).

Gap or Vacuum

Another activity in Sweden of importance to this research project is the appointment, in 1997, of a Committee on Democracy – a response to nation-wide difficulties experienced by the political system in general illustrated by downward trends in the number of votes committed in the national elections, especially among the population of segregated suburbs of major urban centres. For a few years, the Committee has produced a substantial number of research volumes and booklets, and has also promoted a series of seminars on the theme of democracy, held in various cities throughout the country. In its final report, the Com-

mittee summed up its main conclusions, in short, a recommendation to include more participation and deliberative qualities, i.e. communication and argumentation, into the representative democracy system (SOU 2000: 23).

The stated trust in the Agenda 21 document, in strengthening participative democracy as an agent for sustainable development may constitute an answer to these communicative problems that have been expressed in Sweden lately. Some argue that this communication problem exists since the political arenas are moving away from the traditional political parties into other constellations of decision-making, both formal and informal. However, this is not only of interest for political scientists, other professionals have also discussed this problem for some years.

From the point of view of planning this may be described as a gap or a vacuum, obstructing sustainable development (Malbert 1998: 21-22, 35-43). The planning situation has changed during the past two decades, the rational top-down construction of Swedish society has grown into a negotiation planning in which different actors participate (Orrskog 1998: 161). This has come as a result of the high level of specialisation, the fragmentation of responsibility, and the increased influence of the private sector. Thus, the changed prerequisites for the planning situation make it necessary to manage large groups of actors, including experts and stakeholders, in order to handle all aspects essential to understanding the comprehensive perspective of sustainable development. The problematic with the existence of a gap in the planning situation, thus, concerns not only the problems of relating the top and the bottom perspectives to each other, but also problems concerning the mutual relationship between the different domains of the actors (Malbert 1998: 23-25).

The growth of a common vision such as the notion of sustainable development has naturally emphasised the importance of planning to embrace the comprehensive perspective more than earlier. However, the vision is not thought to be implemented only with help from regular planning instruments from top to bottom. The Agenda 21 document may be considered as an approach with the purpose of activating and building up networks at the local level, i.e., networks built on trust between individuals and their non-governmental organisations (Michaeli 2000: 12). This understanding of the planning situation, thus, also stresses the importance of realising the gap between the top and the bottom, however, from a bottom-up perspective. Trust developed at the local level, with help from local Agenda 21 initiatives, may then form the base that people need to be able to take part of a comprehensive environmental policy and local environmental initiatives.

Suburban Areas

The discussion concerning communication problems related to planning, has, for some time, been present in the suburban housing areas of major urban centres constructed in the 60s and the 70s. The gap in this context is primarily



This research project has its focal point on suburban areas from the 60s and the 70s in major urban centres in Sweden. Norsborg Stockholm Sweden.

constituted of communication problems between, not only politicians and public but also between housing companies and their tenants, and civil servants at the city districts and the people living in the area. One may say that this communication gap is one of the reasons to the problem of vacant apartments during the 80s and the 90s, which in turn, may be seen as an obvious signal of the existence of other and even more serious problems. As these problems turned out to be extremely expensive, both socially and economically speaking, for housing companies and for city districts, the local actors started to search for operational approaches. At the same time, national finances deteriorated, which worsened the local situation even more. These same areas also receive many refugees and consequently contain many different cultures and languages as well as groups of people with social problems caused by traumatic war experiences. Sweden is in fact a most segregated country in so far as the most exposed housing areas in Sweden have the highest share of immigrants in comparison to all other OECD countries (Swedish Government 1998: 28). Moreover, people with social and mental problems tend to gather in the same suburban areas, as this is the only place where they may rent an apartment. Taken together, the large amount of vacant apartments is a consequence of a quite natural reaction by those who have a choice. This response should be considered as a critique of, not only the planning of the 60s and the 70s, but also the planning of the 90s (Arntsberg 2000: 203).

This problematic is complex and not possible to solve solely by activities at the local level. The local professionals lack, for example, not only adequate funding for such major problems, but also the possibility to change the prevailing nation-wide segregation that constitutes one of the most serious problems for Swedish suburbs. The Swedish Government now actually supports the development of a new policy for major urban centres concerning this matter (Swedish Government 1998). With help from, e.g. *Local Investment Agreements (LUA)*¹ the Government supports activities with the aim of decreasing segregation and unemployment. However, does this kind of top-down support solve the problems that local professionals and inhabitants think are the most severe? Furthermore, how do such approaches relate to the broad vision of sustainable development?

Purpose and Research Questions

As the quotation from Agenda 21 in the beginning of this chapter constitutes the basis for the research project, the overall purpose thus is to study the *relation between broad public participation in decision-making and sustainable development*.

Further, the special focus on suburban areas from the 60s and the 70s in major urban centres implies a delimitation of the kind of public participation to concentrate on. At these specific places there often exist methods or approaches for communication between local professionals and inhabitants, with

¹ *Lokala utvecklingsavtal* in Swedish.

the purpose of improving the living qualities of the area. The ambition with such initiatives is often to increase the influence of inhabitants on decision-making in one way or the other. Such approaches, when successful, may thus be designated as local democracy processes, a term that makes the combination of participation and influence evident. In this thesis, the term *local democracy process* is used in this meaning, as a synonym for *broad public participation in decision-making*.

Sustainable development is an ample notion and this extensive perspective is retained in this thesis. The reason for this approach is simply that it is plausible that the answers to several of the research questions will depend on the amalgamation of the different dimensions of sustainable development. The application in this thesis of *the broad definition of sustainable development, thus, implies that the social and institutional, as well as the economic and the environmental dimensions are of equal importance*. However, other important aspects of sustainable development do exist. One such aspect is the issue of justice – between city districts in a town, between different parts of the world, and between our and coming generations. These aspects, however important, are not explicitly discussed in this thesis.

With such an extensive purpose for the project, consequently, the research questions that constitute the basis for the work are very expansive. First, there are questions concerning the theme of sustainable development: What does the vision of sustainable development imply at the local level? Do local professionals work with this vision in mind? Do the inhabitants care for the vision? Which aspects or dimensions of sustainable development are important to local actors? Do they have knowledge of all dimensions? How do these answers relate to the global vision of sustainable development?

Second, there are several research questions concerning the influence through participation in local democracy processes: What kind of local democracy processes exist at the local level? Which local professionals and inhabitants participate? What role do non-governmental organisations have? How do local democracy processes work, which methods do they use? Which goals are most central? Which obstacles do they experience? How do they try to overcome the obstacles? How do these answers relate to the ten-year-old global vision of broad public participation in decision-making?

Finally, there are research questions concerning the communication gap that, as mentioned earlier, may be seen as obstructing a sustainable development. What does this gap look like from a local point of view? Do such processes have the potential to work as transformers² of the notion of sustainable development at the local level? Which local actors would then be part of the processes? Would this imply a positive development for the local inhabitants from their point of view?



The research project focuses on broad public participation in decision-making.

² The term *transformer* is used to illustrate that this is a matter of a transformation or translation of the notion of sustainable development when the notion is transmitted from the global level to the local level, and back again.

Going through all these research questions elucidates that this project has the ambition to handle a quite a complex research situation. This broad exposition, on the other hand, implies that not every path is studied in depth. As the problem area is plentiful and complex, one of the purposes of this licentiate thesis, thus, is to search for a limited number of clearly defined key questions for future work.

Research Methodology

The research problem and, consequently, the nature of the research questions make it appropriate to choose a qualitative approach for the project. It is not only the interdisciplinary point of departure of sustainable development that is important for this choice. The focus on the local suburban area also induces this selection, as such a focal point often generates the need for a comprehensive perspective.

This research project, hence, utilises a qualitative approach and the selected methodology departs from the grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967). The basic position of this approach states that “generating grounded theory is a way of arriving at theory suited to its supposed uses” (Ibid.: 3). In other words, close correlation to the problems of the real world is considered to be of great importance and empirical material should provide the foundation for the development of knowledge.

Since this is a qualitative study there exists no hypothesis in the proper meaning, as being part of a theory and thus possible to be tested in order to examine the theory (Hartman 1998: 110). There are assumptions, however, some of them were already present at the initial phase of the project while others were developed during the progress of the work. One early assumption was the belief that local democracy processes are needed if sustainable development is to become a reality. Another early assumption was that there is a communication gap between the system and the public, between policy and practice and also between plan and implementation.

The empirical foundation for the first phase of this research project is comprised of a field investigation, consisting of qualitative interviews (Kvale 1996). One intention was to narrow down the research problem with help from local professionals in Göteborg and the method is more thoroughly described in the chapter concerning the field investigation. However, as scientific literature and theories also play an important role in building this knowledge base, the research process may be described as abductive (Alvesson and Sköldbberg 1994: 42). This implies a change of perspectives, again and again, between the empirical and the theoretical foundation, though with a point of departure in the empirical material rather than the theoretical. The qualitative approach, thus, implies that the project is

moving along the *path of discovery* rather than the *road of proof*, and therefore it is characterised by loose questions, improvisation, intuition and a wealth of ideas (Starrin et al. 1991: 21, my translations).

Disposition of the Thesis

In the following, the thesis is separated into two main parts, one focusing on empirical findings and the other on theoretical approaches. In the first part, THE FIELD INVESTIGATION, the background of the investigation is outlined, the method is described and empirical findings are presented. In the end of the chapter, there is also a short summary of the findings. In the second part, BRIDGING THE GAP, a selection of theoretical approaches is presented, reflected upon and discussed in relation to the empirical findings. In this chapter, the possibilities of bridging the indicated gap between top-down and bottom-up perspectives is, thus, discussed and analysed from the point of view of the different theoretical approaches. Thereafter, in CONCLUSIONS, the results of the analysis are discussed a bit further and, finally, in THE DESIGN OF FUTURE RESEARCH, an option for forthcoming studies is outlined.

*

The Field Investigation

IN THE INITIAL PHASE of the research project, a field investigation was conducted. The intention was to narrow down the research problem with help from some local professionals in Göteborg with experience of initiating local democracy processes. This chapter contains a detailed summary of the field investigation, based on a report which was written in Swedish (Stenberg 2000; Stenberg 2001).

Background

Most of the actors that have been interviewed in the field investigation are responsible for private or public activity in a city district built mainly in the 50s, the 60s and the 70s. There are several different reasons for their interest in the development of processes entailing increased public participation in local decision-making – local democracy processes. Firstly, the Agenda 21 document has influenced local professionals to stress such a development, especially the existence of a local Agenda 21 office in the area implies activities around this issue. Secondly, the Swedish Government has gradually increased pressure on local professionals to develop such processes. This is obvious in documents like, e.g. the report of the Swedish National Commission on Agenda 21 (SOU 1997) and the final report of the Swedish Committee on Democracy (SOU 2000). Thirdly, there are several documents at the municipal level dealing with the issue of local democracy processes. In Göteborg, the city council has agreed on an action program concerning the development of the city district committees (Johansson et al. 1998).³ The purpose of the plan is to increase the transparency of the decision-making of the committees and to amplify the existence of local democracy processes. This document also requires a local democracy plan⁴ for the year 2000, one from each of the twenty-one city district committees in Göteborg. These plans are to contain a pro-

³ *Stadsdelsnämndsreform i utveckling* in Swedish.

⁴ *Lokal demokratiplan* in Swedish.

gram of how to increase the influence of the inhabitants in each administrative area, such as e.g. pre-school, schools and the care of the elderly. Furthermore, the plan is to be followed-up annually.

Fourthly, the municipal housing companies have received similar directives to increase the existence of local democracy processes. Förvaltnings AB Framtiden, the parent company of all municipal housing companies in Göteborg, emphasises e.g. in a document that “the inhabitants shall via the housing company be given comprehensive influence on their own flats and the adjacent surroundings” (Förvaltnings AB Framtiden 1999a: 6, my translation). This document constitutes an important base for the subsidiaries within the Group. Furthermore, the management plan emphasises that, “a strategy is to be established for the progression of collective and individual influence of the inhabitants” (Förvaltnings AB Framtiden 1999b: 2, my translation). The activity plan, which is based on the management plans of the subsidiaries, states that, “local democracy and self-administration of housing will from a long-term perspective give reduced operative costs, a lower level of movement out of the area, and an increase in new inhabitants moving in” (Förvaltnings AB Framtiden 1999c: 2, my translation).

As this research project focuses on the prerequisites for local democracy processes to work on a regular basis, it was vital to initially search for knowledge concerning the practice of this issue. As stated above, there are two types of local actors with widespread responsibility at the local level: the local professionals employed by the housing companies and those employed by the city district committees. It is these professionals that usually initiate local processes of different kinds. The housing company may, e.g. initiate a participative design process when they intend to change the design of the area around the blocks of flats. In another housing company the introduction of a new system for sorting waste, may imply participation of the inhabitants when analysing which system to use. For the local professionals employed by the city district committee, e.g., the extensive unemployment in the district may make them anxious to initiate a local educational centre. There is also a third group that may be of interest concerning this issue, actors employed by local non-governmental organisations or by local educational institutions.

Purpose

To sum up, the purpose of the field investigation was to find out how local professionals in these suburban areas actually work with local democracy processes, and furthermore, to explore their experience of incorporating such proc-

employed by	
municipal housing company	15
private housing company	2
city district committee	4
town planning department	1
city council office	2
non-governmental organisation	2
educational institution	1
responsible for level	
housing area	5
city district	17
municipal	5
responsibility	
development work	8
local processes	12
environmental issues	8
social issues	5
technical issues	2
economic issues	2
district superintendent	5
regional superintendent	1
administration	1
education	1
primary context	
local collaborative network	23
housing company	4

Fig. 2. Data concerning the respondents.

Questions

What is going on, or has been going on in the past few years, on the issue of local democracy processes?

Who initiated the process? When? How?

What are the purposes of the process? Primary purpose? Secondary purpose? Pronounced? Unspoken?

Were the purposes met? Did the purposes seem to have the prerequisites to be met?

What driving forces seem to be important for such a process to succeed?

What obstacles seem to exist that hinder such process?

How is the process financed? Is it cheap? Expensive?

Has the process changed over time? Why? What circumstances influenced this change?

Who is responsible for the process? Has the responsibility changed at any time? How is the process followed-up?

What does the time-schedule look like for the process? How far have you come? Does the process have a planned endpoint?

What knowledge and experience would you like to convey to someone with the intention of initiating a process like the one you have just described? What do they need to know to get started?

esses in everyday decision-making. In other words, to answer the question whether or not these local professionals have the potential to work as transformers of the notion of sustainable development at the local level.

Method

The field investigation was initiated by conducting interviews with local professionals in Göteborg. They were selected out of consideration for their special interest for, and experience of, initiating local democracy processes. Hence, they had a positive standpoint concerning the issue, even if they did not always have positive experiences. Most of the respondents were chief administrators or similar at the city district level, but there were also some respondents employed at the municipal level and at the level of the housing area. At first, a group of about ten respondents was selected, this group was successively extended until the theme of interest seemed to be saturated.

Within a time period of six months, twenty-seven local professionals were interviewed on nineteen occasions, and each interview lasted from one to three hours. The respondents were first contacted by correspondence with information about the research project and then approached by telephone a few days later to be asked if they wanted to participate in the investigation. Most of them were very interested in this problem and all of them, except one person, wanted to participate. Sometimes they also wanted to bring a colleague with experience concerning this issue, some of them were thus interviewed individually while others were interviewed in a group of two or three. For more detailed information about the respondents, see the Appendix (p. 83).

Most of the respondents were employed by a municipal housing company, while a minority was employed, e.g. by the city district or the town planning department (see fig. 2). However, the main responsibility that they referred to during the interview, concerned the development of local processes at the city district level. These processes were mostly about the influence of inhabitants, development work in general or environmental issues. Thus, even though they were employed by distinct employers, the primary context that these respondents referred to in the investigation were the local collaborative networks which most of them were part of.

The interview questions were sent out a couple of days in advance (see fig. 3). As this was a qualitative investigation, the interviews were then carried out as an open conversation rather than an inquiry. Thus, the intention was to understand the world from the point of view of the respondents, to develop the significance of their individual experiences, to present their life world prior to scientific explanations (Kvale 1996: 5-6). The qualitative interview aims for the development of knowledge by

Fig. 3. Questions sent out to the interviewees in advance.

providing the means for teamwork between the individuals that participate in the interview. Through a common interest and teamwork, different attitudes emerge that may constitute importance for further dialogue. Thus, the respondents in the field investigation were free to talk about their experiences within the topic, direct question on a specific issue were only formulated when the respondents did not touch on a topic.

The interviews were taped and the recordings written out within two or three days. The transcriptions carefully followed the recording, however, not exactly word for word. The transcriptions were then sent to the respondents, giving them the opportunity to correct misunderstandings or to cut out sensitive statements. Out of nineteen interviews sixteen responses were received. Six of them did not have any comment, or just wanted to correct minor errors of fact. Five had more extensive comments, and four wanted to cut out sensitive parts. The assumed reasons for these reactions are included in the analysis. The quotations from the field investigation that are presented in this thesis comes word for word from the transcriptions, however with the exception that the text sometimes has been changed to increase the comprehension, to change typical spoken language into written language, or to avoid identification of the respondents. The quotations have also been translated into English by the author of this thesis and reviewed by a language expert.

The respondents have had the opportunity to comment on the treatment of the interviews on two more occasions. Firstly, before the Swedish report was to be printed, which resulted in comments from four interviews. The reactions were mainly positive, they thought that the text corresponded well with the picture of reality that they had drawn up. The negative criticism mainly concerned fear of misunderstanding of some of the quotations because of the spoken language. Secondly, the respondents had the opportunity to comment on the result before the printing of this thesis; this time there were no reactions.

The result of the field investigation has been treated in a computer program, QSR Nud*ist, which is software designed for code-based qualitative analysis. It combines efficient management of non-numerical unstructured data with effective processes of indexing, searching, and theorising. The transcriptions were coded, sentence by sentence, in this program and gradually a large amount of coding word were developed. Every sentence was coded to at least one, but mostly to several, coding words. For example, the sentence “if you are an external interpreter you’ll miss so much and you’re in a hurry all the time” may be coded to five abodes: obstacle, profession, method, language, and time. In order to be able to manage such large qualitative material, the defining and the redefining of the coding word is essential. After some time,

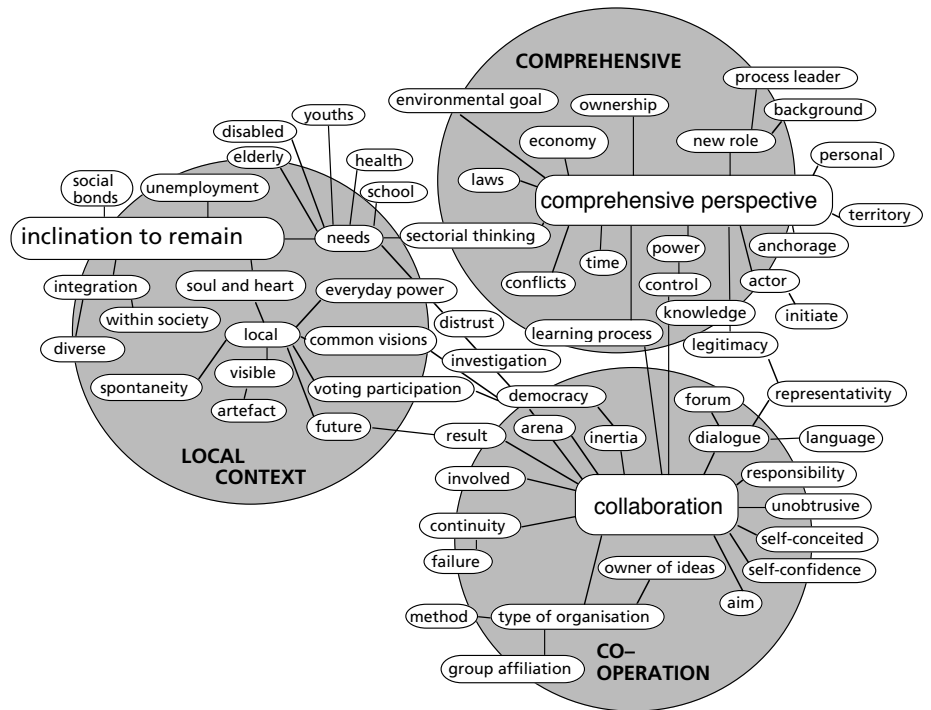


Fig. 4. The pattern of coding words.

the definitions of the coding words turned out to be more and more precise and similarities and differences between the respondents began to be more and more visible. Some coding word seem to play quite a central role for the local professionals, while some topics seem to play a more distant role. The coding also created a special pattern between the coding words. These coding words and the pattern they form may together be seen as an aggregated picture of how the local professionals perceive the task of working with local democracy processes (see fig. 4).

