Sustainability from Below

public officials as inside activists in two cases

Jan Olsson

First draft!

Novemus-University of Örebro
701 82 Örebro, Sweden

46 19-30 30 81 (phone)
46 19 30 34 64 (fax)
jan.olsson@sam.oru.se (e-mail)

Sustainability from Below

Public Officials as Inside Activists in Two Cases

Abstract
This paper is studying sustainability from below by focusing empirical data about the role of local public officials and their capacity and propensity to consider aspects of sustainability in two Swedish case studies; (1)
one is about a radical change of land use in Örebro, a relatively big Swedish city (125 000 inhabitants), which resulted in a project of environmental restoration and development instead of a traffic-roate project which was terminated, (2) the other case is about a radical renewal of residential areas in Hällefors, a small, declining industrial city. In both cases the role of public officials was decisive for the direction that the two projects took. Even though the meaning of sustainability concept is debatable, it is obvious that important aspects of it are considered in the two cases. The two officials which were project leaders can be described as *inside activists* with fiery spirits. They were inside in the sense that they were employed by the local authorities. However, they did not accomplish those changes by themselves, with municipal resources. They were really good at networking to mobilise different types of resources, both in vertical and horizontal dimensions. The paper starts theorizing on the character of those networks and the role of inside activists.

**Introduction**

We live today in a world where many actors are talking about globalisation and sustainable development as two major forces shaping our future. These forces are intensively discussed, not seldom from a problematic point of view in relation to national sovereignty and democracy, but often also as something promising that can show us a way to a new, future world order. This second interpretation is the normative departure of this article (Camilleri & Falk 1992; Held & Archibugi (ed) 1995; Holden (ed) 2000).

The concept of sustainable development was introduced in the publication *World Conservation Strategy*, published by the World Conservation Union 1980. It was used again 7 years later in the Brundtland Commission's report, *Our Common Future*. At the United Nations meeting in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 regarding environment and development, the concept was again given a central place and began to be used by a large number of groups in society. Today, scientists, industrial representatives, politicians and civil servants use it regularly in different ways and situations. This should be seen in relation to the general way it is formulated in the basic documents (1).

Even though there is important room for interpretation about the meaning of sustainable development, it seems reasonable to define the core of the concept with help the following three moral principles.

- **Principle of ecological sustainability** means that environmental limits need to be considered by identifying environmental thresholds and adopting the precautionary principle.

- **Principle of equity between generations** imply a development that meets the needs of the present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

- **Principle of equity within generations** is a critical consideration since inequitable distribution of wealth, especially between poor and rich countries, leads to unsustainable behaviour and makes change more problematic.

A fourth aspect is sometimes discerned as being an important part of the sustainability concept, that is *citizen participation*. The philosopher of science, Merle Jacob has made a thorough analysis of the policy goals of sustainable development as it has developed in international conferences. He comes to the conclusion that the idea of sustainable development consists of four ethical principles and dimensions: human-biosphere interdependence; human-human interdependence; intergenerational equity and participatory decisionmaking (Jacob 1996, p. 46 ff.).

Even though there are different interpretations of the meaning of sustainable development, it seems reasonable to conclude that it has the character of an ideological vision. This means that the practical applicability of it is open to many alternatives and need to be addressed in relation to specific conditions, which often vary between different local contexts. Thus, understanding sustainability imply understanding it from below. In concrete situations, different actors try to give the concept a meaning in line with their own interests. Its nature is what Gallie called *essentially contested concepts*, that is concepts characterized by endless disputes about their proper uses on part of their users. Gallie formulates five traits to define an essentially contested concept. (1) The concept shall refer to something that is generally thought to be valuable, (2) it shall have an internal complexity and multi-dimensional character, (3) the concept shall have an open character in the sense that its criteria of applicability are open to unforeseen changes and different interpretations, (4) even at the point of departure the concept may be defined in different ways, (5) actors are well aware of the fact that different
interpretations are possible and are therefore prepared to defend their own interpretation against others (Gallie 1964).

Democracy is a good example of an essentially contested concept (Jacobsson 1997). So is also sustainable development. Both concepts are today very much valued and popular. Sustainable development is a newer and perhaps a more fluid concept than democracy, which means that the battle lines of democracy are more clear and better known. There are also tendencies to interpretation struggles about the concept of sustainable development, but at this stage it is still more about creation of meaning and searching for applicable interpretations. We will probably see more clearly stated positions and open conflicts in the years to come.

In Sweden, sustainable development has got a lot of attention and sometimes Sweden is described as a the really good example. Two british researchers talk, for instance, about "the lead Sweden has played and still plays in this policy arena" (Fudge & Rowe 2000, p. 9). In Sweden, municipalities were given the operative responsibility for carrying out Agenda 21. They should have started an Agenda 21-process before 1996. Local goals and strategies should be developed in line with the Rio-declaration and all service and activities of local authorities should be pervaded of the idea of sustainable development. The responsibility assigned was not legally binding, but functioned as a strong moral imperative. According to the Swedish parliament the ambition was that Agenda 21-work should be based on local municipal conditions, even though it is a common global challenge (Bro, Persson and others 1998; Lafferty & Eckerberg 1997).

