



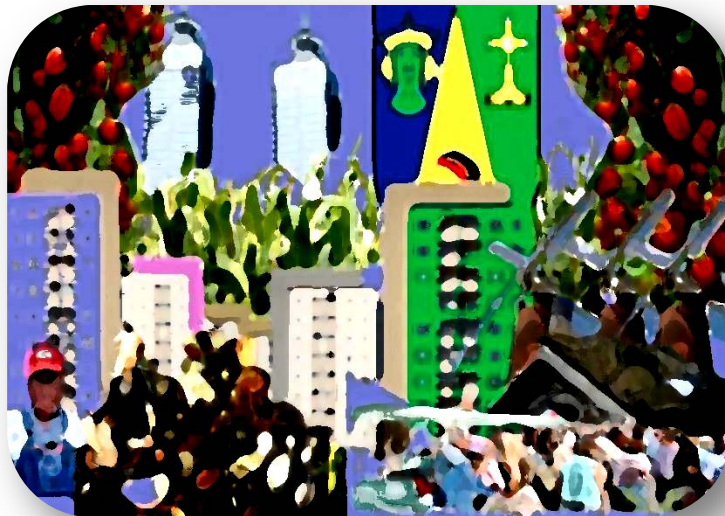
Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

Faculty of Natural Resources and
Agricultural Sciences

Villages in the Urban Landscape

– Reconfiguration of the local urban communities through community gardens and homestead associations in the heart of Stockholm

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Department of Urban and Rural Development

Master's Thesis • 30 HEC

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– Reconfiguration of the local urban communities through community gardens and homestead associations in the heart of Stockholm

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Abstract

Across Sweden different initiatives are currently forming urban based local groups or networks, engage in local, sustainable development and transformation of their local community. Guerrilla and community gardening, culture and art projects, environmental transition initiatives and platforms for local democracy, are projects that all seem to indicate that a local community landscape is on the rise within the urban areas of Sweden. In the heart of Stockholm, I will investigate three local initiatives are currently involved in activities that can be seen as examples of this phenomenon They consist of two community gardens and one homestead association. This study investigates how these initiatives through every day practices are transforming or striving to transform their neighbourhood, creating a sense of community and platforms for political action. In addition to the initial aim, there is also a discussion on how these initiatives have the potential to become, a new social movement. In order to answer these questions a theoretical compound based the concepts community, practice and meaning and social movement have been used as analytical tools on a qualitative empirical study based on three cases.

Keywords: Local community, meaning and practice, urban agriculture, belonging, social movements, homestead association, political action

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1 Introduction

Throughout post-industrial society groups of people have expressed a sense of discomfort, a sense of alienation towards our way of life. Descriptions of detachment or of insecurity, indicate that the world we live in is experienced as one on the brink of collapse, be it economic, environmental or both. This has compelled people to protest and challenge the society that surrounds them. This phenomenon is nothing new. At the turn of the last century, the naturalist movement, with prominent figures such as Henry David Thoreau and John Muir provides one example. Later, during the 1970s and in a Swedish context the Back to Nature movement more commonly known as the Green Wave (Gröna vågen), sought to overcome a materialistic and urbanized lifestyle. Presently, in the second decade of the 21st Century there is once again a current of transformative projects that might have the potential to reform our society.

Across Sweden different initiatives are currently forming urban based local groups or networks that engage in local, sustainable development and transformation of their local community. Guerrilla and community gardening, culture and art projects, environmental transition initiatives or platforms for local democracy- projects that all seem to indicate that a local community landscape- is on the rise within the urban areas of Sweden. One example of this could be the transition town movement, where local development groups try to create environmentally and socially sustainable local communities. Another could be glimpsed through the medial phenomenon called rurbanism, which can be understood as a fusion of selected rural and urban experiences through a mixture of practice and consumption.

In this thesis I will present three local initiatives that can be said to be examples of these more general tendencies. They consist of two community gardens and a homestead association which all operate within Sweden's largest city, Stockholm. The members of these initiatives are predominantly members of a white, well educated, middle class with some exceptions in the community garden initiatives. While this social stratification is important, it has not been the main concern of my enquiry but could provide interesting approach for future studies.

1.1 Aim of the thesis

The aim of this study is to discuss how these initiatives through every day practices are transforming or striving to transform their neighbourhood, thereby creating a sense of community and platforms for political action. Although local, the initiatives are also embedded in a network of actors with similar goals and aims. In addition I will also discuss how these initiatives become, or at least have the potential to become, a new social movement.

