Learning while participating in public planning, and having fun
Testing a method of using focus groups and a vision of a sustainable future neighborhood, that 'pushes the limits,'

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Abstract

We are facing the problems of climate change, the unfair share and over use of Earth’s resources. Global North overuses, Sweden has an ecological footprint of four planets. The challenge is to change our lifestyles. This thesis is trying out a method to diffuse ideas of sustainable development (SD) and for citizen participation. I created a future vision of a sustainable neighborhood inspired by Jane Jacobs and the concept of densification. This I presented to three homogenous focus groups: the next-door neighborhood, home owners and people in rentals. Free discussion then followed, and then a questionnaire. The findings where that the participants, fifteen of sixteen, thought the method gave them new ideas, allowed them to share their knowledge, and that it was a good method for participation. I thought that it was a ‘fun’ method. Focus groups research works more the way people normally interact, as did the literature show. I could see the learning process, that Patsy Healey describes, the creation of cultures, and also how the issue of SD was explored. It was time consuming to recruit participants. The tendency was that volunteers liked to talk, had an interest in planning, although not all in favor of SD. Many resembled me, in age and cultural background. The method could be useful to deepen dialog with citizens, especially in an early stage of planning. The vision should be ‘daring’ to spur good discussions, that may land in a compromise on SD.

Keywords: Sustainable development, public planning, densification, participation, learning, future vision, focus groups, Earth’s limitations, sustainable lifestyles, Örebro, Äpplestad
1. Introduction

In the years around 1970s and 80s I used to spend my summers travelling in Europe. I found my favorite town on the south shores of Crete. We spent the days in the Mediterranean Sea and the evenings amongst the narrow back alleys and the many restaurants and cafés along the ocean promenade. People walked up and down these promenades and alleys and the enjoyment was to be there were people were and just watch the crowd. I do believe that most of us have some similar experiences and enjoyed it immensely. Jane Jacobs (1961) does put word to this very experience:

...the activity generated by people on errands, or people aiming for food or drink, is itself an attraction to still other people...People’s love of watching activity and other people is constantly evident in cities everywhere. (Jacobs 1961: 47)

Back in Sweden at that time I lived in Malmö. It had one pedestrian street strictly for shopping and not much more. We hung out in a café at the bottom of a shopping mall, a quite dull place, otherwise it was far between the cafés. Beside the shopping hours – until six on weekdays and for a few hours on Saturday – the city was empty. When I moved to Örebro in 1992 I had the same experience. Since then the development of both Malmö and Örebro have been astonishing. I do get the feeling of going on vacation upon visiting down town Örebro on a warm summer eve.

In 1986 I went to the US and came to stay there until the day I moved to Örebro. I had looked forward to travelling again, to sit at cafés and walk on busy narrow alleys. But the disappointment was great upon realizing that the cities I came to live in had nothing of the sort. It was even worse than both Malmö and Örebro in the 80-90s. If you wanted to eat out you took your car to the road strip with malls, and parked outside. There were no people at all out for walks. It was the country with urban sprawl (Wheeler, 2013). When they built a new shopping mall within eye sight of our house, it was impossible to walk to it. We had to get in our car to loop around on freeways before getting there. The only city that I visited that broke the pattern was New York City. The city with the many neighborhoods that were their own city within the city, with its corner grocery, cafés and myriad of people in the streets. Up to today I have never again found anything like New York, if you want to enjoy ‘people watching’ this is it. Although New York also has its dull spots, like the south tip of Manhattan with its business district that is totally dead except for business hours. Something that I have experienced and Jane Jacobs also describes. (Jacobs, 1961: 167)

This is my starting point when I think of what a town, a city, should be for people. This is the reason the words of Jacobs (1961) so strongly struck on with me, her ideas I will discuss more under the section of social sustainability. My strong belief is that without a neighborhood that appeals to
people in this way we cannot convince people to make lifestyle changes necessary for a sustainable future.

I believe that our biggest challenge for a sustainable future is the Global North’s current lifestyles. The dilemma lies in raising the awareness of the public on the issue of climate change as well as the limitations of Earth’s resources, and in doing so spur a will to act in changing those lifestyles. Climate change especially is a very frightening fact. It is easy to feel despair, and get a sense that it does not matter anyhow ‘what I do’. Yet I do not see information on what the full impact on Earth, probably will be, if we go above two degrees Celsius of Earth’s temperature within this century.

I do not believe that scaring people into action is the right way. Of course, the truth’ needs to be out there, the whole ugly truth if we fail to act, but we do need to present the alternatives. Staying within Earth’s limitations does not have to be such a ‘dull’ life. We do not have to go back to the poverty of the past, and the inequality. The future with less ‘stuff’, so that all of Earth’s population can reach a good living standard, does not have to be a bad one.

In planning for the future, we must develop already existing neighborhoods to become more sustainable, and because of the need for more housing in many cities, we are also required to develop new areas. In developing new areas, we must use all our current knowledge to build an infrastructure and promote ideas to build sustainable, and to live sustainable.

The aim of the study
The aim of this study is to explore the possibility to spread ideas of sustainable lifestyles, with the use of future vision and dialog. In doing so, see what type of learning can be achieved.

Research question
➢ Can the use of a presentation of an imagined sustainable future vision of a neighborhood, to focus groups, be a way to diffuse ideas of a SD?
➢ Could it as well function as a tool for municipalities when they seek the participation of the public in the planning process?

The participation here is striving to create ‘learning’, in the sharing of knowledge on many different levels. First, the learning of the public on sustainable development (SD) through the vision, but also the exchange of knowledge and the shared learning of the participating public.

Secondly the learning of the municipality, of the current state of the publics knowledge on SD, as well as the learning of the publics experiences and their preferences. This knowledge can then either be used to further develop methods to spread more knowledge of SD to the public, or be used to make compromises in the public planning.
Method

My research design is the use of a sustainable vision of a neighborhood to spur discussions in focus groups. The vision is one that I have created (Appendix III). I explored current trends and research on what can constitute a sustainable neighborhood in the context of a Swedish city. I used a location known to the people participating in the study, and placed that future vision of a sustainable neighborhood within these local conditions. Intending for people to be able to relate to what it would be like, if such a neighborhood would be a reality there next to them.

The method I chose to generate data was focus groups, with sound recording and observation, followed by a questionnaire. The vision was functioning as a starting point for discussions on SD, to both spur discussions and set the limitation on resource use in a sustainable future. I recruited three focus groups with 5-6 members in each. It was homogenous groups: one with people who rented their home, one that owned and the third group were people next-door from the neighborhood vision. The recruitment and the conduct of the focus groups will be described more thoroughly in the next chapter, as well as literature on both participation and scenario planning.

The disposition of the thesis

Chapter 2 has three sections; on participation, visions and focus groups. Each section will start with a literature review of current research and then be followed by how I used it in my study.

Chapter 3 is a chapter on SD. The first section here is on earths limitations, a way for me to define my view of SD with support of the literature. After this follows a section on the sustainable neighborhood, with three separate sections of ecologic, social and economic sustainability. Here the structure is the same as in chapter 2, first a literature review of current research and then how I used it in the vision.

Chapter 4 is the study itself, with the focus groups, the presentation of the results. It has three sections; the recruitment experience, the conduct of the three focus groups and comparison of the three focus groups. In the second section here, the conduct of the focus groups, each of the three group results are presented separately, with a summary of the discussion, the learning experience and view of the methods usefulness.

Chapter 5 is the analysis, and the conclusions of the results. Here I look at the research question and compare the results to the literature. Finally, I raise some new questions on the issue of what I learned, and propose more issues to explore.
2. Participation, visions and focus groups

I started my literature review by exploring the issue of participation in planning and then moved on to seeing how scenario planning have been used regarding participation. I did also explore literature on how to do ‘focus groups’, so that I could conduct them to obtain the best possible data, with as little interference of irrelevant factors as I could. This to avoid pitfalls and to make the sessions as meaningful as possible both for me and the focus group participants.

2.1 Participation

Literature review

I have chosen Patsy Healey (1997) Collaborative Planning as theory frame, on the issue of participation in planning. She does, among others, describe a social constructive approach on participation. Healey does regarding the institutionalist approach, discuss how people, even though we see ourselves as individualist, do exist within cultures. Cultures with their own systems and meanings, socially constructed realities. An individual may in its daily life ‘travel’ between different cultures, and exist in webs (networks), such as home-life and work. Even if an individual lives and acts within these structures, they are socially constructed environments, so at the same time people are active in constructing their own life. Social life is in this way being constructed continuously. Collaborative planning is a part of this idea how relation-building process is ongoing. (Healey, 1997: 49-57)

This creates the possibility that the ‘ways things are’ could be transformed into something different. (Healey, 1997: 58)

This is what I see as the strongest argument for collaborating with the public in planning. Top-down policy making does play one part, but the diffusion of ideas into the public mind is what makes cultures. And the making of cultures, realities, can only be made by the individuals themselves, and as Healey describes it, become culturally embedded.

Culture, in institutionalist analysis...It is the continuously re-shaped product of the social processes through which systems of meaning and modes of thought are generated. Cultures provide vocabularies through which we express what we think and feel...They provide symbolic structures...which help to reflect and to arrange the relations within a social group – a family, a firm, a government department.... (Healey, 1997: 64)

Healey (1997) says that representative democracy is where the hierarchically-structured bureaucracies are encouraged. The technical and administrative staff answer to the politicians, and they in turn to the voting ballots, the public. This is a challenged model since in practice are both
politicians and administrators subject to all sorts of influence, and the public are rarely involved in such way that the politicians can inspire the voters to be informed on every issue to take that into account when they vote. (Healey, 1997: 120-122)

I see that we in Sweden today, largely function in this way. Within planning it is usually participation only to supply information and for consultation. Our Plan- and Building Act (SFS 2010:900) requires that the municipality make public the proposed Comprehensive Plan (CP) for at least two months before voting upon it. During that time the public have a chance to comment it in writing. After the CP has been approved it is still only a guidance plan and does not have to be followed. (SFS 2010:900, Ch.3) When it comes to a Detailed Development Plan (DDP), only people directly affected have a right to comment. (SFS 2010:900, Ch.5)

In the past we have seen it as that stakeholders should not get involved at all to speak on their behalf, according to Schéele (2001). It was only within the political party process people should have an influence. Stakeholder involvement were seen as interfered in the democratic process, in the 1960-70s. (Schéele, 2001: 276-277) In my experience this is sometimes still an issue, the idea that party politics should be created by its members only.

Karlsson and Lundberg (2013) shows that not only does politicians have difficulties to inspire the public to participate, but the political parties in most developed democracies, have a problem with recruiting members. From 1979 to 2009 Swedish political parties lost five out of six members, even though two new political parties entered during that period. If the trend continues then in 2025 the number of members in the political parties will be lower than the number of elected politicians needed. In their study they explore the issue on if the parties see this as a problem or not, and concludes that not all political parties see membership as a necessity today. But the parties with their roots in people’s movements, does view it as a democratic problem. Since the member base is functioning to form the party’s politics as well as recruiting politicians more broadly. (Karlsson & Lundberg, 2013: 50-62) In view of this changing world, I think the questions is: If we need to find other ways for the politicians to have a learning relationship to the public?

I am not saying that there have not be good initiatives for more participation in Sweden. We have had plenty of good examples, like LUNA and Local Agenda 21 projects (Eckerberg, 2012). Schéele (2001) did use group talks in homogenous groups to explore the different type of user’s needs in planning. This was done in Örebro in the late 1990s within Agenda 21. Different categories of groups, as many as 17 groups, have been used as an effort to improve participation, and she recommends it. But she does see that Agenda 21 trials clashed with the traditional city planning. (Schéele, 2001: 288-
Although the problem is usually more that of being able to engage the public in the daily work in the municipality, like Healey said, politicians have difficulties inspiring the public to participate.

This brings me to the issue of how it can be done, what the concerns are in trying it out. Healey (1997) is talking about power structures and the limitations for dialog. She argues that in the institutional approach on power relations, it is also through the networks that people have different levels of powers. Our social life gives us access to networks and resources. Being able to build a network is favorable for gaining power. But your starting point may be such that you are not let into all networks, leading to inequalities and polarization. (Healey, 1997: 118-122)

Healey (1997) is discussing different approaches within planning culture. One being the strategy-making as politics and techniques. It differs between ‘facts’ and ‘values’, and the identifications of what is what in the planning process. Within social learning, it is rather seen as that knowledge develops in group work. People learn through doing. Healey says that Friedmann, does not mean that it is going to be a pure social construction, but that it does stay within the external world. It is in the interaction with this external world that people learn, and can correct errors in their perception and do not actively construct it. Healey argues that little is known how these processes work outside of self-selected groups. (Healey, 1997: 248-249, 256-258)

Healey (1997) proposes how this can be done. First the initiators must spend time identifying the stakeholders of a place. Healey also raises the problem on how such meetings are different for different people, the rituals of political discussion are not familiar to all. Rethinking on rituals and language use, must be done to include all in the communication. (Healey, 1997: 269-273) Strategy-making through inclusionary argumentation, is the institutional approach that Healey develops. It is based on collaboration, where power is shared through communication between different webs, and the hegemony of communications gets broken. Here local, technical and scientific knowledge is used. Consensus is to be reach through the deliberation of different stakeholders. The process is a struggle, and Healey like to see the use of Habermas’ communicative ethics, wanting a dialog ‘between equals’ not allowing the language and communication strategies of the powerful to dominate. (Healey, 1997: 263-265)

Here I first like to point to the problem on defining who is a stakeholder. In the Plan- and Building Act (SFS 2010:900) it is rather clear. Everyone when it comes to the CP, and only those who have a land interest when it comes to the DDP. A CP is, as I pointed out only a guide, it is in the DDP that the neighborhoods get shaped. I believe we need to broaden the group of stakeholders. Everyone is must be involved when it comes to the planning for SD. As it is now it is up to the next-door neighbors and developers only, to have a say in a new development. The problem being, that when
the development is new, we do not know who is going to be a stakeholder, who is going to live there. Schéele (2001) also see the need to broaden the group that can have a say in planning. She discusses the concepts of ‘entitled undertakers’ and ‘users’, and wants to broaden it to include the ‘everyday users’ as stakeholders in an area to be planned. (Schéele, 2001: 284-287) Mullally (2012) does see more types of participation than that of the stakeholders, like citizen- and community-centered participation. (Mullally, 2012: 152)

Secondly, Healey (197) stays on a more theoretical level when it comes to how this dialog ‘between equals’ may be conducted. The issue of vital importance, but in practice so hard. Awareness is the first step into dealing with it, and this is what Healey gives us. Others have come with more practical tips.

Beauregard (2013) gives example on how different meeting venues may affect the outcome of the dialog. He gives several examples on how a large venue is better suited for giving information and less so for engaging in discussions, and argues that the planning process must provide many different types of meeting places, and that not all meetings need to be open to everyone, to allow groups to have some privacy. Innes and Booher (2005: 421, 424) raise the dilemma with citizen participation that the larger formalized venues, like public hearings, can give the participants a feeling of battle instead of dialog. Individuals also always represent themselves, some are strong voices, while others are silent.

Forrester (2009) points out the problems with communication. Groups and individuals does not all agree, and the planner must work as a mediator. To be able to ‘feel’ the room, see the argument behind an angry voice, to use humor to ease tension are abilities that are useful to make communication easier. As well as using techniques to let more people speak, like dividing into smaller groups, is important.

Healey (1997) says that Davidoff means that we are not value-free, not in our professional role either (Healey, 1997: 25). I say that we may just as well be open with that, to give others an opportunity not to be manipulated, and a chance to think for themselves.

