Interplace Planning – Theory and Practice:
Partnership and Participation in Transformation of Multicultural Neighbourhoods

JENNY STENBERG

PhD, Architect, Planner
Built Environment & Sustainable Development
Chalmers Architecture
S-412 96 Gotenburg Sweden
Phone +46 31 772 2346
E-mail jenny.stenberg@chalmers.se

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Abstract

The present article deals with inhabitant participation in planning. First, it presents a theoretical framework, developed on the basis of previous research on stigmatized multicultural metropolitan housing areas. Second, it describes the outcome of a planning project, including inhabitant participation, which made some use of the theoretical framework. Third, relating these outcomes to recent articles on governance, collaboration, partnerships and inhabitant participation, it concludes by focusing on two certain and interrelated themes: the question of accountability when inhabitants are involved in planning and the question of institutionalized responsibility for inhabitant participation.

Introduction

The prerequisites for urban planning have undergone considerable changes during recent decades, and new theories and approaches have been developed (see, e.g., Sager 1994; Allmendinger 2002). A shift from government to governance has resulted in a communicative turn, from top-down rational planning to planning through partnerships between local actors (Healey 1997; Rhodes 1997).

This communicative turn in planning has been closely related to introduction of the concept of sustainable development – stressing that 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 1992: Chap. 10.10). In other words, politicians have agreed upon a vision of planning for sustainable development that entails a communicative turn, with local partnerships that should include not only local professionals, but also citizens.

Additionally, there is an ambition, at least in Sweden, to broaden the scope of physical planning procedures to include ethnic and economic integration issues (SOU 2003). This ambition resulted from the fact that Sweden, during the latter part of the 1990s, was rated as the most segregated of the OECD countries, insofar as the most exposed housing areas in Sweden also had the highest share of immigrants (Swedish Government 1998). The Swedish governmental proposition to broaden physical planning procedures to include ethnic and economic integration issues in order to promote sustainable development is a key issue in this complex of problems: How can architects and planners, in their professional roles, contribute

to such a development, and what are the prerequisites that will enable such a development to take place?

In the present article, these issues will be discussed, first, by presenting a theoretical framework developed to analyse the local effects of a Swedish top-down funding programme aimed at social inclusion and sustainable development of stigmatized multicultural metropolitan housing areas (Stenberg 2004), second, by describing the outcome of a planning project with inhabitant participation that took place in one of the exposed housing areas after the funding programme was completed, and third, by relating these outcomes to recent articles on governance, collaboration, partnerships and inhabitant participation.

The article concludes by focusing on two certain and interrelated themes that should be addressed in future research: the question of accountability when inhabitants are involved in planning and the question of institutionalized responsibility for inhabitant participation.

The funding programme

The governmental funding programme in focus was called the local development agreements and involved an investment of SEK 2 billion in twenty-four socially excluded housing areas in seven municipalities over six years, 1999-2004. In the funding programme, the two overall aims of social inclusion and sustainable development mentioned above were broken down into eight objectives, including formulations such as »employment rates are to be raised« and »pupils are to be given the opportunity to reach secondary school«. Although this programme obviously did not constitute an ordinary planning procedure, it was an interesting object of study in the field of planning, as it also included objectives that relate social aspects to the physical environment and to planning procedures, using formulations such as »city neighbourhoods are to be experienced as attractive and safe« and »democratic participation is to be increased«.

Another reason why the programme was interesting for the field of planning is that, in Gothenburg, professionals employed in the city districts were responsible for realizing the objectives. Additionally, a bottom-up perspective – i.e. inhabitant participation – was explicitly expressed as a prerequisite for implementation. These requirements may be considered very much in line with a planning procedure entailing a communicative turn, with local partnerships including both professionals and citizens.

The theoretical framework

The design of the theoretical framework used to analyse the local effects of the funding programme was based on critiques found in previous research on segregation and social exclusion, on the one hand, and on planning and sustainable development, on the other (Stenberg 2004):

- there appears to be a lack of detailed analyses of temporal aspects and their relationship to the social problems of the housing areas in focus;
- there seems to be a general failure to include power aspects in research on planning and sustainable development, and it is essential to also include the expert role of the planner in such studies;
- there may be insufficient explicit knowledge of how we should understand theories of and approaches to organizational learning in the context of planning in multicultural suburban metropolitan areas.

Focusing on the three theoretical themes of time, power and learning resulted in an analysis that culminated in a story, or actually three stories that follow each of the themes and that deal with how the concepts of time, power and learning, respectively, were perceived in practice by the inhabitants and the local employees (Stenberg 2004):

Analysing the empirical material from the point of view of TIME resulted in three major conclusions. First, there was a discussion on fragmentation of time implying that time ceases to exist as duration (Hylland Eriksen 2001). In practice, fragmentation of time was found to occur not only as a result of the extremely rapid increase in the information flow in society, but there were also problems with slowness – laws, rules, traditions, thoughts, biases, and procedures in society changing too slowly to meet the needs of the inhabitants. Thus, slowness, not only swiftness, may cause fragmentation of time. The second aspect discussed was the apparent emphasis on the economic-technical system at the expense of the temporal patterns of biological, mental and social systems (Heintel 1999; Haunschild 2001), which seems to have resulted in difficulties in endorsing solutions to problems such as ethnic housing segregation, for instance, when local employees focused only on unemployment and not on housing segregation when discussing social exclusion in society. Third, the apparent use of time to exercise power (Andersson 1985) was highlighted and criticized. This was expressed by local employees distressed over governmental and municipal use of time to exercise control and by inhabitants suffering from the time abuse perpetrated by the local employees.

The analysis of POWER aspects resulted in an awareness of the »rationalities« (Foucault 1982; Flyvbjerg 1998; Lapintie 2002; 2003) of the local employees when implementing the funding programme, which most often concerned quite explicable activities from the point of view of the context of a given actor. Additionally, the analysis resulted in the exposure of »black boxes« (Callon and Latour 1981), which were found to be under reconsideration when »micro-actors« found reason to oppose them. Further discussed was the question of whether such a result – micro-actors opposing black boxes – could actually constitute a reasonable objective for a national funding programme stressing the bottom-up perspective, hence, helping micro-actors to reconsider certain black boxes used by macro-actors, such as the city district administration and the city district committee as a prerequisite for their accomplishments. This would seem to be a fairly reasonable bottom-up perspective, as the thoughts, habits, forces and objects that are sealed in black boxes must be made to contribute

to a better life for the inhabitants in stigmatized suburban housing areas. It was, after all, for them, and not for the local employees, that the national funding programme actually came into being. Discussed in relation to these findings was also how the analysis of power aspects actually kindled an awareness of the call for inhabitants to take the role of micro-actor in reconsidering black boxes, as the inhabitants seemed to be the only people who could understand when a black box impeded their progress, whereas local employees, such as civil servants, politicians and housing company employees, seemed to be prisoners in their own contexts.