In order to achieve my two goals, I have attempted to collect and describe the narratives behind and practices within three local development initiatives. All three of the groups are based in the southern parts of Stockholm. Even though they differ, in size as well as in official motive and focus, they have certain similarities. They are all centred within a specific city district. They are also operating within their local community, striving for some sort of transformation, be it a greater involvement in local democracy, or educating children in the processes of food production. The initiatives operate on several levels, with different meanings and practices attached to the activity within each level. There is the practical level, concerning activities such as gardening, but there is also a more cognitive level, in the way they explain an overall goal for their organisation, such as education and a sense of community.

The cases I have focused on consist of a modern homestead association and two community garden initiatives with slightly different outlooks. The analysis is thematic, in that I have focused on certain forms of practice. The themes that I present within the analysis of the local initiatives can also be seen as elements that make up the pre-sets for a social movement as they

involve a sense of solidarity, political and collective action, which in turn produce or aim to produce a change in their local community.

1.2 Thesis outline

The outline of this thesis is constructed around two areas of discussion. Initially, I will introduce how the concepts of meaning, practice and community relate to my theoretical standpoint. I will then proceed to describe my methodological framework and a background description of the field. Thereafter I will provide the first section of analytical discussion. Following this is a secondary theoretical debate on social movement theory, which will be used in order to construct the second discussion.

It might be prudent to point out that the empirical material presented in the analysis is not divide according a geographical or practise oriented basis. Instead I have sought to make a more comparative division, based on different themes that I perceive the local groups to have in common. The data that make up the basis for the analysis in this study have been attained from predominantly qualitative fieldwork methods such as interviews and participant observations. As I pointed out above the themes of the local initiatives guided me towards a theoretical compound based on community, practice and political action. Even though I present the themes separately, they are in reality interwoven and occur in a much more disorganized fashion. In the discussion that follows the description of the initiatives I will also present additional theoretical concepts, based on Jürgen Habermas' discussion on the public sphere and Alberto Melucci's theories of contemporary collective action and social movements. These are in turn applied to my understanding of the initiatives in order to discuss how they can be understood to be part of a social movement.

1.3 Scientific context

In certain aspects, this thesis is part of a quite narrow scientific context and the number of studies with a similar outline is few. However, there is extensive research made in several related fields. One of these is that of the Transition Town Movement, a contemporary social movement where the

members aim to create sustainable towns and communities in the face of environmental crisis. With different programmes and strategies they strive to transform their local communities to prepare them for peak oil and climate change. In Sweden, the movement has yet to claim any wider academic attention except for a few master theses (see Nyfors 2011, Edquist 2012, Pühringer n.d.). However, the cases that I have studied operate outside the transition town movement, even though they share, a common agenda to some extent.

In contrast to my specific aim and its comparative nature, there exist a great body of research regarding urban action groups, both in a Swedish and an international context. Perhaps most prominent among these are the studies conducted on urban agriculture and community gardening. McClintock (2010) discusses how urban agriculture, through reclaimed local land, can be used to “de-alienate” the urban populace and overcome a social, ecological and individual divide. Gough & Accordino (2013) investigate how urban development can be furthered by establishing a relationship by cultural institutions such as public gardens and local government. The increasing activities concerning guerrilla gardening have recently been discussed by Cranea, Viswanathanb & Whitelaw (2013). In their article they present how localised action outside formal institution can be perceived as sustainability in action.

In a Swedish context, urban agriculture has been the focus of several recent master thesis projects, mainly from the discipline of landscape architecture (see Saukko 2012, Queiros 2009). The focus has been on the spatial, social and environmental impacts of urban agricultural projects and how these can improve public health and quality of life. Eriksson (2013) shows how a community garden project in the city of Malmö promotes and strengthen the social life in the district where it has been deployed.

However, the studies on urban agriculture and community gardens often have a strong tendency to focus on food production, environmental aspects and the prospect of transition. My focus lies instead on collective action and the political potential adhering to the practises within the local initiatives. In light of this, recent studies on community action can be seen as part of the scientific context. The concept of community has been the focus of some

recent studies, albeit within a rural setting (see Liepins 2000, Gunnarsdotter 2005). In her dissertation Anette Forsberg (2010) follows a rural community in the northern part of Sweden and its actions for development, not in terms of economic growth but as a struggle to maintain the community. The three initiatives that are the base for my case study might not struggle to maintain, but are instead constructing, a sense of community within a setting that is otherwise dominated by an individualistic urban lifestyle.