In any given situation this means clarity in what type of participation that is available, if it is just information, consultation or if it is ‘real’ citizen participatory power. Healey (1997) describes Arnstein’s Ladder as a guide on participation, from not being participation, like manipulation or therapy, to different types of weak and strong participation. (Healey, 1997: 26) Boverket (Housing Administration) in Sweden uses Arnstein’s Ladder as a tool, as the ‘Participation Ladder’. They recommend that it should always be clear to all participating what type of participation that is present. The first level of participation, called information does not contain a dialog but the other
three does. They call the second step consultation, the third participation and the fourth defines an actual participation in the decision process itself. (Boverket, 2018)

Ertiö, Ruoppila and Thiel (2016) showed in a study in Turku, Finland that it was mostly highly educated and those already engaged, that participated when the town ran a test period with cell phone application in participation with the municipality on planning. The app was similar to other social medias and it was possible both for the officials and the users, to introduce ‘missions’ on a particular issue, to invite other citizens to participate. That possibility was mainly used by the officials, and with little response. The users were mainly motivated by bringing their own ideas to the attention of the municipality directly, and not to communicate with other citizens. (Ertiö, Ruoppila & Thiel, 2015: 138-146)

Gustafsson and Hertting (2017) did a study in Stockholm, Sweden, on what people have as motive to participate. They argued that not much studies have been made on the issue at all. (Gustafsson & Hertting, 2017: 238) They found that the top four reasons for people to participate were: To improve the neighborhood, to participate in discussions, to contribute one’s knowledge and competence and to give voice to a specific group. (Gustafsson & Hertting, 2017: 542)

They also explored who participated and why, but did not study those who chose not to participate and their motives.

Common good motives were often expressed by high-educated participants with a Swedish background who participated as local residents. Self-interest motives were more common among low-educated participants, persons with a foreign background and association representatives. (Gustafsson & Hertting, 2017: 546)

Self-interest does not need to be negative in these situations. Marginalized groups may have more reason to promote the interest of the own group, gain influence and connections through participation. There is a problem with mobilization in groups that are socio-economic or ethnically segregated. So self-interest motives here may be perfectly legitimate and the participation of marginalized groups does empower them, Gustafsson and Hertting argue. (Gustafsson & Hertting, 2017: 546)

The issue of the unevenness in participation in planning and the problem with power relations is discussed also by Loit (2014). He suggests that there should not only be a requirement for an environmental impact assessment, but also for an equity impact assessment. (Loit, 2014: 121) I will return to Loit in the part ‘The use of visions’.
Participation in my study

I take my starting point in Healey’s (1997) thoughts on social construction. On how social life and institutions are all constructed. I usually say ‘Det blir som du tänker’ (It will be the way you think). I do not argue that it ‘actually’ will, but what you think is what you see, and construct. It does unfortunately not mean that ‘good’ will prevail. What is in our thoughts will prevail. But it is possible to think in a different way, we shape it. It does not help much to just work on yourself as an individual, it needs to find its way into your networks and then through the individuals in that network, into their other networks, and so on. This was the reason it is interesting to see what would happen in a discussion on a sustainable neighborhood in focus groups.

As we say in Sweden ‘hälsan tiger still’ (when healthy one is quiet), as long as we are provided for people usually don’t see the point for engagement, is an idea that comes into mind. Although motives not to participate are not that clear cut, we saw in Gustafsson and Hetting’s (2017) survey that highly-educated Swedes more often did participate for ‘not self-interest’. And those more in need to participate to improve their situation, usually did not. More studies are needed to find out why people do and do not participate. My study lacks from the ability to make a real difference in peoples ‘neighborhoods’. But the radical lifestyle changes that, I see, we are facing, does require more participation, so we do need to develop participation practices. This thesis is one ‘small’ test of the sort.

To find out more on how these processes can work is of interest for this thesis. Here I saw the importance of reaching out to people and create learning through doing situations in new groups, to reach further in SD, by being exposed to the facts of the external world, the limitations for a SD. In my study the dialog in focus group was therefore a wider approach than merely the stakeholders, as The Plan an Building Act requires.

2.2 The use of visions

Literature review

The ability to change depends also on historic phases Raskins, Banuri, Callopin, Cutman, Hammond, Kates and Swart (2002) argues. History have moved through phases with take-off, acceleration and stabilization. Looking all the way back to the stone-age until today, now we are in the take-off of the planetary phase, with global governance, globalization, internet. This require a Great Transition. (Raskins et al., 2002: 6)

Crudely, archetypal social philosophies can be placed in three broad streams—the evolutionary, the catastrophic and the transformational. They reflect fundamentally different mindsets about how the world works. (Raskins et al., 2002: 9)
The evolutionist thinks that we will prosper, develop forward like always, the catastrophic the opposite. The transformationists also see our problems, but an opportunity too, to make a global transition into something different, a better civilization. Raskins et al. think that this mindset can be altered with the use of future scenarios, that will show what the world may look like within these three different mindsets. Then arguing for the New Sustainable paradigm, with less consumption. (Raskins et al., 2002: 9-10, 16, 41-42) What ties Raskins et al. with Healey can be expressed by this quote from Raskins et al.:

The underlying engine of a Great Transition, however, is an engaged and aware public, animated by a new suite of values that emphasizes quality of life, human solidarity and environmental sustainability. (Raskins et al., 2002: 53)

The use of scenario planning is shown by Ringland (2014), on how it has been developed during the late 20th Century first within business. A company like Shell was one of the first to use it. The way to conduct the scenario planning was usually through work-shops conducted over just a few days. Leading experts or ‘future leaders’ within the organizations where usually gathered to first brainstorm on the issue of what the future may look like some 10-20 years ahead, then to create a few different future scenarios. The purpose was to prepare the company for all eventualities in the future, to give the company an edge in competition. For Shell this was especially successful in foreseeing both the oil crisis and the fall of the Soviet Union. (Ringland, 2014: 11-27)

Carlsson, Hjelm, Baas, Eklund, Krook, Lindahl and Sakao (2014) shows how through creating meeting places, called jam session, with experts within branches of industry and researchers, they were exploring ‘red and hot topics’ for the future. They recommended this could be useful also for regional development. (Carlsson et al., 2014)

Ringland (2014) also gives examples of how scenario planning has been used for public sector participation, with similar methods as the private sector. Finland have come up with future scenarios of both sustainable and unsustainable futures. (Ringland, 2014: 296-300) In Surrey future scenarios were produced through a process of first gather information among 800 stakeholders, then doing scenario planning with 200 experts with the traditional workshops, arriving at a few future scenarios. What is interesting here is that the public also got involved. Information about scenarios were spread and large numbers of the public showed interest and argued to go even further than the politicians dared, in creating SD. (Ringland, 2014: 334-336) Bina and Ricci (2016) shows somewhat the same result. Here it was a project over two years, but with key players; like scholars, city administrators, urban planners, and policy makers that were engaged in scenario planning in China. The choice
among the participants were also to prefer the more sustainable scenario. Resulting in an opening in otherwise very set and traditional ways. (Bina & Ricci 2016: 516-531)

Scenario planning have been used internationally too. The UN have engaged 49 global modelers and scenario analyst and have developed scenarios based on 98 models. This has been created for the Conference for SD, informally called Ri+20. This being a quite different way of producing the scenarios than the scenario planning described above, and to be used as a starting point for international bodies in the discussions on sustainable future planning. (Roehrl, 2012) The European commission have funded an attempt to produce only sustainable future scenarios, to show the alternatives for sustainable futures, to be spread to the public. The spread, what I can see, stayed at a point of just information on an internet homepage. (Leppänen et al., 2012)

Loit (2014) describes, as I see it, The Järva Dialog as an example of how visions and participations have been used in Sweden. The Järva Lift was initiated in 2007 to lift a socially challenged and segregated part of Stockholm, with the renovation of 20 000 dwellings and through dialog with the citizens living there. A vision of Järva 2030 was created in 2007 by the politicians, and the citizens where described as ‘the real experts’, with the argument that ‘you have to start with dialog with the citizens first’. But the planning had already begun before the dialog started. (Loit, 2014: 167-171)

The Järva Dialog started in 2009 and was quite extensive, with a total of 15 000 participants. First with the gathering of input through questionnaire, followed by discussions. It has been done in three steps leading up to a creation of a future vision. Even if it raised conflicting issues like, problem with higher rents, and of being a plan for two different groups of interest - current or future inhabitants – its seen as an ambitious and long-term project for participation. (Loit, 2014: 172-176)

The intention is to change the view of the area as a socio-economically challenged area, but at the same time have made the current inhabitants uneasy, and the dialog have exposed and lifted those views. One of the goals of the Järva Lift is to make one of the streets in Järva, Rinkebystråket, into an attractive city center in line with the more centrally located Stockholm city centers. To attract new businesses to make more of a mix of different types of use and also to give it a more city like appearance, but then it is also a goal to support the already existing businesses with its multi-cultural backgrounds. (Loit, 2014: 186-193)

The use of future scenarios in my study

My approach in this thesis was to create a sustainable future vision of a new built neighborhood. To do this I reviewed current knowledge on what constitutes SD. The vision scenario was not at all within the scenario planning methodology that I described above, but something different, as far as I can see not tried before. The purpose was to attempt to stay within ecological limits as well as to try
to create an attractive future. At the same time, it was a starting point to spur discussions, and as such it needed to push the limitations on what is main stream. People must be faced with earths limits and our challenges when thinking of future development of city planning. Maybe even be a little bit ‘provoked’, if we want to steer the discussions into some sort of ‘compromise’. The method could have been done quite differently with more time and resources. More a creation of the participants own vision could be fruitful, more the way future scenario planning usually is done. But I see the need of first introducing the ‘facts’ of Earth’s limitations before doing so.

2.3 Doing focus groups

Regarding how to do focus groups the literature is extensive. It was first invented in the 1940s at Colombia University within social research. Focus groups are used both for academic and commercial research, as well as in public relations. Some uses for focus groups are, the use to pre-pilot project to survey further research, as triangulation of other research, as a method to give feedback to participants in research studies, or as a tool to offer public participation in the research process. (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas & Robson, 2001: 1-18) Focus groups are used in a range of areas, from surveys on commercial product, to finding out the public awareness on social problems. (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2016; Gruning 1990; Getrich, Bennett, Sussman, Solares & Helitzer, 2016) The literature I have reviewed is a good guidance in all the steps of doing focus groups; the recruitment and preparations, the conduct of the meeting, and the analysis of the data.

2.3.1 How to recruit and prepare

Literature review

The recruitment is in two parts, first on who to recruit, and in what way they may fit your study. Here the problem formulation is the guide. The ages, gender, places they live and so on, may be of interest. The second part is the recruitment itself to ensure attendance. If possible, it is good to use preexisting lists, or statistics, and if there are already existing organizations that can help you contact and recruit they may be used. When that is not available the recruitment is more time consuming. The gift of their time is what the participants offer the researcher, so the researcher should offer something in return. To ensure attendance it is easier if the participants have met the researcher in person in advance, a reminder is sent the day before, a comfortable venue is chosen, and something is offered to snack on. The greatest dilemma is to be able to assemble 8-12 people at the same place at the same time. (Stewart, Shamdasani & Rook, 2007: ch.4, Bloor et al. 2001: 33-35)

In the preparations an interview guide should be made, with no more than a dozen questions. And to be aware that it is just a guide, it is important to get the flow of the discussions started. Open-ended questions are more useful for discussions too. It is also good to pretest the questions on a group.
(Stewart et al., 2007: ch.4) Stewart et al. discourage that friends participate in the same group, because they hinder anonymity, may interfere with group formation and may engage in side conversations. (Stewart et al., 2007: 100)

When recruiting there may also be the dilemma of ‘who’ the researcher is and the groups being invited. Sands, Bourjolly and Roer-Strier (2007) describes how a young agnostic, white female social worker, faced dilemmas when she wanted to interview a middle-age black female that had converted to islam. The learnings from this study led the to suggestion of having cross-cultural teams in doing research projects. (Sands, Bourjolly & Roer-Strier, 2007) This touches the discussions earlier of the power relations that is mentioned both by Healey (1997) and Loit (2014). Ortbals and Rinkers (2009) argues that both the gender, race, and cultural background of the researcher do impact the results for the research. The power relations may strike in both directions, both that the researcher may hold a higher and lower power, than the subject of the research. It may matter for example, if the researcher is a man or woman. (Ortbals & Rinker, 2009)

The recruitment and preparations of my study

My aim was to recruit four different focus groups. That of renters, condominium owners, home owners, and those who live next to the sustainable vision scenario, which is also home owners, in single-family houses and condominiums. The time consumed in recruiting made me change my plan. The difference in groups was to make it more likely to cover wishes for different type of housing, and also to explore if the groups differ in their views.

In advance I handed out an invitation letter (Appendix I) to my study in the mailboxes of each neighborhood. Informing about the purpose of the study, the time and place, and roughly what would happen during the session, that their identity would not be disclosed in the study, and that it would be recorded. I also added a picture of myself, so they could recognize me when I came and knocked on their door later on. Going door to door I invited them to the study. In this way all participants would have met me in advance, which is something the literature review showed is an advantage. The purpose of the letter was to prepare people of my visit, so that they would have thought of whether they wanted to help me, to save us time. The first hand out was approximately 40 invitation letters, and was repeated until I had enough participants.

The main challenge was to find people that were willing to offer me their time and effort. There was a risk that the participants would be those favorable to the issue of SD. In the invitation letter I avoided the use of the concept SD, and were somewhat vague, talking about a future ‘good for us all’.

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Given these difficulties in the recruiting process I did anyhow try to, within each group, have both men and women, and people living alone and with others and of different ages.