Analysing the empirical material from the perspective of LEARNING (Easterby-Smith et al. 1999; Easterby-Smith and Lyles 2003) highlighted the potential of focusing on situations in which a rationality within a black box was being attacked by a micro-actor, or in which an actor seemed eager to keep a black box sealed. This is because, in such situations, when power was exercised by an action upon an action (Argyris and Schön 1995), there followed an opportunity to reveal »triggers for learning« (Ranson and Stewart 1994; Krogstrup 1997) that could facilitate »double-loop learning« (Argyris and Schön 1995). As a consequence of employing such a focus when analysing the empirical material, it became obvious that civil servants and politicians found it difficult to make use of the funding programme in such a way. Reactions from non-governmental organizations and from inhabitants' projects, which had the potential to be developed into triggers for learning, were not made use of. Accordingly, »theories-in-use« (Argyris and Schön 1995; Schein 1996) such as »immigrants will always benefit from adapting to other cultures and particularly to the Swedish culture« and »housing segregation should be upheld because of the expected hostility of people born in Sweden« were not actually challenged as a result of the local development agreements. Therefore, discussed in relation to learning was the question of whether responsibility for the funding programme should have been given to another actor.

The analysis of learning gave reason to discuss a so-called third world – variously called »aesthetic of locus« (Bech-Danielsen 1998), »phronetic organization research« (Flyvbjerg 2003), or »interplace« (Forsén and Fryk 1999) – a world that, in theoretical frameworks on planning and urban development, has often been highlighted as improving the potential to reconcile, or to achieve an understanding between, two worlds called, e.g., »space and place«, »abstract and concrete«, and »scientific knowledge and technical know-how«.

One difficulty, however, was the lack of stringency concerning definitions of the concepts discussed in the different approaches, e.g., human activity and knowledge have often been intertwined in a way that does not facilitate understanding. Still, except for some differences, it seems to be possible to understand the two worlds presented in many of these approaches if we use Aristotelian learning terminology, in which »action« (theoria) is related to »systematic knowledge« (episteme), and »production« (poiesis) is related to »technical expertise« (techne).

As is obvious in Aristotelian quotations, the distinction between systematic knowledge (episteme) and technical expertise (techne) has nothing to do with the difference between theory and practice. It is instead apparent that also the concept of technical expertise (techne) is the result of thinking and theorizing, only it aims at being prepared to produce something, rather than at being ready to act.

With this in mind, it may be better not to use the concept scientific knowledge for episteme, as does Flyvbjerg (drawing on another translation of the Nicomachean Ethics), as this may result in the erroneous conclusion that episteme is produced only in the realm of academic research. To clarify, the significant difference between the notions is that action (theoria) relates to systematic knowledge (episteme), which is eternal and cannot be otherwise, while production (poiesis) relates to technical expertise (techne), which is knowledge only in an incidental sense.

Further, the question is whether the previously mentioned third world may also be understood using Aristotelian learning terminology, in which »disposition of goodness« (praxis) is related to »wisdom« (phronesis). This situation, however, turns out to be more complicated. Even if it seems obvious that all of the approaches discuss learning as a self-evident strategy for achieving understanding between the two worlds of »space and place«, »abstract and concrete«, and so on, not all of them discuss what sort of human activity precedes the learning process, or the kind of knowledge resulting from the learning process. Naturally, the activities and knowledge may be considered present anyway, though these are not often explicitly discussed and examined. Actually, this third world is instead often discussed in spatial terms. Perhaps this last-mentioned deficiency – not discussing the kind of action that precedes the learning process – is the most problematic, as trying to understand what kind of activity the Aristotelian notion of praxis implies in reality is quite difficult.

What Aristotle stressed was that wisdom (phronesis) is neither systematic knowledge (episteme) nor technical expertise (techne) – wisdom (phronesis) is closely related to »a capability of human beings to form a clear view of what is good for themselves and what is good for human beings in general«. Consequently, the notion of praxis must be equivalent to this »capability or disposition of goodness«. Still, wisdom (phronesis) may also be considered an amalgamation of systematic knowledge (episteme) and technical expertise (techne) (Aristotle 2002: p. 180, Book VI, 1140b20). What is important, though, is that wisdom (phronesis) must not be considered to be related *only* to this amalgamation – as wisdom (phronesis) is actually primarily interconnected with the third human activity: disposition of goodness (praxis).

To sum up, the analysis on learning ended with a discussion about this so-called third world, which was found to be perceptible in the empirical material when focusing on triggers for learning, possibly prevalent when an organization is new or when an existing organization does something uncommon, as well as when there is a conflict. What this brought to light was the notion that funding programmes may actually benefit from any project, whatever its

objective may be, as long as the people responsible for the programme make sure they attend to the triggers for learning that emerge owing to these new situations. Accordingly, they must use the triggers for learning to expose theories-in-use, primarily by revealing any espoused theories, and in an open debate examine whether or not the theories-in-use are counterproductive to the objectives of the funding programme, in particular, and the mission of the city district committee and its administration, in general. Thereafter, they must be prepared to make decisions on measures than can change the theories-in-use that obstruct a desired development. When implementing funding programmes, such as local development agreements aimed at social inclusion and sustainable development, awareness of such a third world would seem to be fruitful.

An interest in methods of avoiding continued conformance with traditional planning procedures thus brings to light the potential impact of planning procedures from the so-called third world – procedures that may be labelled »interplace planning« (Stenberg 2004). This implies also taking into consideration knowledge developed in between the realms of local actors – employees as well as inhabitants. It would seem that such an approach is particularly important in contemporary planning, because communicative planning, in the form of local partnerships, is often considered a proper substitute for traditional planning procedures, even if they are obviously designed to fulfil a specific mission of the partners and often lack the voice of the citizens.

Interplace planning in practice

Two years after the above-mentioned funding programme and research project were completed, the city planning office was assigned, in 2006, the task of developing a densification plan for the multicultural city district – Biskopsgarden – to redress the pressing shortage of residences in the municipality of Gothenburg. As the city district was built in the 1950s and 60s, decades characterized by functional planning and low building density, the physical environment not only tolerated densification, but also welcomed new buildings at certain places.