2 Community and Practice – An introduction to the theoretical concepts

The theme of this thesis begs the attention of several theoretical perspectives. In this chapter I will give an overview of these strands of thought which will serve as an introductory orientation for the reader.

Due to the aim of this study, as well as the empirical material, I will present the relevant theoretical concepts based on the themes that I presented in the introduction. The core of this study is constructed around three sets of theoretical concepts; (1) community, (2) practice, meaning and political action and (3) social movements. They are all in some sense attached to the concept of the *lifeworld*, the playing-field on which humans' conduct their everyday life, the world as it is taken for granted and commonsensical. It is through interaction within the lifeworld that individuals give meaning to their reality (Hansen 2006). It is when the elements of our lifeworld come into question that we have to transcend our current conceptions in order to define or reflect upon an alien phenomenon. The lifeworld is a process of inter-subjectivity, created through the meetings between persons, a social construction (Berger & Luckman 1966). There is a sort of duality connected to meaning and practice in that they are interwoven. Meaning begets practice, while at the same time practice can instil new meanings. Through interaction between individuals, a shared idea of community, gardening and local history can be negotiated and affirmed, thereby broadening the common-sense reality of the actors involved. But the interaction of meanings may also give cause to re-evaluate or develop one's set of beliefs. Thus, it can become the basis for constructing an ideology which challenges what is taken for granted. In this sense collective action can both create a tacit understanding of the everyday, at the same time can

be the birthplace for social movements. This begs the question: which components are needed for social interaction to turn into a social movement. Under the following two topics, I will discuss how interaction ties together the concepts of community, practice and potential political action. In chapter six I will continue the discussion on collective action and social movements, in relation to the three initiatives.

2.1 Community

All three of the local initiatives are in some way interdependent on a community. In another sense, the initiatives can be said to be communities, creating and maintaining themselves in their own right. The concept of community has been the attention of a long theoretical debate (see Hansen 2006, Delanty 2003, Liepins 2000). Within this debate the concept of community is applied in order to describe a social gathering or some sort of collective. Community as a concept is therefore closely tied to the empirical world, as a way to categorise and understand social groupings. The concept points towards an idea of belonging, as well as defined social phenomena, like a place or group (Delanty 2003:3)

Central to my understanding of community is that it is based on a collective, a social group which shares certain aspects of social life. Their commonality can be based on a common practice and/or a specific interest. In this sense, community is something that you do, that is constructed through the practice of the actors that share the idea of community (Delanty 2003:71). This commonality is not necessarily homogenous. In the words of Anthony Cohen a:

Community is [...] a boundary-expressing symbol. As a symbol, it is held in common by its members; but its meaning varies with its members' unique orientations to it (Cohen 1985:15).

Cohen shows that what can be perceived as a collective unity can, behind the surface of the common symbol, be a field of different meanings. Thus the community can be highly stratified and although it looks harmonious from the outside, may contain the struggle for the resources that give its members position. Hence, communities are not exempt from the power struggles that Marx ascribes to our society (Inglis & Thorpe 2012).

In this study, I use the terms local community and sense of community. Local community is based on collective interests, one of which is connected to a specific place. In one sense, all communities are local, in so far that all actions have to be localised, but to a “local community” a place has been infused with certain meaning. The place is central to the boundaries of the community. The communities that emanate from the urban agricultural projects are centred on the physical community gardens. However, the community extends beyond the seed beds and work days and into the everyday life of its members. A member of the homestead association can be define as a *Sjöstadsbo*, a person living and *being* from the district of Sjöstaden, which is an important aspect on how he/she perceives him/herself as caring and local. In Swedish, the word *bygd*¹ is a useful term to describe the combination of a sense of locality and a sense of belonging. The word *bygd* has no adequate English equivalent. In Sweden, it has a distinct rural connection. The terms that come closest to describing it are local community, or perhaps homestead. The word *bygd* refers to a specific place, often based around one or several villages that share history, culture and understanding of what it means to be part of the community. To some extent, the initiatives are arenas where a sense of *bygd* (*bygdekänsla*), can be established.