2.3.2 How to conduct the focus group meeting

**Literature review**

Getrich et al. (2016) argues that during the meeting itself it is important to realize that groups are unpredictable, they have a life of their own. Even if all is prepared, surprises may occur. They experienced in focus groups study on HPV vaccine in New Mexico in 2010, that all groups acted with their own dynamics. But they meant that this too, was part of the learning experience for the researcher, and did not produce any less useful data. (Getrich et al., 2016) Bloor et al. suggests that pre-group questionnaires may be used and it is good to record what is said. (Bloor et al., 2001: 39-42) It is important that the participants know that what the other participants learn about them stays there. Even if the research will be summarized and published, the individuals stay anonymous. (Morgan, 1998: 85-91)

Ritchie, Lewis, McNaughton Nicholls and Ormston (2013), says in *Qualitative research practice*:

> The collective context of focus groups creates a process which is in important respects very different from an in-depth interview... Participants present their own views and experience, but they also hear from other people. They listen, reflect on what is said, and in the light of this consider their own standpoint further.... individual response become sharpened and refined, and moves to a deeper and more considered level. (Ritchie et al., 2013: 212)

Stewart et al. (2007) discuss the influence a moderator can have on a group. Something the moderator must be aware to avoid. Such as if respondents are prone to say things the moderator finds favorably, then the moderator favor those answers more, and it may be done non-verbally with nods, probing more, or being more permissive or even ignoring those who have more unfavorable views. (Stewart et al. 2007:84-85)

However Ritchie et al. (2013) argues that the researcher influences the participants less than in one-to-one interview. The researcher takes more on the role of a listener, and it is a more natural environment, the way it is in real life, how people normally interact. The standard format in social research for focus groups, is a group that meet once for up to two hours and consist of 6-8 participants. The structure of the discussion is set by the researcher, from very structured to free discussion, and can be combined as well. (Ritchie et al., 2013: 215-218)
The researcher must deal with this fact, and Ritchie et al. (2013) suggests how to take the group through the five different stages. First by setting the scene and the ground rules, so that the group know what is expected from them. Making them feel at ease and welcome, offer some refreshments and then give an introduction. Explaining also when the participants will do their part, stressing that there are no right or wrong answers. Secondly, to make sure all individuals has opportunity to speak and be seen. Starting up with a round of introduction. Thirdly to offer a neutral opener to start discussion. Here it is important to get everyone to say something. Fourth, the discussion itself to give space for the group to move into new areas and formulate ideas and views. This is where the researcher may feel that the discussion is getting out of control. But this is when the researcher must be active in listening and observing. Researcher can have some prepared agenda of topics and probing questions, if the group itself does not lead the discussion into depth of the research topic. The best action, if there is silence, is to wait, and not try to fill the gap oneself as a researcher. Then finally, to end the discussion in a relaxed way and allow for some final points. It is a good idea to have decided on the final topic in advance, for example on how to improve things in the future, this to avoid an abrupt ending the researcher signals in advance that it is now the final topic. But here the researcher also should inform what will happen next and thank them for their participation. (Ritchie et al., 2013: 218-221)

Ritchie et al. (2013) shows how groups are different just like Getrich et al (2016) argued. The dynamic differs and some may need more involvement from the researcher to prevent dominance and steer it back to the topic while other groups may be best left alone to have the best progress. The researcher’s ability to make people at ease and to be flexible is critical for the results. (Ritchie et al. 2013: 222) Ritchie et al. (2013) also gives example on how a topic can be widening in the discussion. The moderator can for example repeat the question, highlight differences to encourage more discussion, gesture for more in the group to take part and so on. To get the non-verbal language like nodding into the recording, the researcher may verbally make note of it during discussion. As saying ‘I see that you agree’ or disagree, to encourage people to verbalize it instead. Non-verbal language may also be used to stop a dominant person from always responding first and have too lengthy answers, by looking at the others instead, and avoiding direct confrontation. (Ritchie et al., 2013: 225)

Conducting the focus group in my study

In my study I used the standard format of 6-8 participants, in the three focus group session, of about two hours. I wanted to invite ten participants to allow for no-shows, but it was not possible due to difficulties to recruit. I see that this method could benefit from a more extended research design, with multiple sessions for every focus group, upon exploring the question on of ‘learning’ about SD
issues, and to develop the vision further together. But my time frame was too limited for this master’s thesis.

When the participants arrived, I offered snacks – ‘fika’ - and a ‘round’ of introductions. This also allowed for late comers to arrive. I spend some time before my presentation to ‘lay down the rules’ for the following discussion and to go through step by step what would happen. I also informed them on the questionnaire they would do in the end on the issue of the method’s usefulness. I stressed that they were anonymous in the study and ‘what was said there stayed there’.

The meeting had three parts: the presentation, the discussion and the questionnaire.

First, the presentation of the sustainable neighborhood. The purpose was to present an attractive future sustainable scenario (Appendix III) that did place some limitations on lifestyles.

Second the discussion, where the participants first had a round where all had a first say, on what they liked, or not, and to introduce issues that they found the most important themselves. Then followed free discussion and I tried to interfere as little as possible. To support their memory, pictures from some of the slides in the presentation, were spread out over the table. The discussions were sound-recorded. I was prepared to let my function to put word onto the non-verbal communication of the group, to get this into the recording, but that was not necessary. The ‘humming’ and laughs were caught on the recordings. The session ended in good time, with a pre-announced last question: “What is most important for the future?” that allowed for all to make a final statement.

Lastly was the questionnaire, (Appendix V) on two issues: had they learned something new, what, and how meaningful was this meeting to them and why? The second question was if they saw that this form of discussions was a good way to communicate with the municipality. I also asked about their age, gender, how many they live with, their education level and if they have had any previous participatory engagement.

Even though this method of doing focus groups may appear to be very free, the presentation of the vision did set the frame, and made this research to a very structured one. There was no need to use any probing questions or use any techniques, to wait out silence or hinder dominant participants take up too much time.

2.3.3 How to analyze the results

Literature review

Krueger (1998) and Stewart et al. (2007: ch.7) offer practical tips on how to analyze focus group data. From the importance of how to collect it, to material and methods on the analysis itself.
Stewart et al. starts their chapter on analysis by saying:

- The most common purpose of a focus group interview is to provide an in-depth exploration of a topic about which little is known. For such exploratory research, a simple descriptive narrative is quite appropriate and often all that is necessary. (Stewart et al., 2007: 110)

Then most of the chapter then discuss how to analyze a transcript, although they do also argue that there are situations when it is not necessary, as when results must be presented promptly and the research is quite straightforward, then a brief summary is sufficient. (Stewart et al., 2007: 110)

Krueger (1998) point to the necessity of an analysis to be verifiable. Another researcher should be able to come to the same conclusion using the same raw data. There must be enough data to investigate. He talks about field notes and recordings during the focus group and an oral summary (verifiable) during the focus group of the key points. A sound recording also makes it possible to make an interview transcript. (Krueger, 1998: 11)

Stewart et al. (2007) discusses also the epistemological orientation of the analysis. It can be done out of three perspectives. One being from social constructivism, with the tendency to focus on how the group collaborate on some issue, achieve consensus or not, and construct shared meanings. Another is from a phenomenological approach that focus on the individual preference, the subjective perceptions, and finally the interpretivism that take in both words and actions into the analysis. (Stewart et al., 2007: 114) As I said in the section on participation, social constructive approach according to Healy (1997), is my theoretical approach in the analysis of this study with focus groups.

Stewart et al. also argue that there is a difference between statistical studies and focus group studies, where the analysis of the latter is not entirely after the session, but also during it. The moderator interacts with the groups and does shape the discussion, may introduce new topics as the session goes on, and reshaping the results due to ongoing analysis of what the output is. But Stewart et al. do argue that the main analytic work does occur after the group discussion. (Stewart et al., 2007: 115)

Time spent on an issue, shows the interest and how much the participants care about it, something to consider in analysis according to Stewart et al. (2007). The intensity of expression on an issue reveals the same. Sometimes respondents also say what they think is expected from them and may be inconsistent in what they say. The researcher then must be careful not to always take what is said at face value. Generalizations are normally not to be made from focus groups, since the research
involves small samples and not do represent a larger population. (Stewart et al., 2007: 115-116)

However they argue that:

An alternative approach is to view each individual in the group as representing a particular demographic, lifestyle, or attitudinal segment, which encourages a within-person rather than an across-person analysis. (Stewart et al. 2007: 115-116)

Krueger (1998) also emphasize the importance of looking at the focus group results not only from the words spoken. The results differ from a regular interview, in the way that the group interact and learn from each other during the session. Unspoken actions and behaviors may also be part of the results. He also argues that not all that is said has the same importance, the analyst need to be open to new thoughts and to be able to see the whole picture behind the details. (Krueger 1998: 20-26)

Krueger (1998) also argue that the analysis must be practical and to choose what is appropriate for the situation, what the purpose of the study is, what type of information was requested. (Krueger, 1998: 28-30)

Lastly but not least important, Krueger does share some good advice to the novice moderator of focus groups. He says; ‘few, few, few’, (Krueger, 1998: 97) arguing for the novice to start with as few focus groups as possible, two to three, to have as few participants as possible, four to five, and to start with as few questions as possible, maybe five to six, and to always keep in mind what the purpose of the focus group sessions are. (Krueger, 1998: 97-98)

*The analysis in my study*

The purpose of the focus group was to explore if the use of a presentation, of an imagined sustainable future vision of a neighborhood, could be a way to both diffuse ideas of a SD, as well as function as a tool for participation for the public.

The answer to both questions partly came from the final individual questionnaire (Appendix IV), mentioned earlier. The answer to the first question also came from the analysis of the discussions in the focus groups and my observations. The main purpose of the focus group was to test a tool for communication and learning. Since the main purpose was not to explore views on SD in future neighborhoods, I did not produce a transcript of the sessions. Although I did an extensive summary, omitting no issues, but avoiding repetitions which is attached as an appendix (Appendix VI). The results in the thesis is on a more holistic level, in trying to trace the possible social constructions of SD ideas, or the opposite, in the focus group discussions. Where the answers lay not only in what was being said, but in the dynamic and non-verbal interaction of the group.
I was able to observe what themes the groups engaged in and what occupied their attention the most. I observed if the vision encouraged them to discuss SD issues and learned. For example: If they started to exchange SD ideas? If they introduced new questions and showed curiosity? If they came up with their own suggestions on SD? Of interest here, was when the tool worked in different ways in different groups. Although generalizations cannot be made from such a limited number of people, it can only be noted. I looked at what I learned about their reaction on the sustainable vision. What in the vision was attractive to them and what was unthinkable? What issues did engage these participants the most? In this exploring what a municipality could gain from using this method.

The focus group results in the thesis is an analysis on group level mainly, however I did in one group traces an individual’s opinion. I chose not to video record the session due to the risk of making it harder with recruiting. People may feel intimidated if filmed.
3. Sustainable development

I believe that the key task upon succeeding in a SD lays in the ability for us to be successful in creating social sustainability. This is the main idea behind this thesis, that seeks to explore how SD can be looked upon as a positive change, instead of only sacrifices for the future. The planner must be the one to put these visions to life, not the least to create stories that people like to share and that becomes dominant. I think that some of the sustainable answers may lay in the past. To quote Borges:

I see planning as an arena in which multiple stories struggle to become heard and get attention, or to silence others. When some of these stories become chosen or self-projected; i.e. when they become institutionalised in planning practices, they become powerful, because they favour and give legitimacy to the reproduction of particular ideas rather than others. In this sense, planning is about power and authority formation, and as such it can be seen as a means for social transformation... I argue that despite their apparent disparity, pasts and futures have a lot in common, and are often overlooked in planning. (Borges, 2016: 18)

3.2 Earth’s limitations

Upon the creation of this vision, it does need to be sustainable in all three ways, ecological, social and economic. What a sustainable future will look like is not given. Interpretations are many and somehow you must choose one. I believe that building sustainability is quite a local or regional task. It differs all over the world when it comes to having to cut back in resource use, like the Global North, or develop further, for some places in the Global South.

There is not one view of what needs to be done for a SD. To summarize just a few views of SD I will use Dryzek’s (2013) Politics of the Earth: Environmental discourse. He argues that there are two main discourses when it comes to the view of global limitations, one that does acknowledge such limitations and one that does not, both on each side of the extreme.

The one that does acknowledge limits derives back to Malthus from the early 1900th Century. Since Malthus, this side have adapted and changed, because Malthus predictions did not come true. Earth’s populations did grow rapidly and standard of living did get better. The discourse changed course, but adapting and introducing the concept of the exponential growth. These curves showed in the 19th and 20th, in a growth of population, economy, use of fossil fuels, and much else. The discourse argue that this cannot go on. That there are limits to growth argued by Meadows,
supported by the Club of Rome. Later Rockström introduced the concept of planetary boundaries, that could not be exceeded. (Dryzek, 2013: 28-35)

On the opposite side Dryzek (2013) describes the promethean discourse. The claim here is that when needed, humans will always invent and discover something new to use. There are no limitations on Earth. Materia can be transformed into something else and we can pump carbon dioxide into the Earth instead of into the atmosphere, or cool down the Earth with whitening of the clouds. The technological ingenious of humans are endless. If this is the truth, then we do not need to worry about SD, because then everything we do will be a SD. Julian Simon, followed by Lomborg are the forerunners of this discourse. (Dryzek, 2013: 53-58)

With claims of what SD is arguments range today somewhere in between these two opposite poles. Dryzek (2013) does use the concept of SD as a discourse of its own. An international concept under the lead of UN and with its start in the Brundtland Commission in 1987. Here the concept allows for green growth. Dryzek shows many other discourses that deals with our environmental issues, from this Green growth discourse to the Promethians, and in the other direction to what he calls the Green radicals. (Dryzek, 2013) He means that Sweden’s discourse today is mostly of Ecological modernization. The key idea here is that it is good business to change into a greener path, such as renewable energy. But it also acknowledges for the government to be active, to legislate and take the lead, with the Dutch government talking about ‘transitions management’. (Dryzek, 2013: 166-171)

When it comes to striving towards SD I do not think just one path is the one to embark upon. We do need to promote both green technology and to save Earth’s resources. What we cannot do is to deal with just one issue at a time, then we will lead down the wrong path. It will be like when Norway claimed a SD. This has been described by Langhelle and Ruud (2012), when two out of three pillars of SD was going well, they achieved social and economic sustainability, with the redistribution of wealth and economic growth, but with their oil money. They questioned is whether you can really talk about a SD without ecological sustainability, Langhelle and Ruud argues. (Langhelle & Ruud, 2012: 177-189)

I am not with this thesis trying to produce proof of why the vision I create is ‘the solution’. Since there are different ways to go about it, and most of all the solutions must be local and regional, there is no ‘one size fits all’. But all solutions must be sustainable in the way described by the Brundtland report Our common future from 1987:

Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The concept of sustainable development does imply limits - not
absolute limits but limitations imposed by the present state of technology and social organization on environmental resources and by the ability of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities. (WCED 1987: 16)

We have since then been trying to calculate just how much of earth’s resources we can consume before we start to use up the resources for ‘the future generations’. One such measurement comes from the Earth's Overshoot Day, which arrives earlier every year. In 2017 it was already on the 2nd of August. This is a way to measure, that calculate earth’s resources available for one year that can be reproduced in that year. Ideally this day should come no earlier than the 31 of December, or even better not come at all, with plenty of resources on that day still left over. (Earth Overshoot Day, 2018)

This is calculated through the measurements of Ecological Footprints. The numbers come from the Global Footprint Network (2018) a network that is connected worldwide to both scientist, politicians, NGOs and industry. It measures the Earth’s available resources for humans. It calculates Earth’s resources for different kinds of use; carbon, cropland, fishing grounds, built-up land, forests and grazing land, and produces a total sum of the Earth’s resources and then divide it by number of inhabitants on Earth. As Earth’s populations grows it leaves less per person. To make it easier to visualize, it can be calculated as number of planets. Countries exceeding the resource use of one planet and year, is said to overuse. And by then they are using either poor countries resources or future generations. (Global Footprint Network, 2018)

The Global Footprint Network (2018) calculated in 2013 that Sweden used 3.83 planets, US 5.04, India 0.62, and China 2.11. The country using the least was Eritrea with 0.3 planets, and the most was Luxembourg with 7.68. (Global Footprint Network, 2018) But totally the Earth’s population, as we saw in Earth's Overshoot Day used about 1.7 planets in 2017. And, of course, we only have one planet. If you make such calculations, then Sweden in getting close to using 4 planets and needs to cut down its use to about 25% of its current use.

In line with these calculations are others, that I will now present.

SPREAD Sustainable Lifestyles 2050 is scenario visions of four alternate sustainable futures. The purpose was to spread sustainable lifestyles and it was funded in part by European Commission. The sustainable scenarios limitations were set from the calculation that the average European lifestyle has a material footprint of 27000 to 40000 kg per year, and that it had to drop to 8000 kg, to be sustainable. This is a cutback to about 30 to 20% of material use in current lifestyles. (Leppänen et al., 2012: 7)
The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development Rio+20 is behind the report: *Sustainable Development Scenarios for Rio+20*. The report contains a large number of future scenarios; from business as usual to sustainable scenarios. The scenarios were created by numerous scientists and organizations. One sustainable future scenario for 2010 to 2050 is made from scenarios “by PBL, IIASA-GEA, SEI, OECD, FEEM, GSG, and others for Rio+20.” (Roehrl, 2012: 93) This resembles a sustainable scenario made by the IPCC. Its focus is on a future that stays within the planetary limits, and is not a paradise vision, but provide decent life for all. In this vision countries have less differences in income levels, and there is a ‘catch up’ development in African countries. It figures that GDP per capita is more than 10 000 US dollars everywhere in 2050. (Roehrl, 2012: 94) If income levels are going to near one another, that would mean a cut in the Global North. The World Bank statistics show in 2016 a GDP per capita in the US of 57 632 US dollars, and Sweden had 51 845. (The World Bank, 2018) Again showing the drastic cutback in resource use for the Global North to manage to reach a SD.