Sustainable development can be described as a new, postmodern policy-field with a multilevel governance character. It is depicted as postmodern in the sense that some traditional aspects of the modern project has lost their decisive importance, that is: the national context, the hierarcial and sectoral state, the belief in rationalistic planning, the dichotomy between policy-making and implementation and the non-disputed trust in parliamentary democracy based on political parties. All these aspects seem to be challenged in the postmodern policy-field of sustainable development. It has a complex multilevel character (governance), rather than a clear pattern of responsibilities (government). It is a dynamic policy-field, which is about creation of meaning through communication, rather than rationalistic planning and implementation. It is a policy-field where direct citizen participation is valued relatively strong in comparison to party-based democracy (Camilieri & Falk 1992).

Sustainable development as a policy-field is unique in a sense because of its fundamental character, but is also in many respects typical for its own time. In an ever more complex world of multilevel governance the traditional distinction between policymaking and implementation lose more and more in relevance. Who are making policies and who are implementing is a demanding empirical challenge for researchers of today. As a matter of fact, most policy makers are also implementors and vice versa. The policy process can be seen as an integrated, collective process of policy realization. Preformulated policy goals are given meaning and relevance in processes of realization, both by interpretations of goals and of resource mobilisation. Policies can only exist in a real sense, that is come alive or being made operative, if they are taken seriously by a collective of policy actors in a process of realization. Before that, we can only speak of formal policy goals; expressed intentions with unclear prospects (Olsson 1995; Sabatier).

The complex governance-nature of todays policymaking should be seen in relation to the postwar expansion of the public sector, increasing complexity of problems and technocratic policymaking as well as the more recent increment of relevant political decisionmaking bodies on different levels (EU-integration, internationell regimes etc). Most policy areas are complex multi-actor fields, including public and private actors as well as many decisionmaking levels. Public officials and experts of different kinds play an increasingly important role in policymaking, which is well documented in research (Fischer 1990, Haas 1992, Andersen & Burns, 1996). This imply that central, normative questions more than ever are open to empirical research; that is questions such as who gets what and when and is there popular control over public decisionmaking? This also means that party systems of the Western world with weakening legitimacy is further undermined by the increasing number of different policymakers. Traditional mechanistic models of political systems seem to be efficiently challenged by organic models that are stressing the multiplicity of input channels to democratic decisionmaking bodies. This does not imply that we can put traditional theories aside, their future relevance are of course dependent on the empirical conclusions that we can possibly reach.

**Aim and Methodological Considerations**
The aim of this article is to report and start theorizing on empirical data about who are influencing policy and implementation when it concerns local development issues with relevance to the sustainability field. Empirically, the paper is focusing on two Swedish cases, one about land use and one focusing on renewal of residential areas. The two cases are analysed with respect to the following questions:

- What characterizes the cases when it comes to defining the problems and challenges as well as developing strategies and solutions?
- To what extent and in what ways are explicit references made to ideas and conceptions of sustainable development?
- Who are the important policy actors in the cases, both in terms of making and implementing policies? Are there any activists who are important forces of change? What characterize the relations between different policy actors?

The article's theoretical interest is about local public officials as inside activists and their influence over networks of policymaking and implementation, both in terms of content (aspects of sustainability) and network structure.

This article is based on primary data from two cases. The methodological strategy is to use crucial cases in the sense that they can be interpreted as good, innovative examples of how the global idea-complex of sustainable development may be implemented on sublocal level in two Swedish municipalities. This means that we have crucial cases with the most favourable design, given our interest in the implementation of sustainable futures (Eckstein 1975, p. 127; Hague, Harrop & Breslin 1998, p. 278). Here we could expect to learn about sustainable development in practise. If we are going towards a more sustainable future the two cases could also be classified as prototypical cases, that is cases that are not representative but are expected to become so. As Rose puts it: “their present is our future” (Rose 1991, p. 459). Our choice of cases are based both on analytical considerations within the research group as well as discussions with a stable group of practitionairs that is an important, integral part of the research project (2).

Both cases are innovative and strategically important in the sense that changes in terms of ideas, institutions as well as physical base came about, implying that we have to do with long term consequences. The cases are on a sublocal level within the municipalities or beneath the level of the local authority. The case of Hälefors is about a radical restructuring and renewal of housing areas, with the ambition to decrease the number of empty flats and make an attractive living characterized by green and cultural values. The case of Örebro is about a radical change of land use, which resulted in environmental restoration and development instead of a traffic route project, which was terminated.

Local level is defined as the territorial area of the local authority (municipality). In Sweden, there are relatively big municipalities as a consequence of amalgamation reforms. Today there are 286 municipalities. The two municipalities focused in this article are Örebro and Hälefors. Örebro is a relatively big Swedish city (125 000 inhabitants), the central city of the region (County of Örebro, sometimes called Central Sweden). Hälefors is a small, declining municipality (8 000 inhabitants) in the old, industrial region of Bergslagen. During the past 30 years, the municipality has lost one out of three inhabitants and this decline seems to continue. In both municipalities there are strong Social democratic parties. Even though they are not as strong as before, they both are in power in their local authorities. In Hälefors, the party has dominated during the whole last century. In Örebro, the Socialdemocrats has been in power since 1994 (the bourgeois-party coalitions have been in power on two occassions: 1973-1976 and 1991-1994). Thus, on the municipal level we can say that the study is a focused comparison with a most different design. We are looking for similarities within different contexts, that is particularly aspects of a transformation towards a more sustainable development.