A community is not only based on common interest but is defined by its actors as being apart from a world outside the community (Gunnarsdotter 2005). This may be exemplified as how a group perceives its city district or neighbourhood as special, not only in terms of location but how it describes the general attitudes of its inhabitants or how the group experience its sense of belonging. The community can then be said to be centred on a common “we” as apart to the “others” i.e. those that are outside the community. Both the sense of solidarity and the sense of specificity that I described above indicate that a community is something shared through social interaction within a gathering of people. Local communities are based on collective action, anchored to a specific place (Liepins 2000:32). Belonging to a local community can be seen as an important part of an individual’s identity,

¹ For a more detailed discussion on rural communities in Sweden, see Gunnarsdotter (2005:281).

connecting the individual with the shared values, history and traditions of the community, while at the same time restricting the individual through moral obligations (Hansen 2006:14). However, in the densely populated urban landscape there is a high degree of anonymity. A person might enter or leave the local community, without becoming stigmatised. The sprawling social life of the city makes it easier to establish new or exchange your social network. In this sense, membership in an urban community is not as restricting as it might be in its rural counterpart.

It should be made clear that there is a distinction between a local community and the neighbourhood. A district or a neighbourhood can contain a community, but they are also places where individuals live their life without any greater extent of social interaction outside their private networks, without a sense of community. A neighbourhood can thus be described as your home, filled with personal experience, but this might not be the same as a place where you have strong social connections.

Classically, community has been used to being an antonym of society. In this dualism, community is used to describe a pre-modern social order based on close social relations, solidarity and tradition while society describes the modern social order, based on anonymity, cosmopolitan life and self-seeking individualism (Inglis & Thorpe 2012:23). This definition is a version of Ferdinand Tönnies's concepts *Gemeinschaft*, representing community, and *Gesellschaft*, more dominant in society. This dualism of social orders has often been presented as a dichotomy, where *Gemeinschaft* has been represented with an air of romanticism, the small scale preindustrial community. As such it is a contrast to the large, alienating *Gesellschaft* of urban society. Both terms express forms of associative life (Delanty 2003:32). In *Gesellschaft* this is seen through public opinion and legislation. In *Gemeinschaft*, on the other hand, this is shown through folkways or the rituals of tradition. *Gemeinschaft* is tied to locality as well as tradition, and is perceived as a "natural" organic life. Tönnies viewed the urban lifestyle that was developing in the cities as a progress of change, where communal bonds were influenced by *Gesellschaft*, unravelling them and progressing into individualism. As such, by turning back to a social order based on close social relations, community initiatives are a way of

turning against present day society and individualism. The rigid duality and the normative emphasis on Gemeinschaft is, according to sociologist Johan Asplund, a misinterpretation of these concepts (Asplund 1991). They are not, in fact, in a dichotomy but part of a gestalt image; two pictures coexisting within the same frame.

Tönnies' definitions of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft are only two possible concepts that try to define the duality of modern society. A similar division, which perhaps has had a greater impact on modern sociology, is the concept of mechanic and organic solidarity, coined by Emile Durkheim (Asplund1991:25). Durkheim has a critical view of Tönnies' division, which he describes as overly simplified. The modern society is not defined by the loss of community; instead, transition from the pre-modern and modern society is signified by a change from rigid, small scale mechanic solidarity into a more complex organic solidarity. In the latter, new opportunities and forms of labour, which are interdependent on each other, create fluidity beyond the constraints of tradition and conformity (Delanty2003:37). The mechanic solidarity or Gemeinschaft is, according to Durkheim, dominated by a collective that mechanically reproduces its values and ideas, forcing its members into similarity (Durkheim 1984:60). This view, in contrast to Marx's, provides a picture of the community as a collective unity and therefore situates the description given by Anthony Cohen between a rigid unity and struggle for power.

The local initiatives can be understood as manifestations of an ideology, or projects of creating Gemeinschaft, closer social relation and a communal structure in a setting mostly dominated by gesellschaft, the contemporary society. In this sense, the community establishment as a practice within the initiatives can be understood as a challenge or at least an alternative to our present lifestyle. Through the local community initiatives, the members are creating a lifestyle based on closer social relations and collectivism, as a contrast to the individualism and anonymity that are dominating the urban social landscape. However, the discursive standpoint of the initiatives lies with those who can claim the right of interpretation (Bourdieu 1995). Those who can claim this right decide what the initiative is *about*, which in turn affects how they are perceived by the world outside the community. This

relates to the Marxist standpoint on the power struggles that exist within a community, as well as the struggle between community groups. The right of interpretation is gained by one's position in the community, a position dependant on your available resources or capital (ibid.) In order for the initiatives to be understood as being part of a larger ideological movement, they have to be acknowledged by other actors that are present in the same context or social field.