3.3. The sustainable neighborhood

Before getting into the three dimensions of a sustainable neighborhood I first want to summarize some of Bradley’s findings in *Just Environment* (2009), which was a case study in Spånga-Tensta, Sweden, and Burngreave, Great Britain. She found in Spånga-Tensta that people of different ethnical backgrounds, as well as socio-economic background had the same view of what constituted an eco-friendly lifestyle. This view included out-door activities, clean environment, eco-friendly behavior (like recycling) and environmental policy and lawmaking. As a paradox those who saw eco-friendliness as a more important issue, were those who had the larger ecological footprints. This due to that, being of less means does automatically bring on less resource use and a more ecological lifestyle. This was something she found in both case studies. (Bradley, 2009: 228-230) And yet, in both places there were great resources put into trying to change the lifestyles of the underprivileged, like trying to make them change light bulbs and recycle. The lifestyles of the better off where not questioned, with energy consuming lifestyles like flying, playing golf and keeping two homes. (Bradley, 2009:250) The quote below of her, corresponds well with the ideas of sustainable lifestyles that I will get into in this section.

However, a discourse on eco-friendly living that becomes increasingly centered around, for instance, living space per person, consumption levels and acts of solidarity with larger collectives and relatives in distant countries might better reflect the heroic and desired in the lifestyles of poorer people with immigrant background. The promotion of such eco-symbols would do more justice to the environment as well as in the
environment. However, changing this type of thinking is not easy and requires conscious collective political action. (Bradley 2009: 265)

3.3.1 Ecological sustainability

A neighborhood that is ecologically sustainable need to cut down on resource use on primarily transport, food and housing. These areas cause the major part of GHG emission from the households. Transport and food with 30% each, and housing with 20%. (Naturvårdverkets, 2018) When it comes to the neighborhood’s infrastructure one need to consider energy and water. This to be able to build up resilience in these two systems.

Literature review

Transport

Suburban sprawl is a concept that Wheeler (2013) explains as the least sustainable way to provide housing. With the United States as the worst example of it. The ‘home owning dream’, with living in a single-family house in a suburb, with a back-yard, is often an ideal. This ideal lead both to enormous land use, and the need for travelling long distances in private cars on a network of high ways. (Wheeler, 2013: 4-10)

Wheeler argues that we need to use public transport much more, as well as walking and bicycling. (Wheeler, 2013: 164) To encourage people to walk and bicycle more, we must plan for short distances to services, work and recreation. Jacobs (1961) and Wheeler both talk about the importance of connected streets and short blocks. If people need to take routes around long super-blocks in going from A to B, then we will be inclined to find an easier way, maybe the use of a car. Many routes and connected neighborhoods shortens the distances and spurs walking or bicycling. The use of loop roads, that leads only in and around a neighborhood and nowhere else, is not to be used. (Wheeler, 2013: 294-296, Jacobs, 1961:191-195) Loit (2014) shows how the city of Stockholm in their CP have strategies to create many different attractive city centers and connect the different parts of the city well to one another to extinguish barriers. (Loit, 2014: 160-161)

We also need to plan for service, work and recreation mixed in with the dwellings to shorten distances. A neighborhood needs to be dense enough to support service. Wheeler argues that we need to have at least 12 dwellings per acre. (Wheeler, 2013: 301) Public transport needs to be available, as well as that new technology is part of a sustainable future. (Wheeler, 2013: 169)

Internet and Communication Technology (ICT) can save in resource use. Kramers (2014) describes how the use of ICT can bring about savings in transports, as in car sharing services. (Kramers, 2014: 43, 49)
Food

According to Schösler, Boer, Joop and Boersema (2013) the production of food is one of the main sources for putting strain on the environment, worst is meat consumption. It puts pressure on biodiversity, water and energy use, and is also a risk for human health. With industrialization and wealth, meat consumption have risen, and developing countries are also following with a trend of rising meat consumption. We need to eat less meat and replace it with more plant protein. There is an over consumption of protein as well, in the global North. (Schösler et al. 2013: 59-60) There are changes on the way. Kihlberg (2018, March 1) writes in Dagens Nyheter that Jordbruksverket (The Agricultural department) says that the consumption of meat is for the first time since 1990 lowering in Sweden. Kihlberg (2018, March 7) writes another article in Dagens Nyheter, on the issue of food and climate, and finds out in an interview with Richert, food expert at the WWF (World Wildlife Fund) that we need to cut down our carbon dioxide emissions from our food with 75%.

ICT could here fill a function when it comes to save and supply food. Kramers says regarding ICT:

The third opportunity is mass customisation, with less consumption of scarce resources through a move from mass production to intelligent adaptation or personalisation.

(Kramers, 2014: 24)

According to Naturvårdsverket (2018) restaurants and grocery stores waste a lot of food. Internet shopping is already here, and it is often possible for the customer to ‘save’ the usual shopping list and re-order (as an example in mathem.se and ica.se). Such customization will make it easier for the store to keep the right amounts if costumers are more predictable. The availability and spread of apps can help people eat more climate friendly food and can cut down the impact of our food footprints. WWF have already produced such a climate friendly food calculator. (Kihlberg, 2018, March 7)

Spencer (2014) is arguing that urban farming should be a part of urban planning. City people mostly consume industrialized food. By bringing the farming into the city and showing people how food is grown, may alter the consumers to making better and healthier choices. (Spencer, 2014: 120-124)

I say that an ecological neighborhood need to provide for short distances for food transport, and production, as well as not to build structures on farmland. Hamilton (1999) argues that we are met with a challenge to preserve farmland and to meet the growing demand of organic food. This as a way of sustaining food security also. (Hamilton, 1999: 657-658)

Housing

Wheeler (2013) argues that buildings are one of the world’s largest user of energy and materials. In the U.S.A. using about 40% of the total energy use. (Wheeler, 2013: 184.) Wheeler says that locating
houses close to workplaces and orient them in the best direction when it comes to sunlight, south in the northern hemisphere and north in the southern hemisphere, is sustainable. He points to the need of building zero-net energy houses or passive houses, as well as for the use of rooftop photovoltaic panels (solar cells) to produce electricity. Green, or sustainable materials that can be sustainable harvested lumber, local soil, or even straw bale houses. All depending on the availability of material. He stresses the importance of recycled material, whether it being from plastic, steel, or wood. (Wheeler, 2013: 184-189).

People living in single-family homes is an environmental problem according to Schmitz-Günter (2000). Not even if the houses are ecologically built and low energy houses, do they measure up to the ecological requirements for sustainable housing. But most people do want to live in their own house with a yard. In the decades leading up to the year 2000, the living space for Swedes have more than doubled per person. In Germany from 1950-1990 it increased from 15 to 37 square meter per person. The single-family homes are also the type of housing that consumes the largest area of land. (Schmitz-Günter, 2000:12-13)

Wheeler (2013) proposes shared facilities for new forms of housing in sustainable planning. From gardens, laundry, common rooms to cars. Even proposes co-housing and shared facilities like kitchens, and living arrangements that support especially the elderly and disabled. (Wheeler, 2013:196)

**Water**

In the future, due to climate change our water supply may be very different from today. Although we have already seen the effects of what is going to come, with last year’s drought and this year, with the ground water levels back to normal again. It is probable that precipitation is going to be much more irregular in the future. Long dry spells during the summer may lead to the need for irrigation, as well as we may have summers with too much rain. (SOU 2007:60) I believe that this is at least one of the reasons that Örebro will start the project of taking water from Vättern. (Länsstyrelsen Örebro Län, 2018)

With this said we do need to use our drinking water more carefully. Save and reuse is preferred. Gray water is possible to reuse for both irrigation and toilets. Storm water can also be collected and used for the same purpose. (Wheeler, 2013: 161, 192) In San Francisco new built houses are required to keep double piping, for gray water and black water, the former washing water and the latter from toilets. As a design feature Wheeler discusses the use of water in neighborhoods. (Wheeler, 2013: 194)
Ecological sustainability in the vision of Åppestaden

Transport

Åppestaden is going to have a well-connected street pattern to promote walking and bicycling. This being something that both Wheeler and Jacobs argued for. Today it is still common with loop road, that Wheeler meant is contradictory to connected streets. Nyponlunden in Örebro, the closest neighborhood to Åppestaden, has such loop roads.

We have in Sweden today about 4.8 million cars in use. (SCB, 2018). If we cut down to 25%, that would be one car in eight people, instead of two people as now. To stay within the limits set under the section on ‘Earth’s limitations’, we need to cut down even more, since the public transport that would replace some of the car travel, also requires resource and energy use. In the city blocks with 80 dwellings in Åppestaden there will be 20 parking spots in the inner yards, reserved for electric car pools. Those who want a private car is going to be able to have a parking spot in the outskirts for the neighborhood.

Åppestaden is going to be densely populated to be able to support service. Wheeler talked about at least 12 units per acre. So even the single-family homes can stay within these limits. The overall density of Åppestaden is going to be well over that, with more than 35 dwellings per acre. Service close by does lessen the need for transport.

There is of course going to be public transport in Åppestaden, that emit as little GHG as possible. The city bus from the city center needs to come there and it runs on methane gas. The city bus connects the ‘suburbs’, the neighborhoods, to the center of the city. (Örebro kommun, 2018)

I would like to see suburbs better connected, like Loit (2014) showed that Stockholm is striving towards. The suburb city centers of Åppestaden, Lundby, Vivallaringen, Mellringe, and Nyponlunden will have a driver free bus. In Tensta trials are going on with this type of bus, and it runs on electricity. (Carlsson, 2017, December 14(410,405),(993,879)) Such developments, as well as electrical bicycles are of great interest when it comes to transport. The driver-free buses, are especially needed when bringing home groceries, or for people with difficulties in walking and bicycling. Lately trials have been on buses running on demand only, Lantz writes about in ETC Örebro (Lantz, 2016, April 6) ICT can be used for this purpose too. My idea is that the driver-free buses could be called on from ‘their’ charging stations, with user cards or cell phone applications.

Food

I think that, even if a super market chain does not consider there to be enough inhabitants to support a full market store, they may consider having a let-out service in place in a neighborhood. People could place their orders on the internet the day before they pick it up. If the number of large
supermarket stores were fewer, in favor for only one in a city, I believe that we could waste less food in the stores themselves. It will also save in number of transports to the supermarkets from the neighborhoods. Some stores today are also experimenting with making ‘lunch-boxes’ made of food that would otherwise be wasted, this is good development, as well as it saves energy when cooking for many instead of few. (Westerdal, 2017, May 9) In Äpplestad this will be developed and stores and restaurants will be doing just that.

Instead of placing Äpplestad on the farmland that CP of Örebro have reserved for housing developments, I have placed Äpplestad in on forest land beyond the farmland. The farmland should instead be used for locally produced food. Green houses with wooden frames and transparent solar cells are already being built now days by ETC EI (ETC EI. 2017, October 23) I believe with insulated glass and artificial light, the growing season for vegetables can be much longer even in Sweden.

Housing
Schmitz-Günter (2000) argued that increasing living space is an environmental problem and that single-family homes could not be sustainable. In Nyponlund, a fairly new neighborhood next to the vision of Äpplestad, it is not uncommon with 150-200 square meters single-family homes. The concerns with the building materials used, is mostly for speedy construction and cheap materials, what I have seen. In Äpplestad the dwellings will be small. Rental apartments that receive state subsidies when built must be no larger than 70 square meters. (Boverket, 2018) The single-family homes in Äpplestad will have living area of 50-60 square meters downstairs, with an opportunity to use a second floor for a few bedrooms.

In Sweden the use of wood is a good choice of material, wood that have been harvested in a sustainable way as Wheeler (2013) said, even preferable recycled. Ehrenberg (2017, December 7) is showing how even eight story buildings can be built in wood. Ecologically built houses, with ‘clean’ materials that are sustainable. Some of the greatest concerns are the use of concrete in the foundation. Concrete have a large carbon footprint, but today it is possible to get ‘green’ concrete, with a somewhat lower energy use. Ehrenberg is discussing the alternative of using steel for stability in the foundation, and recycled glass material for insolation. (Ehrenberg, 2017, December 7) The greatest fear with wood, was in the past the risk for the spread of a fire. Now days the wood can be treated, to lower the risk of fire, and can also build high-rises in wood, with new types of wood materials making bearing structures. Although there is still a debate on how high the fire risks are. (Brandskyddsföreningen, 2018)
Many of the paints now days are made with plastic. This also seals up the house in an unhealthy way like Wheeler (2013) said. Natural paints are possible to use, mineral based, but may limit the numbers of colors to use, especially on the outside of houses. Could we be happy with black and red houses, and use the Swedish mud paints from the past? Houses that today have hundreds of years on them and still standing strong in our country-side, as we all can see.

I will not get into materials used in kitchen and bathrooms, but do want to point out that here also much can be constructed in healthier ways with more natural materials.

Energy
Äpplestenen will have all the houses oriented with large roof areas to the south, with solar cells on, to produce a large bulk of the towns energy need. South facing roofs should have no disturbance of vents or sky-light windows.

Even EON gives ideas of how to build more sustainable and resilient local electric grids. With clean power production and even batteries, only connecting to the outside grid when needed. (E-On, 2018)

Water
Äpplestenen will be provided with double piping in all houses, as Wheeler (2013) showed was done in San Francisco. Gray water will be treated locally, reused for toilets and irrigation. It will also be a design feature of the neighborhood. A park with a pond and a water fall will be there for people’s recreation and enjoyment. Maybe we should even consider using compost toilets instead of water closets. H. Hasselqvist (personal communication, 2018, February 26 and 28), Environmental Engineer at Örebro’s Sewer treatment plant, tells me about the risks of gray water use. Although she says that gray water can be cleaned locally with a simpler process, she sees risks with irrigation of food crops with that water, and pointed to the risks of using storm water from streets, due to the pollution from vehicles. This water also need to go through the sewer treatment if it is to be used. This adds on the reason, both for water and air, to keep polluting vehicles out of the center of Äpplestenen, allowing only electrical vehicles.

3.3.2 Social sustainability
I have already stated my point, that social sustainability is vital in the creation of a SD. If you cannot convince people that the ‘sacrifices’ to be made will lead to a socially positive future, it will probably be hard to convince them to come along. Question being, what does the socially sustainable neighborhood look like? The literature can give me some guidance, but here I have to choose the path to take.
The literature

The thoughts of the ‘good city’ is older than the issue of ecological sustainability. Visionaries like Le Corbousier’s *Radiant City* and Horward’s *Garden City*, have been modelling the shape of many housing developments in the 1900s. And as I see the humane ideals of the two, being lost during the decades, leaving mostly just the urban shape, of housing projects and residential suburban sprawl. (Fishman, 1982, Wheeler, 2013: 35, 44) I do like, and get inspired by the visions of the two, but also see, like Jane Jacobs (1961), how it has turned out in reality. Jacob describes the ‘Radiant city’, in the projects, as empty spaces of green with lack of safety, due to lack of people in circulation. What Jacobs instead favor is to keep old buildings and mix them with new. (Jacobs 1961)

‘Eyes on the street’ for safety, is what Jacobs describe makes neighborhoods safe. In the type of structures were the houses are only a few stories high, with stores at the bottom, safety is higher. She gives examples on how storekeepers and tenants reacts promptly if something ‘suspicious’ happened in the street. In such a neighborhood, children can play safely. Jacob’s (1961) means that what we have here, are the natural guardians of the streets. When apartment buildings grow to big, and without business, like in the richer neighborhood, these types of natural guardians of the street does no longer exist. Instead the rich have doormen, and other hired ‘eyes’ to keep the street safe. It is when builders create apartment complexes - Jacobs talks about the projects- for the less wealthy, that problems occur. Without the hired ‘eyes’ anyone can enter the buildings, and do whatever.