As the funding programme aimed at an increase in inhabitant participation, among other things, the local employees had learnt quite a lot about participative democracy – although the lessons were actually learnt from *not* having involved the citizens to any great extent, as the evaluation showed that, for various reasons, most of the funding was actually given to projects managed by the local employees themselves. However, when the city planning office now contacted the city district administration to initiate a partnership regarding the densification plan, they decided to directly engage inhabitants in this planning project.

For that reason, the city district administration engaged three project leaders, one of whom was the present author. Thus, this was a consultant assignment and not, as in the case of the previously described material, an independent case study. Further, the consultant assignment has not been evaluated externally or hitherto analysed by independent researchers, i.e. the

present description of the project – and the critical discussions regarding its pros and cons – is based on the author's personal view, although the empirical material has been carefully documented, as in any case study research project. Hence, the purpose of presenting this project is not to describe research done on it, but to discuss to what extent the theoretical framework described earlier made sense in a practical planning situation, although not all of the theories could be used, owing to the assignment's limitations.

The objective of the inhabitant participation project was determined by the city district administration in collaboration with the project leaders, before the inhabitants were involved. In the first place, it was based on the needs of the city planning office, which wanted suggestions about *where* new buildings could be situated. However, as it was the city district administration that financed the inhabitant participation project, the objective was also related to the administration's wish to increase participatory democracy. This resulted in additional objectives, namely that the inhabitants should also present their view on what *kind* of residences were needed in the area (the size of residences, heights and sizes of buildings, rented or owned, detached houses or apartments, etc.), and that they should be allowed to suggest building types other than residences, even if the city planning office at that point in time was focused on densification of residences. The inclusion of these two objectives was an example of how the city district administration strived to form a partnership that was not solely based on the view that the economic-technical system should set the prevailing temporal pattern.

The objectives of a partnership project are closely related to the form of co-operation. Earlier experiences of partnership planning including citizens in Gothenburg had shown that making mistakes about, or being unclear on, the chosen form of co-operation can undermine the project. In Biskopsgarden, the form of co-operation was therefore discussed before the inhabitants were engaged, and the city district administration and city planning office agreed upon a form with two intentions (Ranger and Westerberg 2004). First, the co-operation was to broaden the foundation for making decisions so as to increase the quality of the densification plan, i.e. the inhabitants were to make *suggestions*, but the city planning office was not obliged to follow them. Second, the co-operation was to increase democratic transparency and reallocate initiatives, responsibilities and decisions between municipality and citizens, i.e. to strive for a more participatory democracy. Both these intentions were very much in line with governmental recommendations (see e.g. Swedish Government 2001; Amnå 2006), but it was nonetheless not uncomplicated to implement them in practice – especially as the two intentions may be seen as contradictory. A third co-operation form (strive for more efficient and effective administration), however, was readily dropped by the two actors in the partnership, i.e. they were not interested in developing a collaboration that would reshape the ordinary activities of their institutions, because they, at least the representatives of the city planning office , did not have the authority that would allow them to reach such a goal. As is obvious now, in hindsight, despite good intentions, this form of co-operation had not been adequately thought through and designed. However, as a consequence of early discussions on this form of co-operation, it was decided that the inhabitant group should be informed by the

city planning office about when, and the reasons why, the plan for densification in Biskopsgarden did not follow the inhabitants' recommendations.

When the objectives and co-operation form had been decided upon, the city district administration in the area invited all its 25,000 inhabitants to participate in the project by writing about it in the local newspaper, providing information at a public meeting and spreading information within the local networks. The involved inhabitants were assured a smaller fee for their work (EURO 800 per person), which was estimated to amount to one hundred hours per person over the three months. The fee was meant to get people to attend, but it also proved to be a good way of keeping inhabitants in the project. The three project leaders worked about six hundred hours altogether, and the total cost of the project has been estimated to EURO 60,000, excluding the work of civil servants in the city district administration and the city planning office .

Twenty-three inhabitants responded positively to the invitation to participate, but this was not judged to be a good turnout. Involvement would probably have been greater if more imaginative methods had been used to spread information. The administration had planned to accept fifteen persons, but instead accepted all of them. When a few of the inhabitants dropped out early in the process, the city district administration headhunted a few men, as there was a sex imbalance in the group. When the recruitment process came to an end, the group consisted of twenty-one persons, of whom eight were born abroad and thirteen in Sweden, seven were men and fourteen women. All parts of the district were represented, although the representatives had not been elected by the citizens. The balance in ethnicity compared to the district as a whole was quite good, but not regarding sex and age: There were too few men and children. At that point in time, the city district administration engaged a third project leader and made him responsible for communicating with children in the schools, helping them to present their views. The children did start later, however, and worked for two months only. In total, the child project leader involved about one hundred children between seven and fifteen years of age. They most often met during school hours. The child project leader also involved some teachers in the process, and parents were sometimes involved in the tasks children were asked to complete at home.

The group of twenty-one adults met for two to three hours one evening a week with their two project leaders, and in between these seminars, the inhabitants did quite a lot of work in smaller groups. The working methods used to reach the objectives were not decided upon from the outset of the project. Here, the children's work will not be discussed to the same extent as the adult's, as it most often took place separately.

The adult group initiated their work in January 2006 by discussing methodology, and out of many suggestions from the project leaders, one from the university and one from the private sector, they chose a framework called »Methods for meetings« (Ranger and Westerberg 2004). This framework included not only a series of methods and tools for cooperation, but

also a description of what tools were appropriate for specific phases of a project. The phases in use were:

1. Reflect on the prerequisites
2. Search for partnerships and be visible
3. Create togetherness
4. Produce a joint strategy
5. Go from strategy to action
6. Valuate and learn from the project
7. Care about what happens afterwards

As the first two phases actually took place before the inhabitants were chosen, they initiated their work in the third phase by putting everything on the table and creating a sense of togetherness. This phase was mainly based on seminars in which they talked about themselves and their views on the task. It also included the above-mentioned selection of methodology. After a few weeks, the inhabitant group was ready to move on to the fourth phase of the planning process – producing a joint strategy – i.e. they decided in what ways they were going to proceed with the assignment.

After about one month, they initiated the phase of action by applying different tools for jointly creating knowledge about housing, in general, and the physical environment in Biskopsgarden, in particular. This implied not only tools such as taking joint walks in the area and study tours to other areas, but also writing questionnaires to be placed in shops and libraries and conducting interviews with friends, neighbours and passengers on buses and trams. Altogether, the inhabitants – children and adults – in one way or another reached or had a dialogue with about 1800 citizens in Biskopsgarden. This expansion of the boundaries of the project was quite an important element, and the project leaders sometimes reminded the participants of their responsibility to relate to the people in their networks – implying not only gathering information from them about their opinions, but also providing feedback from the weekly seminars. This procedure may be considered to correspond well with the theoretical framework described earlier. It provides quite a telling example of how interplace planning may be implemented in practice.