2.2 Practice, meaning and political action

Drawing upon phenomenology and symbolic interactionism, sociologist Anthony Giddens has developed his own adaptation of concepts of practical and discursive consciousness which describes how the actions of agents are conducted through different levels of awareness (Giddens 1984). The practical consciousness describes the activities that derive from a subject's semi-consciousness, the things that we do without having to think about them, activities that have become routine or second nature. In this sense, the concept of practical consciousness is closely linked to that of the lifeworld. During a working day in the community garden the gardeners turn up to dig in the seed beds, removing dead roots and weeds to put them on the compost heaps. The work is non-reflective in that the gardeners do not have to give their full attention to the mechanical tasks, or think how they should behave towards each other. They have an inert understanding of the social codes as well the physical work. Instead they can reflect on new ideas for the garden, or why their participation is important. When we have to submerge ourselves in this type of mental activity we move towards our discursive consciousness. Within the discursive consciousness we reflect upon ourselves, our surroundings (both physical and social) and our position within them. The boundary between the practical and the discursive is not easily defined, as opposed to the state between consciousness and unconsciousness (ibid:7). On the other hand, the reflexivity of the discursive consciousness is not a guarantee for deeper reflections on practices as it might present the reflection that we do things in a certain way because "this

is how they are done”. Moreover, when we complete a task or perform a mundane ritual we eventually become so familiar with processes involved that they become habituated, and taken for granted. But the discursive consciousness means that we can actively think about our practices and therefore change our behaviour. We are in this sense influenced both by structure and commonsensical knowledge, but still we are free agents that can alter the structure through discursive reflection.

The same practice might adhere to different discursive consciousness, different meanings dependant on the agent. For some, gardening is a form of recreation, a hobby which might have quite basic motives such as “It’s fun to work with your hands for a change, and I like flowers” For others, the same practice is perceived as an act of protest, or based on a need to transform society with creative action rather than words. When these meanings come together as a result of a common interest in the practice, they might open up for a re-evaluation of the meanings behind their actions, bringing it from practical to discursive consciousness (cp. Giddens 1984:27). The practice itself might not change, but with the re-evaluation of the discourse meanings behind the practice can become more political.

I use the term political to describe actions that aim to transform the community or society. In other words an action becomes political when the performer has the discursive intention to transform the current order, like creating a garden in order to increase the resilience of the local community. Hence, political action is motivated on a discursive level. This is in contrast to the way one might pursue gardening as a way to increase personal health. The interactive element of collective practice gives opportunities for reflections on that practice, making a discursive re-evaluation possible. What started as an interest in tulips or local history could be the pathway to an increased care for one’s community and local development. Even if a merging of discourses does not occur, it is still possible for agents to act collectively through their common interest. What is a way to beautify your settlement through flowers to one member, could be a way to secure a more environmentally resilient community to another, by ensuring the presence of pollinators. In this sense, practice creates a potential for collective action and mobilisation. If the shared discourse of the collective is political, actions

that are carried out in the name of the collective can also be perceived as political, regardless of the intentions of the individual agents. Thus planting a seed becomes not only recreation, but an act of resistance and the combined practices within an initiative add to its momentum, its potential to transform the community.

3 Method

The fieldwork of this thesis is as previously indicated based on qualitative methods. I have conducted participant as well as direct observations and semi-structured interviews. Apart from this I have also analysed a number of printed and web-based sources. The aim of the empirical survey has been to create a description that covers both the discursive presentation of the organisations as well as the actual practices that are found within the initiatives. The qualitative nature of the fieldwork also means that the study is not repeatable in any positivistic sense and the analysis is based on the interpretation of the findings. Objectivity can clearly not be reached in any true sense of the word, yet I have tried to be aware of my own views and opinions and reflect on how these intertwine with my actions in the field. In other words, I have aimed to create a reflexive objectivity throughout my work (cp. Barnard 2011:278).

Throughout the study I came across a number of personal narratives that describe individual actors' involvement in the community initiatives. The organisations all have descriptions of their goals and activities, which can be seen through their official documents such as statutes and presentations on web pages. These aims and goals might not always correspond to the motives given by the individual actors within the organisation. In order to give a more just description of the organisations, I have chosen to include both the official descriptions given by the different groups, as well as the narratives of several individual actors. The official or public descriptions can, in a sense, serve as the discursive representation of the organisation or network, while the description given by the individual informants represents a more practical description of their actual activities within the community initiative.