Jacobs (1961) argues that people attract people. The idea of the open, green, quiet space in a city with strangers, is not a working one, when it comes to the sense of safety. Jacobs does see a big difference between large cities and towns. Towns are where people know many people, and most recognizes one another. Cities are full of strangers, but can be safe if built ‘right’. (Jacobs, 1961: 26, 40-50)

Jacobs (1961) mean that being anonymous and only sharing your personal life with those you choose, is the charm of the city. This differ it from a town. In a good city there is a balance between the need for privacy and the need for contact for different reasons, for enjoyment or for help, also from strangers. Even strangers act helpfully in a ‘good’ neighborhood. (Jacobs, 1961: 69-70)

She describes how in strictly residential neighborhoods, the lack of stores and natural meeting places, instead can lead to ‘forced open’ homes, if people should have any contact at all. (Jacobs, 1961: 72-74) What I see, Jacobs here describe is how the Garden City, with its residential areas, function in reality.

Children in NY city, Jacobs (1961) argue, are safer in the old neighborhood streets than in the project’s green areas and playgrounds. But Jacobs says:
There is no point in planning for play on sidewalks unless the sidewalks are used for a wide variety of other purposes and for proper surveillance, for a public life of some vitality, and for general interest. (Jacobs 1961: 97) (Jacobs 1961: 96-98)

Jacobs points out that children just like all other people like to be where the action is.

When it comes to street life Jacobs argue to make room for all; children, adults, and cars. (Jacobs, 1961: 17) Although Jacobs does discuss the issue of pedestrians and cars more. She acknowledges that a pure pedestrian street brings on patterns that are freer, with people using the whole space and crossing more frequently. But she does not like the idea of separating pedestrians and cars on different levels, as I have seen in many of the Swedish projects – Million housing programs. Jacobs believe that cars and pedestrians could share the same street, but that the issue must be to limit the number of cars on the streets. She goes by the device that “life attracts life” (Jacobs, 1961: 362).

(H. Bäckgren (personal communication, February 12, 2018), Planning Architect and head of the department of City Environment and Comprehensive Planning, that I met with, did argue very strongly that car belongs in the neighborhoods, and that we do not want to go back to the divisions of cars and people, as Swedish projects had in the 1970s.

Wheeler (2013) use Jacobs (1961) ideas when he talks about sustainable planning. He describes new urbanism as a growing trend against suburban sprawl, that require cars for mobility. Instead, he explains, new urbanism promotes walkable neighborhoods with gridded street patterns. Narrow streets with sidewalks, and porches in front of the houses and garages behind instead. (Wheeler, 2013: 19) Wheeler goes on to describing the sustainable planning in the same way, outwardly oriented buildings and vibrant and pedestrian friendly planning. (Wheeler, 2013: 43) He does throughout his book Planning for sustainability connect the idea of Jacobs view of neighborhoods, to the ecological solutions of our time, as we saw in the previous section on ‘Ecological sustainability’ of this thesis.

Tunström (2009) have a critical view on both new urbanism and Jacobs ideas. She has studied Swedish policy documents and how they describe the preferred city. It is new urbanism and densification that have lately been the norm. When describing the dense city, it is with positive concepts like; humane, just the right size, unique, functioning infrastructure, beautiful houses and cultural heritage, public rooms, pride, safety, and close to green structure. (Tunström, 2009: 54-55) Upon describing the suburbs, especially the Million Housing Program it uses concepts, that have become increasingly negative, like; city islands, isolated bubbles, high rises, shopping centers, bike roads, high ways and unkept green structures. (Tunström, 2009: 60-61) Tunström means that in idealizing the traditional city like Jacobs does, one forgets the problems with:
...overcrowding, poor hygiene, poverty and class and gender oppression that is the model of the future (Tunström, 2009: 73)

Arguments that she returns to is, that in the past the safety was the safety only for the rich, who knew their store and café keepers and could enjoy that street life. (Tunström, 2009: 54)

Here I find it interesting. Jacobs (1961) does argue that the city with ‘eyes on the street’ does not have to be like in the town, where everyone knows each other, like Tunström (2009) assumes was only for the rich in the past. The towns ‘strong’ community, Jacobs saw, had its backside of control, and lack of anonymity. I see that Jacobs means, that the city does provide the freedom from small town control, at the same time as it provides the safety, also for the stranger.

Tunström’s (2009) argument of the dense city as overcrowded, was an argument that Jacobs (1961) also met in her own time. Jacobs argue that a dense city has a bad reputation, because it is mistaking dense for overcrowded. Overcrowded are when there are too many people living in each room of a dwelling. It does not matter whether the buildings are spread out or standing dense. Overcrowding can occur in neighborhood with few dwellings per acre. Denseness is important to provide service, the denser the better variety of service and offers more variety. (Jacobs, 1961: 218-220)

The strongest arguments that I see Tunström (2009) have against new urbanism is the presumption in the policy documents, that the suburbs do not provide good ‘meetings’. She argues that the concept of community is seen only as positive, as if there are no negative meetings in communities. It is used together with the idea to create a ‘city-living-room’, for positive meetings where people come together, and even come to consensus. A negative community does not exist, if so the terms like ghetto is used instead, Tunström argues. She also points out that the community idea instead of creating diversity and inclusiveness may create the opposite. Closed neighborhoods with a negative view of the outsiders. (Tunström, 2009: 118-120)

Wheeler (2013) shows how an ecological neighborhood can be made for people to enjoy. He argues how you can make nature visible, and make a place unique. This you can do with the use of native and, or edible plants, flowing water from storm water, and other designs that can lift the existing landscape. (Wheeler, 2013: 192-196) Jacobs (1961) promotes a street grid pattern, but does like visuals, irregularities, to make it more interesting. These can be created by a small square or park. She likes the idea of landmarks. (Jacobs, 1961: 394-399) The possibility for a stroll on the gridded streets and alleys, I believe has an equal recreational value as does a nearby nature reserve.

The opportunity to meet, can also be made through the creation of community places, like common houses with shared kitchen. Wheeler (2013) also argues for the reintroduction of co-housing, maybe
to add on a retirement apartment and allow the next generation to take over the house. (Wheeler, 2013: 197) I see that the sharing of houses does not only save in housing resources, but add to the strength of the social fabric. But here we do have to consider Jacobs concerns for privacy.

The vision of Äpplestad

I do not have the same emotional attachment to the ideal of the ‘lost’ city and therefore densification, that Tunström (2009) argues is shown in the Swedish policy planning documents. I enjoy the countryside and can tolerate the city. But urban sprawl is not an ecological sustainable way to live as I’ve shown. We need to reserve farmland and forests and we do need to keep ourselves contained in smaller areas with less daily travelling. I like the city, when I can enjoy a busy street life and watch the crowd, and I do want my fellow humans to watch out for me and keep me safe. I do enjoy the company of others in a moderate amount, and the privacy of my own dwelling. I do like to meet people more often than I like to invite them to my home. This is why I think that Jacobs (1961) ideas are useful in the construction of Äpplestad, and why Äpplestad will resemble the city of the past, the old town, and be dense.

But Äpplestad will not be equally positive to cars, as Jacobs was. I see that in 1961 the cars were few and far apart. It was possible to play ball in the street, and just pause when a car had to pass. I don’t think Jacobs had any idea of how it was going to become. I think that if we want the streets to be safe for the use of all today, we do have to limit the use of cars on those streets, as well as for environmental reasons not to pollute.

To be socially attractive Äpplestad must provide for the wishes of as many different people with choice of type of dwelling. From apartment, to town houses to small houses, as well as owning and renting. But size needs to stay within the limits to what is ecologically feasible. It is also a question of creating diversity among the inhabitants of the neighborhood. Social sustainability and equity is usually seen as connected, but the question does land on who can afford to live there, in a new development. Social and economic sustainability is closely connected.

Äpplestad needs to offer all the conveniences of the modern life, with technology, service and good transport. But it also need to provide more, so that people choose to spend their spare time there. It needs as well to give opportunities to enjoy beauty, nature, culture as well as a good meal. As I said in the previous section about water, reused water will be part of the design providing a water park with both a pond and flowing water. There will be several squares and a culture building. Already existing trees can be saved and edible plants can become the trademark of the neighborhood. I believe that surrounding us with the beauty of green structures, created or natural,
is a human need and will attract people to go outside, and give them opportunity to meet. Restaurants and small businesses must be mixed in with the dwellings.

I agree with Jacobs (1961) that places need to be used by people of all ages to function well. There are many playgrounds set aside from other activities, where parents either must engage in the children’s play or wait. No activities are available for adults in the same place, sometimes not even a bench. A play park in Äpplestad will be for all ages.

Tunström (2009) pointed out that even the ‘projects’ may provide good meetings. This is an important issue, but the way I see it, strong community can be built by people, despite ‘poor’ planning. This lead me to the conclusion that people are adaptable and city planning is only one aspect for supplying good conditions for social sustainability. Even if I believe that Jacobs (1961) ideas for building social sustainable neighborhoods are preferred, it does not automatically create just that. The downside being of course that it takes times to build new social structures. It takes time for the guardians of the streets to find their role, without any ‘old’ ones to show them how. But being ‘wise’ humans, and learning about current knowledge, we can speed up the process if we all know what it ought to look like.

3.3.3 Economic sustainability

On this issue I will be brief. The question here is not going to be the questions of our economic system, although that would have been interesting. It all depends on what economic system and what regulations are setting the limits when new developments take form. In Sweden, today, it is up to the market mostly, but still home owners can benefit from tax reductions on mortgage loans interest and low-income homes can receive housing subsidies. If people do want Äpplestad and can afford it, it will be reality.

Literature review

One of the main argument that Jacobs (1961) have for keeping old buildings, beside to social benefits I described earlier, is the need for aged buildings due both to variation in design and prices. New buildings always have a higher price-tag, in time they become the affordable locations, both for housing and business. The mix gives a better ability for diversity and more flourishing neighborhoods. (Jacobs, 1961: 200-203)

Jacobs (1961) proposes zoning for diversity, so that market forces cannot take over, and create just one type of use. When an area becomes popular, more of the same tend to show up and take over, like insurance and banking districts. (Jacobs, 1961: 260-270) When it comes to financing Jacob talks about three different kinds. Conventional lending institutions, governmental money subsidizing land development and housing, and the third ‘shadow money’, an underworld of cash and credits at
extreme high rates. What type of money that flows in influence the outcome of the neighborhood. (Jacobs, 1961: 305-312) The kind of money needed for gradual and continuous upgrading of existing housing and in keeping of diversity, is money much harder to come by. She discusses how hard it is for people in black listed neighborhood to get loan for improvements. (Jacobs, 1961: 321-323)

Jacobs (1961) is not much for the utopians, she argues that people who cannot afford to pay privately, are guinea pigs for the utopians in their quest to build the same. She says that it is wrong, that people who cannot afford housing becomes segregated in affordable housing ‘projects’. Jacobs propose something that is similar to the system we have in Sweden with individual housing subsidies for low-income households. (Jacobs, 1961: 336-345)

In a report from Boverket (2007) it is shown that Swedish housing policy has in the past, also received the state’s financial support. The government stepped in and guaranteed State mortgage loans at a fixed low interest, that were available most of the time from 1946 to 1992 for newly produced apartments. This to even out the cost between the old and new dwellings. The need for more housing was great in Sweden, due to the cities need of labor that led to urbanization. During the years from 1965-1975 Sweden built about 100 000 dwellings per year for ten years, called the Million Housing Program. The goal was to erase the overcrowding, setting a new standard of no more than two persons per room. From 1988 the housing policies should be adapted to the deregulation of the housing market. From the late 1990s the issue was instead to create socially and ecological sustainable housing. The economic part of the housing policy is to give subsidies to those with low income, and deduction on the taxes for all interest payments on mortgages loans. (Boverket, 2007: 24-30)

The vision of Äpplestad

In Äpplestad the pure size of the housing will cut down the cost. When the municipality sells their housing lots they price them by the number of square meters. This I was told by the head of the department of City Environment and Comprehensive Planning of Örebro, H. Bäckgren (Personal communication, February 12, 2018). If you cut the lot size to one third, you get one third of the price tag. Äpplestad will have only housing lots of 300 square meters for single-family houses.

I asked K. Franzén (Personal communication, 2018 May 2) at VästkustStugan/VästkustVillan, a house construction company, what the difference in price is between a small house with five rooms and a kitchen of 82 square meter, and a large house with six rooms and a kitchen of 150 square meters. The answer was, for a fully built house in Örebro, 1 664 100 SEK for the small and 2 851 800 SEK for the big. Roughly including the parcel of land, the big house would cost around 3,9 million and the small one 2,2 million, including solar cells for the latter. Maybe this could help more people afford a
single-family home, or companies to build and rent out, and some to be willing to size down for the climate as well. Municipalities could in planning supply only small lots, limit the built area, and by then make people build smaller houses. They could also supply information on the benefits to choose small, and at the same time the benefits to build ecologically as well.

When it comes to building rental apartments government subsidies are available to cut cost. But only if you build small. In Örebro you can get 5 800 SEK per built square meter of living area on apartments up to 35 square meters, and half of that up to 70 square meters. Hence small apartments and houses can keep the rental cost lower. (Boverket, 2018)
4. Research with focus groups

4.1 The recruitment experience

The plan was to have four focus groups, but during the recruitment process it became clear that it was more than I could manage to recruit. I started by putting an invitation letter (Appendix I) in the mailboxes. A few days later I returned and knocked on their door. I had thought this would give them an opportunity to prepare themselves for the idea, so that people who knew they would not participate, could say that up front, saving both me and them time. This allowed me not having to explain what I wanted at some doors, but quite a few had not read my letter. I started knocking at approximately 30 doors in an apartment complex area of Varberga. I had no success at all in recruiting anyone. People were not unfriendly, but rather shy. Next followed an area with single family homes, also 30 doors. Here I met two persons, that were very keen on participating. One of them did eventually participate, and brought a friend along. Something that I had strived to avoid.

Then I instead decided to recruit people in my own neighborhood, to get somewhat more skilled at recruiting. Here I did manage to recruit six participants after knocking on 80 doors on two occasions. I had more luck on a Saturday midday then a weekday evening. I did appeal to their engagement on what Örebro’s CP had planned for the farmland behind the neighborhood, and arguing that I thought that should not be touched and instead the forest beyond should be built upon. That struck the interest with quite a few people. Just like Gustafsson and Hertting (2017) said was at the top of the list for motives to participate; ‘to improve one’s neighborhood’.