In both case-studies a bottom-up perspective is used, that is we start with the two cases' specific problems, activities and goals. From these case-departures we go on searching for if and how they are related to the municipal level and/or to the global idea complex of sustainable development. We are going from practise to policy, with specific focus on the eventual operation of relatively stable networks or implementation structures.

In the bottom-up tradition of implementation research implementation structure is a unit of analysis which may be helpful in mapping relevant actors in implementation processes (Hjern o Porter, Carlsson 1993; Olsson
1995). This approach focuses on implementation rather than policy-formulation, giving an impression that the traditional dichotomy is uphold. There is nothing saying that this must be the case. Implementation structure as a unit of analysis may very well be used to understand aspects of policy-formulation on different levels. Policy actor's cognitive pictures when it concerns substance (in this paper sustainable development) as well as process can be stressed more than the approach may seem to admit. In fact, the approach is not only focusing on resource mobilisation but also on two other functions, that is problem definition and priorities. However, the problem definition function has mostly been focused in a rather narrow sense; that is how are the problems defined by implementors and/or service users on the "bottom" and who are defining the problems in the implementation process? These questions are of basic importance, but the cognitive aspects can be more thoroughly considered. Important policy actor's values, beliefs and attitudes can be described in a broader sense, not specifically related to the policy problem. It may help us to understand creation of meaning and policymaking from below.

A summary picture of the cases
In this section the two cases are analysed in relation to the first two groups of questions. What characterizes the cases when it comes to defining the problems and challenges as well as developing strategies and solutions? To what extent and in what ways are explicit references made to ideas and conceptions of sustainable development? This analysis is made separately for the two cases in order to give an introductory summary picture.

The case of housing renewal in Hällefors(3)
During the slow down in the business cycle and the structural crisis in parts of the private sector of the Swedish economy (banking, estates, industrial production) in the beginning of the 90s, the situation in Hällefors became quite dramatic once again. A weaker local economy and faster decline of population meant that apartments of Hällefors Housing Foundation (the local municipal housing foundation) began to empty. Something had to be done quickly. There was a risk that the emptying of apartments would have a snowball-effect, threatening the economy of the Foundation as well as the municipality. In this situation, the Foundation was reestablished as a housing corporation; Hällefors Housing, Inc. established in 1991. The newly appointed Managing Director Lennart Ljungberg got a directive of quickly coming up with a proposal for what might be done about the crisis.

According to the Managing Director's report in January of 1992, the company had approximately 250 empty apartments (out of approximately 1755 in total), that is nearly 15 percentage. The situation was quite serious also because of the relatively old age of the housing-property and the continuous decrease of population. If nothing had been done, the company losses during 1992 would have been approximately 8.5 million SEK, according to the prognosis of the Managing Director. It was necessary to quickly consolidate the company. The operative expenses could be brought down by demolishing or putting some buildings in storage.

Beside the acute economic problems and strategies, there were also other motives for starting a renewal of the housing areas. Already before the acute crisis there were many problems regarding housing inventory, which also was accentuated by the increased opportunities for choice of housing. Another important aspect was that parts of the residents (Klockarskogen) were closely connected with social problems. "Problem families" were moved in and out and some of the residential areas got a bad reputation.

How then should the transformation and renewal proceed? This was not decided from the start as a part of the directives of handling the acute economic crisis, but developed instead during the process of implementation. One alternative was to demolish the oldest buildings downtown in need of water and sewage renewal work. Another alternative was to tear down the newest buildings with the most empty apartments. The strategy that was chosen after a while was to make it as cheap as possible for the owner, but it was not just a matter of short run economic considerations. Every decision of demolishing an individual house would influence the whole structure of and probably also attitudes towards the residential areas. This could have detrimental implications, not least long run economic ones. Thus, the strategy was interpreted as demolishing as few houses as possible in the "good" neighbourhoods, which implied a need to convince people to move from other areas. In other words, this was a radical housing restructuring guided by a comprehensive view on the municipality. As we shall see it also became a comprehensive restructuring in other respects.
The housing transformation in Hällefors was implemented in three residential areas during 1992-1999. The residential area Diakonen was rebuilt and the name was changed to Polstjärnan (the Northern star), to mark its new identity. The renewal emphasised the outdoor environment. Large areas of asphalt were replaced by grass, vegetation and fountains. The front of the houses were partly ornamented and given a totally new colour composition. Eleven artists, of which some have national reputation, are represented in the area with 23 works of art. A totally new artistic, lightening system was also implemented. Several works of art were connected to a universe theme. On the highest rise of the area, a starry globe was situated named The Universe. It moves with help of a computer programme. This renewal was implemented 1994/95 and was inaugurated in the fall of 1997. Investements amounted to approximately 10 million SEK for work on the grounds, 6 million SEK for the buildings and 2 million SEK for the works of art.