Going from strategy to action also implied introducing to the group knowledge from previous investigations in the area, e.g. investigations carried out by the city planning office and the city real estate office. It proved to be quite important for municipal actors to be completely open and put all old and ongoing plans on the table – even those not yet made public. One may describe such a strategy as an important step in enabling the inhabitants to oppose certain black boxes. Additionally, as the public and private housing companies had been involved in a very active local partnership in Biskopsgarden together with the city district committee and the city planning office for more than ten years, the inhabitant group also made use of information about the perspective of the housing companies, which was quite important, as they were the actors who were supposed to become interested in financing and building new

houses in this not particularly affluent housing area. The representative from the city planning office participated in some of the meetings to inform about certain things, but also to get information about how the project was proceeding.

The phase of going from strategy to action also included analysing the results of their investigations and putting everything together into one or more suggestions about where and how densification of residences/buildings should be accomplished. Altogether, the inhabitants suggested forty-five places suitable for new buildings in Biskopsgarden, and they also indicated which buildings should be built first. Their choices were clearly related to inhabitants' feelings of insecurity in certain, often wooden, areas between bus and tram stops and the residences. Their suggestions nicely tied together the different »islands« of housing areas in the district. The inhabitants, especially the children, pointed out certain areas they thought should *not* be built on, as they were used as recreation areas.

In addition to carrying out the work of choosing locations for densification, the inhabitant group discussed housing policies. First on the agenda was the discussion about the price of newly built apartments, which was very high in Sweden at this point in time, implying a general risk for increased housing segregation in metropolitan areas. The youths in the group did research on this theme and found several smaller construction companies that actually had succeeded in building very cheap apartments in other parts of Gothenburg. Thus, it was natural for them to argue that at least some of the building rights be given to such small enterprises – in an effort to achieve economic housing integration. This was a very interesting example of the inhabitants opposing a black box. However, these ideas were difficult to communicate, as the city planning office does not handle building rights in Gothenburg, i.e., they were not the authorities sitting on the black box to keep it sealed. The city real estate office is responsible for building rights, but they were not directly involved in the inhabitant participation project.

One may also argue that such issues should be further discussed by politicians and not civil servants. The problem with such a conviction is that local politicians, those who are actually available for the inhabitants, are only responsible for local social services, such as schools and elderly care. Thus, they may not interfere, politically, in planning of the physical environment if it is not related to their area of responsibility. What they *can* do, of course, is talk to their party colleagues in the municipal city real estate committee. No one knows whether this was actually done, especially not the inhabitants themselves, and if inhabitant participation in planning is going to have a future, it is probably necessary to find ways of increasing the transparency of the democratic system in order to provide this essential feedback.

Second on the political agenda was the discussion of social housing. In Sweden, the public housing companies have previously been largely responsible for social housing, but this role is rapidly changing as public housing companies – referring to the market economy – argue that they should act in the same way as private housing companies do (Sahlin 2001). This development had resulted in a general shortage of apartments for people with social problems

in the municipality of Gothenburg. Simultaneously, the increasing problems of stigmatization of certain city districts in Sweden had led to a situation in which housing companies, often collaborating in local partnerships with the authorities, explicitly strived for a decrease in the share of apartments for people with social problems, as such individuals add to the level of stigmatization.

Such a point of view is usually not only presented by local professionals, but also by inhabitants. In planning, it is commonly known as the *nimby* (not in my backyard) effect. It was therefore not surprising that this effect emerged in the inhabitant group in Biskopsgarden. This effort may also be considered an attempt to open a black box on which many different municipal actors were sitting. There were two persons out of the twenty who from the very outset of the project had this issue on the agenda and who tried in different ways to convince the others to make it a priority. At the beginning of the project, the participants did not seem to find reason to discuss this, as the question was not naturally included in the work. However, at a certain point, the issue was put on the table again.

This occurred in the middle of the project when they were discussing what they were going to present as the results from the project as a whole. One of the working groups began arguing that they should only ask for detached houses. The argument was that this would attract socially stable families. At first no one really objected to the suggestion, it seemed like a reasonable conclusion, which actually could have come from any representative of the authorities. However, when they later discussed whether the working group meant only privately owned detached houses, it became obvious that they were after two things: First, they wanted the group to ask for small-scale buildings with two-three storeys, preferably detached and semi-detached, as the districts already had a great many large-scale buildings and needed a better mix. This standpoint is often mentioned, as stigmatization of areas built in the 1950s, 60s and 70s is closely related to a large building scale. Second, they wanted the group to ask for privately owned residences or tenant ownership only, as the district already had many rented apartments. According to the working group, this issue was also closely related to stigmatization effects.

At this point, the discussion took off and the black box was opened a bit more as the result of a complete scenario including arguments that may well be analysed and understood using theoretical concepts such as espoused theory and theory-in-use. First, it was argued that the district did not actually consist only of large-scale buildings. Instead, the district was divided into different sections with distinctive scales. Additionally, the stigmatization effects in the district did not always follow the scale of the buildings. If the group were to argue for diversity of scales, it would be natural to also argue for large-scale buildings in the area with detached houses and vice versa. The same thing holds for form of tenure, which in Sweden has traditionally followed the scale of the building, rented apartments being found in large-scale buildings and private or tenant ownership in smaller-scale housing.

Actually, four working groups found reason to argue for new large-scale buildings in the district. First, there were the youths who had become engaged in economic housing issues. They found it difficult to believe that small-scale housing, such as detached and semi-detached houses, could end up being inexpensive enough for, e.g., students and other low-income groups. Additionally, they were very involved in working towards different forms of collective housing in the district, as a complement to the, as they put it, traditional, isolated and boring single-family residences. The cold winters in Sweden make it difficult to use outdoor areas between detached houses for collective activities, and more large-scale buildings may be much more appropriate for such needs. This perspective was also shared by the working group of elderly and functionally disabled. Being old and/or having a functional disability in Sweden, where the elderly population is increasing and the budget for care decreasing, implies a need for new kinds of buildings that promote a feeling of community, also for retired people.

The third group arguing for large-scale buildings was the children. This was rather contradictory to the vision that many families with small children seem to have: a dream of moving to a detached house for the sake of the children. Actually, the children felt that large-scale buildings give a feeling of safety and seem to have meant not only feeling safe in their little nook high up above the ground and the trees, but also the social feeling of safety that comes with knowing many of the children and adults on the housing yard.