With a focus on agency rather than structure, I have directed my fieldwork towards the personal presentations of my informants' practices, and how the world that we dwell in is perceived through their experience of everyday life. Subsequently, I have set out to understand how actors within a community initiative describe their own activities, what motivates them and how they conduct their affairs. What type of phrasing is used, what symbols reoccur during our discussions.

The bulk of the fieldwork has been done through eight semi-structured interviews, mimicking ordinary conversations in so far that the mode of speech is a relatively open and free-flowing conversation but nonetheless still covers topics defined by the interviewer (Kvale & Brinkman 2009). The aim here has been to enter a situation where I could discuss and investigate the viewpoints of individual actors. The names that appear in relation to the interviews are fictional, but each name represents a single individual.

The interviews have been dialogues where the informants could freely describe their personal involvement in an initiative, their motives, practices and thoughts concerning the initiatives impact on the surrounding community. It has also been an opportunity for me to discuss my reflections that arose during our conversations, which have been helpful to test the validity of my reasoning. Alberto Melucci (1996:389p) states that the phenomenological approach creates the need for meta-communication, where you openly discuss your findings and compare your understandings of a phenomenon.

Apart from the interviews and the written material, I have attempted to make a number of ethnographic observations. These have varied somewhat in their nature in that my role as an observer has shifted from passive to a more participatory form. All in all I have made seven observations, where three have been passive and four have been of a more participatory nature. During the more passive observations I have walked through the cityscape around the areas where a community initiative is active. I have spent at the sites for plantations, walked through shopping districts and been around community centres and cafés or visited exhibitions. The aim has been to orientate myself in the field to which my informants refer, and to draw a mental map of the area. The initiatives are always connected to a certain

terrain, a certain place, and the feelings that are attached to this place are often central to the informant's personal descriptions of the initiatives.

The participant observations were made during two different gatherings of community gardeners, and two meetings of a homestead association. This is where I have, on a first hand basis, come across the actual practises of the initiatives, from planting seeds to sitting in on yearly meetings. During these observations I also had the opportunity to make new contacts, gaining access to areas where I did not have an entry point to begin with. This mode of operation is what Russell Bernard (2011:260) refers to as "the role of the participant observer", which means that I have been in the field, known to my informants as a student researcher, while involving myself in their activities, asking questions and participating in their work. Bernard (ibid:266p) also states that during observations the role of the researcher does not become as prominent as when conducting interviews, which might have given me a more open connection to my informants. Observation might also allow the opportunity for more relaxed interviewing which can validate or falsify assumptions made during the study.

4 The local initiatives and their settings

The fieldwork has been carried out in three districts in the south of Stockholm. In this chapter, I will introduce these areas and the three different initiatives within them. My descriptions of the districts are meant to situate the initiatives within a local context.

4.1 Hammarby Sjöstad and the Homestead Association

From behind a bar-counter in a small Café in Hammarby Sjöstad I'm looking out at the street, where a late snowfall reminds the citizens of the city district that the Swedish spring is a changeable season. The hot cup of coffee at my side licks with its steamy tongue at the café window and blurs the shapes of the people walking by.

The street is busy, and shuttle-trains and busses swoop up and down their routes, accompanied by the sound of the warning bells at the level crossing. The people, whose hurried steps are a testimony to the cold weather, represent different strata of society, and it is hard to distinguish any features that would give them away as a homogenous group. One thing that is more common than it might be in other parts of the city is the swarms of baby-strollers that are being pushed along the sidewalks by young parents.

I drain my cup, nod at the barista who is impatient for me to leave so that he can close his coffee-shop, and then I proceed out into the windy, cold sunset. I stroll along the streets and let my gaze flow over the urban landscape. The buildings are looming tall over the wide main street where the public transportation vessels are pushed onwards by the city's central nervous system. Contemporary monoliths of glazed bricks, matted steel and coloured glass, everywhere I look the apartment buildings have a new, modern outlook. The streets are clean and in the dim light of the evening they are more and more lit up by the lights of the many stores and restaurants that make up the base of most of the buildings. I walk on, trying to understand the sense of community, the feeling of a small town that supposedly is so different to the adjacent city centre, only a few kilometres away.