According to the respondents there are three central themes from the point of view of the local level. Firstly, *the inclination of the inhabitants to remain* in the housing area. The severe problem of a high degree of moving and many vacant apartments is the main reason local professionals engage themselves in collaborative networks. Secondly, *collaboration in networks*, as this cooperation is needed to reach the comprehensive objective. Thirdly, *the comprehensive perspective* because such a cross sector attitude is essential if the local professionals are going to be able to solve the problems experienced by the inhabitants.

This pattern of coding words, together with the tentative development of their definitions, turned out to be helpful in the theoretical part of the research project. Initially, when searching for relevant literature, these three themes constituted a base to depart from. Further on, the

definitions of the coding word was a help in understanding the relationship between theoretical approaches, and also for understanding the relationship of these approaches to practice at the local level.

Reliability and Validity

The question of reliability and validity of qualitative interviews follows closely to how the investigation is accomplished (Merriam 1994: 174-188). One important aspect of the reliability is, e.g., how data from the interviews has been collected. Tape recordings give higher reliability than if the interviews have been documented by taking notes. To keep a copy of the raw material in its original form, give another researcher the potential to fulfil a similar analysis, which gives a high level of reliability. Additionally, the treatment in a computer program implies the potential to follow the work step by step, as all phases of the analysis is saved.

To give the respondents the opportunity to control the transcriptions is a step with importance for the validity of the investigation. The practice of using several different sources for information is another way to increase validity. One important part of the validity, is if the result is possible to apply even to other situations than those examined in the field investigation, i.e., whether or not it is possible to generalise from the results. The answer to this question is not evident in qualitative research. The notion has its origin in quantitative research and in this context it is commonly accepted that it is not possible to generalise from one single case. However, in qualitative research this *is* possible, assuming a “redefinition of ‘generalise’ to reflect the prerequisites that such research rests on” (Ibid.: 185, my translation). One way of doing this, is to produce a quite dense and genuine description of the investigation. Another way is to initiate a discussion of how typical the case may be, in order to give the reader the possibility to compare the situation with his or her own case. Yet, a third way is to distribute a cross analysis within the same case, or between different cases.

This field investigation is built on a quite small selection of local professionals in Göteborg and these individuals do have a deep interest in the theme of local democracy processes. Most of them also have their own experiences, positive or negative, of such or similar processes. If their experiences are possible to generalise in another context, with other local actors and their circumstances is, thus, hard to decide. “It is the reader that must reflect on what parts in this field investigation that may be applicable to his or her situation and what would not fit in at all” (Ibid.: 187, my translation).

What Local Professionals Say

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the analysis of the material from the field investigation resulted in an aggregated picture of how the local professionals may be seen as perceiving the task of working with local democracy

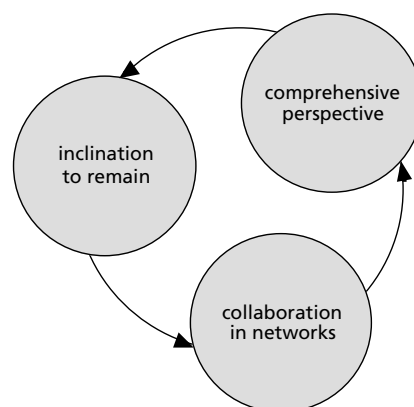


Fig. 5. Three main themes form a framework for local professionals.



The degree of influence of the inhabitants on local decision-making is rather low compared with the vision formulated in the Agenda 21 document.

processes. Three main themes were described as central. Firstly, the inclination of the inhabitants to remain in the housing area; secondly, collaboration in networks with local actors; and thirdly, the ability to embrace the complex of problems in a comprehensive perspective. These themes were also described as being in a position of dependency (see fig. 5): the problem with the little inclination to remain in the housing area; which leads to local professionals collaborating in networks; which in its turn leads to an ability to act on the basis of a comprehensive perspective as this increases the potential to help people with their most severe problems; which finally leads to an increase of the inclination to remain in the housing area. This is the good circle that seems to constitute a framework for the activities that the local professionals in the field investigation take part of. This framework is probably a conscious strategy for some of the respondents, while it may constitute a more intuitive background for others.

How, then, do local democracy processes fit into this strategy of the respondents in the field investigation? One assumption that the respondents make, is that local democracy processes increase the inclination to remain in the area (Stenberg 2000: 19). However, the realisation of the vision of broad public participation in decision-making at the local level seems to constitute a difficult dilemma for local professionals. It appears evident that it is mainly the local professionals that take part in the actual processes. However, the local professionals usually also consider participation from the inhabitants as fundamental for the successful function of local democracy processes, though the local professionals often find it hard to engage people in the long run. Even if it is not very complicated to initiate a process with participation of the inhabitants, such a process is in demand of constant support if it is not to wither away and die. Therefore successful examples of such processes are mostly in the possession of local professionals, as they have to guard and nourish them at all times. Consequently, one important result of the field investigation was that the degree of influence of the inhabitants on local decision-making is rather low compared with the vision formulated in the Agenda 21 document. Such processes with little influence will, therefore, in the following be referred to as *local processes*, to distinguish them from the local democracy processes with high degree of influence of the inhabitants. However, most of the respondents have the ambition of fulfilling the vision of a high degree of influence on local decision-making of the inhabitants and they are not at all content with results thus far.

The problem of processes being in constant need of support from these local professionals may, to a great extent, be seen as a consequence of how those processes were initiated from the beginning. In fact, only one of the experiences referred to by the respondents has been initiated from the inhab-

itants themselves, i.e., from the bottom-up. It is, thus, a reasonable assumption that, apart from the practical difficulties accounted for by the respondents, this is also a grave problem not only in relation to the objectives stated in the Agenda 21 document, but also when referring to recent municipal documents urging for greater local democracy. Even if local professionals often pick up and incorporate the ideas from the inhabitants and use them when initiating local processes, these ideas inevitably will change shape and be transformed when initiated from the top instead of from the bottom. Most of the respondents in the field investigation were much aware of this crucial dilemma, even though they have not found any easy way of redeeming it. The obstacles for more developed bottom-up processes interact in a complex manner, something that makes it hard for any actor to identify one single and simple strategy for their work. According to the respondents, there are several obstacles to such development and cause and effect of these are intertwined in a rather complex manner (Ibid.: 15-38).

Firstly, in a local context, segregation is considered to be a grave problem (Ibid.: 35-38). It affects these suburban areas in many different ways and makes it hard to engage people in local democracy processes. One reason is the huge unemployment which seems to influence the inhabitants to avoid participation in collaborative processes. Another is the involuntary location of refugees in these suburban areas. Such conditions do not facilitate participation of inhabitants in local processes. If a person is about to leave the area, there is no need for engagement with the aim to improve the local environment. Hence, the inclination to remain in the area is low, in some of the districts about 30% of the inhabitants move on to another area yearly. However, most often not to a place where they really want to stay under long-term conditions, but rather to another suburban area with a slightly improved reputation. The segregation also affects the quality of the social services locally. The schools, e.g., acquire major problems when there is a constant stream of new refugees into the classes, as they acquire special care because of their prior experiences. The schools in these areas also have to bear the extra burden of teaching Swedish language, when classes contain few children who speak Swedish regularly.

However, this pessimistic description of the local circumstances does not outline the whole situation. There exist far more activities initiated by the inhabitants in these actual suburban areas, than may be perceived in the first place (Ibid.: 16). These activities are usually initiated by different cultural groups and many of them, such as carnivals or festivals, are directed outwards to the entire society. Other activities are held within the cultural group, such as religious activities. Happenings initiated by youngsters are quite often without cultural boundaries, as they are often based in the school situation where many different cultures are present. These activities are altogether considered by the



"Why don't I live here?" Segregation on the housing market and the labour market is considered to be a grave problem. Photo: Agnetha Nordin.



Lack of good ideas is one obstacle to a positive development at the local level. Ideas can be discovered if renovations are organised so that inhabitants can influence the extent of the work and the actual design of the changes. Norsborg Stockholm Sweden.

respondents as important for the inhabitants as well as the development of the city district, still there does not seem to be much connection based on long-term conditions between these activities and local decision-making in the city district or housing companies. Quite often there is a dialogue concerning practical issues that have to be solved, however, the communication is rather irregular and seldom part of mainstream decision-making.

One important reason for the local professional to be interested in the activities of the inhabitants, are the ideas that these activities are based on (Ibid.: 32-33). There is a shortage of good ideas, according to the respondents, and therefore the engagement of the inhabitants is seen as essential for the local processes that the respondents may initiate. This obstacle is also closely related to the question of visibility (Ibid.: 34). Local processes must be followed by visible results, obvious for the inhabitants as well as for the local professionals. This is something that the respondents often stress as important for a process to succeed in the long run.

Secondly, there are obstacles related to the theme of local collaboration in networks. One important prerequisite for a positive result is the awareness of the actors for the need to develop a common value-ground (Ibid.: 30-31). Such shared focus is considered as intensely important by several of the respondents. The ability to push a shared vision forward depend on the vision being anchored among employed personnel, thus, common learning processes are seen as a necessary component. There may also exist unfortunate experiences from former attempts locally, which cause problems that the local professionals together have to respond to in an adequate way. A common value-ground, in addition, is in itself an important theme considering the necessity to base local initiatives on the needs of the inhabitants. In this way, collaborative networks may be seen as one way to bridge the problem of lack of good ideas on part of the inhabitants. Two obstacles mentioned in relation to this complex of problems are the competition between housing companies and the hierarchic structure of the city district administrations (Ibid.: 27-28).

The respondents also describe one way to avoid some of these obstacles, namely, the employment of a joint process leader (Ibid.: 31-32). This person may be seen as a mutual force for the collaborative network, acting on its behalf in all directions: upwards, downwards, and horizontally. Focusing on common problems and stimulating the development of the common value-ground of the group. Several of the respondents also stress the importance of this not ending up as an enthusiast thing, symbolising that it is the *role* that should be in focus, not the person. In relation to this theme, lack of time for the professionals to collaborate in local processes is also emphasised as a severe obstacle (Ibid.: 26-27). This situation has also deteriorated because of the recent cut in the budget of the public sector at the local level (Ibid.: 18).

Thirdly, there are obstacles which are closely related to the comprehensive perspective. Crossing boundaries between different sectors is necessary if the inhabitants are to be helped with their main problems. This mission, however, is not as simple as the respondents wish it would be. The problems they meet are often related to obstacles, such as safeguarding territories and ingrained power structures (Ibid.: 21-23). This discussion is also closely related to the debate on democracy that has been in progress for some years. According to the respondents it is hard to change practice, especially for large organisations, such as the city district administration with many employees in different administrative abodes.

Additionally there may be conflicts between the economic system of the housing company and the preferred mode of working at the local level for the employed personnel (Ibid.: 23-24). Financing may also constitute a problem when national or European funding is to be implemented at the local level (Ibid.: 24-26). Problems are mainly caused by the different perspectives of top-down control and bottom-up needs, but the distinctive time perspectives also interfere in a negative way when, e.g., the funding is to be evaluated (Ibid.: 26-27).

Discussion of Empirical Findings

This brief summary of the obstacles for a positive development to take place, as described by the respondents in the field investigation, constitutes the empirical basis for this thesis. These obstacles may sometimes also be perceived differently, depending on the abode of the respondents. This will be discussed a bit further in the following, with a point of departure in the empirical findings from the field investigation.

Housing Companies

As mentioned earlier, most of the respondents are employed by municipal housing companies. Even if they primarily refer to experiences from their participation in local collaborative networks, the place of their employment is probably important for their standpoints. The local organisations of the housing company that these people are parts of are quite small and flexible compared with, e.g., a city district administration. The number of employed personnel in a housing company in a city district may be only about thirty persons. This condition makes it easy for them to act quickly concerning issues over which they have control at the local level. This includes all sorts of communication with the inhabitants concerning, e.g., minor renovations of the buildings or new systems for sorting waste. However, things such as the development of a new management system for the housing may be rather difficult, as this is an example of decisions that are usually made at the municipal level. Decisions on environmental certification, such as EMAS, are also usually made at the municipal level.



Considering the debate on democracy one may wonder why all groups in Sweden are dependent on support from authorities. This is the result of a self-construction project built by the young generation in Rieselfeld Germany.

Additionally, the local professionals employed by housing companies may perceive their mission a bit differently considering democratic aspects. Their main task is to maintain the buildings and the housing area in such a condition that makes the inhabitants want to remain in the area, as this contributes to a beneficial economy for the company. Hence, they do not feel a democratic obligation to force inhabitants to participate under exactly the same conditions in the local processes that they initiate. Instead they may embrace participation from the inhabitants quite easily and still manage to take an overall perspective of the results of the processes, thus, considering the democratic aspects from time to time. However, in this way they are not able to leave the decision-making on specific issues to the inhabitants on a permanent basis, this must be done by local professionals.

There are also economic aspects that influence the local professionals. The system of economy used by the municipal housing companies seems to be a severe obstacle to local democracy processes. This comes as a result of the municipal level having control of economic resources and the privilege of changing local economic conditions from one year to another. The purpose of such a system is the ability to level out market effects and the problems caused by segregation, thus enabling the housing company to take money from one housing area and give to another. Such a system, however, makes it difficult for local democracy processes to exist under long-term conditions, as it works as an obstacle when agreements are to be written between the housing company and the inhabitant organisation. Hence, the inhabitants may not be interested in participating in local processes if the activity is not to be followed by control of finances. Further, if participation presumably implies that finances will leave the housing area, then interest for participation will be even less.

City District Committees

The local professionals on city district committees play quite a different role at the local level. They are civil servants with the aim of realising the welfare policy implemented by the local politicians in the city district committee. The democratic aspects are thus distinct, compared with the conditions for those employed by the housing companies. The city district committee employees are obliged to connect catchwords such as *justice* and *most needy*, additionally they have to fulfil these purposes in a system of representative democracy. Participation of the inhabitants, thus, is not unproblematic for them. In an organisation as big as the city district administration with maybe thousand employees and 20 000 inhabitants, the democratic aspects may be hard to overview. In this way they may have a more negative standpoint towards participation of inhabitants compared with the actors employed by the housing companies. Another democratic complication closely related to this problem

is that the local politicians in the city district committee are not chosen by the people in general elections, they are appointed by the city council according to the general result of the elections. The city district committee in that way is cut off from city residents, as the possibility to hold politicians responsibility must be directed towards the municipal level instead of the local level.

There are other obstacles which are closely related to the levels in society, i.e., the discontinuity that exists between the top level and the bottom level. As one example, the local actors are affected by the top-down perspective when special local projects are financed by funding originating from the national or European levels. This kind of funding is most often of concern for the employees of the city district committee, as they are often the answerable actor at the local level. On the one hand, the local professionals are dependent on top-down funding to be able to fulfil the most urgent needs of the people in these suburbs. On the other hand, the funding causes severe problems, such as forcing the local professionals to think in terms of project rather than process. Such thinking complicates the relationship with the inhabitants, as they have often suffered from various adjournments of projects over time. Neglecting the time perspective when evaluating projects is also a problem, according to the respondents it is hard to measure results after just a few years of work as the financier demands. When such projects are to be evaluated, the conflict between the distinct perspectives often becomes evident, a conflict that mostly implicates negative repercussions for the local community. Hence, the financier and the users may not define the goals similarly and, therefore, measurements turn out to be a problem.

There are some respondents in the field investigation that are employed at the municipal level, by the town planning department and the city council office. The experiences of these individuals seem, to a great deal, to be based on the same prerequisites as those employed by the city district committees, the fact that they are from different abodes will, therefore, not be further discussed here.

Non-governmental Organisations

There are only two respondents in the field investigation employed by non-governmental organisations and one respondent employed by an educational institution. Even if this group is rather small, there may be an interest in outlining some of the specific prerequisites that they seem to have. These respondents have a close relationship with the inhabitants, as they are employed by organisations with the explicit purpose of protecting the rights of a specific group of individuals. Consequently, they often give voice to the inhabitants, especially on issues concerning power relations and democracy. Their main opposition to the development of local processes concerns the lack of influ-

ence of the inhabitants. They argue that those who already have power in society, arrange local processes in a way that leave the inhabitants in a minority position. According to this group, it is, thus, the accidental occurrence of influence of the inhabitants that constitutes the most severe problem. Inhabitants are given permission to influence decision-making when it suits the local professionals in the housing companies and the city district administration. However, the attraction of organising such influence into mainstream decision-making does not seem to be very great.

Summing up the Field Investigation

The local professionals interviewed throughout the field investigation emphasise three main themes as central and forming a good circle that seems to constitute a framework for the activities that they take part in. Further, related to these themes, there are different obstacles to positive development.

How, then, do the experiences of the respondents relate to the stated purpose of the field investigation? *Do these local professionals have the potential to work as transformers of the notion of sustainable development at the local level?* The answer to this question, however, is both positive and negative. The potential may be considered as being high because the professionals often already collaborate in local networks. Further, they see such collaboration as being necessary for their organisations to function well and from their point of view they also perceive the collaboration as being fundamental for the local area to develop in a positive way. Taken together, this indicates a possibility that such local collaborative processes may continue, henceforth, and have the potential to survive in the long run.

On the other hand, the potential for the local professionals to function as transformers may be seen as little when observing their obvious lack of collaboration with the inhabitants. Thus, they do not appear to have reached very far along this line of development, especially not when comparing the situation today with the ambitions stated in the Agenda 21 document. Although the reason for this shortage is not at all self-evident, the local professionals point out some obvious obstacles such as segregation, competitiveness between companies, hierarchic structures, conflicting systems, safeguarding of territories, ingrained power structures, and different time perspectives.