The residential area Klockarskogen was also given a new name, that is the Milles Park, with reference to the world famous Swedish sculptor Carl Milles. Eight artists contributed to the artistic ornamentation and among these works of art were mouldings of some classical works of Carl Milles, (for instance: "God's Hand" 1952-54 and "Angel with Clarinet" 1949-51). Other references for the ornamentation of the area were the 20 000 years old caves in Combed Ark in France and the rock-carvings from the Bronze Age historical areas of Tanum in west Sweden. This residential area was inaugurated in August of 1995. The investments made amounted to 20 000 million SEK for contruction and outdoor environment. The cost for mouldings of Milles sculptures was approximately 1.8 million SEK.

The neighbourhood Klockaren was transformed to Mästarnas park (the Park of Masters). A small park was established between the buildings with a pond filled with lily pads and the artist Hasselberg’s "Toad". The idea behind the Park of Masters was that the most famous Swedish master artists of the 20 century would be represented with sculptures in the area (Tobias Sergel, Bror Hjort, Arne Jones, Eric Gate and others). The housing company also procured a copy of Jones' "Cathedral", made in aluminium. Furthermore, two exhibition apartments were equipped in the style of the 1950’s, one as a worker’s home and one as the home of a civil servant. The tranformation of the area was completed during the fall of 1999. Investments were 13.5 million SEK for construction and art for approximately 1.6 million SEK.

The housing renewal of Hällefors was innovative in the sense that it meant changes in terms of ideas, institutions as well as physical base. There was an obvious ambition of really trying to think in new ways, that is thinking based on other terms and concepts than those that dominated during the industrial epoch. This new thinking expressed to a large extent a willingness of developing Hällefors beyond the industrial tradition, not to forgett it but to make history of it in a good sense. This meant being able to take care of old characteristic buildings, objects and life-styles from the industrial epoch, and thereby creating a richer cultural heritage, on the one hand, and finding fundamental, long lasting ways of organizing social life, on the other. In the words of the Managing Director:

The human instinct to give ones children the best possible opportunities in life were among the subjects we discussed. We also made deeper studies of the knowledge that research offers us concerning the flocking instinct in humans and the human need to be seen and respected in the social community as well as the way we strive to understand the abstract - feelings, desires, faith and the future (Citation from: Persson and Bro, 2001).

The searching for "new" ideas meant that some explicit references were made to the sustainability terminology. The 1994 policy document of the housing company, developed during the first years of the renewal process, state that the whole company shall strive for non-polluting activities and systems of re-cycling.

The innovative character of the housing renewal also manifested itself in institutional change. Firstly, new types of normes and priorities developed during the renewal process when it concerned investments. These were made in the outdoor environment (green areas, vegetation etc) rather than a traditional focus on apartment standard. It was about colour, lightening and work of art rather than physical aspects and functional solutions. Secondly, ecological aspects were systematically considered during the demolition and reconstruction phases. The demolition work in Hällefors was one of the first so-called ecological demolitions where efforts were made to sort and recycle building materials and housing sections. A local second-hand market for building materials was set up. Many local citizens bought materials at cheap prices in order repair and upgrade villas.
and summer cabins. Despite this second-hand supply local dealers of construction materials also got advantages from the situation thanks to complementary selling of articles such as nails, paint etc.

These changes of ideas and institutions were particularly important in the perspective of a decade (basically the 1980s and the beginning of the 90s). Thus, it was not a question of completely new ideas and institutions as a result of the renewal project of the residential areas, but in relation to the local historical epoch of industrial production. Hällefors had, since a couple of years, the ambition to become a so called eco-commune and to stress the importance of small firms in non-traditional branches such as tourism, restaurant and education. One could therefore conclude that current post-industrial ideas and attitudes in the local context were beginning to institutionalize in the 1990s, which became obvious in the housing renewal projects. This also meant that the physical base of the area became fundamentally changed. Old buildings were demolished or re-coloured, open areas were developed with emphasis on cultural and environmental resources.

The three transformed residential areas have got a lot of attention, both in the local context (which we will come back to) and from external actors such as media, interest organisations, architects and researchers. Different groups are visiting the areas and people responsible at the local level say that they now have good examples to show the surrounding world, which is a contrast to the traditional pessimistic picture of industrial decline and unemployment in Hällefors. The housing renewal of Hällefors Housing, Inc won the 1999 SABO Environmental Award. The Award statement said that art was included in these efforts to an extent that was unique, that Hällefors Housing, Inc. had succeeded in the difficult task of changing negative attitudes towards residential areas by investing in the outer environment in an unexpected way. These efforts had, it was further stated, created a clearly defined identity for the area which gave the residents a sense of self-esteem and pride about living there.

The case of Rynningeviken in Örebro (4)
In the expanding region centre of Örebro, issues of land use and traffic solutions are continuously high up on the agenda. There is a limited supply of and an increasing demand for land to different kinds of purposes (traffic solutions, housing, service and industry, leisure and recreation). The structural transformation of local industry during the last 30 years, meant that traditional land use of the 60s and 70s could begin to be reconsidered. Örebro was transformed from a city based on industrial production (shoes and biscuits) to an economy dominated by public service (health care, statistical production, university etc).