(Direct Observation, strolling through Hammarby Sjöstad 18/3 2013)

Hammarby Sjöstad is a newly established residential and commercial area, just south of the central parts of Stockholm city. The district, which is built on an old harbour area, marked by run down industries, now has an outspoken environmental profile, promoted by Stockholm municipal district administration. Even though the land around Hammarby lake has been used

by the citizens of Stockholm for hundreds of years, the district's current design is new and in some places still developing.

The development of the new district and the transformation of an industrial harbour into a modern residential area began in the 1990s and the project took off in 1995. By the turn of the millennium the first shape of the new, modern residential district could be seen: a district that promised to have a strong environmental outlook with a focus on infrastructure and waste management (Poldermans 2006). Today Hammarby Sjöstad contains 20 000 inhabitants, most of whom are in their mid-30s and have small children (hammarbysjostad.se 2013). The bulk of the flats are co-operative apartments. The residential buildings often have small businesses, restaurants or convenience stores at street level. Hammarby Sjöstad has its own website, which is developed and maintained by GlashusEtt, the environmental hub of the district. GlashusEtt is a visitor's centre and demonstration site, currently upheld by Stockholm Water. This is where most organisations and groups have their meetings. Hammarby Sjöstad as an environmentally sound city district has received much recognition when it comes to city planning, even outside Sweden. Due to this, the GlashusEtt receives approximately 2000 visitors each year from all over the world, people who are interested in Hammarby Sjöstad's environmental profile.

Sjöstadens Homestead Association (SHA) describes itself as a modern homestead association, looking into the future as well as into history (www.sjostadenshembygd.se). SHA aims to become a platform for local democracy and a forum for discussions about the development of its young district. It also wants to create and maintain a sense of community within Hammarby Sjöstad, a practice that I will return to in the analysis. Besides the aim to become a political voice of the community, it works on celebrations of traditional Swedish festivities such as Midsummers' Eve and Walpurgis Night. SHA was formed in 2010 and today has around 140 members. The main part its member base consists of pensioners and they have pointed out that it is hard to engage the younger population. SHA also holds study circles and seminars in the local history of the area, moving beyond the recent establishment of the district to study what has been at the site of Hammarby Sjöstad throughout history. These activities have had a high rate

of attendance and a member of the association also conducts history and environmental tours around the district to give people the opportunity to experience their district on a first hand basis.

One of their main projects is called the Sjöstads dialogue (Sjöstadsdialogen) which is the attempt to create a local “think tank” and dialogue concerning the development of the district. This project has not been as successful as the steering committee would have liked. The chairwoman of SHA believes that there is a need for these types of platforms, but that it is only when people are provoked and negatively affected by recent development that they have the will to act and engage themselves.

4.2 Skarpnäcksfältet, the Food Park and Folkodlarna

We are walking down what seems to be the main street in an apartment district known as Skarpnäcksfältet, situated in the district of Skarpnäckgård. My informant is taking me to the park where the community garden is situated. While we are walking, we are continuing the interview that gave us the reason to meet up at the community centre, which we recently left. We talk along the way, about our views on gardening; fertilizers and what type of weeds are most troublesome.

As we arrive at the park, which looks just like any other in the area, before you see the garden, she repeats what she told me during our more formal interview.

“The park is open to everyone; anyone can join in whenever they want, even though it is just around harvest season and they haven’t helped with the planting, we can’t refuse anyone, it is not how it should work”

We are now standing in the park where, on Folkodlarnas initiative, the municipality has erected a number of boxes containing espaliers for planting, prepared some flowerbeds and built a pair of benches. Around the park the big red brick houses loom and the garden almost feels like a courtyard, resting under the snow. The sun is shining so brightly that we have to shade our eyes as it reflects the light on the white frozen ground, and apart from our conversation and the low constant buzz of the city, the area is silent, almost serene. We are the only two people standing here and it is obvious that this place belongs to the warmer seasons.

(Direct Observation, strolling through Skarpnäcksfältet 22/3 2013)

Skarpnäcksfältet, located at the end of the subway line in south-east Stockholm, is a relatively young part of the bigger suburb of Skarpnäcksgård, built in the 1980s. It is known for its rather curious architecture of red brick houses that reminds you of medieval castles or forts. Along the streets there are several small convenience stores, a hair salon, a drugstore and small restaurants. Skarpnäcksgård has a higher degree of unemployment and a

lower level of education than the upper middle class area of Hammarby Sjöstad (statistikomstockholm.se 2010). Skarpnäcksgård has an abundance of allotment gardens and it contains the largest area of allotments in Stockholm. In Skarpnäcksfältet, the greenery is not as evident, apart from a few smaller parks and flowerbeds. The community garden initiative is carried out by the non-profit organisation Folkodlarna (Folk Cultivators). Even though the organisation is behind the initiative, people involved in the gardens are not required to become members of the organisation. Currently they have two agricultural projects in the area. In the allotment garden they have combined six lots into a larger field and in one of the small parks, known as the Indian park, they have established the more recent food park project. A food park can be understood as a community garden, focused on the production of edible plants.