It was quite difficult to recruit people to the focus groups. After having knocked on 240 doors, I had recruited only eight people in total. The main argument not to participate was lack of time. People in my own neighborhood were easier to recruit although I avoided the recruitment of people on my end of the street, or that had some connection to me. I did tell them I was a neighbor and by then got better access to a chat. They could relate to me. Many people were also willing to start talking about planning there and then, but not to join the group. They wanted to talk about their wishes on the plans for the neighborhood, to expand or not. Some wanted to save their views of the open fields.

The recruitment at the doors was successful in my own neighborhood. The volunteers were individuals that were interested in planning for a good neighborhood and who liked to talk themselves. Leading to a very friendly and talkative group.

The recruitment at the doors were somewhat successful when it came to recruiting people who lived in single-family homes or condominiums, the homeowners, but not so close to the vision. I did as
well knock on 80 doors there, but recruited only two participants. One participant brought a friend, and the other two participants I managed to recruit through social media. One being an acquaintance, the only one, of all the participants. I tried otherwise to avoid that.

The recruitment at the doors was not at all successful when it came to the rental apartments, I knocked on 80 doors in Varbergal, and recruited no one. I then contacted ÖBO and also the Renters Association (Hyresgästföreningen) at Varberga and Vivalla, and got the help from five members of the board of the Renters Association in Vivalla. But as one of the board members did express, the focus group there did only contain ethnic Swedes. This is not very representative in a neighborhood that has quite at good ethnic mix.

When it came to venue I strived to find a place close to where the people live that where participating. I had problem finding venues, the closest I could find was room that the University have in the town center. I then resorted to inviting the next-door neighborhood group, to my own home since they are my neighbors too, just to make it as easy as possible for them to attend. The homeowner group came where the only group that could come to the center of the city. The renter’s group preferred their own facilities in Vivalla. Flexibility I found was most important here.

4.2 The conduct of the focus groups

4.2.1 The focus group with next door neighborhood (Nyponlunden)

There were six participants in this focus group. Five of the members were women. Two were in their seventies, two in their sixties and two in their thirties with small children. Only one lived alone. Five lived in townhouse condominiums and one in a single-family house, all owned their home. The education level ranged from elementary school, with three members, to university with two members. One of the participants had previously been engaged in participation of some form.

Discussion

The main focus of the group discussion was from the beginning to the end of the discussion, that the vision was a development that was too big and too dense. The group’s view was that this would be a reason for people not to get along and that the place ran the risk of being unsafe. Some argued that not even where they live, in a small condominium association, people could always get along. They may have disagreement on things like were to put the garbage bag. Some saw that the vision ran the risk of being a place that attracted people with low-income, if you tried to keep the prices down. This would lead to an area with people with less environmental awareness and to people who cared less. It being a ‘positive vision’ would also attract people that would take advantage of that. Some argued that it was a lovely vision, and they wished it would work, but were skeptical and did not believe in people’s good intentions.
The members really liked the ideas of safe streets and children playing, but did not find it realistic. They rather saw another type of neighborhood to be safer. A neighborhood like Nyponlunden, with single-family houses and townhouses, and that is what they liked to see for new developments. One felt it to be ‘homey’ with the curved loop-roads of Nyponlunden.

One member did come back a few times to the vision’s parks, squares and safety, viewed it as a vision of past towns, that the member liked. These thoughts did not get picked up by other participants.

The visions ideas of keeping costs down, rather scared the group. The argument repeatedly came up, that the area would turn out to become a ghetto. They saw likeness with other areas that they named; Markbacken, Vivalla and Varberga. One argued that since the area would be low-income area the restaurants in the vision would not be a reality. There would be no profit.

Another argument was that businesses in Äpplestad would not be profitable, since people do not want to spend money on the restaurant it their own neighborhood, they want to go to the city since it is more festive. One member had lived in Markbacken from the start, at a time when there were stores there, she was working in a bakery, and argued that those stores are now all gone, even if the authorities had calculated that it would work with the large amount of people there. The same would come true for Äpplestad.

Some argued that they really liked the idea of solar cells and the environmental development, without specifying more what. When viewing into the future, one argued that wooden houses and solar cells should be planned for in a new development in their part of the city, but being more like the development in Nyponlunden, with single-family homes and townhouses. Many argued for this type of development in the future. Many said that more land should be used for housing developments. One even argued to use gracing land, since the amount of cattle were being lowered in Sweden, therefore we could use that land. The idea of the out-spread development, with green areas between, the urban sprawl, was strong as an ideal. They did think that the lot size in the vision were to small, there were even arguments for bigger lots than 800 square meters, the normal lot size in Nyponlunden. They also argued for the choice of house size when building. The visions single-family houses were viewed as too small too. One participant that wanted a lot to build on the farmland, did add that one does not need to exaggerate the house sizes.

No-one discussed the idea of walking and bicycling distances in the vision.

Many in the group did not think that it is possible to car-pool. People want their cars, and they did not see that this was going to change. One member placed the responsibility of the issue on the
government to supply people with sustainable alternatives, cars that were as good as the cars we have now. One argued that when going to the grocery store the whole car trunk was full, and the car was needed in bringing the groceries home. Ordering on the internet, and picking up at the let-out place for groceries would not work, because of the large amount of groceries needed. There was disagreement whether the internet ordering in shopping was the future or not.

Learning
All the members felt that they had an opportunity in the discussions to develop thoughts and to share their own knowledge.

From the discussion it was very clear that the members did listen to one another and did spin on ideas from the others. Even if many ideas were questionable in a sustainable perspective, it was a startup on a discussion on the issue.

In the discussions the members also picked up a few ideas from the vision, but this group did less than the other two groups, argue with the vision as a starting point. During this session I forgot to place cards on the table of some of the slides in the vision. My mistake did not supply them with the support to help them remember.

A method for participation
Five members thought it a useful method for the municipality in communication with its citizens. One member answered not no but ‘Something else’ (the third answer alternative), and seemed to have misunderstood the question when reading the explanation for the answer. There were no real explanations to why they thought the method may be useful. Instead the members seemed to elaborate on the vision itself. I did in the following two groups make clarifications on the question.

Three of the members had previously been engaged in activities for participation, which for two of them was the engagement in the condominium association. Three of the members had never engaged in any such activities.

Only one answered the question of what would motivate them to engage in participation, saying the possibility to influence the release of new housing lots, since the member wanted to build a house.

4.2.2 The focus group with home owners (Nya Hjärsta and Lundby)
There were five participants in this focus group, two of them were women. All of them owned their home, four in single-family house and one in a condominium. Two of the participants were in their late seventies, two in the fifties and one in their forties with a small child. One person lived alone. The educational level varied. With one participant with an elementary education, three with high
school, and two with high-school and two with university level education. Two of the participants had previously been engaged in participation of some form.

Discussion

In this group all but one participant – Participant 1 – saw quite a few advantages with Äpplestaden. Some of the features that these participants found positive was the sharing of things like the car pool, the reuse of water, the fruit trees, the office hotels, the solar cells, the play park with adult and children play tools, the wooden houses, the locally grown food, the development toward more advanced internet shopping of food, the cultural center, and even that it was a compact city. One participant expressed how great it would be to work there as a nurse’s aide because of the short distances and could also see that this would be a place for her ten year old daughter when she is older. Another participant argued that living a little closer together would be cozier and that people then easier could help each other, and yet another argued that it would be good for older people so that they would have closer to meeting places.

Some ideas came up to go even further. When it comes to sharing, participants argued, that it could even be more expanded to electric bicycles, tools, caravans and trailers. The use of bicycles was also lifted, with the need to expand and promote the use even more.

However there were concerns about some of the features of Äpplestaden. When it came to density, questions came up about those people who want more space for being ‘private’. The issue of the small sizes of the dwellings was also questioned if people that live today really would accept it. The inner-yard was lifted as a space for more quietness and for children to play, so there was some reluctance about the streets being safe for children. One participant had experience from Brickebacken, where it was supposed to be car free, but cars did drive there anyhow.

Quite a lot of time was spent on the issue of ‘barriers’ within a city. A participant expressed that between their neighborhood and the next with rental apartments, the divide was sharp. One participant said, that one does not cross the small forest leading to the next neighborhood with rentals. The discussion then came up of how to avoid the same problem in Äpplestaden, since it is going to have different types of housing. Here the idea of the high rises not fitting in came up, with the argument that the people living on the eight floor may envy the ones in single-family houses, because they could not afford it themselves. The solution of the problem differed. One participant meant that Äpplestaden should only contain the city blocks, with tree story buildings. This to avoid the creation of the problem. Two other participants argued instead that mixing even more would be the solution. Having single-family houses mixed with the three-story buildings. A discussion came up
on how to arrange it so that the higher buildings would not shade the solar cells on the lower buildings, having streaks of low buildings into the center.

All but Participant 1 did see mainly the positive sides of Äpplestenen, working together trying to solve the problems they saw. Participant 1 had a negative view of Äpplestenen, but this spurred the others to argue for Äpplestenen.

Participant 1 wondered how I would ever find so many people that would like to live in Äpplestenen, since today people are individualist and can afford to be. People do not like to share things, and when they must they cannot get along. The participants had experienced this while being on the board of a condominium, and a road association. People can neither accept the smallness of the houses, the kitchen and bathrooms. The participant was also concerned with how Mellringe was getting segregated, with one immigrated ethnic group being more and more dominant. Not the least with the worry that the cultural ideals for how to build, differed from the Swedish culture. The ethnic group wanting large, white and cement siding on their houses, as another participant expressed it. On this issue Participant 1 got agreement with some of the others.

What Participant 1 also expressed, was that we in the future may be forced into the compact and ecological form of Äpplestenen, and that visions, although naive, are necessary to get there. The participant did not lack in awareness of the seriousness of our environmental situation. As the participant said:

I can say this, what the green party is saying is the only right thing, even if I don’t vote for them, they are right, I think all understand that, but no one wants to do what they say. But it is the truth, it will come one day, even if we don’t want to believe it.

Learning
The questionnaires showed that all but one participant thought that the discussions gave them new ideas and that it felt meaningful. The arguments that came up where that it was interesting to participate and to hear the opinion of others that had different backgrounds, and to listen to different people’s views. One participant expressed that this was a method that was new to him, and an interesting way to discuss.

The one participant that did not learn anything new, did anyhow find it meaningful. All the participants felt that they were given opportunity to develop their thoughts and share their knowledge.

During the discussions I could clearly see how they all started their discussions from the vision, formulating their own standpoints and hooking on to someone else’s ideas and developing it further.
I think that the participants that did have a more negative view of the vision, did ‘put fuel’ on the discussion and made all the participants more alert and clear on their arguments.

**A method for participation**

All the participants thought that this is a good method to use if the citizens and the municipality should have a dialog on planning. The size of the group they felt was good, gave room for all to speak, and especially the ‘rounds’ without being interrupted they felt good. To be able to speak freely, but under some steering was appreciated.

4.2.3 The focus group with rental apartments- Vivalla

There were five participants in this focus group. Four of the members were women, one was in her seventies, three in their sixties and one in her forties with small children. Two people lived alone and all lived in rented apartments. The education level ranged from three members with high school, to university with two members. All the participants had previously been engaged in participation of some form, since they were all members of the board of the Rental Guest Association.

**Discussion**

The focus group living in rentals spent more time on the subjects of green space, car use, and affordable housing that preferably should be rentals, the latter also in connection to segregation. The issue of the necessity for change to more sustainable life styles were also discussed, both seeing it as a dilemma of how to make people change, and how they themselves did not live sustainable.

The green areas in Vivalla were much appreciated. It was expressed that they did not like the idea of more structures to be built there. All participants wanted to see more green areas in Äpplestad. There were especially concerns about play areas for children. They did not believe in the streets as play areas, since they had experiences from Vivalla. Vivalla has car free streets between the buildings, but cars frequently drive there anyhow. One of the participants expressed worry to let a child of seven years out alone. Even if the forest is near, a child of that age needs to be monitored by the parents. There were proposals of turning the car free streets into parks instead, but the discussion came to that the fire trucks needs access, as well as people with difficulties in walking, also need hardened ground. The playpark in Äpplestad for both adult and children’s ‘play things’ were expressed as something positive. Making it a safer park for children when it would attract adults.

There was a discussion on the issue of balconies to the inner-yards or the streets. Some wanted the tranquility of the inner-yards while others saw the need of having them towards the streets for safety, I then filled in with the idea was of ‘eyes on the street’ for safety.
One participant proposed that the inner-yards should be used for parks and play area for children, and that the cars should be placed under ground instead. I did explain how underground structures could cause problems with flooding, due to climate change. This participant was strongly insisting on the need of cars, and said that there is a need of at least one parking spot per dwelling, and continued that if underground parking is flooded, then it is only cars and not people that get affected. Another participant then expressed that car owners would not like that, and yet another one that down town in Örebro does not contain parking available for all apartments, and works anyhow.

Some of the participants were expressing the need to cut down on car use, but did not see themselves as very good examples. Wondering how they themselves could inspire others with their bad habits. The view of the car was somewhat contradictory in this group. The participants did understand the problem, but could not see how people would be willing to change. The need to visit relatives far away and go out on vacation, were viewed as a necessity. At the same time participants argued that it was necessary to change, and that we may get used to it, just like we have gotten used to that we having to pay for water-use. Some thought that we may be there in 2040, others not earlier than in a hundred years.

One participant thought that it was great if a new two room apartment would cost 5 800 SEK, and saw that as the upper limit to what a single-family household can afford. Many of the participants argued that the whole development should be purely rentals. This they said, would lead to less segregation and less societal classes, when people who could not afford to buy their own house could rent one. The small houses could be ideal for older people, as well as families, who could add more rooms for the children on the second floor.

At the same time other participants argued, that mixing rentals and home owning, would be better and lead to less segregation and classes. However then, they would like to see rentals in all types of housings, both the small houses and the apartments. This to hinder the sharp line, and segregation between the single-family house developments and the apartment buildings within the area. They did raise the issue of Äpplestad running a risk of being a city within the city. This mainly because ‘all that you need’ would be in the neighborhood, spurring people not to leave the area and others not to enter. For this reason, it was argued that cars were also needed to brake this isolation. The isolation that were both seen as bad, as we have seen, and as good. Good when it would lead to better sustainability with less travel. Some made comparisons to Vivalla, wondering if Äpplestad would not just be the same, segregated, but with less green areas.
The issue of segregation was discussed by many of the participants, with the experiences from Vivalla, seeing were the risk of pit falls were. In my presentation I said that in the Örebro region, there are 17,7 restaurants per 10 000 people, meaning that Äpplestad could support that number of restaurants. One participant was questioning where their 17,7 restaurants were in Vivalla? With only one food court in the center, that was closed in evenings and nights, and no pubs, Vivalla lacks from meeting places. Question being, when they ought to have enough people to support such service, why is there not? The group said that the only ones out at night were the ‘rascals’ youths, with nothing else to do than breaking windows. They also saw there being a divide between the ethnic groups in that way, with the Swedes going into the center of Örebro if they wanted to be out at night.

Two of the participants did express a very positive attitude towards the ideas in Äpplestad as a whole, on the issue of SD. Things that was looked upon as favorable was the solar cells, recycling of water, wooden structures and compact living. One of them expressed that this is the way the future must be, the other saw the challenges of getting there. The latter expressed that we must start thinking ‘outside the box’ and get used to new ideas, and to be as ecological as possible. The need to grow one’s own food came up a few times, as something positive, with not only the small houses having the possibility to do that.

Learning
The questionnaire showed that all the participants thought that the discussions gave them new ideas and that it felt meaningful. Arguments here were also that it is good to discuss with others and that it always led to some new knowledge. One participant said it was good with a clear presentation as a base for the following discussions. That it was good to take turns to briefly formulate what was most important, but what was most rewarding, was the joint dialog after. All of the participants felt that they had an opportunity to develop their own thoughts and to share their own knowledge with the others.