One interesting result from the field investigation into sustainable development, is that environmental issues were not extensively discussed by the local professionals. They seemed to be more concerned with and knowledgeable of social, economic and institutional issues. However, this is a result that has to be related to the focus of the field investigation, which was to explore the experiences of the local democracy processes that the local professionals

had taken part in. They were not explicitly questioned about their engagement in, e.g., the carbon dioxide level or for the quantity of nutritious substances in waste water. They were just asked to discuss their experiences of engagement in local democracy processes. However, the absence of discussions concerning the explicit environmental issues may be seen as an interesting outcome of the investigation. How come this is not considered as a central part of local democracy processes? Consequently, one difficulty for the local professionals to act as transformers of the notion of sustainable development may be the lack of awareness and knowledge of this theme.

However, there may be a difference between local professionals employed by housing companies and local professionals employed by city district committees. The former group is often, in one way or another, part of environmental procedures because of environmental certification of companies, such as EMAS. Thus, they may have knowledge of this issue, even though such duties are not usually involved in the local processes they initiate. The latter group is most often not involved in such development at all, as it is still unusual for city district committees to strive for environmental certification. Additionally, in a city district administration there may be very few, often just *one* single appointed local Agenda 21 coordinator, assigned to pursue environmental issues. This is particularly true if they do not have a well-developed local Agenda 21 office, something that is quite unusual in the actual districts. These circumstances may altogether imply a lack of knowledge about environmental issues at the local level, even if it is not the same kind of knowledge that is omitted for all actors. Maybe this is not so much a matter of the existence of intellectual knowledge. There is perhaps a lack of ability, or potential, to make the knowledge useful in practical reality and to bring these issues into everyday actions.

To sum up, local professionals *do* have the potential to work as transformers of the notion of sustainable development at the local level. However, this potential is not evident. There are several obstacles that need to be overcome before this can work properly. An important and fundamental observation, however, is that the accounts of the respondents reflect a common criticism of the way that measures often are implemented, i.e., from the top. The vision of sustainable development is not an exception. Taken together, all the problems that the respondents describe as main obstacles to positive development may be seen as forming a thorough description of the distance between top-down management and bottom-up needs. Almost every problem they consider as being important carries such implications. The next chapter discusses possibilities of bridging this indicated gap between top-down and bottom-up perspectives. This discussion will be based on a review of the literature identifying theoretical bodies relevant for overcoming the distance between policy and local reality.

Bridging the Gap

THE PROBLEM of bridging the gap between top-down and bottom-up perspectives has been discussed in a substantial body of literature. Therefore, it is not self-evident which of these approaches may be considered as being most relevant for this thesis. There are two main points of departure, however, that could serve as criteria for a selection. Firstly, in this thesis, the focus is on the city district level, i.e., on the so-called middle level in society. Secondly, the combination of sustainable development and the influence of the inhabitants on local democracy processes is of particular interest. However, such strict search criteria when searching the literature gave no hits at all. It was, thus, necessary to depart from a broader scope when searching the literature by studying the themes relevant for this thesis separately, i.e., influence of the inhabitants, cooperation in networks, the middle level, and the notion of sustainable development. The following account is based on such a search in which different combinations of the themes are present within the different approaches. However, none of the theoretical bodies discovered comprises all of the thematic focal points.

As a point of departure in reviewing the literature which explores the themes found in the field investigation, work developed in the immediate academic surroundings at Chalmers Architecture was studied. In his thesis, planning researcher Björn Malbert thoroughly discusses the notion of the gap. He departs from the Agenda 21 document and aims at finding approaches for bridging the gaps between the public planning systems and the stakeholder communities (Malbert 1998: 84). One of the most interesting results of the thesis is the discussion showing the need of *new professional tasks and roles* in urban planning. The response to the communication problem resulting from the gap is, thus, to make changes in mainstream decision-making by introducing a new role into the planning systems, a person with knowledge of collaborative planning⁵ guiding processes forward with the help of relevant methods. As this author understands it, Malbert directs his main interest at the municipal

⁵ Collaborative planning is further discussed at p. 39.

level or higher and the methodology which he refers to, i.e. the strategic choice approach, seems to be suitable mainly for planning situations when the participants are experts at more or less equal level (Ibid.: 87, 101). An example of such a situation may be when experts from distinct sectors meet with the aim of discussing the problematic situation related to transport within a city.

However, apart from being focused at a different scale level the results presented by Malbert may be seen as corresponding very well with some of the empirical findings in this field investigation. Hence, new roles in planning as requested by Malbert, may be considered as a parallel to a discussion of the respondents concerning the need for a process leader. They refer to that person as a necessary catalyst for a local process to succeed, however, the character of the role may be hard to outline.

The process leader should not carry out the ideas herself and it is important that she takes distance from execution and expects us to take responsibility. The process leader is of course the spider in the web and therefore indispensable. As local professionals we cannot divide that role between us. Having a process leader is probably absolutely necessary (no. 13, housing company).⁶

Further, even if that person often has to be present at the local level, the respondents consider it of importance that this catalyst does not have his or her professional habitat within any of the participating organisations. Such a view makes it difficult for e.g. a planner employed at the city council office to play such a role.

At first I really had a hard time understanding which leg to stand on. I thought it was important that the four actors that employed me saw me as *their* process leader. I didn't want to be understood as employed by the city district committee (no. 25 city council office).

In a city districts which have local Agenda 21 offices, the people of these organisations operate at a level close to the local organisations represented in the field study. It is quite common that the local Agenda 21 office has employees that take on the role of process leaders. The problem is that as being employed by the city district they cannot easily take on the role of truly impartial catalysts. Thus, one possible conclusion may be that although new roles within public planning may be necessary for a positive development, the procedures applied so far within the context of the field investigation appear to be inadequate. This is especially so if the influence of the inhabitants on the planning process is to increase.

Planning researcher Lena Falkheden also discusses the communication problem existing between higher levels and the local level in the context of sustainable development. In her thesis (Falkheden 1999) she suggests an answer to this problem in terms of creating *links* between the global and the local context, between different individuals, and between man and nature.



Something concrete has to take be the result when people engage themselves in local processes, something that is visible. The tiles for this work of art, an astrolab, have been designed by school childs from Alby Stockholm Sweden.

⁶ See p. 83 for further information about the respondents.

Furthermore, Falkheden emphasises the need to make these links visible, not only to the eye but also to the other four senses (Ibid.: 177). According to Falkheden, it is necessary to make the relations between man and nature sensuous, in other words to design the links in such a way that they may explain and translate global prerequisites to the local inhabitants, thus “creating bridges for sustainable development” (Ibid.: 253).

Notably, these results, to a great extent, correspond with the findings of the field investigation, e.g., concerning the emphasis on visible results. The respondents stress the importance of showing results, not only for the sake of the inhabitants but also for the employed personnel in the housing companies and the city district committees. They are often guests in the local environment where they work, and therefore, do not always realise the advantages of influence from inhabitants on local processes. The respondents, thus, argue the importance of visible results, though it is not necessary that the results are physical, i.e., in the shape of a building or a place. This may also be shown in an abstract way, e.g., as an idea illustrated in a sketch.

I found it interesting that this picture made so many people understand what I wanted to achieve. One year after the sketch we got started. I put all my efforts into it of course. A picture of what you want is really important (no. 11, town planning department).

The notion of designed links developed by Falkheden thus appears to be relevant for the further development of this thesis. The visible, or sensuous, results are not only important as a catalyst for common understanding and action. These may also, as Falkheden emphasises, constitute the indispensable link between the global vision of sustainable development and the interpretation of the vision at the local level. The next chapter will discuss this issue, with a point of departure in the different perspectives that distinct actors may have, depending on the level in society from which they act.

Project or Process?

Departing from the field investigation, one distinction between local actors, on the one hand, and actors at municipal, regional, national or European levels on the other, is how they perceive local action. The respondents express deep concern for the problems that may rise when local professionals are dependent on higher levels for different reasons.

We certainly have a project oriented approach in our culture. Seeing life as project rather than a process is a fundamental difference (no. 24, city planning office).

Consequently, this respondent says that actors at higher levels see local actions as clearly defined projects, while actors at the local level see them as forming



Employed personnel are often guests in the local environment where they work and do not always realise the advantages of influence from inhabitants on local processes. When youth in Årsta were given power over the renovation process of a building from the 50s, the result was small and cheap flats. Framtidsloftet Stockholm Sweden.

parts of continuously on-going processes. For the local professionals, these two differing approaches represent a grave problem. This top-down project oriented approach does not correlate accurately with local action, if departing from the point of view of the local professionals.

Characteristic for good local processes is that they are unobtrusive, target-oriented, sensitive and persistent over time. When for example large amounts of governmental funding reach the local level in the form of projects, it is as if the good intention ends up as the enemy of the original idea. There is something wrong with this way of thinking, which has after all a laudable ambition. It breaches the conditions for democratic processes. Therefore irrational moments rise, as for example when we ask ourselves what we are going to do with this money. The existence of that question shows that something has failed. The process is thus not built from the bottom-up, as it should have been (no. 24, city planning office).

Not only the practice of how local projects are funded from the municipal, national or European level that constitutes a problem for the local professionals, but also the differing time perspectives involve a dilemma. The political democratic system requires specific routines when local professionals apply for funding. These routines imply bureaucracy and time-consuming procedures. Thus, this does not correlate properly with local democracy processes, i.e., when the inhabitants are to be involved in local processes and influence decision-making concerning funding.

It takes two years before you hold the money in your hand. Although, as the development is rapid, the issue that was of immediate interest at that moment is almost worthless now. Nowadays with IT it's even more rapid. I don't think this is sustainable in the long run. The whole system is outdated. You have to change the way of thinking! The parliament and the government, the entire process, they are too slow. Our housing company is also too slow and so is the municipality. If you are going to wait for their decision it takes six months (no. 1 and 2, housing company).

This problem of differing perspectives is not only due to conflicts arising from different time perspectives, e.g., at the time of project evaluation when the financier may urge results after just a few years. In addition, the top-down approach aims at measuring only the factors that were part of the initial goal formulation of the project. Within a project focused on environmental factors, for instance, only results directly related to the environment will be valued. Local actors cannot afford to work in such a sectorised manner. Instead they try to set up comprehensive initiatives affecting as many dimensions of the local environment as possible.

In a project with the official aim of decreasing the environmental impact, the local professional may, for example, focus just as much on social aspects as on environmental aspects. These social issues are surely important to consider, as they are also fundamental for the environmental result of the work. A posi-



A positive outcome from sorting waste for composting depends not only on technical solutions but also on how the inhabitants perceive the problem. Hyldebjergvej Albertslund Danmark.

tive outcome from sorting waste for composting is, e.g., dependent not only on technical solutions but also on how the inhabitants perceive the problem.

Those that are interested may tell us and then we hand them the accessories, in this way we may check who participate. We don't want to force this on them, it doesn't work. /.../ We choose one night, and together take one block of flats at a time. We ask every single person if they sort waste and if they need some sort of help. We keep notes, thus we get statistics on the situation. /.../ 68% in this housing area sort compost waste, on paper. Not in reality though. /.../ We come back several times to follow up. Sometimes we weigh the compost at one entrance to get a true picture of the situation. Sometimes they probably want to get rid of us and therefore they say yes when we ask. /.../ We have stickers that they can put on their mailbox to brag, that creates group pressure (no. 18-20, housing company).

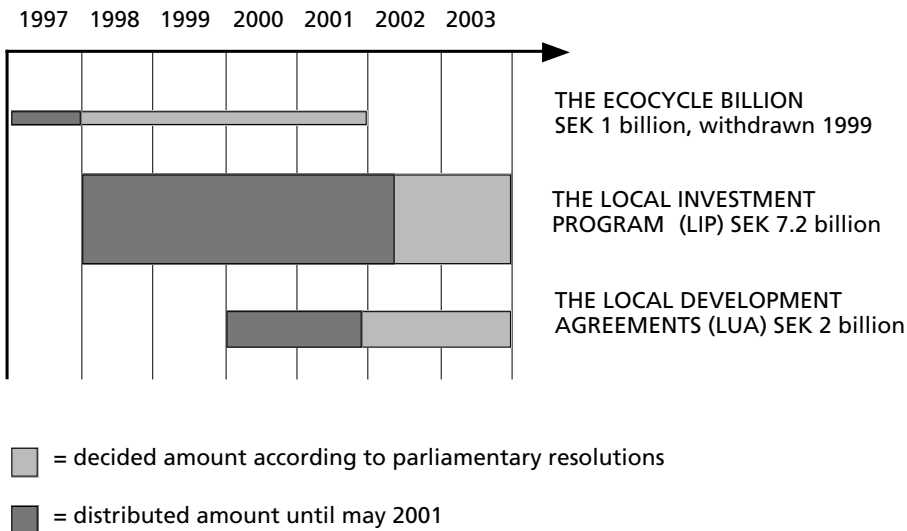
In this way the local professionals may spend most of their time on social issues, i.e., discussing individual standpoints and in this way also participating in learning processes concerning the environment. As a result of this close connection with inhabitants they may end up discussing not only environmental issues, but also many other issues of importance for the inhabitants. The visible result of this environmental project, then, may not be as sensational as the financier has hoped, the result may, instead, be hidden among the inhabitants as accumulated knowledge.

We don't have a spectacular wind power station or something like that. Although, if you enter the waste room there is a sack of compost waste (no. 18-20, housing company).

Financing projects at the local level is one common way for the government to distribute funding for exposed housing areas or to lead society in a politically desired direction. Understanding the prerequisites for and the effects of such a distribution of money from the top, implies valuable knowledge with importance when trying to bridge the gap between the top and the bottom. The respondents express anxiety about such funding to influence their local work in a negative way, i.e., if it changes their way of thinking in a process and, instead, makes them focus on project. Large sums of money can, e.g., lead to an abrupt initial phase of a process, even if it is common knowledge among local professionals that a slow initial phase may be fundamental for a positive result.

Most important with this process is how it has grown. We haven't had any subsidies, we didn't get a heap of money to spend. The process has grown from the base, now we have a steady foundation to stand on. It is not dependent on one single enthusiast, there are several important actors. If someone falls, the process will still continue to grow (no. 5 and 6, housing company).

In the past four years, the Swedish government has allocated about 10 billion Swedish crowns within three distinct target areas of importance for professionals and inhabitants at the local level, the ecocycle billion, the local invest-



ment program (LIP) and the local development agreements (LUA) (see fig. 6). Investments like these are necessary for a positive development at the local level, as the initiatives are directed towards areas with specific and burdensome problems to be solved. One reason other than local needs for this funding, is the adaptation of society to sustainable development. This change is intended to be facilitated and encouraged by, among others, this funding. Without this extra funding it may be hard, e.g., for suburban areas in major urban centres from the 60s and the 70s to develop in a positive way. Hence, most of the respondents in the field investigation consider the subsidies as fundamental for their work to succeed. What they principally criticise is the practice of dividing funding, not the existence of it.

I don't think it would have been possible to develop this network, if we had got a lot of money from the beginning. Our network is very important. The smooth cooperation with another housing company, it's fantastic. We can discuss the rents too, even though we are competitors. If we had money from the beginning we would have safeguarded our own interest much more. It has been tough of course, although also amusing. Especially when progress becomes visible. Sometimes it has really been tenacious, e.g. when the city district committee didn't want to hear about this process. They are about 1500 people, it's not easy to initiate something new there. /.../ Although perseverance makes a difference, today it's the opposite. Now they come to us /.../ That's good, cooperation across boundaries (no. 17, housing company).

From a top-down point of view, this type of funding constitute a way for national politicians to influence the local environment in a way which corresponds with national and European policies. As the quotation above shows, the funding may, if it is well practised, also have another outcome:

Fig. 6. Some of the contributions that the state have made to local processes and sustainable development. Sources: <http://www.hallbarasverige.gov.se>, <http://www.regeringen.se>, http://miljo.regeringen.se/M-dep_fragor/hallbarutveckling, <http://www.storstad.gov.se>.

collaboration between local professionals that traditionally see each other as competitors. This theme will be further discussed in the next chapter, departing from the notion *collaborative planning approach* as interpreted by planning researcher Patsy Healey.

Collaborative Planning Approach

As described earlier, various researchers have discussed problems concerning the difficulties of bridging the gap between top-down initiatives and bottom-up demands. This problem may have been discussed from many different points of departure, depending on the affiliation of the authors. However, they often seem to end up with the same issue: We are aware of the dilemma and we can agree upon the problematic situation, but how can we make changes happen in practice? This understanding of the problematic is also shared by the respondents in the field investigation.

It is really hard when you perform a transversing function. Suddenly I found myself being in a position *outside* the system! It was very interesting. I can't even sketch it, here is the system and here I was, in a lonely box that didn't even exist (no. 25, city council office).⁷

Possibly the collaborative planning approach may be considered to offer solutions to problems related to bridging the gap obstructing understanding and exchange between different levels of society. This approach implies a transition from the traditional, rational, instrumental, target-oriented and hierarchical form of planning – *government*, to an open, communicative and collaborative form of planning – *governance*. Governance includes not only the formal structures, but also the informal arenas and networks (Healey 1997: 59). “Governance involves the articulation of rules of behaviour with respect to the collective affairs of a political community; and of principles for allocating resources among community members” (Ibid.: 206). As the main focus for this collaborative approach is on formal and informal networks, it is usually labelled as *institutional*. “It may be seen as an idealistic vision” (Ibid.: 313), as Patsy Healey puts it in her major work about collaborative planning. However, it is not unrealistic, she argues, as all formal societal systems are socially constructed by the users:

These formal systems are often seen as immovable constraints, powerful systems which are just ‘there’. But the institutionalist approach emphasises that constraints are never fixed. They are socially made and re-made; through dialogue, by re-thinking; by changing perspectives, through social mobilisation (Ibid.: 314).

⁷ See p. 83 for further information about the respondents.

⁸ The primary source that Healey refers to concerning Giddens is *The Constitution of Society* (1984) and *Consequences of Modernity* (1990).

To a great extent, the collaborative planning approach as developed by Healey takes its point of departure in Anthony Giddens’ theory of structuration⁸ (Ibid.: 45-49), as well as in Jürgen Habermas’ theory of

communicative action⁹ (Ibid.: 49-54). According to Healey, the theory of structuration emphasises the awareness of the power that every person exercises when making everyday decisions at work or at home. The structures exist because of our actions, rather than as a separate system that we try to co-function with. “The structuring is therefore *inside ourselves*”, she argues (Ibid.: 46). The societal structures are, consequently, constructed by each individual. First of all, as a result of our day-to-day life and, second of all as a result of what has taken place before, not only in our individual lives but also within the lives of our different relational webs. Thus, people do have substantial influence on the structures as they both use them and constitute them, they may however not be aware of this interrelation. There may exist a lack of conscious reflexivity (Ibid.: 49).

Habermas’ theory of communicative action deals with, according to Healey, “how to reconstitute the public realm through open, public debate” (Ibid.: 49). It is, thus, a theory of communication processes and their potential to make abstract structures more understandable. Compared to Giddens, Habermas appears to emphasise the difference between structure and everyday life more strongly:

He [Habermas] uses the concept of *abstract system* to identify the structures of economic order (the marketplace) and political order (bureaucracy) which constrain daily life. This is opposed to the *lifeworld* of personal existence; the daily, weekly and yearly going about and getting on in the life of personal existence (Ibid.: 50).