A geographical area of particular interest in the beginning of the 90s was Oset-Rynningeviken (Oset-the Creek of Rynninge) adjacent to the lake of Hjälmaren, the forth biggest lake in Sweden. Earlier, a big part of this area was the polluted backyard of the municipality, with activities such as the municipal dump, oil harbour with storing and military exercise fields including rifle-ranges. This meant that places of great natural beauty, including some smaller nature reserves, were hard to access. The historical landscape with open meadow land next to the lake, a result of the former agricultural activities, had slowly been replaced by forest even near by the lake. Hjälmaren was difficult to see and its shore was often hard to reach because of all the vegetation.

In the end of the 1980s, when the municipal dump was terminated and the military regiment I 3 was closed down, the land use of this area could be reconsidered. Using the area for a new traffic route (Skebäcksleden) was an idea that had been brought to the fore from time to time during many decades. This would have given Örebro a traffic route around the city, which could have decreased traffic congestions and pollutions in the city centre. This was an important argument for the idea of a route. For a long time it had been difficult to realize this idea because of the military presence. Even after the closing of the regiment the traffic route was difficult to implement because it was controversial, especially among environmental organisations and residents in the neighbourhood.

It was also an ardent issue in the local political debate. Building new traffic routes to decrease congestions were no longer seen as efficient solutions by leading social democrats in the municipality. It was believed that new routes should only lead to traffic increments soner or later, which would not solve the problem, maybe postpone it for a while. This change of ideas had developed during the 1980s and can be interpreted as an ideological process, implying that the local Social democratic party became more oriented towards green values. In the election campaign of 1994 the Social democrats promised that they would not build the traffic route if they would come into power. They won the election and terminated the project as they had promised. The planning process that the coalition of bourgoise parties had started was now stopped. This process had
come so far that a purchasing of a bridge was to be implemented. This was the first part of the traffic route. The other parts had been planned to be implemented in stages as a way of spreading the costs over a longer time period. Perhaps it also was a strategy to handle the critique. The most controversial part was described as a preliminary plan. The leading liberal politician of the coalition wanted to continue the purchasing process, but other strong politicians of the coalition thought it was necessary to stop it with regard to the Social democratic victory. This was also done and since then the route project has not really been on the agenda.

In 1992, parallell to the planning of the traffic route, the biologist of the municipality Mats Rosenberg took initiative to small scale activities focused on nature conservation, restoring and protection in the area of Rynningeviken. The activities were for instance about cleaning up on the old city dump and clearing forest and vegetation to restore some of the dominating historical landscape of open meadows near the lake, which had nearly disappeared during a couple of decades. In a few years, these activities became more extensive and important, especially after the planning stop of the traffic route in 1994. In 1995, the local authority (through delegation from the County Administration) established a nature reserve of Rynningeviken. Oset, the other part of the area, had to a large extent been a nature reserve since the 60s. The new established nature reserve was a watershed for the area, implying that the environmental ambitions came to dominate.

In the management plan for the nature reserve of Rynningeviken, explicit references are made to the Rio-declaration and the local work with Agenda 21 in Örebro. In the foreword of the management plan the following statement is made about the project of Rynningeviken:

Right now our city is in an exciting development towards long-term sustainability and adaptation to systems of re-cycling. An important part of our concentrated efforts on the environment is to create a living green structure, where we preserve and develop the diversity of good living conditions for humans, vegetation and animals, also within the city. The restoring and protection of Rynningeviken will be one of the corner-stones in the green Örebro (Skötselplan för naturreservatet Rynningeviken, 1995, p. 1, author's translation).

The management plan state that the purpose of the nature reserve of Rynningeviken is to transform Örebro's backyard of dumps and shabby rifle-ranges to a landscape of recreation with high natural values and resources, close to the city centre for pedestrians and cyclists (Ibid.). The development work of the project includes many aspects, which the management plan describe in the following way:

• One of the goals is to preserve and develop green structures close to urban areas in order to stimulate recreation, outdoor life and studies of nature.

• Nature conservation. Within the area threatened nature types are restored as grazed open meadow land next to the lake, enclosed pasture-land, places for batrachian and tadpole as well as primeval deciduous wood.

• Environmental control. The old dumps are sanified and transformed to sheep-grazed moorland and deciduous wood. Polluted water from the dump is cleaned at the local place in a series of ponds and wide shore-mashes.

• Labour market. The restoration has been implemented as a large labour market project. Around 120 persons have been working practically during sixth month and at the same time received education in natur conservation and environmental control. This work has been physically demanding and has lead to pride and engagement over the good results. Many participants of the project have taken their families and friends to the area, showing what they have accomplished (Ibid. p. 2, auth. transl.)