Actually, there was also interesting information on this issue in the empirical material the group themselves had collected from other inhabitants in Biskopsgarden. In a questionnaire they had, e.g., asked about the inhabitants' needs as regards form of tenure. Most of the informants preferred rental apartments, and they also wanted *large* rental apartments, as many former refugee families suffered from overcrowding conditions and did not want to leave the city district. So the question that emerged from the discussion was: For whom are these new residences going to be built?

At this point the issue of social housing came into the light – the black box was wide open. Attracting socially stable families actually meant designing a physical environment that made the area unattractive for any kind of housing for people with social problems – alcoholics, drug addicts, people with mental illness, the unemployed – as the district, according to some of the inhabitants, already had »its share« of such housing. The inhabitant group became quite silent after this clear picture was finally given by two of the inhabitants, and shortly afterwards the seminar ended.

The following morning, one of the inhabitants called one of the project leaders. She declared that she could absolutely not stand behind such a misanthropic policy as the one proposed the previous evening, but she felt so oppressed at the seminar that she could not object. Additionally, she said that several of the inhabitants in the group stood behind her. She declared that social problems can strike any of us at any time, and e-mailed the entire group saying she would like the group to instead present a suggestion for how a smaller worn-out,

former industrial building, situated at the port of the district, could be rebuilt to become a nice housing for elderly people who have previously been homeless. Her point of view was that the district already had many inhabitants with social problems, and she would like the local authorities to provide better care for them.

Actually, at that point in time, it became quite clear that the methodology used by the group had failed to fully handle internal power aspects. Although such issues were discussed to some extent, e.g. by pointing out meeting rules, this was not enough to make the group members aware of power problems and certainly not to support opening black boxes and moving forwards towards democratic conclusions. The problem of social exclusion was discussed to some extent in the following seminar, but the only consensus they could reach was that opposing propositions for housing could be presented at the end of the project. Although this was quite satisfactory from the perspective of democracy, the result was that their very interesting discussion about housing and social exclusion was not presented in the end – at least not to the extent it could have been.

The form of the final presentation of the project had been decided in advance, by project leaders and assigners. It was to be oral and presented to the representative of the city planning office – to provide her with information before she drew up the densification plan for the district. Beyond this, the inhabitants were free to present the results as they wished and to complement the oral presentation with any kind of written or other material.

The inhabitant group decided to make a power point presentation themselves, all together on the stage, without the project leaders. The children's project leader, however, presented their results together with about ten of the children. At that point in time, the city planning office had realized that they could get more out of the presentation if the inhabitant group were to present their ideas to *all* of the civil servants working in that part of the city – in total about sixty employees. Additionally, some civil servants from the city real estate office could be invited as well as politicians from concerned municipal committees.

This offer presented a real challenge. On the one hand, it was extremely encouraging that the city planning office was interested in the inhabitants and their results. On the other hand, this arrangement changed the prerequisites for the presentation in a way that was contrary to the needs of the inhabitants. When the time schedule for the presentation was to be decided, the city planning office only allotted the inhabitants *one* hour – not the two hours they had asked for. The remaining four hours were to be spent on lunch, a historic review of the district – presented by an architect – and a joint walk in the district with the architect as guide. Hence, twenty adults and ten children were supposed to present three months of work in sixty minutes – two minutes each – and most of them were not used to making presentations in their professional lives.

From the perspective of the inhabitant group, these circumstances gave rise to a suspicion that the project was just a way for the city planning office, and perhaps also the city district

administration, to legitimize their work. The project leaders found it strange that the city district administration would put so much effort and money into an inhabitant project and then allow the city planning office – additionally very late in the process – to arrange things in such a way that the inhabitants were restricted in presenting their the results. Even if the city planning office saw this event as an opportunity to provide employees with better knowledge of a city district and to learn something new from an unusual project, for the involved inhabitants, this presentation constituted the culmination of their work. Actually, at this point in time, it became quite clear that the methodology the group had used had failed to deal with *external* power aspects. We had experienced how external actors can use time to exercise power. With regard to the theoretical framework, this showed how the inhabitants were affected by time abuse. Failure to make agreements about the time limitations with the project assigner and the city planning office from the beginning was clearly a mistake on the part of the project leaders. It was also a mistake not to have clarified the power relations between the city district administration, the city planning office and the project leaders before the inhabitant group was chosen. However, it also became quite evident that the city planning office actually had no idea about the trigger for learning they had just missed.

After intense negotiations, the inhabitants were given ninety minutes for their presentation and the city district administration decided to go through with the arrangements. The project leaders made a decision to film the entire event to have it documented for the future, which was considered important from a democratic perspective. The presentation was actually a success. The inhabitants themselves were very pleased with having such a large audience and the visitors were highly impressed. They were impressed with both the presentation itself and the results of the work: It was in a way astonishing to civil servants at the city planning office to receive so many suggestions concerning placement of new buildings in a municipality where inhabitants often consider densification to be a problem rather than a possibility. Some of the municipal politicians expressed a belief that procedures such as this could reduce the number of appeals later on. This, however, may not be a realistic expectation, as there will probably always be some people who are negative towards any kind of physical change in their neighbourhood. Apart from presenting suggestions about places for densification, the inhabitants gave some very interesting lectures on building policy, covering the themes of economic housing, a feeling of safety, elderly care and housing segregation.

The inhabitants also made their presentation at a well-attended and highly appreciated meeting for local politicians and local civil servant management, as they were the project assigners. Moreover, they presented their results at a less well-attended inhabitant conference about the future of the city district. Again, this disinterest was probably due to the unimaginative methods used to inform the public.

Lessons for the field of planning

When the phase of moving from strategy to action was over in March 2006, the engagement of the inhabitant group and the involvement of project leaders had actually come to an end.

The phase of valuation and learning took place gradually in the form of self-evaluations at the seminars. In the academic realm, ex post analysis has been conducted to try to understand the outcomes of the practical planning project in relation to the theoretical framework described earlier. The seventh phase – caring about what happens afterwards – was actually not planned for by the city district administration, and the author has not been able to participate in all of the meetings and study all documents produced since completion of the project. Thus, only parts of the seventh phase will be discussed here, focusing on two specific issues closely related to the inhabitants' participation in planning: First, did the inhabitant group's suggestions influence the densification plan made by the city district office? Second, did the city planning office provide the inhabitant group with explanations for their final decisions, as they had promised?