In the way that this discussion is presented by Healey, there also seems to be a marked difference between the opinions of Giddens and Habermas concerning the potential to influence the structure or the system. They seem to agree on the existence of the problem related to the increasing gap between system and lifeworld. However, while Giddens argues that this gap results from lack of awareness, Habermas maintains that it is rather a matter of how the present *basis for reasoning* steers the way of communication in the lifeworld. He argues that the *instrumental-technical* way of reasoning dominates communication in society, at the expense of *moral reasoning* and *emotive-aesthetic reasoning*. Instrumental-technical reasoning comes from the economic and politic spheres, and the system in that way invades the lifeworld, which in its turn is separates public policy from people’s everyday life even more (Ibid.: 51-52). According to Healey, Giddens and Habermas thus seem to consider the communication problems between system and lifeworld as being equally critical, however, they may not agree on the cause of the problem and, consequently, not the solution.

Collaborative planning and communicative action appears to be themes of considerable importance for the development of knowledge concerning local democracy processes. An important observation is that even if local actors do not use the same words as the theorists to describe their

⁹ The primary source that Healey refers to concerning Habermas is *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol I* (1984), *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1987) and *Justification and Application: Remarks on Discourse Ethics* (1993).

situation, they seem to share their opinions about the problematic situation and they are quite aware of the prerequisites for a desired development. It is, however, hard to change practice.

We don't have very much direct contact with people, the reason for this is our primary intentions. We wanted to build our own organisation here, with close cooperation with the inhabitants. Then, when we called to a meeting everybody was really furious. Again and again you come here with new projects and experiments, the money never last long. You steal our ideas and then nothing at all happens. We don't want more experiments here (no. 11, town planning department). Then we decided in the city district committee that we were going to start with ourselves, to build networks within our own organisation and develop a value-ground between the different actors. A common ideology for the city district (no. 3, city district committee).

In this chapter, the difference between project and process has been discussed from the practitioners' point of departure for the description of the communication problems between top-down steering and bottom-up needs. Further, the collaborative planning approach has been discussed as an answer to some of the problems related to the different perspectives. However, local professionals have also outlined the importance of setting up actions with significance for as many dimensions of sustainable development as possible, not just one goal of, e.g., a decrease in environmental impact (p. 36). In this way the broad definition of the notion sustainable development may be seen as corresponding with the local point of departure, as this approach also requires a comprehensive perspective. The next chapter will, therefore, discuss the theme of sustainable development, with a specific focus on its relation to local democracy processes.

Sustainable Development

The notion of sustainable development is a broad political vision. Due to its wide-ranging definition, however, it appears that there is a need to subdivide the various elements constituting the notion in order to arrive at a better understanding and to make the concept more operational. In one research approach, developed by environmental scientist Joachim Spangenberg, economist Odile Bonniot and geographer Anke Valentin from the Wuppertal Institute, these elements may be ordered into four dimensions of sustainable development. These dimensions are seen as forming a four-dimensional prism (see fig. 7) with the environmental, economic and social dimensions at the base and the institutional dimension on the top (Spangenberg and Bonniot 1998: 1; Valentin and Spangenberg 1999: 3). The four dimensions of sustainable development presented in this approach originate in a report by Ismail Serageldin, vice president of special programs at the World Bank. In this report four different types of capital are defined: natural capital, man-made capital, human capital and social capital (Serageldin 1996: 4).

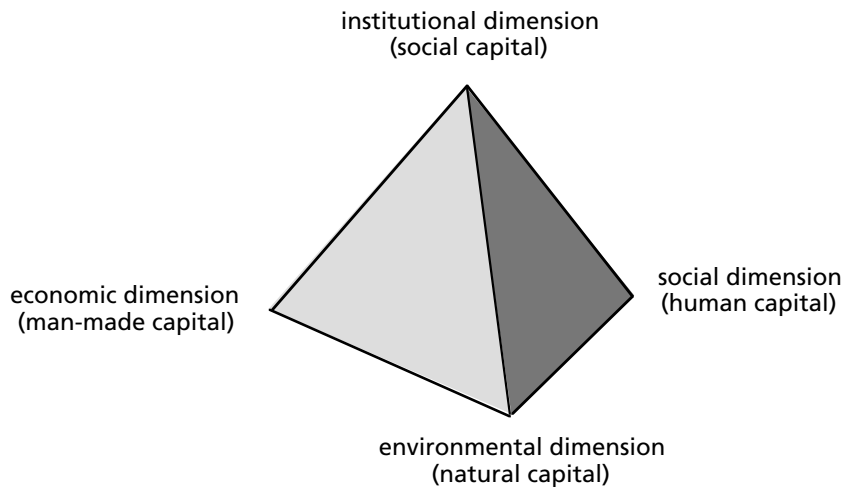


Fig. 7. The prism of sustainable development adapted after Spangenberg and Bonniot (1998), Valentin and Spangenberg (1999).

The discussion concerning the four different dimensions of sustainable development may appear incoherent and abstract if not related to the *imperatives* inherent in each dimension. An imperative tells what to *do* and it may, thus, be considered as constituting a norm for action. Thus, based on these imperatives, *indicators* for sustainable development may be identified (see e.g. CSD 1996; Valentin and Spangenberg 1999). These indicators are used to measure how far one has actually come in comparison to the overall vision of sustainable development. They are, thus, expected to work as instruments for politicians and other macro actors in order to make decisions that depart from a comprehensive perspective of the vision of sustainable development.

The development of imperatives and indicators has resulted in several different interpretations of the dimensions of sustainable development and the results are sometimes quite confusing. As an example, in the report by Valentin and Spangenberg, one imperative for the economic dimension is to *improve competitiveness* and another imperative for the social dimension is to *safeguard cohesion* (Valentin and Spangenberg 1999: fig. 1). However, this interpretation may be seen as not corresponding to the definition of the four kinds of capital presented by Serageldin. This inconsistency is discussed by planning researcher Jaan-Henrik Kain at Chalmers Architecture. As regards the concept of the prism of sustainable development, he argues, “the economic dimension tends to include assets emanating from all four dimensions, thus, adding confusion to the description and analysis” (Kain 2000: 25). The imperative to improve competitiveness may be seen as an example of such an inclusionary interpretation.

In his thesis, Kain develops a more stringent image of the four dimensions, based strictly on the notions of natural, man-made, human and social capital. In this conceptual model the environmental dimension “comprises all

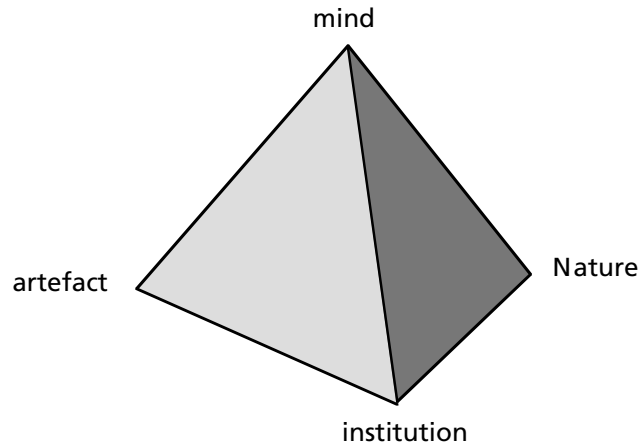


Fig. 8. The MAIN prism of sustainable development (Kain 2001).

natural capital which in turn may be subdivided into two categories: stocks of non-renewable and renewable natural resources respectively” (Ibid.: 26).¹⁰ The economic dimension includes “all man-made material assets such as buildings, roads and ducts” (Ibid.: 26).¹¹ These two dimensions are often closely intertwined in reality, as the discussions concerning development often end up as something of a combat between those who emphasise economic welfare and those who stress the protection of nature (Ibid.: 26). Moreover, the social dimension – human capital – should, according to Kain, be perceived as the awareness of the individual, meaning “the worldview, knowledge and wellbeing possessed or experienced by the individuals” (Ibid.: 40). Finally, the institutional dimension concerns relations between people, i.e., how we organise our society and how knowledge is distributed. This dimension, thus, contains both formal and informal structures, i.e., more strict systems for control and decision-making but also loose systems for social interaction – social capital (Ibid.: 34). As a result of this discussion, Kain has developed a prism using another set of expressions. Thus the MAIN prism is comprised of *mind*, *artefact*, *institution* and *nature* (see fig. 8) (Kain 2001). The intention of using this redefined prism is to relieve the prism from the burden of the expressions social and economic, as they are often more confusing than explanatory. Yet another ambition is to make clear that the notion environmental does not include any man-made artefacts.

How then would the imperatives be interpreted from the approach of the MAIN prism? Is it possible simply to put the word *increase* in front of each dimension? If so, the environmental imperative would be simply *to increase natural capital*. Possibly, this may be accomplished through a decrease in the use of organic and non-organic material through an increase in recycling material. However, this also has to be complemented by an increase in biological

¹⁰ Here Kain draws on “Sustainable Development and Social Welfare” in *Ecological Economics* (32): 481-492 by Werner Hediger (2000).

¹¹ Drawing on Serageldin (1996).

production through intensive cultivation of biomass. Consequently, the economic imperative should be *to increase man-made capital*. This is possible to accomplish by producing more material welfare, such as schools, hospitals, cars, buses and aeroplanes. Further, the imperative for the social dimension then should be *to increase human capital*, i.e. to make individuals feel better by providing, e.g., good education and plentiful cultural events. Finally, the imperative of the institutional dimension should be *to increase social capital*, i.e., to improve formal and informal interrelations between individuals.

Of course, such an increase in capital within all four dimensions is self-contradictory. Thus, this line of reasoning instead highlights that it is the *interaction* between all four dimensions that constitutes sustainable development (Kain 2000: 128). It is, consequently, not possible to know if a development may be considered as sustainable, if all four dimensions have not been considered. This is also clearly pointed out in the research reports on the prism from the Wuppertal Institute (Spangenberg and Bonniot 1998: 3; Valentin and Spangenberg 1999: 1). This emphasis on the comprehensive perspective and the possible potential of the prism as an approach for strengthening this perspective, has been further developed by both Spangenberg (2000) and Valentin (2000). In her research, Valentin aims at identifying those aspects of sustainable development that are important from a bottom-up perspective departing from the local situation. The interest of the local actors is to use indicators that are full of nuances. This interest often stands in contrast to the needs of the national level, encouraging simple and transparent systems with a limited numbers of indicators. Furthermore, for researchers developing indicators at the macro level, the shortage of information from within the social and the institutional dimensions is obvious, and it is, thus, hard to measure indicator values from all four dimensions within the same model. Valentin therefore attempts to develop new participatory procedures for finding and evaluating indicators for sustainable development by using local working groups and their *leitbilder* (Valentin and Spangenberg 1999; Valentin and Spangenberg 2000).

Spangenberg agrees on this concern for focusing on the bottom-up perspective, but emphasises the importance of focusing initially on higher levels when operationalising the notion of sustainable development, as these are the levels at which decisions concerning the local situation accumulate. Subsequently, according to him it is necessary first to understand the notion at higher levels before it is possible to draw any conclusions concerning the links between levels and, finally, to take any further action at the local level (Spangenberg 2000). In fact, it was the matter of how to bring together projects at different levels and within different dimensions that led to the development of the prism in the first place, as an aid in asking relevant questions about sustainable development.



Decent quality of public transport is one important prerequisite for good living conditions. Such factors are hard to influence from the local level. This is Rieselfeld in Germany, a recently built housing area.

How, then, do the findings from the field investigation presented in this thesis correspond with the discussion of the notion of sustainable development? Firstly, the comprehensive perspective is something that the respondents are very concerned with. In many ways they express frustration about the absence of a comprehensive perspective when communicating with actors at the national level concerning e.g. financing. In fact, the local professionals are not at all supposed to deal with all four dimensions of sustainable development.

Streets and transportation are also important for housing. It's terribly far walk to public transportation here. We need a cash dispenser. Surprisingly, people really have money in this district too! It's necessary to see the area from a comprehensive perspective. We need basic things. Like feeling safe on your way home (no. 1 and 2, housing company).¹²

As was mentioned earlier (p. 31-32), the environmental dimension (natural capital) seems to be of little concern to the local actors in the field investigation. They hardly talk about it and it appears as if they consider it as being a responsibility located outside their domain, at the municipal or national levels.

The ecological aspect is actually not included in our local vision. We may, however, be interested in this theme, considering your research project (no. 4, housing company).

Thus, they do not appear to perceive the environmental dimension as forming a central and integrated part of the long-range process they run professionally in the city districts. Those who discuss environmental issues often relate them to a specific project, related to the environment, that is supported by national or international funding. However, sometimes the actors are engaged in the environmental issue as a result of the environmental certification of the companies, but this is mostly a top-down responsibility located at higher levels of the organisation.

The economic dimension (man-made capital), in contrast, is both essential and of immediate interest to local professionals, as their primary responsibility is to manage material welfare. This dimension contains everything that man has constructed and at the local level examples of this may be a good place to live in, a school for the children or an elderly-care centre. At the same time, local professionals exercise almost no influence over the market economy system, i.e., over the mechanism for managing man-made capital. Neither do they have much influence on the design of the artefacts, as that is a responsibility located at other levels of society.

The social dimension (human capital) may, in a few words, be described as dealing with the human need to lead a life with dignity and it comprises individual thoughts and perceptions. For example, this may include the satisfaction a job can give and the necessity for personal growth. This dimension is intensely central to the local actors in the field investigation, especially for

¹² See p. 83 for further information about the respondents.

those involved in local processes over time. Results from this dimension are, however, seldom measured in project evaluations. They are often considered as constituting human rights that are presumed to have been fulfilled a long time ago, even if this is obviously not the case in many suburban areas surrounding major urban centres of Sweden.

Finally, of what interest is the institutional dimension of sustainable development (social capital) to the local professional? Apparently, it is most relevant to them as it comprises the formal and informal decision-making structures that may include any system that organises people and their interrelations. The market economy system is also part of this dimension as it is an institutional agreement on monetary transactions. Further, the networks within and between non-governmental organisations are also part of this dimension as well as the communication taking place within local collaborative processes. For the local actor these aspects are central, even though they seem to have trouble managing them. For example, local professionals are very concerned about the consequences the inhabitants' participation may have on the system of representative democracy.

A major advantage of subdividing the notion of sustainable development into distinct dimensions is that this facilitates a better understanding of the unequal importance that the different dimensions have been shown to carry at different levels of society. It is not at all surprising that the development of the notion has taken this course, as it once started out as a marriage between two large societal movements: the economic development movement and the environmental protection movement (Meadowcroft 1999: 13). Representatives of these two movements were united at the UN Conference in Rio de Janeiro 1992 when agreeing upon several central documents of global partnerships. As a result, when discussing sustainable development at the national level or higher, economic and environmental dimensions always seem to be considered as the most important.

In Sweden, however, the main focus has been even more narrow. As an example, the government often emphasises the environmental dimension and acts as if this alone equals sustainable development (see e.g. Ministry of the Environment 1999). Such a biased understanding of the meaning of the notion is of importance for the actors at the local level, as they are dependent on the activities at the higher levels in many ways. This may be seen as corresponding to Habermas' discussion, as interpreted by Healey, concerning instrumental-technical reasoning as coming from the economic and political spheres and from there invading the lifeworld (Healey 1997: 51-52).¹³ Habermas' discussion of the lack of moral reasoning and emotive-aesthetic reasoning in the dialogue may, thus, be compared with the lack of institutional and social dimensions in the discussion of the meaning of sustainable develop-

¹³ The primary source that Healey refers to concerning Habermas is *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol I* (1984), *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1987) and *Justification and Application: Remarks on Discourse Ethics* (1993).

ment. In this way, the Wuppertal approach of the notion sustainable development may be seen as a parallel to Habermas' theory of communicative action, as interpreted by Healey (Ibid.: 51). The instrumental-technical reasoning may, thus, be considered as analogue with the environmental and the economic dimensions of sustainable development, as these notions are interpreted by Kain (see p. 41-42). Instrumental-technical reasoning implies a scientific and rationalist way of handling society and the environmental and economic dimensions of sustainable development are often managed in this way. Moral reasoning is focused on values and ethics and may be considered as parallel to the institutional dimension of sustainable development, as this dimension contains formal and informal systems for control, decision-making and social interaction. Finally, emotive-aesthetic reasoning concerns emotive experience and may be considered as corresponding to the social dimension of sustainable development. In this dimension, the mind, how people feel, is considered to be in focus.

Another parallel between the notion of sustainable development and the theories of Habermas, as understood by Healey, may be the emphasis on integration of all aspects. As mentioned earlier (p. 44), the interaction between all four dimensions constitutes sustainable development. A similar kind of conclusion has been drawn by Healey concerning Habermas' three modes of reasoning.

So, the appeal to science, the appeal to moral value, and the appeal to emotional response should be given an equivalent status in debate, rather than privileging one sphere of reasoning – that is, the rational-technical sphere (Healey 1997: 52).

To sum up, in this chapter two different kinds of gaps have been discussed. On the one hand, there is the gap between top-down and bottom-up perspectives. On the other, there are also gaps or interfaces existing between the different dimensions of sustainable development (Kain 2000: 130). As mentioned earlier, the collaborative planning approach may have the potential to bridge the gap between top-down and bottom-up perspectives (p. 41). However, the gaps between the four dimensions may possibly not be bridged only with help of such an approach, as these horizontal gaps, to a great extent, seem to be dependent on traditional structures of decision-making and power relations.

It is, thus, important to understand what happens when a local professional faces a concrete decision-making situation related to the local context, and if this professional tries to opt for a more comprehensive perspective. Within such a context the prism of sustainable development may function as a four-dimensional model enabling a better understanding of the comprehensive nature of local everyday action. But how can such a wider decision-making situation be facilitated? One way of increasing common knowledge concerning the interacting dimensions may be to introduce *four-dimensional organisations for learning and decision-making*.

Today, the responsibilities for the four dimensions of sustainable development are unevenly distributed between different sectors and between different policy levels: the nation, the municipality and the city district. Thus, an important question may be: Who can delegate the responsibility for and the power over the underrepresented or missing decision-domains and how could such a transfer be managed in practice?

The purpose of this research project is to study the relation between broad public participation in decision-making and sustainable development. Further, one central research question is to contribute to the development of knowledge of what the vision of sustainable development may entail at the local level. Additionally, it has the intention of being conducive to the understanding of how this knowledge may be related to the vision of broad public participation in decision-making, as this is clearly pointed out as fundamental in the Agenda 21 document. Even if local professionals in the field investigation have their own opinions on this issue, they do not have much practical experiences of local processes that have, in fact, led to real participation in decision-making. What is the reason for this? Which obstacles are mentioned as important to such development taking place? The next chapter will go deeper into this issue departing from the contemporary national debate on democracy.

The Debate on Democracy

As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis (p. 13) the National Committee on Democracy in their final report summed up their main conclusions, in short a recommendation to include more participation and deliberative qualities into the representative democracy system (SOU 2000: 23). The deliberative approach stresses communication and argumentation as being of fundamental importance.

However, some political scientists oppose such an approach, see e.g. Peter Esaiasson and Mikael Gilljam (2000). They have criticised the report for being unrealistic and for giving an all too idealised picture of public participation. In their line of argumentation, they question whether or not people in general have the potential to give priority to political commitment in the manner described in the committee report. They express a fear that the idea of participation may, instead, put the representative system into danger, an effect which would affect the most exposed and vulnerable people in society most seriously.