The goals of the management plan have been implemented to a large extent and many local politicians, public officials as well as organisational interests describe the project as a good and innovative example of environmental development work. In our empirical field work, it was impossible to find opponents to the project. Local citizens also enjoy the new area of recreation. During the winter season there are a lot of people skating on the ice of Hjälsmaren. In the spring and autumn, bird watching and nature excursions are important activities. Fishing is popular in every season. In the summertime, the whole area become populated. Families and friends go on trips with boats or cycles, perhaps with a bathe in the new, popular, artificial lake.
The restoration of Rynningeviken is an innovative project in the sense that changes were implemented in three dimensions. Firstly, there was a change of dominating ideas, which meant that green values were stressed, both on the project level with explicit references to the Rio-declaration and the concept of sustainable development and at the political level as well by the disbelief in traffic routes as solutions to problems of traffic congestions. Secondly, in the institutional dimension, changes have been made when it comes to policy documents and rules. A new nature reserve was for instance established. Thirdly, the physical base of the area is completely transformed. Now there is moorland instead of dumps and open meadows instead of a traffic route.

Even though this case seems to be a success story it also has some problems and dilemmas. A very important problem which remain to be solved is the high level of pollutions from traffic in the city centre. When no traffic route was built this problem was unresolved and must be handled in other ways, which is still an open question in many respects. One clue here, is the municipal strategy of creating the bicycle city, a new three year project. Another point of conflict and debate, which is coming up now, is the growing interest for a luxury housing exploitation near the lake of Hjälmaren. Paradoxically, the restoration with emphasis on green values has increased the attractiveness of the area for housing exploitation. This does not have to mean a zero-sum conflict, but there is a potential risk. Basically, it is a question about how close to Hjälmaren the city of Örebro will be allowed to grow. Another potential dilemma with continuous relevance, is the need for professional sanitaryising and environmental control, on the one hand, and the efforts to stimulate recreation and outdoor life, on the other. If the focus on environmental control will weaken, there is a risk that the area's history of pollutions is hidden beneath a green surface of renewal. For instance, the control system of polluted water from the dump has not been unproblematic. There are difficult questions of measurement and control which need to be handled continously.

Policy actors and their influences
As we have seen, both cases became cases as consequences of specific and more or less unforeseen events. These events resulted in problems and challenges that the local authorities had to handle in some way. In Hällefors, it was more of an acute economic crisis which had to be handled quickly to save the Housing Foundation. In Örebro, unique circumstances in relation to the geographical area of Rynningeviken opened up a window of opportunities. "New" land, attractive for many types of uses, was suddenly free to plan and use for the local authority.

Both cases can be described as innovative and strategically important because of thorough changes in ideas, institutions as well as the physical base, which will have long lasting effects. In both cases, there were explicit references in documents and interviews to the thinking of sustainability and environmental protection, even though these references were a bit more common in the Örebro case. Environmental considerations were also made in relation to concret activities within the projects, no matter if it was about demolition of houses or covering and sanitaryising of an old municipal dump.

We will now describe and analyse the cases in relation to the remaining group of research questions: Who are the important policy actors in the cases? Are there any activists who are important forces of change? What characterize the relations between different policy actors?

Local public officials were important actors in the policy- and implementation processes, especially the two project leaders: the Managing Director of Hällefors Housing, Inc., Lennart Ljungberg and the municipal biologist employed by the local authority of Örebro, Mats Rosenberg. These two officials were ambitious with ideas and visions. They were fiery spirits with the capacity of being driving forces. One important difference, however, was the roles that these officials played when it concerned initiatives in relation to the projects. In Hällefors, Mr Ljungberg had a formal mandate from the local politicians and clear directives to handle the economic crisis of the company. Beside this, Mr Ljungberg had a large room for manoeuvre and much of the ideas developed during the process. Mr Ljungberg himself had an important influence over the direction and character of the housing renewal. Of course, this influence was based on and stimulated by discussions with colleagues.

In the Örebro case, Mr Rosenberg had a decisive role for the mere start and creation of the project. In the beginning, before the project of Rynningeviken existed in a formal sense, it was Mr Rosenberg who took initiative to the small scale activities in the area (cleaning up in the surroundings of the old municipal dump and
clear forest near the lake of Hjälmaren to restore old meadow land near the lake). This was done in cooperation with unemployed youth within the framework of a specific unemployment program of the local labour market office. Thus, the project of Rynningeviken really developed from below. However, a reasonable interpretation is that Mr Rosenberg had long term ambitions already from the start. In the interview he spontaneously admitted that it was something of a coup, which was applauded by the environmental movement. If it should be interpreted as a coup it really was a soft one, much because of Mr Rosenberg's kind behaviour and pedagogical skills. In all interviews only nice words were said about him, from different political camps, administrative units and organisations.

Both Mr Ljungberg and Mr Rosenberg were deeply rooted in their local societies but in different ways, partly depending on their different interests and competences and partly because of the fundamental differences between the municipalities. They had developed important experiences and networks during a decade or more within their fields of specialisation, which also the studied cases concerned. Both these men were and are well known and respected in their local contexts.

Mr Ljungberg's background is that of being an activist and driving force within the labour movement in Hällefors. He was particularly engaged in cultural and educational activities within the Workers' Educational Association (ABF) and Social Democratic Youth (SSU). Mr Ljungberg was the driving force behind the development of the educational centre of Bredsjögården, which was the former home of the managing director in the old foundry town Bredsjö. (The foundry was closed in the beginning of the 1960s). This educational centre focused on courses in adult education, social projects, unemployment projects and courses in amateur theatre. Local societal efforts were also initiated to strengthen Bredsjö as a community, for instance by starting a parent owned co-operative pre-school, a worker's co-operative and a co-operative store. There were also large investments in social and cultural meeting-places such as theatre performances and Workers Movement's Park. In the network of activists connected to Bredsjögården during the 1980s we find persons which today belong to the local political establishment of Hällefors, (for instance the chairman of the local government administration). Thus, much of the ideas and ambitions of the housing renewal had roots in the experiences that developed during the 1980s in the networks of Bredsjögården.