The first question will be discussed by briefly comparing two maps. As seen in the first map, showing the work of the inhabitant group (see Fig. 1), the adults and children suggested forty-five places suitable for densification (filled white oval). Of these, eleven were selected both as prioritized building sites and as problematic for inhabitants in some way (marked with a star). They also chose twenty-two places where building should not occur, as these were important for recreation (unfilled oval). Clearly, some of their choices were contradictory, in that one area could be considered both a problem and a possibility – i.e. buildings may be constructed if recreation is simultaneously protected.

Fig 1. The map shows the inhabitants' suggestions for densification in Biskopsgarden.

The second map describes the densification plan made by the city planning office at the municipality (see Fig. 2). The planner chose fifteen places suitable for densification (yellow fields) and suggested reinforcing certain passages to improve connections between different parts of the city district (pink lines).

Fig. 2. The map describes the densification plan made by the city planning office.

To what extent, then, do these two maps converge? If we look at the number of overlapping areas, there is actually a great deal of convergence. Thirteen of the fifteen municipal suggestions had also been made by the inhabitants, and, as the municipal suggestions often covered two or more of the inhabitants' suggestions, twenty out of forty-five inhabitants' suggestions were actually also pointed out by the municipality. Moreover, eight out of eleven locations prioritized by the inhabitants were included in the municipal plan. If we consider the places the inhabitants felt should not be built on, five out of twenty-two such areas were included as possible locations for densification in the municipal plan. However, all of these were areas for which choices were contradictory in the inhabitants' map.

Hence, the inhabitants can feel quite content with their work, as it seems to have influenced the municipal densification plan. This, however, is a superficial evaluation, as it does not tell us anything about causes and effects. In fact, when the inhabitants had presented their final results, the representative of the city planning office spontaneously exclaimed: »How

interesting – this is exactly the same result I would have presented myself, even without inhabitant participation!«. Still, she later described very carefully in her plan that it was inspired to a great extent by the inhabitants' suggestions. In order to understand more about these issues, it would be necessary to carry out an investigation including, e.g., actor analysis and discourse analysis, as well as a comparison of outcomes from planning projects with and without inhabitant participation.

Now to the second question: Did the city planning office provide the inhabitant group with explanations for their choices, as they had promised? Unfortunately, they did not, and this was a great disappointment. As mentioned before, this late phase of the planning process was not taken care of by the city district administration, and as the project leaders had already finished their assignment, they had no mandate to interfere, even if they had an interest in how the planning process continued. Naturally, the project leaders should not have accepted such a limited responsibility. This is an important lesson from the project that can be kept in mind for future projects. Then again, the planning process is very slow, and the inhabitants' interest may be almost non-existent after one or two years have passed, which is a good example of how slowness can cause fragmentation of time to the extent that it ceases to exist.

Actually, for the field of planning, the process occurring after the project provided interesting learning opportunities. It seems that the representative of the city planning office now thought of the process as belonging to her institution, and she felt no obligation whatsoever to inform the inhabitant group about how she would proceed. Although she gave some sporadic information at short-notice meetings or via e-mail, she did not take responsibility for living up to their promise. It also seems that the city district administration did not put pressure on the municipality to do so.

From the perspective of the inhabitant group, the promise would have been quite simple to keep. What they were actually waiting for was simply to be invited to a meeting at which the representative of the city planning office would present her draft of a densification plan, tell the inhabitants what considerations her decisions were based on, and listen to their reactions. Hence, this meeting was thought to provide an opportunity for mutual learning. From the perspective of the inhabitants, the municipal representative did not seem to be interested in learning from their comments and discussions – yet another example of a missed trigger for learning. This also gave inhabitants reason to believe that the project was merely a way of legitimizing the planning process and product.

However, in September 2006, the densification plan was ready, distributed to the adult inhabitant group and simultaneously presented to the public in the form of exhibitions, as prescribed by the planning and building act. Concerned parties were thereafter allowed to present their objections to the plan, in person and in writing. Then, if they found reason to, the city planning office could revise the plan. The exhibition was accompanied by two official meetings, at which the city planning office invited the public to inform them about the densification plan and to discuss it.

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These two meetings were extremely chaotic, with people screaming demeaning and disparaging things at the representatives of the city planning office. Perhaps the officials now regretted not having provided enough feedback to the inhabitant group. The group could have been of great help, and an early discussion with them could also have prepared the planners for what was to come. Then again, such a strategy would also have blurred the line between the work of the municipality and the inhabitant project – which may not have been such a good idea from the point of view of democracy. However, it was quite clear at that point that if legitimating really had been a hidden objective, then they had not succeeded at all with the wealthier inhabitants in one part of the district with detached houses. Most of the visitors at the two meetings came from that area, and their objections concerned densification of one location in their area – a location that had not been included in the inhabitant presentation. The rest of the visitors came from an adjacent area with tenant-ownership apartments. They objected to a suggested building on top of a parking house – a suggestion coming originally from the inhabitant group and intended to make the passage between the two parts of the district feel safer.

The rest of the city district was actually not represented at all, there were, e.g., very few inhabitants who were born abroad, rather few women and almost no youths. The inhabitants from the area with detached houses and the adjacent area with tenant-ownership apartments made many significant statements at these meetings, most of which concerned the city planning office's vision of better linking the distinctive parts of the district, by placing new buildings there. »We don't want that connection« they argued, »the contour lines actually constitute a natural division of the district«. An further, »I would never have been interested in living, for example, in the flashy new harbour area, if it had been populated by people from another social group than mine: dark, narrow, cul-de-sacs…«.

The considerable interest in attending these two meetings was preceded by a written announcement posted at certain places in the district. In fact, the announcement consisted of a collage of various documents that seemed to convey municipal information about certain building heights in the area with detached houses. These heights, however, did not come from the authorities' densification plan. Thus, even if the municipal densification plan was preceded by an unusual planning procedure including inhabitant participation, this did not prove to be a good way of avoiding strategic actions with nimby effects.

As a matter of fact, the part of the district with detached houses was actually represented in the inhabitant group by two persons. If one were to follow the theory-in-use concept, which the inhabitant group finally came up with when discussing housing policies, although it was not explicitly expressed, it would in fact be quite a good strategy to position large-scale buildings in this small-scaled area. As it seems, the inhabitant group did not take notice of the two inhabitants from this area or consider that it might be strategic to avoid suggesting densification in their area. Now, in hindsight, one must question whether the methodology

used was able to reveal any of the individual inhabitant's agendas and put them on the table for discussion.

Then again, the city planning office's own professional analysis resulted in suggestions in that area anyway, implying that one perhaps can allow inhabitant participation projects to leave such considerations to the authorities. However, after exhibition of the plan and the two public meetings, the city planning office revised the densification plan, decreased the proposed building location in the area with detached houses and removed the suggested location in the adjacent area with tenant-ownership apartments.