Advocates of participative democracy, however, see e.g. political scientist Sören Holmberg, maintain that the deliberative approach may work *within* the representative system and furthermore may improve its qualities (Holmberg 1999: 13). One reason for these differing points of view is the way in which these opposing approaches perceive the electors and their knowledge. Adherents

to participative democracy place a large degree of confidence in the competence and capacity of people. It is argued by Holmberg that “knowledge is one of the core questions in this debate” (Ibid.: 36, my translation).

The debate is also made more complex by the fact that, today, we are discussing influence from quite different groups of citizens than earlier. Before the redistribution of local government areas into larger more centralised units in the 70s, there was a larger number of elected representatives. These had substantial networks of contacts at the local level, something that filled an important function for accounting for ideas and anchoring political proposals. When talking about participative democracy today, however, there is a range of new actors involved. At the local level where the local politicians used to be active, there are now the officials within the city district committees and the employees in housing companies, who build up communicative networks. Among the inhabitants there are also other categories of people participating in the public debate, compared with the era of the strong Swedish welfare state. The networks of today doubtless contain more of active immigrants, women and youths compared to earlier, a fact that may influence the debate on participation and democracy. To put it bluntly: Is it fear of these new groups’ competencies and capacity which make some people sceptical of more participative democracy?

However, instead of focusing on the competencies and capacities of these people, it is also possible to move the focal point to the structures of the political networks. It may be argued that it is not the participants as individuals but this structure that is to blame for the malfunctions of participative democracy processes. Departing from such a perspective, the national committee on democracy may find support in the well-known research project on political reforms in Italy conducted by political scientist Robert Putnam. In this study, Putnam shows that where there exists a high degree of civic spirit, i.e., a lot of local participation and activity in recreational and cultural associations, this will influence the whole local area in a positive way. When groups of citizens are active in such networks “bringing together agents of equivalent status and power” (Putnam 1993: 173) they constitute *horizontal networks*. Putnam argues that the existence of such networks is fundamental for the development of social capital. *Vertical networks*, on the other hand, do not have such a positive influence on local development. While horizontal networks are characterised by reciprocity and trust, dependency and exploitation may be found within vertical relationships. For a long time, Putnam and his research team have been comparing the south of Italy, with mainly vertical networks, to the north of Italy with a lot of local organisations organised in horizontal networks. By comparing these network structures with the eco-

conomic development in the different regions of the country they have shown that the north, with its horizontal networks, has embodied much more economic progress than the south (Ibid.: 176).

Two other social scientists, Bo Rothstein and Staffan Kumlin, oppose this theory of social capital. They argue that social capital is not primarily built on activities in horizontal networks, instead they maintain that social capital comes as a result of effective formal institutions, i.e., activities in *vertical* networks (Rothstein 2000). Both Putnam and Rothstein/Kumlin discuss the presence of reciprocity and trust between human beings as fundamental for the development of social capital. However, when Putnam presents his chain of cause and effect, he argues that social capital comes as a result of trust and general reciprocity, which, in turn, comes as a result of the existence of activities in horizontal networks. Rothstein and Kumlin, in turn, argue that social capital comes as a result of the existence of trust between human beings, which, in turn comes as a result of effective formal institutions (Rothstein 2000: 2; Rothstein and Kumlin 2001: 7).¹⁴ In other words, it is the absence of corrupted politicians and civil servants that constitutes the foundation for the development of social capital, according to Rothstein and Kumlin. Consequently, the author understands it, while Putnam states that social capital is built from the bottom and up, Rothstein and Kumlin maintain that social capital is built from the top and down.

How do these statements correspond to the findings in the field investigation in this thesis? As inhabitants are not included in the investigation it is not possible to discuss their point of view on the theme of trust and social capital. Local professionals, however, have opinions concerning this subject, as most of them have the intention of including active inhabitants into their local processes.

I reach a lot of people through associations and non-governmental organisations. I have been working here for a long time and meet many inhabitants. Additionally I am curious. I saw that one association organised city walks, then I walked together with them. Thus, I met eight inhabitants and got their telephone numbers. I also contact colleagues that live here and they spread the information further. My aim is to make things better in this city district. I have a large contact network after sixteen years in the area (no. 9, city district committee).¹⁵

This personal local knowledge and the habit of working in close cooperation with non-governmental organisations and other social groups seem to be of great importance for the local professionals with the ambition of facilitating the influence of inhabitants. Another local professional expresses the same experience, referring to local processes in which local professionals cooperate with each other. They, as well as the inhabitants, need time to build trust and reciprocity.

¹⁴ The page references for Rothstein and Kumlin (2001) relate to an advance copy of the book section, as the book yet not were distributed at the time for the publication of this thesis.

¹⁵ See p. 83 for further information about the respondents.

We didn't know each other especially well. It took us a long time to build up trust and to communicate on a proper level. Where we didn't exploit each other, rather trying to work as an ensemble (no. 9, housing company).

There are also respondents who express deep concern about problems related to democracy, which they often meet in their everyday practice. According to one respondent in a local non-governmental organisation, the most severe problem for local professionals seems to be the lack of legitimacy for political decisions. The respondent argues that local professionals mainly need local participation in order to confirm the political decisions that are already taken in the local area. At least this seems to be an important first priority.

The civil servants and the politicians are too divided. /.../ The civil servants seem to think that there is no need for politicians. They think they already know our needs. Then they get surprised when people don't want to commit... It's still too much of top-down steering. They only want confirmation from the bottom on the things that they themselves choose to do. They don't want discussion and criticism (no. 14, non-governmental organisation).

This problem is due to the fact that political decisions are commonly not made by *local* politicians. They are more often made by the municipality, at the national, and sometimes at the European level. The results from the field investigation may, thus, be understood as indicating that participative democracy is difficult to practice as long as the lack of legitimacy for political decisions remains as strong as it is within these suburban areas. It is not clear, however, if it is the local professionals who are unable to work with such participative processes under these circumstances or if it is the inhabitants and their organisations that refuse to participate.

In the beginning, there were many discussions about democracy and the way of working. The requirements of the inhabitants were really meant to be included and ordinary people were to be part of the process. Now when we are sitting in these working groups, we realise that the ideas are not coming from the bottom-up as was planned. They come from the administration, the housing company and so on. Well formulated projects that are often already initiated... What is my role then? To give a sort of rubber stamp, ensuring the project to be a democratic success? But it is not, it doesn't work at all! (no. 12, educational institution)



Students solve their own housing problems in a cheap way, a bottom-up process in the housing area of Vauban in Germany.

However, there are several arguments reflecting the interpretations of what causes these difficulties in improving the democratic system with more participation in local development processes. These include the fear of negative influence on the representative system, the existence of sham democracy, bad experiences from earlier local processes, the fear of failing again, the distrust of local people's knowledge, and finally the resulting fear of losing control. All these circumstances seem to have grown into a vicious circle from which it is hard to find a way out.

Such problematic situations are described by Putnam as the *dilemmas of collective action* (Putnam 1993: 163). This dilemma is based on the hypothesis that it is natural for people to avoid collaboration, as one cannot be sure of what one's neighbour is going to do. Is the neighbour going to participate as well or is he going to take advantage of everybody else's work? The answer is always shrouded in mystery, which is why it is easier not to act. One way out of this dilemma is, as social theorist Hobbes proposes, enforcement from a third-party, e.g., the state. In this way the "state enables its subjects to do what they cannot do on their own – trust one another" (Ibid.: 165). This solution, however, has shown not to work adequately, as enforcement is quite expensive and societies using violence are less effective and rather unpleasant to live in (Ibid.: 165). Further, the dilemmas of collective actions do not come as naturally as presumed. In fact, people do cooperate to a much greater extent than these theories presume. According to Putnam this is a result of influence from the existing social capital in a community.

Voluntary cooperation is easier in a community that has inherited a substantial stock of social capital, in the form of norms of reciprocity and networks of civic engagement (Ibid.: 167).

Social capital in a community is, thus, something that is inherited from generation to generation. Further, *trust* is a form of social capital that is fundamental for a positive development. Another important conclusion is that when someone is using social capital it will increase, if not used it will decrease (Ibid.: 169). These assumptions do not indicate a positive future for the suburban areas in the field investigation in this thesis, as lack of trust seems to be one of the most obvious problems.

Here is not possible to go out and say that you can participate in decision-making, it's not possible to initiate democracy processes that easily. There are several obstacles: linguistic, ethnic, social and an unaccustomedness in participating in such processes. 80% are foreigners, and we have representatives from 88 different countries. Many people come from undemocratic countries, they are afraid of expressing their opinion. Maybe they came here because of their opinion, maybe they were forced to escape because of it. Many of them have lived here for several years without any contact with Swedish society. Confusion and bitterness may be the result of initiated democracy processes, if not at first using careful reflection (no. 7 and 8, housing company).

This statement shows that trust is important to consider, especially if initiating processes in areas with many refugees and immigrants. According to Rothstein and Kumlin, the general level of trust between human beings in Sweden is high and stable, if compared with the United States and several countries in Europe (Rothstein and Kumlin 2001: 5). This confirms their theory, which stresses the importance of operative vertical networks, as Sweden is a society

with little political corruption. Nevertheless, there is an exception to this high level of trust and that is in suburban areas with lots of refugees and immigrants (Ibid.: 9). They explain this crucial point with help of the theory of *collective memories* (Rothstein 2000: 29; Rothstein and Kumlin 2001: 10).¹⁶ To put it simply, refugees from countries with dictatorships probably bring experiences of corruption and this may be the reason for them to have a low degree of confidence. Although, it is not only true history that matters, the theory of collective memories also contains the belief that such histories are consciously constructed, by for example politicians and their agents, for their specific purposes (Rothstein 2000: 33). Thus, even if Sweden does have well functioning vertical networks, the collective memory that the inhabitants have may influence the existence of reciprocity and trust in a negative direction. The reason for the distrust of these inhabitants, consequently, is to be found in their original countries, not in the Swedish context.

Putnam would probably not agree with this statement. According to him, social capital may grow from two sources, the *norms of reciprocity* and the *networks of civic engagement* (Putnam 1993: 171). Collaboration in networks, which the respondents in the field investigation seem to consider as being important for solving problems, may be seen as constituting a response corresponding to Putnam's norms of reciprocity. Thus, local actors may be considered to say to each other: *I will help you now because I trust you will help me later on and I am sure that our collaboration will help the district to improve. Even if we are competitors, this is best for both of us in the long run* (Ibid.: 182). From such a line of reasoning it appears feasible to assume that when inhabitants are involved in such local collaboration processes, they will gradually become part of the norms of reciprocity. Such a development may, consequently, step by step increase the stock of social capital in an area.

The other source which, according to Putnam, will make social capital grow are networks of civic engagements (Ibid.: 171). As discussed earlier, every society is characterised by its networks, some are mainly horizontal while others may be considered to be more vertical. Most of the networks that exist in reality, though, are mixed and, thus, contain both horizontal and vertical interrelations. Some examples of typical horizontal networks are cooperatives, sport clubs and choirs. A network that may be considered to be mainly vertical is governmental decision-making. However, it is not at all easy to sort out right from wrong, i.e., to say that horizontal is good and vertical is bad. Instead both structures are needed for a society to function. One important aspect, nonetheless, is that even if a vertical network may be very dense and important to its participants, it cannot uphold social trust and cooperation (Ibid.: 174). Putnam, therefore, focuses his interest on horizontal networks. In relation to this, a discussion on what may be considered as bad and good,

¹⁶ According to Rothstein and Kumlin this is a research tradition established in the 1940s by the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs.

respectively, rather focuses on the difference between weak and strong ties *within* horizontal networks. Weak ties often interconnect members from different groups, while strong ties support collaboration within groups.¹⁷

Dense but segregated horizontal networks sustain cooperation *within* each group, but networks of civic engagement that cut across social cleavages nourish wider cooperation. This is another reason why networks of civic engagement are such an important part of a community's stock of social capital (Ibid.: 175).

Two other concepts that Putnam uses to describe this relationship are bonding and bridging.¹⁸ Strong ties which link people or groups that are alike, then, *bond* social capital. On the contrary, weak ties that link people or groups that are unlike *bridge* social capital. Thus, according to Putnam, one possible solution to the problem would be to support the networks of civic engagement that are active in the local context with a particular ambition to support the development of weak ties between the different local networks in the district. But, what would such support look like in practice? Are spatial facilities for the networks needed? Or is supportive funding for local activities more important? Some districts in the field investigation support local organisations, to a great extent, but when looking at the comprehensive picture, the city districts in Göteborg have actually been working in quite the opposite direction. During the past ten years they have been cutting back economic resources for all local activities, obviously as a result of the nation-wide crisis in the public economy. Support to local organisations today is therefore at a minimum. In spite of this, many organisations are still active. In a city district with about 25 000 inhabitants it is not unusual to find at least one hundred non-governmental organisations operating in different fields. Hence, an important question is if these are functioning as catalysts for the economic development in the local area, as argued by Putnam, by forming integrated networks of civic networks. Or, are these groups and non-governmental organisations developing into dense but segregated networks, thus, counteracting an increase in bridged social capital?

The differences between strong and weak ties in horizontal networks is not utilised within the approach of Rothstein and Kumlin. However, they conclude that if their tentative theory is considered to be correct, this would imply quite a different policy than that recommended by the Swedish Commission on Democracy.

The will to increase social capital through support to different kinds of non-governmental organisations, may have the opposite effect if these organisations in practice contribute to tribalism, distrust, nepotism and corruption in public administration (Rothstein and Kumlin 2001: 15, my translation).

The issues of democracy and the development of social capital may be considered as essential for the research project presented in this thesis. However, the field investigation does not throw much light on these issues, as inhabitants



Can carnivals bridge social capital?
A Bunda Göteborg Sweden.

¹⁷ Concerning weak and strong ties, Putnam refers to Granovetter in "The Strength of Weak Ties" in *American Journal of Sociology* 78 (1973) p. 1360-1380.

¹⁸ These concepts Putnam uses in *Bowling Alone: Collapse and Revival of American Community* (2000) p. 358.

are not included in the inquiry and only a few local non-governmental organisations participated. These issues will, nonetheless, be kept in mind, as they are very important for the research project, as a whole, and they will, therefore, possibly be further developed in next phase of the project.

Another aspect associated with this discussion is *power relations*. This subject often arises as crucial in several themes in this thesis, e.g., concerning collaborative planning (p. 39) and the four dimensions of sustainable development (p. 48). The empirical material also confirms that this issue has great importance. One respondent in the field investigation, e.g., discusses power relations when describing the effects of a selected method (scenario workshops) for communication between local professionals and inhabitants.

Who has chosen those who participate? What do representativity and legitimacy look like for this task? How much fear is there for the concentration of power? All groups which were parts of the development process in the area participated, civil servants too. However, the limitation is that the inhabitants do not have anything to fall back on to discuss. They are part of the general public but don't anywhere where they can discuss their approach. They are never part of a context in which they can dominate. That's the big problem (no. 12, educational institution).

Evidently, power relations are central to the problem area of this thesis. This issue has not been further developed here, mainly as a result of the time limit. However, the theme of power relations will also be kept in mind and possibly further developed in the next phase of the project. Still, the next chapter on knowledge and learning processes may also be seen as being related to power relations. In this context, however, the theme of learning has its primary point of departure in the Agenda 21 document, as lack of knowledge may be seen as constituting one obstacle to change towards sustainable development.

Learning Processes

The Agenda 21 document states that education is a key issue when the vision of sustainable development is to be accomplished. A reoriented education towards sustainable development is, thus, necessary, as well as an increase in public awareness and promoted training (UNCED 1992b: ch. 36). One explicit aim is, e.g., “to promote a flexible and adaptable workforce of various ages equipped to meet growing environment and development problems and changes arising from the transition to a sustainable society” (Ibid.: ch. 36.13). However, how is this concept to be understood and accomplished from a point of departure in the local context?

As discussed earlier in this thesis, lack of knowledge may constitute an obstacle for local professionals to act as transformers of the notion of sustainable development (p. 31-32). Furthermore, the differences between housing companies and city district committees have been pointed out. It has been assumed that this

problem may not only be related to a lack of intellectual knowledge. Something else may be missing as well. Something that may entice local professionals to get a more concrete feeling for environmental aspects and to bring these issues into their everyday actions. This problem of lack of knowledge has been further discussed in the chapter on sustainable development. Knowledge of the broad notion may be seen as a serious obstacle to positive development. One assumption that was presented was that one way of increasing common knowledge of the interacting dimensions may be to introduce four-dimensional organisations for learning and decision-making.

However, when discussing whether or not it is possible to elaborate such organisations, a first step towards understanding internal dynamics may be to better understand the nature of organisational learning processes. Within the scope of this thesis it is, thus, the question of how organisations learn that is of particular interest. With the focus on the city district level such learning processes appear to be relevant for the understanding of how different local organisations try to collaborate in order to accomplish something more than they would have done separately, i.e., in order to facilitate four-dimensional processes supporting sustainable development.

Two diverging approaches seem to be of particular notable interest within this field, being developed within the domains of management and corporate strategy. Firstly, there is the *organisational learning approach* which concentrates on “understanding the nature and processes of learning (and unlearning) within organisations” (Easterby-Smith et al. 1999: 8). Secondly, the *learning organisations approach* seeks to develop “normative models and methodologies for creating change in the direction of improved learning processes” (Ibid.: 8). The distinction between the two directions is not self-evident, but to author’s understanding the main difference may be perceived as methodological. While the organisational learning approach, to a great extent, is built on observations of and within organisations which learn, the learning organisation approach aims at a more action oriented research process with collaboration between researchers and practitioners. Further, this latter approach may often comprise elements of measurement with the aim of evaluating what the organisation has learnt.

In this thesis, it seem appropriate to focus on the organisational learning approach, since the empirical foundation of the thesis has not been gathered following action oriented procedures and, consequently, cannot be discussed within such a theoretical framework.

Organisational Learning

The concept of organisational learning comprises two main directions, of which one mainly emphasises a *technical* process while the other mainly emphasises a *social* process (Ibid.: 3). Chris Argyris and Donald Schön, researchers in organisational behaviour and planning, are representatives

of the technical viewpoint. They have developed a theory of action for organisational learning which has its roots in the Lewinian¹⁹ tradition developed in the 1940s (Argyris et al. 1985: 8). Thus, the theory is built on the conviction that change of knowledge is always preceded by an action.

The idea of organizational action is logically prior to that of organizational learning, because learning itself – thinking, knowing or remembering – is a kind of action, and because the performance of an observable action new to an organization is the most decisive test of whether a particular instance of organizational learning has occurred. How can we know what it means for an organization to learn, then, unless we know what it means for it to take action? (Argyris and Schön 1995: 8)

This focus on action, consequently, makes the learning process visible, the action can, in itself, reveal if the learning process has been effective (Ibid.: 33). Further, it is argued by Argyris and Schön that an organisation starts to learn whenever an individual in the organisation needs information about something in order to respond to an arising problem that needs to be taken care of.

Organizational learning occurs when individuals within an organization experience a problematic situation and inquire into it on the organizations's behalf (Ibid.: 16).