Mr Rosenberg, in the Örebro case, has no connection to the worker's movement, but a strong relation to the environmental movement. He has a university examine as biologist with ecological specialisation as well as some chemistry. His first job was on the County Administration related to nature conservation and inventory work. He has also studied pedagogics, making him qualified as teacher. During the 1980s he worked as a teacher and was also active in local environmental organisations. During this time he also made some work with environmental issues as a consultant. In 1993, Mr Rosenberg was requested to apply for the new employment as biologist in the municipality of Örebro. He did so and got the job. Before that, Mr Rosenberg had become more and more involved in the local environmental policymaking through his idealistic engagement in the environmental movement and particularly in municipality connected units such as the Oset committee and a local nature conservation council. Thus, the local authority hand-picked a competent and well known environmental activist in order to strengthen the environmental policy field. Mr Rosenberg really took on this challenge and was important both for developing the new environmental program of Örebro and taking development initiatives such as the transformation of Rynningeviken.

These very active public officials did not work in isolation. On the contrary, they were really good at networking both within and without the jurisdiction of the local authority. Both had good contacts with leading politicians and a capacity to argue convincingly for ideas to get support. Both also had many good relations with other public officials of the local authority. Some of these colleagues were very important during some crucial phases of the implementation of the projects, which two examples illustrate very well. The city architect of Hällefors, for instance, had an important influence over the thinking on how and where to demolish buildings. She strongly emphasised that not just economic and technical aspects should determine which way to go. She argued for a comprehensive perspective which could make it easier to consider the importance of what the remaining residential structure would look like and what the potential could be of having more open areas as a consequence of demolitions. Mr Ljungberg was indeed sensitive to this input. An illustrative example from the Örebro case, was Mr Rosenberg’s early contact with the colleagues on the labour market office, which was decisive for really getting started. The labour market program was strategically important when there were no fundings for the environmental development project and when a lot of work needed to be done in order to create a good pedagogical example.
However, the process of implementation differed between the cases when it concerned citizen participation and this is really interesting because of its often mentioned relevance for the sustainability thinking. The process of restoration and development of Rynningeviken seems to be something of an ideal model thanks to a rather open and slowly escalating process with an extensive as well as intensive participation of a large number of people, especially unemployed youths. Mr Rosenberg has continuously presented and legitimized the project in the so called Oset Committe, with representatives from the environmental movement and residents in the neighbourhood of Oset-Rynningeviken. He has also frequently presented the development of the project in different kinds of public meetings as well as in more specific conferences with residents living close to the area and researchers from the university (including this research project). As was mentioned earlier, Mr Rosenberg seems to have quite a unique capacity to include peoples in "his" projects by stimulating them to contribute and by building consensus around the projects. When Mr Rosenberg is active, it never seems to be any zero-sum situations, but rather challenging possibilities. It was the planned traffic route, not the environmental project, which tended to produce conflicts and resistance, especially from property owners and the environmental movement.

The housing renewal of Hällefors was a more difficult process in terms of participation from citizens and residents. Many residents had to move and the housing company was stricter with those who were failing to take a proper care of their apartments. There was, at times, quite a strong critique among local citizens against the project. It was about the controversial focus on extensive purchasing of art work as well as about how the process of renewal proceeded. Many saw it as an undemocratic process due to its top-down steering and fast implementation. An extensive local debate evolved, with harsh words and intensive feelings. Some argued, for instance, that Mr Ljungberg’s investments in ornamentations were part of his own ambitions to create something of lasting value. For Mr Ljungberg this was an afflictive experience. His life was threatened periodically. At times, he was outfitted with a bullet proof vest and a personal alarm. However, after the inaugurations of the new residential areas, the critique began to fade, but it has not completely disappeared. This local indignation towards the project was a fascinating contrast to the large external attention in form of visits, awards and media reportages.

In both cases the two activists have had important external contacts, which have shaped the direction and character of the projects to a great extent. Mr Ljungberg and some colleagues from the housing company visited Holstebro in Denmark to get inspiration. The story they were told in Holstebro was, according to Mr Ljungberg, that the newly appointed municipal director travelled to Paris and bought art for a large sum of money. This lead to a lot of local criticism which got a nation wide attention. One result, however, was that Holstebro became famous for choosing to invest in art. The municipality dared to go its own way. Thus, Mr Ljungberg’s experiences from Bredsjögården and Holstebro were in combination very important for the direction and character of the housing renewal.

Mr Rosenberg’s external networking also included generation of ideas. He was, for instance, inspired by American nature parks. One important experience from his visits was the efficient solutions in guiding large numbers of nature park visitors in specific "paths corridors" with limited disturbances on vegetation and animals. Furthermore, Mr Rosenberg was very successful in mobilising external funding of the project. Important sources of financiation were on the national level. Financial resources from the local authority has been limited, especially in the beginning of the process.