There is one interesting issue that has not yet been discussed, and that is the building scale. In their plan, the city planning office did not explicitly define building heights, they simply distinguished between three types: detached houses (most often one to two storeys), »slab blocks« (generally from three to five storeys, but can be up to about ten storeys) and »tower blocks« (can be from eight to fifty storeys). About half of the suggestions concerned detached houses and half of them were slab blocks – only one location was suggested for tower blocks, but that was removed in the revised plan. Comparing this result to the inhabitant group's suggestions, one may say that there was considerable similarity – as some had argued for small-scale buildings and others for large-scale. Considerations about housing policy (economy, segregation, etc,), however, were not included at all in the municipal plan, which was not surprising, as this is not the responsibility of the city planning office – though it was, of course, a problem for the inhabitants.

Housing policy considerations are actually not visible until the »detailed plan« of certain areas comes into being, and such plans have generally been preceded by non-public municipal negotiations led by the city real estate office with potential construction and housing companies. In the case of Biskopsgarden, such negotiations started to give results in October 2007. The headlines of a current newspaper article read »Biskopsgarden to get many new detached houses« and thereafter three locations for densification were pointed out, presumably comprising 250-340 residences (see Fig. 3). The chosen locations were fully in line with the suggestions of the inhabitant group, although no buildings were included that were larger than semi-detached houses. The reason why locations selected for slab blocks have hitherto not been exploited is not known. Some people referred to the market economy, but it is also possible that municipal civil servants and politicians were influenced by the strategic insight that small-scale detached houses intended for well-situated families may be the prevailing medicine of the future for housing integration problems. In 2007, in Gothenburg, with its increasing housing segregation, this approach – i.e. building small-scale, privately owned residences in certain socially excluded large-scale suburbs – was actually the only strategy they had to decrease housing segregation. Based on the experience gained from the inhabitant participation project studied here, another strategy for housing integration may be to more explicitly involve civil servants from the city real estate office in the local development work and to make them the direct recipients of information from inhabitant projects.

Fig. 3. The map from the newspaper GOTEBORGSPOSTEN shows where the city real estate office, in October 2007, suggested land allocation for densification was to take place.

Summing up these experiences from the inhabitant participation project, there is one crucial matter that has not yet been elucidated: Which institution would be best suited to taking the responsibility for inhabitant participation in planning? Such responsibility could be given to the city planning office, as their planning procedure is already part of a democratic system. However, after analysing the inhabitant participation project, such a strategy may seem rather unreliable, mainly because the city planning office had such a difficult time simultaneously acting within its legal system and accepting the distinctive prerequisites for inhabitant participation in planning – they were actually much more prisoners in their context than was predicted. If we apply the concepts of the theoretical framework, these officials strived to keep certain black boxes sealed and did not look for triggers for learning. Additionally, as the experiences in Biskopsgarden also give reason to recommend the city real estate office as an active part in inhabitant participation projects, and as they occupy a similar position in the hierarchy, it may be more appropriate to give a superordinate institution this responsibility.

Or, on the other hand, it may be more appropriate for an external institution, e.g. the city district administration, to take this responsibility, as was the case in Biskopsgarden. This would in fact be quite suitable, as according to governmental and municipal documents, this institution is one of the most important actors whose mission it is to increase participatory democracy. However, in that case, the responsibility must be more comprehensive than it was in the inhabitant participation project in Biskopsgarden. It must encompass the entire period of the planning process. Additionally, the chosen authority must take more responsibility in watching over the democratic aspects. Naturally, such a procedure requires that local civil servants have not only the time, but also the appropriate knowledge, which may not be a reality in all city district administrations today.

A third option would be to leave the city planning office to their present responsibility and create a new external institution to be held responsible for including inhabitant participation in all planning procedures. Such a solution would be appropriate considering the fact that new organizations often find it easier to look for triggers for learning and to find interplaces. This would then be a kind of advocacy planning institution, with employed personnel who are specially trained for such a task and who have a straightforward mandate to always prioritize the inhabitant perspective.

Conclusions

As we have seen in this review of one example of inhabitant participation in planning, the potential for further development of inhabitant involvement is related to a complex of problems. In the following, we will focus on two certain and interrelated themes that would seem to require further investigation in this new era of urban governance: the question of

accountability when inhabitants are involved in planning and the question of institutionalized responsibility for inhabitant participation.

Accountability and institutionalization of responsibility have been discussed to some extent in previous research on partnership planning. Political scientist Ingmar Elander has, e.g., criticized the fact that »partnership arrangements leave the question of accountability wide open» (2002: 199). He further described three normative conclusions. First, partnerships, as well as other kinds of governance, should not replace government, which must be monitored by representative bodies. Second, they should not be able to exclude already marginalized groups. Third, transnational partnerships arising as a result of, e.g., Agenda 21 and Habitat II must be complemented with traditional political structures, and there must always be a lively discussion of who should participate and who is accountable in such work.

In research on inhabitant participation in planning, considerable analysis has focused on the *problem* of accountability when forming local partnerships including inhabitants, stressing the risk of contributing to an increase in social exclusion. For example, Evans et al. (2006) concluded that governance cannot function alone, but only in parallel with government. Further, Beebeejaun (2006) emphasized that uncritically involving certain inhabitant groups on the basis of race and ethnicity may be dangerous and underpin pigeonholes in policy making processes. This may be a problem in particular if we fail to consider the power relations between and within groups (Finney and Rishbeth 2006). However, Tett (2005) also stressed the importance of giving priority to inhabitants with the least power, as they most often have the greatest knowledge of local prerequisites.

Uyesugi and Shipley (2005) also presented interesting results on the *product* of the planning process, e.g. stressing that if planners are about to engage in a multicultural planning processes, they must assure concrete results that can be seen in the community and that respect cultural diversity. This theme may be considered closely related to accountability, as striving for a more transparent planning process may be one way of preparing the planners for the changes required to address the new prerequisites. The product is obviously also closely related to the form of the planning process, and interesting research results show that if planning processes are not carefully *designed* for inhabitant participation, plans will very seldom be brought to fruition (Lowndes and Sullivan 2004).

Taking these conclusions into account, it may be wise to keep track of which suggestions are coming from inhabitant participation and which are coming from civil servants at the city planning office – additionally to ensure that decisions about plans are actually taken by politicians and that politicians are made accountable. In Gothenburg, these conclusions may also lead to the recommendation that the part of the planning process for which the city real estate office is responsible be made more visible – i.e. the municipality normally directs its assignments related to housing politics – and that these politicians be more available for discussions with the public.