The notion of organisational inquiry is understood as the process of an individual looking for more information in order to really understand and to be convinced of something. Although, it is not sufficient that the individual herself understands something, this knowledge must also be part of the organisation in some way. Thus, they argue that an organisation may know more or less than its individuals do. This is dependent on how the organisation is structured.

If a collectivity meets these conditions, so that its members can *act* for it, then it may be said to learn when its members *learn* for it, carrying out on its behalf a process of inquiry that results in a learning product (Ibid.: 11).

However, there are different ways of learning for an organisation. Argyris and Schön distinguish between *single-loop learning* and *double-loop learning*. Single-loop learning may be quite sufficient for solving several organisational problems. Such learning processes may work very well when an organisation solely needs to change its *strategies* of action and not its underlying *theories* of action (Ibid.: 20, 24). These situations, however, are almost never much of a problem for organisations, as the procedures of single-loop learning are more or less well-known. One example is when politicians increase the number of schools, when they realise that the present schools are overcrowded.

More serious problems, however, often occur when the organisation needs processes of *double-loop learning* in order to solve a problem. In such a case, one of the conditions that has to be fulfilled relates to the philosophy – or theory – on which the organisation has built its activities. A well-known and

¹⁹ Kurt Lewin was a pioneer in group dynamics and action research.

stable theory of the organisation's actions is always embedded in its structure. This theory may be seen as the *instrumental theory-in-use* (Ibid.: 14). The theory may, for example, be embedded in the form of maps, files, computer programs, physical objects, action programs, or other systems that the members of the organisation use regularly. Individual actions may be considered to constitute double-loop learning only when individual inquiry leads to considerable changes in the organisation. "By double-loop learning, we mean learning that results in a change in the values of theory-in-use, as well as in its strategies and assumptions" (Ibid.: 21).

These experiences concerning single and double-loop learning may be of interest in relation to findings in the field investigation presented in this thesis. Local professionals stress the importance of developing a common value-ground as a base for local collaborative processes with actors from different organisations. This common value-ground may, thus, be seen as a result of double-loop learning.

In our city district we try to find a common value-ground, we have been concerned about this from the beginning, and constantly develop it. Within the collaborative network they have now reached the situation when this common image, the tanker, has to change course from the aspect of democracy. /.../ Deliberately, we didn't search offensively for new ideas. Instead, we put our efforts on the organisations, the housing companies and the city district committee. Those working within these organisations have service meetings every day with the inhabitants. We wanted to see how it works if we use those contacts for obtaining information and discussion (no. 24, city council office).

It is common, however, that individuals of an organisation, when asked to describe an organisation's theory-in-use, will describe theories that are completely different compared to what they obviously use in their everyday working life. Argyris and Schön refer to this as *espoused-theory*, e.g., the theory that the members use to "explain or justify a given pattern of activity" (Argyris and Schön 1995: 13). It is quite easy to find out an organisation's espoused-theory, i.e., what its members usually respond when asked in questionnaires or structured interviews. The theory-in-use, however, is much harder to get hold of and such a study, consequently, requires time-consuming processes within the organisation.

Another important aspect is that when the organisation finally finds out the real state of the theory-in-use, the dilemma is that most organisations embed theories-in-use that are counterproductive to double-loop learning (Ibid.: 76). These systematically counterproductive theories are often sustained by feelings of embarrassment and threats, something that also makes practitioners defensive when asked to discuss them. Here, the issue of power relations once more becomes tangible. One example of



Were turn around projects of buildings of the 60s and 70s, which often ended up with many vacant apartments, a result of single-loop learning? Rinkeby Stockholm Sweden.

such a theory-in-use found in the field investigation is the patronising argument described below. An argument used to prevent the inhabitants from taking control over the management of a housing area.

Giving up power, that's what it's all about concerning cooperation and local democracy. There are plenty of levels of power that are affected by local democracy. The housing companies, the city district committee and others, everywhere there are people with power. Additionally there is the law, several laws that affect housing and which may be an obstacle to local democracy. Actually, it's mostly about the fear of letting power go. I attended a conference where they discussed power and someone said 'Christ, we can't give the inhabitants that responsibility, they'd dig holes in the street!'. The lecturer then answered, 'Why would they do that?' He couldn't answer that of course (no. 26 and 27, housing company).²⁰

In this particular case, the person let her or his opinion out in the open, an act that entails that the theory-in-use of that organisation is seriously questioned by other actors present at the meeting. However, most often this kind of argumentation will not be displayed openly, even if it may well be an opinion that is shared by several actors. The actors may, instead, use other arguments to convince those around them to agree with them. As an example, they may maintain that economic issues are decisive or that there is a problem of time consumption or a lack of democratic representation.

The example above illustrates the dynamics of the interchange between different organisations. The field investigation in this thesis primarily focuses on three types of organisations. Firstly, there is the city district committee with maybe fifteen hundred employees in several sub-organisations, e.g., in schools and in care of the elderly. Secondly, there are the different district offices of the housing companies, both private and public, each one of them employing approximately fifty persons at the local level. Thirdly, the professionals in the field investigation also often include yet another type of organisation in the discussion: the different types of non-governmental organisations like the cooperation of Turkish women or the parents' network in pre-school. These are examples of organisations with which they already collaborate in local processes or else have the ambition of cooperating in the future. They are usually as small in size as the district office of the housing company. Of course, these organisations consist of very distinct individuals such as the teacher at the school, the father in the pre-school network, the social worker in the city district, the woman active in the voluntary organisation, the nurse at the elderly care centre and the caretaker of the housing area.

An interesting question is how the individuals that are active in this web of organisations learn in such a way that may lead to changes in the theory-in-use of their organisations? Further, where do they learn? Does the learning take place inside their organisation or outside? So far these questions have

²⁰ See p. 83 for further information about the respondents.

been discussed with a focus on internal organisational learning, a discussion based on the theories of Argyris and Schön, i.e., what it is that takes place within an organisation when a member has learnt something. In the following chapter the external learning that takes place between organisations will be discussed, consequently designated *interorganisational learning*.

Interorganisational Learning

A tentative assumption may be that the issue of interorganisational learning is related to the discussion of roles initiated earlier in this thesis (p. 33-34). There, the need for new roles within urban planning for sustainable development was discussed and the need for process leaders within local processes was also discussed.

Additional discussions of this new role in planning can be found in research conducted by social planner Inga Michaeli, who is studying Agenda 21 processes in two municipalities in Sweden. She argues that such alternatives are totally dependent on the person who is responsible for the Agenda 21 process. Furthermore she maintains that this role is very exposed and she also points out the importance of ensuring that the projects are within existing institutions if they are going to survive over time (Michaeli 2000: 144). This conclusion is also confirmed by the respondents in the field investigation.

It is not easy to see whether you have succeeded with a process like this or not. The best way is to see if it still remains when you leave. And it does! It's good to change leadership. Important that this doesn't turn into a enthusiast thing (no. 11, town planning department).

Michaeli has several names for this indispensable person: the *border walker*, the *driving force* and the *enthusiast* (Michaeli 2000: 31-32).²¹ With the words of Jürgen Habermas she describes the person who is expected to implement the vision of the Agenda 21 document in a municipality, as playing the role of balancing on the edge between two worlds – the system and the lifeworld – and pushing the development forward through tremendous devotion.

Yet another researcher, societal psychologist Jeppe Læssøe, also discusses a role considered to be indispensable for accomplishing sustainable development at the local level. His point of departure is top-down initiatives in Denmark, such as Green Municipality and the Green Fund,²² which were initiated with the purpose of supporting bottom-up initiatives aimed at sustainable development. In this context, he discusses the role of initiatives from the inhabitants, initiatives that are positioned between two realms: *the world of susceptibility* and *the world of control* (Læssøe 1995: 339).²³ He emphasises the importance of supporting people that are active at the local level if a process is to survive. However, he also points out that the existence of local processes initiated from the bottom-up, does not guarantee that a process will result in

²¹ *Gränsgångare* and *eldsjäl* in Swedish.

²² *Grøn Kommune* and *Den Grønne Fond* in Danish.

²³ *Åbenhed og styrning* in Danish.



When supporting real bottom-up processes educational centres are important. Ökostation Freiburg Germany.

sustainable development (Ibid.: 349, 355). According to Læssøe the slogan *think global – act local* is not at all appropriate for describing local processes. Instead, the inhabitants rather think *local* when acting at the local level (Ibid.: 349). Bottom-up initiatives with susceptibility must, thus, be met by top-down control if sustainable development is to take place.

The point of departure of Læssøe is the so-called adult education movement.²⁴ He, thus, describes the gap between susceptibility and control in terms of pedagogy. In the political sphere, this gap exists between, on the one hand, populist politics following local sentiments and, on the other hand, central over-protective mentalities of the state. In the academic realm, the gap constitutes by, on the one hand, the *laissez faire* pedagogics built on the subjective realities of the inhabitants, on the other, the authoritarian pedagogics which, in this case, may be built on the global environmental issue (Ibid.: 354). Further, Læssøe also criticises society for not taking responsibility for elucidating of the dilemma of the contrasts between susceptibility and control.

His recommended solution, focusing on the realm of pedagogic, consequently concentrates on the organisation around the individual at the local level. According to Læssøe, this may be considered to be a totally new pedagogy, as this approach is primarily based on local *action* rather than giving information to local actors. The purpose of this support of local action, as already employed by several top-down initiatives in Denmark, is to increase the collaboration between people; to create inspiration, engagement, attention, and visible results; and also to initiate learning processes (Ibid.: 343). This recommendation may be seen as corresponding to some of the views in the field investigation.

If supporting real bottom-up processes, then educational centres are important. Within the housing area. Giving the inhabitants the right to discuss their problems and the right to get help from people that may have a different perspective of the issue of being a citizen in Sweden. That's a good basis. I wish such educational centres existed in every area containing repressed people. A locality of growth. Although, this would require awareness among those working within the adult education movement. There were a lot of people with high ambitions but they failed because they couldn't find the proper way to communicate. They didn't consider that many people here have special difficulties which they also want to change. There's been too much old social stuff from the 70s (no. 12, educational institution).

To bridge the gap between the top-down and the bottom-up when implementing sustainable development, Læssøe proposes the initiation of new organisations at the municipal or city district level with the purpose of functioning as catalysts for such learning processes.²⁵ These organisations are not supposed to educate people or to provide them with ready answers. Instead, the organisations should support existing projects or processes, develop networks,

²⁴ *Folkeoplysning* in Danish.

²⁵ In Danish they are called *proceskatalyserende organiseringer*.

coordinate efforts and create synergy. The autonomy of the organisations is crucial. According to the experiences of Læssøe, they cannot be owned by the municipality, nor by the people. The most important role for these organisations is to bring out contradictions and to create productive frames in which they can be discussed and recast. Thus, the purpose is “to promote the dialogue between, on the one hand, the tangible perspectives of the inhabitants, and, on the other hand, the perspectives of environmental control²⁶” of the politicians and the planners (Læssøe 1995: 356, my translation). This main focus on the *organisation* surrounding the individual instead of focusing on devoted persons, distinguishes the ideas of Læssøe from the study by Michaeli. However, as will be discussed in the following chapter, the focus on the individual may be developed further, drawing on a social view of organisational learning, *the development of competences in interplace* (Forsén and Fryk 1999, my translation).

Development of Competences in Interplace

This approach has been developed by sociologist Bosse Forsén and senior lecturer Lasse Fryk (Ibid.). It is based on practical experiences from local learning processes in Göteborg practised with students of social studies, local professionals and non-governmental organisations over the course of several years in a city district.

According to Forsén and Fryk, the professionals, as well as the non-governmental organisations at the local level, can be considered to be acting in different *places*.²⁷ The social worker, the headmaster, the politician, the cleaner, the accountant, the caretaker, the policeman, the civil servant, the dentist and so on, are all active in their specific places. It is important to note that they absolutely need these delimited places in order to develop their specific knowledge, indispensable for the practice of their profession. Likewise, the inhabitants active in non-governmental organisations may also be considered to be active in their specific places, in the same way as professionals.

However, this way of splitting up practice into different places entails difficulties in solving the urgent problems that appear in the local context. Forsén and Fryk maintain that these social problems demand new kinds of professional skills of the welfare workers and other local actors. After several years with practical experience in this field they thus argue that the professionals and other local actors regularly have to leave their own specific places in order to collaborate with other actors somewhere in between, i.e., in *interplace* (Ibid.: 22).²⁸

Forsén and Fryk argue that the interplace is constituted by the specific places surrounding it, without these places it is not possible for something to exist in between (see fig. 9). To be aware of one’s own place and its limits, thus, is an essential element of their approach. Consequently, they stress the

The interplace is neither here or there
not ours nor yours
The interplace cuts off
but it is also what we share
and because it is shared by everybody
it also connects all of us with each other
Therefore
the interplace is the centre of the world
It is the only thing that all people may share
and have in common
Nobody can own the interplace

Stefan Jonsson in Forsén and Fryk (1999: 9, my translation)

²⁶ *Miljøregulering* in Danish.

²⁷ *Rum* in Swedish.

²⁸ *Mellanrum* in Swedish.

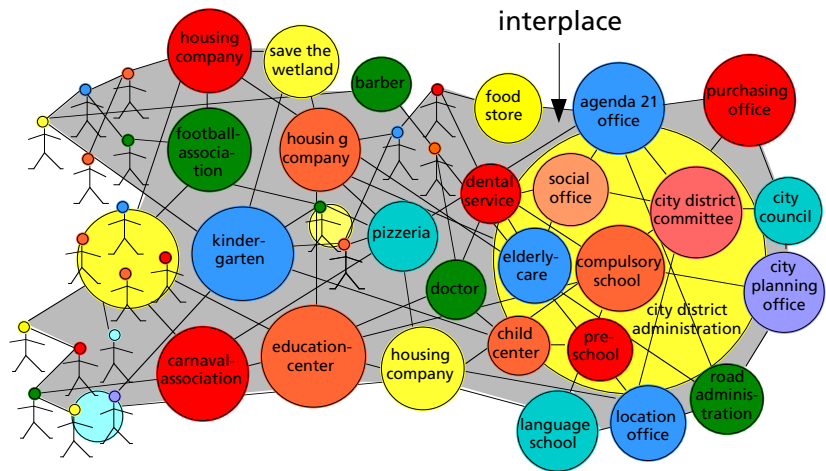


Fig. 9. The interplace is constituted by the places around it.

importance of strong professions with substantial concern for and high awareness of internal competences. However, their main interest is focused on interplace, as the consciousness of the place is born in interplace, i.e., the ability for self-reflection (Forsén and Fryk 1999: 22-23).

The issue of consciousness and self-reflection is related to the question of knowledge. Forsén and Fryk argue that knowledge developed in place is different from knowledge developed in interplace.²⁹ What they entitle *statement knowledge*,³⁰ is usually produced in the place and may be defined as knowledge concerning *knowing that*, a kind of knowledge that is often available in books. Another type of knowledge, which also grows from place, is *skilled knowledge*,³¹ i.e., knowledge corresponding to *knowing how*. This is knowledge that is necessary to use, in order to learn. The first kind of understanding, statement knowledge may, thus, be seen as theoretical knowledge, which is learnt in places for studies. The second sort of understanding, skilled knowledge, on the other hand may be considered as practical knowledge, thus, learnt in places for practice (Ibid.: 27).

In interplace, however, yet a third type of knowledge may be developed, *experienced knowledge*.³² If statement knowledge may be seen as what you stand on and skilled knowledge is what you bring when you are ready to leave the place, then experienced knowledge is what you have developed when you have travelled in interplace (Ibid.: 29). This sort of knowledge constitutes the foundation for a special kind of competence, which Forsén and Fryk refer to as *negative capability*. They explain this by using a quotation from John Keats: “When man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after facts and reason” (Ibid.: 37). Thus, it is this kind of competence developed in interplace that they argue is indispensable for pro-

²⁹ The different terms of knowledge have been borrowed from the philosopher Gilbert Ryle.

³⁰ *Påståendekunskap* in Swedish.

³¹ *Färdighetskunskap* in Swedish.

³² *Erfarenhetskunskap* in Swedish.

professionals and other actors working at the local level, as society is changing so fast and often appears so chaotic. This request for new competencies is also confirmed by the respondents in the field investigation.

We are about to create a new profession which we call housing developer. Considering our assignment, this competence is missing in our present organisation (no. 4, housing company).

These persons with particular importance for the development at the local level are, thus, designated by Forsén and Fryk as *the interplace worker* or *the city district worker*. Such an actor is different compared with the role described in the study by Michaeli. While Michaeli describes the person as balancing on the edge between two worlds, Forsén and Fryk talk about a place where the individual is safe and secure. The person certainly often leaves the place for collaboration with other actors in interplace, although this is a journey made together with other individuals at the local level and to a place which none of them commands by themselves. This may be seen as if the individual is working *within* a collective world, instead of balancing *between* different worlds. Læssøe also stresses the importance of the organisation rather than the individuals, although here it is not at all clear who the individuals are. It is not discussed whether they come from outside of the city district, i.e., if they are environmental specialists with the aim of collaborating with the local actors. Or if they are people that already work in the city districts, such as emphasised by Forsén and Fryk. This is an opinion which is also stressed by the respondents in the field investigation. They argue the importance of using the existing organisation in the city district, i.e., employed personnel working in e.g. the schools and as housing caretakers.

We already have direct every day contact with the user, thus it's idiotic to initiate a new organisation for what is in our network. When you have been working for a while, this becomes obvious. Though, often when you start a new project you want to give it a special profile. That wasn't the idea here. I don't think it would have been sustainable in this way (no. 11, town planning department).

In spite of these differences, the experiences of these three approaches leads to a quite interesting question. Do their conclusions imply that the role of process leader is not supportive of positive development at the local level? Most respondents in the field investigation would probably object to such a statement, although it is not impossible to imagine as valid for all of them.

In Jämtland, for example there are processes which continue without any employed personnel. They have a culture, strong solidarity and focus on a common problem (no. 24, city council office).

Another observation is that Forsén and Fryk do not discuss the notion of sustainable development in their report. In spite of this is it possible to apply

their conclusions in such a context? One limitation may be that their approach seems to concentrate mainly on horizontal and sometimes vertical communication *within* the local context. On the one hand, they emphasise that collaborating individuals are not strangers in the local context as they work there on a regular basis as parts of the welfare system. On the other hand, their approach may be seen as having potential for describing vertical links *outside* the local context. Individuals collaborating in interplace also maintain strong connections to their ordinary places, where their vertical links are based on their professional roles and interdisciplinary contacts.

Moreover, by being confronted in interplace with other professionals or other actors at the local level, the local actors may find out the insufficiencies of their own skills, thus developing experienced knowledge. With support from these other city district actors, in interplace, they may be encouraged to communicate their experiences vertically. Subsequently, their vertical interrelations become *based* in interplace, but *realised* in place. But, what may result from these interrelations, i.e., how can this vertical communication of knowledge be concretised in practice? This will be further discussed in the next chapter, with a main departure from the bottom-up perspective of the city district level; from the approach of creating links for sustainable development already discussed earlier (p. 34).