From the discussion I could see that the participants clearly started their discussion in the facts and the vision I presented. Arguing for what they did agree with, and in what way they had other experiences that would not coincide with the vision. Issues developed during the discussion, and themes were presented from the group in particular when it came to the view that green spaces are very important.

A method for participation
All of the participants did reply in the questionnaire, that they thought this method was a good method to use in dialog with citizens and the municipality. To start the discussion from the short
presentation of a future vision one participant expressed as good, and that it made the following discussion interesting. One participant argued that no more than eight people should participate in such group.

One of the participants expressed in the discussion, that it is vital that when planning a new development, the people who may be the ones to live there, must take part of the planning process. What that participant saw as most important was safety, community and sustainability, and in that order. And that has to start with thinking of the possibilities, as in this method, and that discussions then are started and involvement of people are the key component.

4.3 Comparing the groups on learning and method

When I compare the groups on the question of the learning experience and the view of the method itself, the conclusions were similar.

Of a total of sixteen participants, fifteen participants thought that the focus group session gave them new thoughts and ideas. That is also something that I could see clearly in two groups on learning on sustainability, how the participants would start up with ideas from the vision and then develop their own thoughts around it. The dialog between the participants did after that lead the participants onto a path of sharing experiences and leading them to focusing on somewhat different issues in the different groups, but all relevant to the vision presented. Even the third group that did not start in the vision, had learning dynamic in their discussions, but not of ecological sustainability.

The result was the same for ‘if they thought that the session was meaningful’, with all but one saying it was. To me it was very clear that the participants were quite engaged in the dialog and of all the participants it was only two that stayed somewhat quiet in the free discussion, but they did formulate their ideas when it was their turn. The rest of the participants seemed to enjoy in participation and took turns in talking, in the free discussion part, and I did not have to get involved and steering it up at any time. Although I had to steer up a few times when someone got involved in someone else’s ‘turn’. I am not sure if the same engagement would have been with other participants, this since the recruitment process left me with the participants with an interest in the issue of public planning and in discussing. The renters group did contain only members of the board Renters Association, people that are used to participate, and the rest were those few that would volunteer, after knocking at 240 doors, as I mentioned before.

On the method itself, fifteen of the sixteen participants, were also in agreement that this method is a good method to use so that the municipality and the citizens can be in dialog. They expressed that they liked that the vision was a starting point for discussions. They also liked the rounds where all
had a chance to talk, to start up with their thoughts and have a final say. It was in the freer dialog in the middle they felt learning took place. The group being small, some saw as a prerequisite for the dialog. One participant said that no more than eight should participate, somewhat smaller, but well in line with what Ritchie et al. (2013) said of six to eight participants.
5 Analysis and conclusion

5.1 The usefulness of the method

In the recruitment of the focus groups I tried to recruit participants at random. My method was to go from door to door to invite participants and give all, within an area, equal opportunity to participate. The literature (Stewart et al., 2007 and Bloor et al., 2001) recommended other alternatives to save time, by using preexisting list or already existing organizations. That was not my first choice, but I had to in the end, resort to existing organizations among the renters group, and used the Renters Association.

I can mostly speculate as to why this was difficult for me to recruit in Varberga with rental apartments. I think it may be that many people at the rental apartments that I visited, did not feel a connection to me, an ethnic Swede, middle-age, female and highly educated. Just like Ortbals and Rinkers (2009) said, the researcher’s background and person, have an impact on the research results. Sands, Bourjolly and Roer-Strier (2007) suggests that it is a good idea to have a group of researchers with different backgrounds when trying to reach out to the public for participation. I think that the same would be wise for planners in reaching out to the public for participation in planning. Healey (1997) also discusses the problem with power relations in dialog. Even if I do not know if this was an issue in this case, at least I must consider the possibility.

I did succeed in recruiting people with different educational backgrounds. It was the renter’s group that had the highest educational level, a neighborhood with a socio-economic stigma, and the next-door neighborhood group with the lowest level of education, although the latter is a new built development. The focus group participants were mostly middle age, ethnic Swedes, and with a domination of women, people just like me.

Ertiö (2016) have seen that the people who are engaged are mostly the highly educated and already engaged. This was only the case of the renters group, and that group was not recruited with my preferred method. More effort would have been advantageous in recruiting that group. Not the least would it have been good to recruit more people that were not ethnic Swedes, since the area is multicultural.

The next-door neighborhood group was as I’ve shown, the easiest to recruit. It was my own neighborhood, the one next to the Vision of Äpplesten, and they would gain the most from being able to influence the outcome of the city planning in that area. Gustafsson and Hertting (2017) have found that the number one reason to participate in planning is to engage in improving one’s neighborhood. I did use this as a tool in the recruitment process. While talking to people I informed
them that the municipality had plans for more housing developments on the farmland next to their houses, arguing that I would present a ‘better’ idea.

I did not use the concept of SD in the info letter, and I see that it lead to a recruited group that was not biased in favor of SD. I mentioned public planning ‘that is good for all’, so I did attract participants interested in planning. My Vision of Äpplestad got criticized and scrutinized, and offered me plenty to consider for alterations of the vision.

Beauregard (2013) and Innes and Booher (2003) discuss the importance of choice of venue. Here I tried to find a place close to the participants. As I said earlier I visited the renter’s group on their own home turf, and them all knowing each other, did make the upstart different. They felt at home, and I was a guest. Although I do not think it affected the outcome, the organized structure of the meeting did steer that up, but them knowing one another may have helped them to feel at ease. All groups did strike up a conversation with each other early on in all three cases.

Schéele (2001) have been working with homogenous group talks in exploring the needs for users in planning, and this is something that she recommends, and so do I. I do not necessarily mean that the groups must be homogenous, but it does ease the flow of discussions, I believe. But using small groups in this manner I see as a great advantage in trying to obtain free discussions and comfort for the groups. Group size does matter. Like Beauregard (2013) said, small groups are better for having discussions. Members of my focus groups expressed the same as Ritchie et al. (2013) on the size of the focus groups, with the recommendation of six to eight participants, for the right flow of the discussion. Healey (1997) argue that a dialog between equals is easier to achieve if the power relations are more even. In a homogenous group it is, and even so if the participants feel connected to the moderator.

Having less homogenous groups, I think is good later in a participation process, for reaching even more learning, through meeting people that is different from yourself. In such a situation the planner or researcher, may have to function more as a mediator, like Forrester (2009) argued a planner must be.

The back side of focus group would be the efforts that must be put into it. It is time consuming to recruit, and to conduct. You only reach a few members of the public when you do focus groups. But it may be preferred if you want to achieve more learning for the participants.

This brings us to the issue of the focus group as a learning tool. Ritchie et al. (2013) describes how the focus group is a qualitative research method. The discussion allows the group to develop in the dialog, through listening and reflecting, they can then sharpen their arguments. This is more like real
life how people usually interact. To me this was obviously so in this case. The focus group sessions felt more like a social functioning, than a research project. With all the enjoyment that a social function offers. It was only first when I listened through the recordings that I realized it was much more than just a social function, this is how we learn.

Healey (1997) talks about how we make our cultures through interaction with one another. How our reality is a social construction, and by then it can also be transformed into something different. This is where I see that a conscious effort by the planners can have an impact on the public, with the use of focus groups. It is in the making of cultures that we create a vocabulary too, and if the ‘vocabulary’ of SD can be spread and used it is advantageous. But I will return to this below on the publics learning on SD. However I did see that the focus groups were in a learning process, and they also did express in the questionnaire, that it gave them new ideas and thoughts, all but one participant.

Healey (1997) argue that people learn through doing, that knowledge develops in group work, but the external world sets the limits, and the interaction with it is necessary to correct the errors. This is where I brought in the Vision of Äpplestaden. It is all well to dream of a bountiful future, when you think of city planning, but you need to stay within the realities of the external world, the limitations of the Earth. My idea was that the vision should push the limits, provoke, and spur discussion, and it did. And the hope was that it may lead to new constructed cultures and land in a compromise. The focus groups did also express that the vision was a good starting point for the discussions.

And the literature show, both Ringland (2014) and Bina and Ricci (2016) have experience how scenario planning has spurred a will for more SD.

5.2 A learning tool for what?

5.2.1 The diffusion of SD to the public

This is where I find it more difficult to with a certainty claim diffusion of SD ideas. Even if it was quite clear to me that discussions were all that I have mentioned, a learning process and a good dialog, but was it the diffusion of SD? To really know that I think, I would have had to measure the knowledge of the participants in advance, and then after. Something that is well beyond the time frame of this master’s thesis, but definitely a useful study. Lindén (1994) wrote about an extensive research study that was made in the 1990s on people’s environmental awareness. I bring Lindén into this thesis at this point, since I found her research to be relevant during the focus group research discussions, and I will return to Lindén again further down.

What I can see, is what the participant talked about, and for most part it was about SD. The one group that seemed to construct the opposite of an ecologically sustainable future was the next-door
neighborhood, where the concerns were mostly for continuing to build big houses and have big back yards. And who can blame them, we all love our space, even if, as one participant proposed we use up all the gracing land for building lots. Something I see as utterly unsustainable. And as I said, I did fail to explain the sustainable part of the dense neighborhood to this group. The other groups where I did explain it, did not catch up on to the idea either, on how urban sprawl increases our travelling distances. Something that Wheeler (2013) show have reached its most extreme in the United States with enormous areas of suburbs and highways.

The focus groups spent a lot of time on the issue of social sustainability, raising many important issues. All groups talked about the need of green spaces for people to enjoy, and people expressed that those should not be crowded. This is not in line with Jacobs (1962) ideas of the green empty spaces as unsafe, with a lack of ‘eyes on the streets’ in those places, and that people attract people, and that this is what leads to safety. The enjoyment of crowd watching did not seem to be wished for where the participants wanted to live.

On social sustainability the groups talked a lot about segregation. The next-door neighborhood group thought the Vision of Äpplestad would turn into a ghetto, since there was a strive to keep cost down, and that it would attract people with less means. They also had the view of ‘poor’ people as being less environmentally friendly, than rich, although the rich resource use is far more destructive to the environment than the poor, as Bradley (2009) argue. Somehow the participants in the next-door neighborhood recognized the eco-friendly lifestyle as the lifestyle of the poor, and until now this have been the fact of the matter. Only recently have we seen it becoming fashionable, to reuse and recycle. Circular economy is in my experience becoming trendy.

Two of the focus groups spend more time on talking of ‘barriers’, ‘isolated island’ and ‘a city within the city’ as negative terms. The self-sufficiency of the Vision of Äpplestad was only partly seen as a positive feature. With all due respect, from experiences of other ‘projects’, to use another negative word, they saw the risks. Tunström (2009) point to the dilemma of branding different neighborhoods with negative words. And the reenter group, from Vivalla, expressed both how they enjoyed their Vivalla and saw it as an isolated island. So Tunström has a point in saying it is not so clear cut what is a ‘community’ and what is a ‘ghetto’. This leads me to mention what Gustavsson and Elander (2013) conclude, in My green neighborhood, that some of the people living in Vivalla, did not ask for refurbishment, and changes to make it ‘green’, since they felt that they were already living in a ‘green’ neighborhood. The view of the ‘outsider’ of an area as a ‘ghetto’ may not at all be the same view as for the ‘insider’, as Gustavsson and Elander discusses. (Gustavsson & Elander, 2013)

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The home owner group did spend a lot of time discussing the problem with ‘barriers’ between the different neighborhoods, especially those between the single-family houses and the rental apartments. The renters group also spend time on the issue on how home owning and renting creates segregation, and how to solve that, also by raising the idea of supplying rentals in all types of housing. Loit (2014) shows how Stockholm is trying to erase those barriers by making actual connections between the city suburbs, just like in the Vision of Äpplesten. This is also what a connected street pattern looks like, that both Wheeler (2013) and Jacobs (1961) recommend, for both social and ecological reasons, with closer walking distances and transports.

So where do we arrive at this? Did the focus groups want to go further in SD than the actual vision proposed, just like Ringland’s (2014) Surrey, and Bina and Riccis’ (2016) China example showed by the use of scenario planning. The answer is both ‘no’ as we have already seen, and ‘yes’, when people spun further on the vision, proposing for example both more electrical bicycles and more sharing.

Lindén (1994) found that people felt a sense of cognitive dissonance between what they knew was the ‘facts’ on environmental issues, and how they ‘act’ despite this knowledge. This sense of dissonance, she argues could lead to different strategies, from denial of those facts, with construction of other ‘truths’ than the environmental facts, to a sort of conditioned helplessness. (Lindén, 1994: 30-38) In my focus groups I could see the same dilemma. Some of the participants were well aware of how their actions did not correspond with their knowledge. One participant chose to feel despair, to blame all others that did not act anyhow, for his own behavior. A sort of conditioned helplessness. Another participant took it with more ease, arguing that how could he inspire others with his bad behavior. At the same time that participant was open for new ideas and promoted thinking ‘outside the box’ as he expressed, as a good starting point for a SD, like he meant the Vision of Äpplesten is.

But as I started to say, I cannot know if the participants did gain any new knowledge on SD, but I can say that they did express that they met new ideas and thoughts. It did however give them an opportunity to discuss SD.

5.2.2 A learning tool for the municipality?

I did assume that this method could be used to learn the current state of the publics knowledge of SD, and to find out the publics own experiences and their preferences. As such I can see that the method is supplying ample insight in the minds of the focus groups participants, and allows more of an in-depth, qualitative opportunity for the municipality to explore the issue. In just the way that Bloor et al. (2001) meant that focus groups would function. It is excellent when you want to explore
an area of what you know little, or suspect you don’t have a ‘clue’. I would say this is the case with SD, since things are really moving along too slow, in my opinion.

Focus groups allows you to start up fresh, and without assumptions, since you will allow the discussion to lead you where the participants want to go. As Bloor et al. says, as a pre-pilot project for further research. With the help of focus group’s insights in mind, you can then go out much broader, with questionnaires, if you want to find out more about what people know and want. But the main purpose as I see it, is to start up learning processes on SD, and hope that it will catch on in the participants’ other cultures and webs (networks) like Healey (1997) argues.

Borges (2016) also says that planning is an arena where multiple stories are struggling to be heard, and that planning can form what is going to be heard and to be the most powerful that get institutionalized. Rather than leaving things the way they are, dialog is needed. In this very study an example surfaced on planning policy in Örebro Municipality. The city has a clear goal of densification (Örebro kommun, 2018). The participants were well aware of this policy. They could clearly see the policy in the Äpplestad vision and give ample example on densification in practice in Örebro, viewed out of a critical standpoint. If Örebro Municipality wants to pursue this policy, then effort must be put into spreading information on the purpose of it, with arguments of SD, and at the same time spread a positive ‘vocabulary’ on the issue.

In gaining knowledge of the public’s views we must in planning also make a distinction between ‘facts and values’ like Healey (1997) says. To see what is what, and what consideration to give what citizens express. What consideration do we give the focus group participant that claimed that an immigrant ethnic groups was taking over the neighborhood? What is a value, and what is a fact, in the ongoing discussion on segregation? In what part of a SD does this come in? Social, ecological, or economic? Well maybe all of those, but without the municipality knowing of this ‘social construct’ how can one deal with it?

Is it a fact that we need to cut down to only 25% of our cars, or are just we fine the way it is, like many participants argued? The issues are many and the discussion should be ongoing. But in the process of trying to differ between facts and values and to lift what is the most important issue of the day, one must be in dialog.