Thoughts about the design of a planning process for inhabitant participation inevitably lead to the question of institutionalization of the responsibility for inhabitant participation. Some critiques have stressed that the terms of legitimacy actually have been closely related to the form of decentralized, deliberative, neighbourhood governance (Howard and Sweeting 2007). When planning researcher Marilyn Taylor discussed governance theorists' critiques of governance for their failure to address issues of power, agency and accountability, she stressed the importance of distinguishing »invited spaces« from »popular spaces« (Taylor 2007) – the former being spaces into which citizens are invited by the state and which are created and defined by the state, the latter being spaces created and defined by citizens (Cornwall 2004). She maintained that – as state authorities with area-based initiatives are often directly involved in communities actually becoming places to be investigated, classified and interpreted – there exists a »recentralization« in which power and control are in a way returned to the state. »The new governing spaces can thus be characterised as arenas of co-operation and colonisation, inscribed with rationalities, technologies and rules of engagement that are internalised by non-state actors and create privileged pathways for more powerful actors« (Taylor 2007: 301).

The discussion above is not particularly encouraging with respect to inhabitant participation in planning. One may wonder whether it is meaningful for inhabitants to engage in local planning projects at all. Yet the conclusions are not as pessimistic, as Taylor, drawing on Foucault's notion of power, argued that even if neighbourhood governance is just a way of legitimizing the state, it can also imply that agents – »active subjects« – outside of the partnerships become open to new agendas (Morison 2000; Raco 2003). Taylor therefore concluded that invited spaces as well as popular spaces are necessary for a positive development to take place – i.e. a development involving insiders and outsiders. Most important may actually be the »interstices« between them (Gaventa 2004), a concept that would seem to be closely related to the idea of interplace planning (Stenberg 2004). Additionally, Foucault's active subjects may perhaps be equivalent to the previously mentioned micro-actors who oppose black boxes (Callon and Latour 1981).

Regarding the institutionalization of responsibility, planning researcher Patsy Healey discussed how the »new« urban governance, i.e. governance that is not controlled by the state to the same extent as in the 1990s, has implied the development of an academic, »sociological institutionalist« approach that links the three realms of the local actors, the established local networks and the deeper cultural assumptions that legitimize governance processes (Healey 2006). As a result of such an approach – which may have arisen as an answer to criticism of her earlier work, which does not fully explain how power is related to knowledge (see, e.g., Abu-Orf 2005) – she concluded that, in Newcastle, this new urban governance had actually entailed the municipality losing power, as a new regional scale began to be institutionalized. This is in fact a very interesting conclusion, which may also be applied to Gothenburg. Here, a politically governed regional partnership uniting thirteen municipalities in western Sweden – aimed at promoting co-operation over municipal borders and providing a forum for exchange of ideas and experiences within the region – has gradually increased the regional

partnership's interest in governance, including social issues and democratic aspects of planning. In Sweden, perhaps institutionalized responsibility at the regional level would be appropriate for ensuring inhabitant participation in municipal and local planning. Such an assignment would also, by necessity, include responsibility for initiating a learning process within concerned institutions, a learning process concerning how the municipal planning process can be changed to adapt to inhabitant participation in planning.

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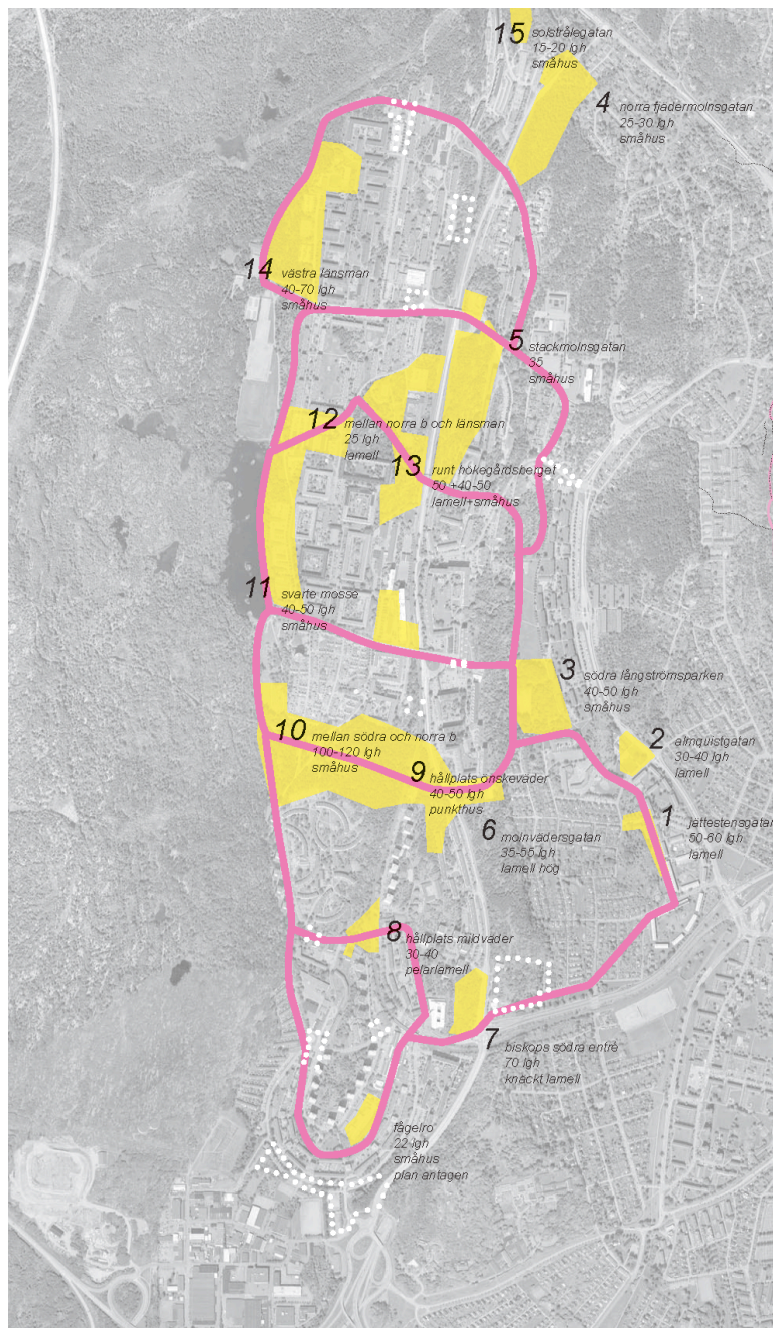
Fig. 1.

Fig. 2.

Fig. 3.