Inside Activists and Sustainability Networks
The two project leaders of the cases can be described as inside activists, a similar role as traditional activists play from the outside, that is trying to influence policymaking of the local authority. Inside activists are public officials and professionals employed by the local authority, directly or indirectly through companies owned by the municipality. The inside activists have knowledge, capacity and a formal role to take responsibility for local environmental problems and take up possibilities for local development. Working professionally often leads to a growing interest and commitment and there are, as we have seen, often big degrees of freedom to utilize. The inside activists in the two cases were close to the political power and had, in comparison with outside activists, good opportunities to influence policy- and decisionmaking.

The project leaders were able to use their professional freedom in creative ways with important implications for the local societies. It could be described as accidental occurrences or, as in the case of Örebro, as a coup
from below. However, none of these interpretations seem to be really up to the point. In both cases the project leaders were either given room for manoeuvre or taking it, but if so it was with acceptance from their superiors.

The possibilities for creative roles of public officials/project leaders can rather be interpreted as intended co-optation strategies from the local authorities; a need for policymaking from below. In situations of fast changes and difficult challenges local authorities tend to become undersupported with important competences that are increasingly requested from the surrounding world. In situations like this political elites of local authorities are not only in need of hard fact knowledge, but also normative, applicable know-how which is often based on practical experiences. As a matter of fact, there is often a need for support to answer the most basic type of questions: Which interests and goals does the municipality have in relation to a new type of problem or issue (for instance environmental policy)? Which experts can contribute in the policy formulation and implementation?

This argumentation is similar to that of Peter M Haas and others about so called epistemic communities on a national/international level (Haas 1992). Even if epistemic communities as well as inside activists and their networks are "carriers" of knowledge, the local networks are that in a different sense. Epistemic communities are more independent units with a higher level of competence (scientific), while the more loosely networks of inside activists are "carriers" of applicable knowledge, largely based on practical experience. These networks also have close and continuous relations to local processes of policy making.

The networks of the two project leaders were comprehensive. They consisted in particular of a limited number of public officials and professionals, spread over different sectors and units. The project leaders and their networks were in a sense "sustainability carriers", that is people working professionally and thinking conceptually in line with the sustainability thinking. However, it is not accurate to talk about a cross-sectoral sustainability profession, because these officials were not particularly integrated in terms of education, skills etc.

Furthermore, the sustainability thinking was not made explicit in an operative sense, that is there were no explicit guiding rules for transforming the local society towards a more sustainable living. This means that there were no forces or mechanisms that could integrate and direct local public officials/professionals to such an extent that it is reasonable to talk in terms of a sustainability profession. The sustainability thinking is rather ideological and visionary with important room for interpretation, and local actor's connections with the concept are, as we have seen, often loosely and indirect. However, this is not to say that the concept is without substance and with no practical importance. Its applicability (in terms of meaning as well as practical use) largely depends on the local context and the type of issue at hand, as the two cases have illustrated. This is underlining the need for empirical studies with the purpose of understanding varying networks of and ways towards sustainability.

The inside activist should not be seen as an alternative to activists of the environmental movement, but rather as a complement. Perhaps, outside and inside activism may coincide in one and the same person, that is an inside activist with outside engagements and an extensive external network. This activist may have a linking-pin position, with capacity to connect and co-ordinate inside and outside networks. This type of role has been focused in analyses of international regimes and show that a linking-pin position may be decisive from a strategic point of view. It may give influence over information and policy alternatives, which can structure the dominating opinion of an issue and thereby influencing the outcome (Jönsson 1987).

From a normative point of view, inside-outside networks have an interesting potential of working as efficient sustainability networks. They can hopefully combine important values and resources from both sides. In environmental movements there are important knowledges and experiences, which local policymaking and implementation may benefit from. The environmental movement often has a relatively strong support in public opinion and from citizens, which may give them political legitimacy. Citizen participation can also be interpreted as a potential for direct democratic legitimacy, if it is working as a complement to the traditional parliamentary democracy. For the environmental movement the inside activist can function as a crucial link to the political power of the municipality. If the network of the inside activist is extensive, in both the vertical and horizontal dimension, and intensive in the meaning of close and continuous exchange of ideas and informations, it may function as a sustainability network. If such a network tend be powerful in the local
political system it could be analysed in terms of a local sustainability regime. Saying more about Hällefors and Örebro in this respect would demand more research of both an empirical and theoretical nature.

Notes
1. The research project is called The Sustainable City: Sustainability from an empirical, normative and constructive perspective. Researchers in the project: Jan Olsson (project leader), Anders Bro (responsible for the co-operation process with practionairs), Michelle Benyamine, Martin Lundberg, Gunnar Persson and Conny Pettersson (doctoral students). FORMAS is financing the project to the end of 2003.
2. This part is based on: Persson and Bro 2000.
3. This part is based on: Olsson, Benyamin and Pettersson (2001), forthcoming.
References
Andersen & Burns, 1996
Camillieri Falk
Fischer 1990
Held & Archibugi (ed) 1995