Designed Links for Sustainable Development

This theme is based on the hypothesis formulated by Falkheden that relations between man and nature must be made *sensuous* in order to achieve the vision of sustainable development. Once again, the point of departure for a concept is knowledge, thus resembling the approach discussed in the previous chapter. Drawing on philosopher zur Lippe, Falkheden distinguishes between *intellectual* knowledge and *sensuous* knowledge. “Sensuous knowledge, unlike intellectual knowledge, integrates our body with our emotional life, zur Lippe concludes” (Falkheden 1999: 189, my translation).³³ As both kinds of knowledge are seen to be prerequisites for positive development, Falkheden stresses that shortcomings may arise as a result of the lack of interplay between them. Thus, it seems that this approach has much in common with the approach based on the development of competence in interplace. Both approaches argue that collaboration between actors at the middle level may be an answer to the problem of lack of knowledge. However, Falkheden’s approach is evidently closer to that of Læssøe, as she argues for the establishment of new local arenas with the purpose of supporting sustainable development at the local level (Ibid.: 230).

However, there appears to be an important distinction to be made between the two approaches. Forsén and Fryk seem to focus on solutions that aim to solve the problem of facilitating knowledge reaching from the bottom and up, while Falkheden seems to seek solutions for the problem of facilitating

³³ The primary source that Falkheden via Læssøe refers to concerning zur Lippe is *Am eigenem Leibe: Zur Ökonomie des Lebens* (1979).

knowledge reaching from the top and down. However, they are not discussing the same kind of knowledge. Forsén and Fryk focus on social issues while Falkheden focuses on environmental issues. Nevertheless, as they discuss within the same context – the middle level – a quite interesting question emerges. Can these two approaches complement each other when seeking to bridge the gap between top-down and bottom-up processes?

Falkheden emphasises making projects visible in some way, a belief that is confirmed by most respondents in the field investigation. They point out visible results as being essential for a positive outcome of local democracy processes. This is important, not only for the inhabitants, they argue, but also for themselves as local professionals and as being visitors in the local area; visitors that do not always realise the advantages of user influence.

We have decided that the money is to be visible, thus visualising the process – and we immediately got participation from non-governmental organisations just because there was some money. It's like a win – win concept. /.../ It's necessary to present a result, you can't just spend the money on something that's not visible (no. 9, city district committee).

This is most interesting as the result of the process can, thus, be considered as creating and sustaining a learning process in which the visible product tells the local actors something about the process behind it. In this way, the product – the artefact – may be seen as an important aspect of local democracy processes. The experiences accounted for in the field investigation, thus, imply that Falkheden's approach may include the potential for transforming knowledge not only from the top and down, but also from the bottom and up.

This emphasis on the artefact is further discussed by design process researcher Lisbeth Birgersson. Her point of departure is *action* of two different kinds: *instrumental action* and *meaning-in-action* (Birgersson 1996: 196, 243).³⁴ They are both seen as necessary, instrumental action for the development of abstract thinking and objective reasoning; meaning-in-action for relating to the actual experience of living in a cultural community. When put together, these two kinds of action may constitute a *mental picture*³⁵ that can be of help for the development of collaborative design processes. A mental picture is a kind of representation that contains two different pictures, although it is not possible to see them both at the same time (fig. 10). This is exemplified by the mental picture of an old working space area, a project in which Birgersson was involved as researcher. Should the area be characterised by deterioration or should it be perceived as creative development? This mental picture may also be seen as a parallel to a discussion that the respondents in the field investigation emphasise.

³⁴ *Instrumenell handling and meningsskapande handling* in Swedish.

³⁵ *Fixeringsbild* in Swedish.

They argue that the suburban areas from the 60s and 70s are mostly perceived as two distinct phenomena, one description from the outside and another from the inside.

The media influence people a lot. Unfortunately they write about negative aspects, even if there of course are also positive aspects. /.../ It's not the city district in itself that constitute a problem, it's the surrounding world and it's way of looking at it (no. 7 and 8, housing company).

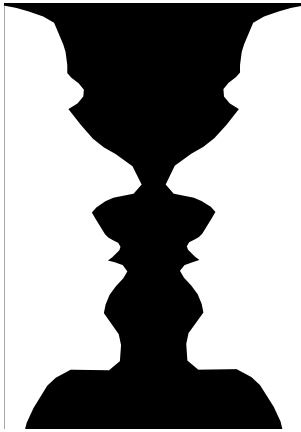


Fig. 10. Mental picture.

According to Birgersson, the awareness of these two kinds of pictures or images, deterioration or creative development, should not imply a selection between them. Instead the aim is to find solutions that will make the two principles relate to each other in a balanced manner. Her designation for this methodology or approach of local dialogue concerning the mental picture, is *limit-regulating instruments* (Birgersson 1996: 144, 246).³⁶ Such instruments may, thus, constitute the connection between different levels in society. In this way, a third kind of action will develop, the *well-considered-action* (Ibid.: 197, 244).³⁷ This implies that the approach may bridge gaps in a way that will increase well-considered-actions to take place at all levels (Ibid.: 198). Thus, she argues that when physical change takes place in practice, the artefacts and the actors “talk” to each other in a process over time. The actors not only use the artefacts for communication with each other, but the artefacts themselves have something to “tell” even when the actors have left the place. The artefact, thus, makes it possible for the participants to act from a distance.

However, according to philosopher and sociologist Latour, this transformation of knowledge used for acting from a distance is not supported by solely *one* single artefact. Instead such a transaction of knowledge and understanding may be perceived as being composed of a series of artefacts or stadiums (references). It is this *transaction* that should be in focus, according to Latour. In an article about a field expedition exploring the extension of the jungle in Brazil, Latour gives an example of such series of artefacts (Latour 1998: 213-268).

This extensive series of stadiums (see fig. 11) that transact one extreme – the story about the world – to the other extreme – the world – and then back again to the story about the world, is described by Latour as constituting *successive layers of transformation* (Ibid.: 253, my translations). It is the existence of an intact chain of layers that ensures that the results of the transformation is true (Ibid.: 262). If just one of these mediations fails, a gap will appear that separates the two extremes and it is, thus, no longer possible to be certain anymore if the world in itself and the story about the world have anything in common. Further, Latour ar-

³⁶ *Gränsregulerande instrument* in Swedish.

³⁷ *Överlagd handling* in Swedish.

- an atlas on the scale of 1:1 000 000
- a photo taken from an aeroplane on the scale of 1:50 000
- a tin-plate with a number written on it pinned to a tree
- collected herbs systematically sorted in a cupboard
- a table in a house in which it is comfortable to study the herbs
- an instrument for establishing topographic coherence
- a 'topofil chaix' for creating a grid of strings in the jungle
- a spade and a drill for digging up soil,
- numbered plastic bags in which the soil samples are collected and codified
- an arrangement of paper boxes in which the samples are labelled with cartesian coordinates
- the numbers of the soil samples put down in a notebook
- a table and a hand-drawn diagram on a graph paper
- a book of colour samples (munsellkoden) for facilitating a comparison with the soil
- the colour codes of the sample put in a notebook
- the bag with coloured pens used by cartographers to classify land
- photos taken from satellites
- transportation of the samples by truck and aeroplane
- a table and a computer back in civilisation where it is comfortable to study the material
- a computer-drawn diagram in a research report
- the written report containing the interpretation of the diagram

Fig. 11. Successive layers of transformation (Latour 1998).

gues that in each transformation along the reversible chain from one extreme to the other, one will always lose something but win something else (see fig. 12). He designates the diminishing triangle of losing as *reduction* and the enlarging triangle of winning as *amplification* (Ibid.: 259). In the process of reduction, one will lose locality, individuality, materialisation, multiplicity and continuity. However, in the process of amplification one will gain compatibility, standardisation, text, calculation, circulation and relative universality. Consequently, this transformation may be considered as bridging the gap between abstract and concrete.

In itself, the story about the world does not only contain the world but also explains its dynamics (Ibid.: 260). Latour stresses the importance of being aware of all the layers that together constitute the chain of transformation. The arguments presented by Latour may be interpreted as if it is not possible to study and understand the story of one single artefact from a distance, leaving out all other layers. It is by all means necessary to be aware of – and to keep track of – the whole chain of successive layers of transformation, if action from a distance is going to correspond with what takes place in the world.

As each successive layer of transformation facilitates a *spatial* transfer of knowledge (Ibid.: 262-263), the experiences of Latour may be supportive when discussing the advantages of communicative methods when aiming at sustainable development. One conclusion that may be drawn from his work is that such communicative methods should not be solitary, instead they should form part of an extensive approach supporting an explicit and comprehensive determination to transfer knowledge or understanding.

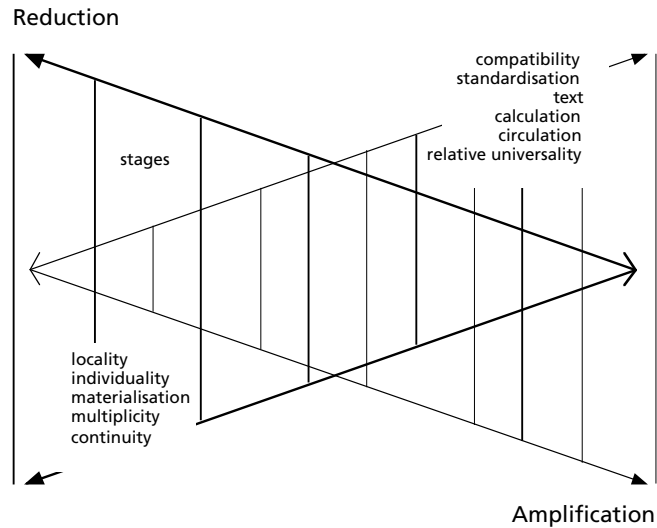


Fig. 12. Each transformation loses something but wins something else (Latour 1998).

Subsequently, some interesting questions emerge: What successive layers of transformation are to be found within the local context of a city district? How are they related to each other? What kind of knowledge and understanding do they transfer? Are they to be considered as effective in relation to the debate on democracy and the political vision of sustainable development? These questions are not answered within the scope of this thesis. They will however be discussed more in depth and possibly further developed in the next step of the research project.

We can observe, however, that if the successive layer of transformation is to be seen as facilitating a spatial transfer of knowledge, the notion of spatiality, i.e., the meaning of place, space and locus need to be discussed.

Place and Space

As described earlier the concept of place may be understood as the context within which local professionals act (p. 62). In this context, they may feel secure and have the potential to develop the specific knowledge that is indispensable for the practice of their professional skills. The concept of *space*, however, is more abstract. It may be used coupled with the concept of place, to differentiate one thing coming from the top which is going to meet something else coming from the bottom (see e.g. Birgersson et al. in prep: 38).

In a way, one may say that this point of view is shared by planning researcher Ole Michael Jensen. According to Jensen, *environmental management*³⁸ is closely related to the concept of space (Jensen 1994: 362). He, thus,

³⁸ *Miljøregulering* in Danish.

talks about policy levels, injunctions, prohibitions, taxes, charges, subsidies and describes environmental management as “both an effort to benefit the environment and a strategy for avoiding a number of threatening environmental catastrophes” (Ibid.: 359). To clarify this further, Jensen compares this notion with another well-known approach from Denmark, *urban ecology*.³⁹ This concept focuses on the local context for environmental considerations (Ibid.: 353). Urban ecology has the purpose of treating all environmental tasks in one locality, while the purpose for environmental management is to handle one environmental task in all localities (see fig. 13) (Ibid.: 364).

However, to consider these two notions of environmental management and urban ecology as departing from two different directions may not be a correct description. From the city district level, both may be considered as being top-down constructions, as both of them aim at implementing sustainable development at the local level. On the one hand, the purpose of urban ecology is to solve “problems linked with the locality’s use of resources, environmental impact and natural surroundings” (Ibid.: 358).⁴⁰ However, on the other hand, it is not correct to say that this notion originates solely at the top. Jensen shows that the urban ecology process once was initiated at the bottom, when a group called Freja started to get engaged in sustainable development problems in the 70s (Ibid.: 356). Their engagement resulted in the authorities adopting some of their arguments, e.g., the emphasis on the specific locality and the idea of placing a given group of citizens at the centre of the efforts (Ibid.: 358). Further, the environmental management approach also has a background in grassroots activities. A study circle called Noah that met once a week in the late 60s influenced a Danish minister to develop the ministerial organisation in relation to environmental issues (Ibid.: 360).

Following this line of argument, the notions of space and place, thus, have nothing to do with whether knowledge and understanding comes from the bottom or from the top of societal structures. At least, not if we imagine society as being comprised of a hierarchic system with the decision-makers located at the top and the people placed firmly at the bottom. The two notions of place and space may, instead, be related to questions about the abstract and the concrete. Consequently, both of these notions have to be seen as being equally present at all levels of society. Drawing on Latour, this may be expressed as if abstraction is something that anyone may make use of in order to solve complicated and complex problems, regardless of the societal level this problem solving takes place. Or in the words of Forsén and Fryk: This is the human ability for self-reflection taking place in interplace.

Thus, Latour as well as Forsén and Fryk, underline the importance of self-reflection, which suggests that both lines of thinking tackle the gap between abstract and concrete. However, there appears to be a distinction be-

³⁹ *Byøkologi* in Danish.

⁴⁰ Quotation from a report by Sven Auken at the Danish Minister of Environment 1994.

URBAN ECOLOGY	ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT
<i>all environmental tasks in one locality</i>	<i>one environmental task in all localities</i>
Ecological building: an overall approach problem complexes offensive measures urban planning design practical experiments evaluation small scale simple technology interdisciplinary development education/training grass-root activity cultural development change in attitudes	Environmentally sound building: a synthetic approach complex problems defensive measures public management implementation of new techniques demonstration projects research large scale advanced technology economy and legislation administration/information civic involvement social experiments attitude conditioning

Fig. 13. The difference between urban ecology and environmental management (Jensen 1994).

tween these two approaches since the notion of interplace not only tries to bridge the gap between the abstract and the concrete. In addition, the notion also aims at bridging the horizontal gaps existing between different places. However, something still appears to be missing in this discussion since, in interplace, nothing really occurs in concrete practice. Interplace is solely a collaborative situation that *supports* well considered action occurring in place. Thus, one may ask if collaboration in interplace really entails action in place. At the local level, the experiences of Forsén and Fryk are cautiously positive, as they have seen how such collaboration has resulted in several concrete activities that would not have taken place without self-reflection in interplace. The interplace approach does not seem to indicate an easy path, however, and the distance from knowing to acting may in fact be rather long.

The Swedish system with big companies as owners of housing areas makes it difficult to get close to the tenants living up the same stairwell (no. 3, city district committee). We can't find channels by sitting here in the office, we must find other ways (no. 15 and 16, city district committee).⁴¹

How can it be possible to overbridge this distance? Maybe a third notion, which is often used together with place and space, may be of use. This is a notion that attempts to contain the entire context. Jensen uses several expressions to capture this: the *locality* (Jensen 1994: 355), the *face* (Jensen 2001: 3) or the *site*,⁴² while architecture researcher Claus Bech-Danielsen refers to it as the *locus*.

In »place« one travels with one's senses and experiences the immediate world in its entirety. In »space« one travels with one's intellect and, thus, understands the ideal world from the shape of its simple pieces. In »locus« one travels with one's creativity and shapes a visual world, where the focus is on the coherence that ties the pieces together to form a whole (Bech-Danielsen 1998: 19, my translation).⁴³

⁴¹ See p. 83 for further information about the respondents.

⁴² This interpretation Jensen uses in his thesis *Vægge/Walls: Kundskabens projektioner/projections of Knowledge* (1995).

⁴³ In Danish he uses the concepts *sted, rum* and *plads*, the translation into English is his own.

According to Bech-Danielsen the distinction between the notions springs from three different worldviews: the holistic, the dualistic and the contextual; each of them constituting three different ways of travelling as described in the quotation.

Further, three different kinds of aesthetics are related to these worldviews (Ibid.: 19-31). The aesthetic of place, Bech-Danielsen argues, is based on topology and he exemplifies this with the construction of an old Greek town. It is the focus on the special qualities of place – *the genius loci* – that makes it possible for such architecture to develop. The aesthetic of space is contrary to this, departing from a superior idea that perceives all places as being identical. An example of such architecture, is the Villa Rotonda by Andrea Palladio, which is an equilateral geometrical building with no association whatsoever to its specific locality. Finally, in the aesthetic of locus “the overall idea of the space is amalgamated with the specific quality of the place, and a representation comes into existence that is not an intellectual brain-child without root” (Ibid.: 29, my translation). The example given by Bech-Danielsen of such architecture, is a town plan in which geometric rational ideas of road extensions meet organic place-bound artefacts, such as a water stream, and a new aesthetics develops out of this amalgamation.

Face

The important question is, however, in what way this third notion may be of help for the development of democracy processes at the local level. To start out with, professional competence developed in interplace is not only suitable for the improvement of activities taking place within the actor’s own places. According to Forsén and Fryk, such competence may also help to create activities in other places. If local professionals come closer to everyday situations at the local level and open up for opinions expressed by ordinary people about their work, these opinions may turn out to be assets (Forsén and Fryk 1999: 62). “One must dare to get close to them, both as individuals and as a group, then supplementary methods and resources will be discovered” (Fryk 2000: 61, my translation). Several of the respondents would agree with this statement, especially as their working environment is suburban areas with many different cultural groups.

Take the suburbs where there are considerable cultural differences and social exclusion. Social exclusion constitutes an enormous obstacle. However, the concept also implies the existence of *inclusion*. In a democracy it shouldn’t be necessary to get the excluded to become included. It should, instead, be possible to take a step over to the world of ideas of the excluded and try to imagine how to develop democratic processes here, under the conditions of this environment. This is not an ordinary way of reasoning for us... (no. 24, city council office).

In relation to this, the notion of face⁴⁴ may be seen as being closely related to a concept that Forsén and Fryk describe as *low threshold activity*,⁴⁵ exemplified by an area with cheap offices or business premises (Forsén and Fryk 1999: 58). Such an area is quite easy to enter for the not so affluent individual. What is needed is a well-developed local network for information and trust, as well as some minor economic resources. Thus, it may be in face that somewhat equal encounters between professionals and local inhabitants may take place; encounters that may result in growth of social, human, as well as man-made capital.

Another aspect of face, is the potential for unpredictable development to take place, something that Bech-Danielsen stresses as being essential. The aesthetics of face *is in itself* a creative process by which the actors may develop a local area. From such an approach actors may *plan* for the opportunity for unpredictable development to take place (Bech-Danielsen 1998: 29). This interpretation seems to correspond to the concept of face as understood by Jensen. He maintains that while place may be seen as closely related to religion, space is closely connected to science, and face has a specific association to art (Jensen 2001: 3). According to Jensen, the notion of face implies something progressive, which changes not only the artefacts but also the artists themselves. In addition, Bech-Danielsen argues that the aesthetics of face supports the development of a worldview that safeguards Nature, as this approach amalgamates the overall vision of space and the qualities of place (Bech-Danielsen 1998: 31). One may ask if this can be perceived as if such an overall vision is comprised of the notion of sustainable development, while the aesthetics of face are composed of activities constituting sustainable development at the local level? (see fig. 14)

To sum up, it appears as if local professionals may develop their skills in interplace. This knowledge may in turn support, not only activities in the places of these professionals, but may also facilitate encounters with inhabitants in different faces; faces where unpredictable aesthetic processes may support sustainable development.