The knowledge the municipality then gain can either be used to adapt the planning process to the user’s needs, if that seem to be the right thing to do from a SD perspective, whether it being for social, ecological or economic reasons. Or to take the knowledge as a starting point for further projects in trying to diffuse the ideas of a SD to the public.
5.3 Future for the method

This creates the possibility that the ‘ways things are’ could be transformed into something different. (Healey, 1997: 58)

These words from Healey, I quote a second time in this thesis. This is where I want to start up in this last section of my analysis. I agree with Healey, that the way we construct our world, and our realities, comes from our communication. Together we create our cultures and our vocabulary and this is the reason why ‘true’ change only can come through dialog. Focus groups makes this dialog possible, and what is most important, offer sustainable public planning a possibility to become culturally embedded. I believe that it is important to deepen the communication, to both being able to spread the complexities of SD, and to fully understand citizens cultures, their realities. I find that it is important, in a time where ‘tweets’ and headline news casts, leads to ‘populistic’ simplifications, in my opinion. Which I think, in turn leads to constructs that may not always be so sustainable.

This dialog has traditionally in Sweden come from the political parties’ member base. These members as the base of the representative democracy. A dilemma that faces our democracy is the growing difficulties, that the parties have in recruiting members, an issue that both Schéele (2001) and Karlsson and Lundberg (2013) showed. We have gone from seeing participation from these members, as the only ‘true’ democratic tool, to deepening participation, with examples like Agenda 21 and LUNA. But with the un-interest of the public in political parties and in participation, we face a dilemma. I did raise the question earlier how the politicians then can have a learning relationship with the public? Because without that in-depth dialog that I mentioned, how will the politicians know what the ‘people want’?

Here may my method, with a future sustainable vision and focus groups, fill a function. Inviting all, and taking those who volunteer, just like the political parties do. This without the participants having to offer all the time that a member of a political party is usually expected to give. Because lack of time was, in my study, what most people used as an argument not to participate. Maybe daytime sessions for focus groups could even be offered, with payment for loss of income too, just like spare time politicians have? At least we can think about it, give it a try, and see where it leads. It may, or may not, be worthwhile the time and money.

Another important question as I see it, is at what point of planning do we need participation. I showed earlier the regulations in the Plan and building Act (SFS 2010:900), that invited all to make ‘comments’ on a proposed CP, and for the ‘stake holders’ to ‘have a say’ on DDPs. Schéele (2001) meant, that we need to widen the group that participate in planning, from stakeholder to users, and as I see it, possible future users too, especially when we are planning new developments. Just like
Loit (2014) saw in they experienced of the Järva dialog, that it was important to include both present and future users. The Järva dialog, is a concept that very well fits as a continuance of my method.

It is important to know what the participation is striving to accomplish, and what sort of influence the participants have. Otherwise you may risk, getting only a long ‘wish list’ and make people disappointed if you cannot deliver. Here I showed that Arnstein’s ladder have been used frequently in Swedish public planning, for example in Boverket (2018). Clarity on the purpose to the participants are important. What level of influence are offered? When we are getting into the more ‘ready’ planning when an actual site, with real stakeholders, then the disappointment is often great if people participate, have their say, and then the plans goes on in another direction. I say, that this is the way it must be, it is what you get, when you ask. Not all people think alike and some are always getting disappointed. I even think that a lot of protests may be a sign that participation have taken place. I think it is when people have ‘no idea’ that plans can run ‘smoothly’. But I guess, this is purely my speculations. Something that would make an excellent issue to study further.

I think if we seek out participation on a more general level too, without a ‘real sight’ even, then we lift participation to a higher level. To talk more about the concepts that makes a good sustainable city planning. And for this I did find that the method with a sustainable future scenario and focus groups was useful. Not least because it spurred creativity and debate, and the format itself was fun. If you want people to participate, you must offer something interesting, something meaningful. As Ritchie et al. (2013) argued focus group research is more the way people normally interact in real life. This is why, it is a good method to make people feel at ease, and maybe more willing to contribute.

I have argued before and will again, that the use of a future vision of a sustainable neighborhood was a good introduction for the discussions. Since it is not a ‘real’ plan, I think that makes the discussions less ‘threatening’ and allows the participants to be more free and inventive. It must ‘push the limits’ to make it interesting. This also makes it possible to introduce new ‘cutting edge’ ideas for a S.D, with its base in the ‘facts’ of course. The facts that we need to consider in the future, when we cut back on our resource use of planet Earth.

And in doing so, presenting new ideas it also makes it possible for people to start thinking in new ways, to start exploring alternatives. To make the diffusion of what we today think is impossible to change, to be planted as a ‘seed’. To start a learning process toward a sustainable future. I feel like I have started mine. So, what would I do, if I were in charge of making Äpplestaden a reality? What have I learned from the participants? Now again I will return to the more practical, down to earth discussions, the ‘stuff’ that makes it a real world that we are talking about.
I would make adaptations of the planned area and add more green areas. There is plenty of forest and farming land around for the ‘bigger’ citizens of the neighborhood to use, it does border a nature reserve, but the children may need to play closer to home and not only on the streets. Both in the city blocks and cottage areas, I would add some more child and adult playgrounds. It is dense enough to promote service anyhow. I would promote the mix of owner and rentals in all types of housing in the neighborhood. Living in a house or an apartment should have nothing to do whether or not you want to own or not. This would be an excellent work against segregation. On other issues I would realize that the work must be ongoing in the diffusion of SD ideas, like the need to cut down in number of cars and living in smaller dwellings. The spread of a ‘vocabulary’ that is positive is necessary.

The groups also taught me that there is a lot in the vision that they liked, that must be developed further. Like child and adult playgrounds, city farming, office hotels, culture center, the sharing of things and much more. Here the focus groups could function further with ideas in more detail, and in the spread of ‘positive’ cultures of ideas.

But most of all I learned that we must be aware not to create developments that will become what the participants called ‘ghettos’. The dialog must be ongoing if all those Äpplestadens, that is going to get built in Sweden, is not going to end up segregated, and we also need some new laws and regulations for that. But equally important is that we need to encourage people to visit the restaurants in their own neighborhood, if they at all want those 17,7 restaurants to be there. The vision of Jacobs (1961) will not be a reality if we ourselves don’t ‘make’ that crowd, that people enjoy watching, and we ourselves will be those ‘eyes on the streets’.
References


Tunström, Moa (2009), *På spaning efter den goda staden*. Örebro: Örebro Universitet


Appendix I. Invitation letter

Will you help me with my research at Örebro University?

Tomorrow night, between 6 and 8 a’clock, I will knock on your door and ask you. You may also send me an e-mail if you would like to participate.

I believe in a future that is good for us all. But what should that future city be built like and look like? I have an idea, that I would like to present to you and 5-9 other people that are willing to participate and live in this area.

We will meet on April X, in the evening at 6 to 8 a’clock at Drottninggatan 2. We will have ‘fika’ (coffee and snacks) with the presentation. After that you will talk, to express what you think about the idea I presented. I will record what you say with sound only, so that I will not have to take notes all the time. In my Master’s Thesis you will of course be anonymous. Even so in the short questionnaire you will answer after the discussion, on the issue if you thought it was meaningful to participate.

The purpose is to try to find good ways to talk, between those who plan our city and we who live here. I myself live in Mellringe. I have talked about my study with the City Planning Department and they are curious to see my results.

Sincerely, Maja Anneborg, majaanneborg@hotmail.se
Appendix II. Notes to the researcher during the groups

Presentation note for Apple City – English Version

1. Apple City 2030 – sustainable neighborhood – challenges: Sweden’s population uses 4 planets Earths

2. Comprehensive Plan on farmland. 65 hectare of forest

3. Apple City: compare to Lundby approx. 1000 dwellings. Densely built good support for service for 17,7 restaurants per 10 000 inhabitants, street pattern well connected, easy walk and bicycle. Short distances, close to both forest and farmland for all, and to service. Connected to neighboring developments.

4. Inner yard:
   • Bicycle and car parking. Recycling.
   • Trees – try to keep some of the forest trees, plant fruit trees
   • Zon 1 only electric cars (from 2020) – inner yards for 20 car pool cars – one car in every five adults. Approximately every second street will be car free. The joining streets car free, but not bicycle free.
   • Car pools – booking through the internet. Small and large cars. You can also inform if you will invite more people to go, for example if you go to Kilsbergen for exercising. If a car is not free in your yard, then a car in the next yard will automatically be booked.
   • Personal parking spaces can be rented outside of zone, also there can guests’ cars park. P-houses in the outskirts in big red barns.

5. Street view – life in the streets – eyes on the street

6. Market square:
   • Local food is sold outside and inside the green house in the winter, food in season.
   • Cafés and restaurants are all around the square – today there are in this county 17,7 restaurants per 10 000 inhabitants, Örebro has a lot more (NA 180404)
   • Lunch box – it started with grocery stores making the most of their food waste and developed even further. It saves energy to cook food for more people. Chef is a growing occupation – Grythyttan is flourishing.
   • To shop – no large H&M. Only show stores, quality instead of quantity, not much spontaneous shopping. Shopping is seen as vulgar and distasteful. The life out is instead preferred for other experiences than shopping. Craft, art, food, games and play or just people watching.
   • Shopping – the local bus will take you to City Gross, but there is also a hand out place that you have order over internet. Some small things you can buy even there like milk if you forgot to order.

7. Water park
   • Reuse gray water and storm water – sewer treatment plant for gray water under the parking house – stream and a pond
   • Damm – gold fishes?
   • Side 1: Scene and a water fall – water cleansing – lift the water to irrigation and toilets
   • Side 2: Grass and cold showers.
   • Side 3 och 4: Wooden deck, and restaurants

8. Triangle square
9. Play park
- Important – play for adults and children – what could it be?
- School on one side – forest behind
- What could it contain: child’s physical play, climbing and hanging.
- And for young people and adult maybe: ping pong, out-door gym
- Hang out: benches, tables, board games

10. Work
- Office hotel – ICT lowers the need to go to the office, office can be here. Work mates work for different companies. Your brake will be just that. Office meeting through Skype.
- Chef
- Farm worker
- Own restaurant, crafts shop or other stores
- School and care taking personnel
- Apple City hostesses – two together serves all hours for the day – patrolling, serves especially from the Tringle square.
- Commute to work – through public transportation

11. Public transportation.
- Ordinary city busses that goes down town, like now
- Driver less local bus – gets called through maybe your bank card in a machine. Card will then let you on the bus (for safety). Goes in loops both ways - Äpplestad, Lundby, Vivallaringen, Mellringe, Nyponlunden. They will stand on their docks for electrical refill when not in use.
- When you call, the closest bus will come.

12. Town houses

13. Cottage blocks

14. A block close:
- House close to the front streets with no car traffic.
- Car pools on the side streets.
- Back yard – fruit trees and berry bushes on the communal strip of five meters between the yards in the back.
- To grow your own food is popular, many have small green houses or winter gardens
- COMMUNAL HOUSE:
  - House with a large kitchen, large community room, guest rooms (small with bunk beds)
  - You book the house – rotating on big holidays.
  - Cook food together on week days common, take turns.
  - There are communal houses also for condominiums and rentals.

15. Life on the street – outside

16. Outside small house

17. Floor plan for a cottage:
- Cottage area - 362 houses
- Modern (allows more solar cells) or traditional cottage – red or grey/black mud paint
- Healthy, environmentally friendly house – all in wood
• Poarch towards the street - Swing
• Solar cells

18. Interior

19. High rises

20. Sketch high rises:
• ETC Bygg is going to build these sustainable houses in Västerås, I was permitted to use the idea (ETC 171207):
• Step roofs for solar cells, lots of space under to store the energy and heat exchanges. Loft apartments – ventilation in the north direction.
• Massive wooden framing, all in wood. Foam glass and steel in the foundations, or green concrete. Three different sizes of apartment, most of them under 70 square meters to gain from governmental investment subsidies.
• A two room apartment of 50 square meters cost 5800 crowns, compared to the average rent of a newly constructed 2 room apartment 2016 of 2016 8200 crowns (DN 180405: Fakta i frågan: Hur stor är bostadsbristen?)

21. Farm land - map

22. Farm land – green house picture.
• Green house – transparent solar cells, wooden frame. Longer growing season.
• Fruit, all sorts of apples and an grove for nut trees. Even line the streets with this.
• Vegetable growing in the fields.
• Hog house and hen house – where you can go and leave your food waste

23. Energy
Appendix III. Vision of Äpplestaden 2030

- Currently the municipality has planned for housing on the farmland in the Comprehensive Plan of 2018
- We bypassed the fact land and built into the forest instead, to save the farmland for food crops
- 65 hectare

- Aprox. 5000 dwellings
- Round a hundred spaces for businesses and organisations
- School
- Culture building
- Two parks
- Two squares
- Sewar treatment plant for grey water

Strait streets due north and south for solar cells
48 city blocks

Mix of:
- Housing aprox. 4100
- Spaces - maybe 100
- Life in the street – not the inner yards
- squares (Triangle, Market Square)
- parks (Water Park, Play Park)

City block – inner yard – car and bicycle parking

- Black and red houses – mud paint – mix of traditional style and
- Balconies, deck, corner stores toward the
- View the street life from home or a
- Many street free from traffic and ready for child's play
Triangle – culture square

- Triangular cultural building
- Bottom level exhibitions and café – public seatings
- Upper level – yoga and dance facilities
- Park square – seatings with board
- Apple trees
- Information center – Apple city hostesses – tourist guiding
Driver less electric bus

Calling controlled that have a route through: Äppelstaden, Lundby, Vivallaringen och Mellringe
Town houses
• 9 town house rows – 9 in each – 80 ‘townhouses’
• Poarch to the street, back side fields

Cottage blocks
• Size down living – economically (Million to save) and ecological savings (save Earth’s resources)
• 362 cottages
• 6 communal buildings – with large kitchen, meeting room, guest rooms and bath rooms
Life in the streets – safe housing blocks

Small houses – cottages – a lot in a small space

- 57 square meter down stairs – two room and a kitchen
- Up stair possibility for more bedrooms/livingroom
- Healthy house - ecological
- Solar cells, plus energy house
- Cold pantry, maybe compost toilet
High rises

• 15 houses – approx. 30 dwellings in each - 450 total
• No larger than 70 square meter – small
• Rent two room: 5800 crowns/month – compared newly built on average in 2017 8200 crowns
• Wooden frame and sustainable foundation
Farmland

- Vegetable farming – green houses and free land friland
- Apple orchard
- Pigs and chickens – food waste

Energy

The local electric grid solution:
- Sun power first serve the own house, then the neighborhood, then out on the large grid.
- Also wind power within the local grid
- Small battery pool locally. Maybe use electric car battiers?
Appendix IV. Questionnaire – English and Swedish version

English – Questionnaire focus group – Äpplestaden

What did you think about being a participant in this focus group?

Did the talks give you any new ideas or thoughts?  Yes ☐  No ☐  Something else ☐

Did it feel meaningful?  Yes ☐  No ☐  Something else ☐

Did it allow you to develop your thoughts and share your knowledge?  Yes ☐  No ☐  Something else ☐

Is this a method that you find useful if the municipality and the citizens should have a dialog?  Yes ☐  No ☐  Something else ☐

Tell me more about these issues and explain what your opinion is. Why, or why not or in what way do you think?

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Have you engaged in ways to participate before?  Yes ☐  No ☐

If yes:

a. What type of engagement was it? Public planning or something else?

b. What encouraged you to participate?

If no: What would make you want to participate?

Is there any other issue you think is important to think of in this type of studies?