Bridging What Gap?

This chapter has given a review of a substantial body of literature aimed at further exploration of the themes found in the field investigation; themes related to the problem of bridging the gap between top-down and bottom-up perspectives. The review thus reveals knowledge about the specifics of the different approaches that are aimed at bridging this gap. In particular, the potential for combining and comparing literature on sustainable development with other bodies of literature seems to be substantial, even if there is still much to be done in this line of work. However,

⁴⁴ The notions of locus, locality and site may seem to be confusingly close to the notion of place – *genius loci*. Thus, to use the notion of face seems to be the most appropriate and will hence be used from now on.

⁴⁵ *Lågtröskelverksamhet* in Swedish.

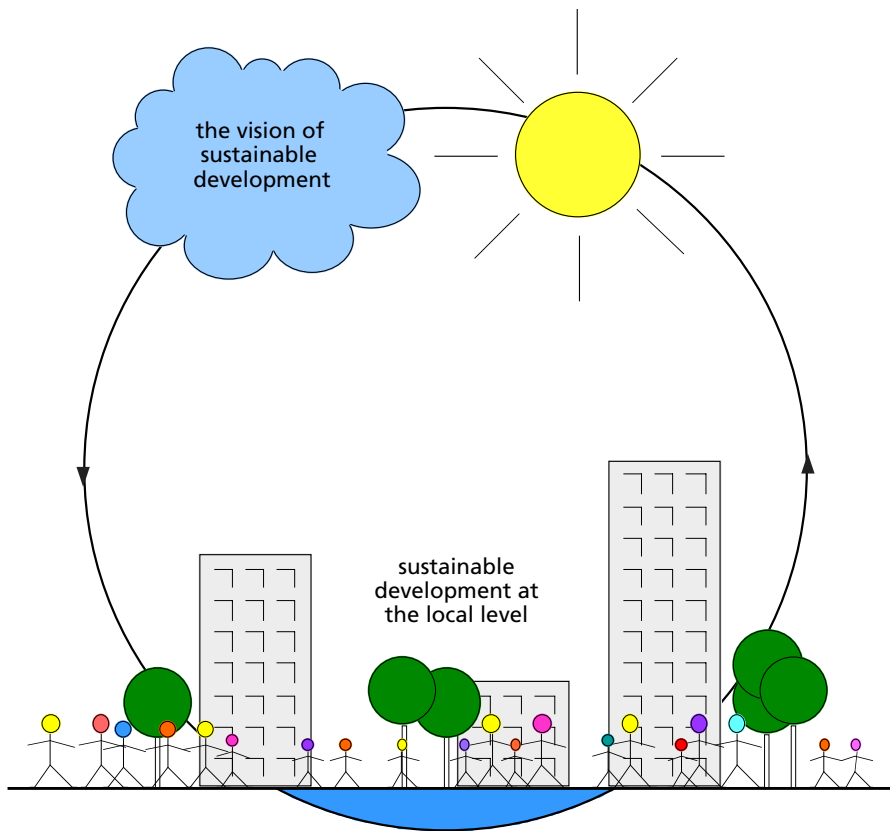


Figure 14. The overall vision of sustainable development and the aesthetics of face at the local level.

and most interestingly, the review also indicates new ways of perceiving the gap in itself. In fact, it appears as if there are several distinctive gaps, which, in different ways, seem to obstruct positive local development.

First of all, there is the gap between *top and bottom*, a gap which is often discussed in the literature on planning and democracy. Second of all, there is the gap between *abstract and concrete*, which is often the focus in the literature on planning and learning. In this second group, the gap between space and place may also be included, as well as the gap between theory and practice. The third identified gap is between the *four dimensions of sustainable development*, also this is an area of interest for literature on planning and, of course, in literature on sustainable development. Finally, the fourth gap is between *place and place*, something which seems to be seen as important mainly in the literature about the local level. Since an approach based on the distinction between gaps appears to be fruitful, these four different gaps will be further discussed in the next chapter. In particular, the aim will be to understand in what way these differences are important for supporting sustainable development.

Conclusions

IN THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER the discussion of how different approaches may be of help in bridging the gap between top-down and bottom-up perspectives, resulted in a discussion of the character of the gap in itself. The conclusion was that there are, at least, four different gaps and that the nature of these gaps may be of importance when trying to fulfil the original purpose of this research project: to contribute to the development of knowledge about the relation between broad public participation in decision-making and sustainable development.

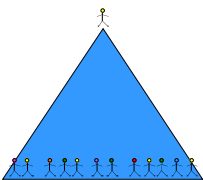
The problem of the four different gaps will not be analysed in its full depth within the scope of this work. It will, however, be discussed below in order to shed some light on the options for future work within the research project.

The approaches studied in the literature review have one thing in common: the purpose of bridging at least one of the four identified gaps. But, which gap does each approach primarily intend to bridge? It appears to be possible to arrange all of the theoretical approaches into a four-column matrix (see fig. 15).

Firstly, there are the approaches that mainly aim to bridge *the gap between top-down and bottom-up perspectives*. New professional roles in planning, as presented by Malbert (p. 33), aim at bridging the gap between public planning systems and stakeholder communities. The primary intention is, thus, to bridge the gap between top and bottom, if the planning system is perceived as being positioned at the top and the stakeholders at the bottom. The collaborative planning approach, as developed by Healey (p. 39), may also be considered as intending to bridge this same gap. The purpose of this approach is to bridge the gap between different levels of society, hence also a typical division of society departing from top-down and bottom-up perspectives.

The approach of deliberative democracy as interpreted by the National Committee on Democracy (p. 48), has its main focus on the gap between top

The gap between top and bottom

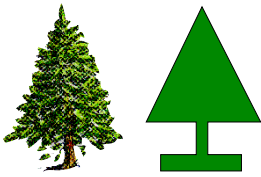


approach \ gap	top bottom	abstract concrete	place place	four dimensions
new roles in planning	X			
collaborative planning	X			
deliberative democracy	X			
border walker	X			
catalyst organisations	X			
mental pictures	X			
double-loop learning		X		
designed links		X		
layers of transformation		X		
space place		X		
social capital			X	
competencies in interplace			X	
face			X	
the prism of SD				X

and bottom as this approach stresses the importance of communication and argumentation between the politicians at the top and the people at the bottom. The border walker, as described by Michaeli (p. 60) could be considered to have the primary purpose of bridging the gap between top and bottom perspectives, as the empirical base of the approach lies in the practical implementation of local Agenda 21 projects. Further, at a first glance, the approach of catalyst organisations as proposed by Læssøe (p. 60) has the intention of supporting sustainable development. However, the main interest has to be perceived as bridging the gap between top and bottom, as the main emphasis is put on the importance of bridging the gap between the world of control and the world of susceptibility. The same argumentation may be maintained for the approach of mental pictures, as interpreted by Birgersson (p. 66). The intention of this approach is to support collaborative design processes, thus bridging the gap between planners and local stakeholders.

Fig. 15. Which gap does the approach primarily intend to bridge?

The gap between abstract and concrete



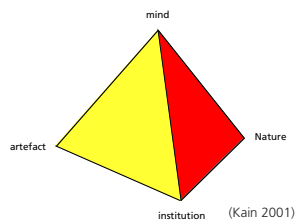
The second column of the matrix comprises *the gap between the abstract and the concrete*. Double-loop learning as discussed by Argyris and Schön (p. 56) fits well into the second column of the matrix. According to this concept, the gap between theory and practice is emphasised and may be considered as being equal to the gap between the abstract and the concrete. The approach of designed links, developed by Falkheden (p. 65), may also be understood as aimed at bridging the same gap. Here, the aim is to link man to nature, or in other words, to link the global to the local, once again a parallel to the gap between the abstract and the concrete. Finally, the layers of transformation as discussed by Latour (p. 67) have the explicit intention to bridge the gap between the abstract and the concrete. This may also be considered as being the intention of the concept of space and place, as interpreted by Jensen (p. 69).

The gap between place and place



When it comes to the third column of the matrix, *the gap between places*, the notion of social capital appears to be valid. Even if the approach of social capital as described by Putnam (p. 49) is concerned with the issue of democracy, its primary intention seems to be to bridge the gap between places. This interpretation comes as a consequence of its focus on horizontal networks at the local level. Further, the approach of competences in interplace, developed by Forsén and Fryk (p. 62), obviously has the same main intention of bridging the gap between different places. This is also true for the notion of face, as conceived by Bech-Danielsen and Jensen (p. 71).

The gap between the four dimensions of sustainable development



Finally, *the gap between the four dimensions of sustainable development* is of primary interest for the approaches of the prism as interpreted by Bonniot, Spangenberg and Valentin and further developed by Kain (p. 43). These are the only approaches with the principal intention of bridging the gap between the four dimensions of sustainable development.

This arrangement of the approaches into a four-column matrix has been developed with the purpose of understanding more about the character of the gaps. Of course, the choice of one single gap for each approach is not always obvious. Take, for example, the approach of mental pictures as understood by Birgersson (p. 66), this approach may be understood as intending to bridge not only the gap between top and bottom, but also the gap between places. This interpretation comes as a result of the focus on communication between different local stakeholders as part of the approach. This may also be valid for new professional roles in planning, as presented by Malbert (p. 33), although focusing on the gap between places at a higher level of society. Another example is the notion of space and place. As this notion is interpreted by Jensen (p. 71), it may be correct to consider it as aiming at bridging the gap between abstract and concrete. However, as interpreted by Birgersson, Malbert and Strömberg (p. 69), it is primarily the gap between top and bottom that seems to be of

interest. A third example is the notion of social capital. While Putnam (p. 49) mainly seems to be concerned with the gap between places, Rothstein and Kumlin seem to prioritise the gap between top and bottom in their approach to social capital (p. 50). Another example is the border walker as understood by Michaeli (p. 60) who is considered as aiming at bridging the gap between top and bottom due to the empirical foundation. However, considering the theoretical base, i.e. Habermas' theory of communicative action, it seems quite appropriate to conceive of it as mainly aimed at bridging the gap between the abstract and the concrete. The same consideration may be equally applicable to the approach of collaborative planning (p. 39), as part of its theoretical base lies in the theory of communicative action.

This structured matrix seems to be of help to better distinguish between the different gaps. But, in what way can this literature review be of help to future work in the research project? One important issue is to understand whether or not it is *necessary* to bridge all four gaps if to achieve positive development. The answer to this question seems to be “yes”, firstly based on the empirical findings in the field investigation, and secondly, supported by the theoretical input from the review of the literature. Any neglect of the existence of either one of the four gaps may cause problems that will constitute obstacles to the development sought for, i.e., sustainable development as it has been defined by the Brundtland Commission: “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED 1987: 43).

And yet another main issue to be considered in future research, is whether or not it is *desirable* to develop an approach with the purpose of bridging all four gaps. The answer to this question may be both negative and positive. On the one hand, negative, as it seems to be impossible to include all aspects into one single approach since such cover-all approach can never be operational. On the other hand, the answer may be positive if understanding such an approach means in fact encompassing several different approaches, or methodologies, with the aim of bridging distinct gaps. If attending to such a complex of problems with the aid of Latour (p. 68), it may be possible to understand such an assembly of methodologies as constituting successive layers of transformation. In this case, it is essential, according to Latour, to keep track of the whole chain of successive layers of transformation and not to leave out any single layer. Is it this comprehensive perspective of the approaches – keeping track of the chain – that is lacking today? Is there, instead a chain of discontinuities, i.e., a chain of gaps? Can it also be so that conflicting overlaps and contradictions between the described approaches constitute a serious dilemma?

The Design of Future Research

LOCAL DEMOCRACY processes may, in the words of Latour, be perceived as forming successive layers of transformation, thus, bridging a variety of gaps between top – bottom, abstract – concrete, place – place and the four dimensions of sustainable development. But, in what way can the identification of these four different gaps be of help in forthcoming research? And furthermore, how can this knowledge be useful in practical reality? Or in other words, does it really matter in practice whether or not there are one or four gaps? The intention is that these questions can be of help when designing the next phase of the research project. An important issue, however, is to find a context in which it is possible to further explore these questions.

One option for future research is to study more closely what is taking place on this issue in the Göteborg area. This thesis is based on a field investigation of local professionals in eleven city districts in Göteborg. All of them have received some kind of governmental or European special funding during the past decade. Some of them have, e.g., obtained financing from the so-called Blomman fund and the National Example; others have received financing from the Local Investment Program (LIP).⁴⁶ Additionally, some districts will be getting support from the Local Development Agreements (LUA).⁴⁷ This last fund has been initiated by the Swedish Commission on Metropolitan Areas and comprises the investment of SEK 2 billion in seven municipalities over four years. The funding has its background in a Governmental proposition concerning the development of large cities.

The metropolitan policy constitutes an important part of governmental efforts to integrate ecologically sustainable development with economic and social development. This entails that all measures have to be analysed with regard to their influence on both the environment, as well as economic growth. The metropolitan policy has to be developed based on the assumption that economic development, social development and protection of the environment are interdependent and mutually strengthening components of sustainable development (Swedish Government 1998: 9, my translation).

⁴⁶ Further information may be found at http://www.miljo.regeringen.se/M-dep_fragor/hallbarutveckling/LIP/lokala_investeringsprogram.htm, <http://miljo.regeringen.se/hut/index.htm>, <http://www.integrationsverket.se/rapporter1.html>.

⁴⁷ For further information see <http://www.storstad.gov.se>.

The purpose of the LUA funding is to provide the foundation for sustainable growth in metropolitan regions; to create new employment opportunities in these areas; and to stop segregation. One important prerequisite for the funding is the engagement and participation of the local inhabitants. In February 2001 the municipality of Göteborg made an agreement with the Swedish Government concerning this new financing program (Johansson and Sahlin 2001). Accordingly, four city district committees in Göteborg will receive SEK 240 million for a period of three or four years, and they are also required to spend the same amount themselves on projects within the program.

This initiative in Göteborg has already been criticised for the lack of a local democracy. In a newspaper article one representative for a local non-governmental organisation has argued that the inhabitants, as usual, are marginalised outside the process by local professionals. Most of the funding (90%) for the first year in this district went to projects under the auspices of the city district committee or the municipal housing company.

What's the fuss about? – The same thing that we have discussed for seven years: lack of local democracy. /.../ One prerequisite in the local investment agreement which Göteborg made with the state is that the initiatives /.../ are to be carried out from a bottom-up perspective and the inhabitants are to participate. /.../ The local board has not followed this line in its work so far. When governmental funds are to be distributed, the inhabitants are left outside (Isemo 2001, my translation).

Local professionals, however, do not share this point of view, even if they seem to agree with the fact that inhabitants have not been included to an adequate extent into the processes deciding on what project to support. In the same newspaper article one of the process leaders for the LUA in Göteborg expresses a fear of trusting local inhabitants and their ideas.

It's a difficult balance. Politicians and civil servants are often considered as being mean if they are willing to take care of things. At the same time there is also a risk that when someone wants to give voice to the inhabitants, they sometimes want to realise projects that maybe not very useful for the area (Ibid., my translation).

This example is not at all unique, the problem is commonly known and often discussed at the local level. It is a problem not only for the inhabitants, but also for local professionals. This may, thus, be considered as constituting an obvious gap between top and bottom. Do top-down initiatives, such as the LUA, have the potential to bridge this gap? For example, how does the time perspective of three years correspond to the top-down goals and the bottom-up needs? What is to be measured after this time period in the evaluation of the program? What are the consequences when mainstream decision-making processes of the city district committee are used when distributing the funds? Would the appointment of more au-

tonomous process leaders and decision-domains correspond better to the challenges presented by the gap that is to be bridged?

Furthermore, how may research approaches aimed of bridging the gap between abstract and concrete be of help? Which problems at the local level are related to this gap? How does the LUA funding relate to the matter of learning processes? Will it be of help for the development of double-loop learning and a subsequent change in the theory-in-use? Furthermore, what would happen if communication in the interplace was considered as essential within the LUA initiative? Can the demand to involve the inhabitants be understood as a desire to bridge the gap between places? If so, will the inhabitants have any real potential to influence the distribution of funds? Can the approach focused on the notion of face be of help when searching for methods to facilitate the influence of the inhabitants? Moreover, will the LUA funding support collaboration between the inhabitants and local professionals in non-governmental organisations, housing companies and city district administrations? Or will the funding encourage separate applications from local professionals and the inhabitants respectively?

Finally, how are we going to achieve sustainable development if the gap between the four dimensions of sustainable development are not included into top-down approaches, such as LUA? Are there other control mechanisms from the top that can prevent development taking the wrong direction? Or will such an unfortunate turn solely become visible as a surprising outcome, after the processes are completed?

*

Appendix

List of Respondents

no.	employment	level	responsibility	primary context
1	municipal housing company	city district	development of local processes, social issues	collaborative local network
2	municipal housing company	city district	development of local processes, technical, economic and social issues	collaborative local network
3	city district committee	city district	administration, social issues, development work	collaborative local network
4	municipal housing company	city district	district superintendent	housing company
5	private housing company	municipality	development work	collaborative local network
6	private housing company	city district	district superintendent	collaborative local network
7	municipal housing company	housing area	housing caretaker, technical and social responsibility	housing company
8	municipal housing company	city district	development superintendent	housing company

no.	employment	level	responsibility	primary context
9	city district committee	city district	development of local processes	collaborative local network
10	municipal housing company	municipality	development work, especially environmental issues	collaborative local network
11	town planning department	city district	development of local processes	collaborative local network
12	educational institution	city district	education, local processes	collaborative local network
13	municipal housing company	city district	district superintendent	collaborative local network
14	non-governmental organisation	housing area	development of local processes, technical economic and social issues	collaborative local network
15	city district committee	city district	local processes, environmental issues	collaborative local network
16	city district committee	city district	local processes, environmental issues	collaborative local network
17	municipal housing company	city district	district superintendent	collaborative local network

no.	employment	level	responsibility	primary context
18	municipal housing company	housing area	local processes, environmental issues	collaborative local network
19	municipal housing company	housing area	local processes, environmental issues	collaborative local network
20	municipal housing company	housing area	local processes, environmental issues	collaborative local network
21	non-governmental organisation	municipality	region superintendent	collaborative local network
22	municipal housing company	city district	district superintendent	collaborative local network
23	municipal housing company	municipality	development work	collaborative local network
24	city council office	city district	development work	collaborative local network
25	city council office	city district	local processes	collaborative local network
26	municipal housing company	municipality	development work, local processes	collaborative local network
27	municipal housing company	city district	development work, environmental issues	housing company

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A minimum demand on movement is that it moves
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THIS THESIS for the degree of Licentiate of Architecture examines the relation between the notion of sustainable development, on the one hand, and broad public participation in local decision-making – local democracy processes – on the other. The empirical part of the thesis is comprised of a field investigation with the purpose of exploring the potential of interviewed local professionals to work as transformers of the notion of sustainable development at the local level. The theoretical part is based on a review of the literature exploring the themes found in the field investigation; themes related to the problem of bridging the gap between top-down and bottom-up perspectives. The review indicates new ways of perceiving this gap in itself. Apparently, there are, at least, four distinctive gaps which in different ways seem to obstruct positive local development: the gap between top and bottom; the gap between abstract and concrete; the gap between place and place; and the gap between the four dimensions of sustainable development.