Folkodlarna has an outspoken goal to develop local transition towards a more sustainable way of life. On their website, as well as information available in leaflets and on posters, they openly take a stance against, what they refer to as, the consumption society and the hunt for economic growth (folkodlarna.se). They have been active in the area since 2009 when they established their collective allotment garden. In 2011 when the municipality office decided to reinvent the Indian park the group engaged the officials in a discussion about the future of the park, and declared that they were interested in creating a community garden. The municipality office agreed to lend them the land and prepare boxes filled with soil, in which Folkodlarna could grow their crops.

Both gardens are based on collective responsibility, and are open to anyone who is interested in gardening. As a result, Folkodlarna contains both fully fledged gardeners as well as complete novices. There is a clear focus on education, and one of the main actors is currently involved in an educational program where children from preschools close to the food park are invited to learn more about growing your own food.

4.3 Bagarmossen and the Bagisodlarna

The subway halts and then comes to a complete stop, allowing me and some of my fellow passengers to leave the carriage. I follow the thin stream of people walking towards the escalator which brings us up to the cold, grey sunlight of March. Before me a small square

spreads out and I start to seek out the bohemian café where I shall meet my informant. Since I still have some time left before our meeting, I decide to take a small walk, trying to get a feel for the surroundings. As I walk over the first part of the square I soon realize that it is bigger than I first expect and surrounded by small stores, pubs, a pizzeria and similar establishments. Over some of the shops old fashion neon signs still hang and I feel like I have walked into a scene from the fifties. I continue to walk, across the square and out into the apartment buildings, following the footpaths that are glistening under the snowmelt. On what I could pick up from a folder from the café, I try to find the area where the community garden is supposed to be situated, and soon enter a divide between the houses, a green corridor of pine trees and birches, surrounding a football field.

In front of me, I can see tall grey buildings, typical of the Million Program, which make a towering contrast to the lower, older parts of the district. I let my gaze slide away from the colossuses of windburn concrete and start to look after the garden site...

(Direct Observation, strolling through Bagarmossen 2/4 2013)

Bagarmossen, or “Bagis” as some of the inhabitants refer to it, is a suburb built in the 1950s, in the southeastern part of Stockholm, and quite close to the district of Skarpnäck. It is inhabited by roughly 10 000 people who have a mixed ethnic background. In recent years, the district has experienced a boom of interest from young parents, looking for a bigger yet affordable place to live. In relation to this, there is a growing bohemian oriented, well-educated group in the district. Apart from the central square and its stores, the area consists of low apartment buildings. The exception to this is a slightly younger block, built during the “Million Program²”, which is made up of a few tower blocks. The area which has been chosen for the community garden is situated by the base of one of these buildings. In terms of unemployment, education and average income, Bagarmossen is very similar to Skarpnäcksgård, although the degree of unemployment is slightly higher (statistikomstockholm.se 2010)

The community garden in Bagarmossen, and the group Bagisodlarna (Bagis Cultivators), have only recently been established. In contrast to Folkodlarna and the food park, Bagisodlarna did not set out to start a community garden in the initial stages of the initiative. The idea came from the municipality office in Skarpnäck which, due to their previous contact and experience with Folkodlarna, suggested that they should transfer the

² The Million Program was a large building program during the 60s and 70s instigated by the Swedish government. The aim was to build a million new homes for the population and to modernize the living conditions in Sweden.

concept to Bagarmossen. It was during a residential dialogue, where the municipality tried to open a channel of communication with the district's citizens in order to understand and meet their needs. A group of people voiced a need for allotments and places to grow plants (bagisodlarna.se). This became the first step towards the community garden which now consists of a loose assemblage of people that are about to start their first season in the community garden. They have no formal organisation, but continually arrange meetings, based on contacts made from previous meetings, in order to develop their process. The group consists of people who have different stakes and interests in the project. As in the food park, the motives behind their activity in the project differ from a clear transition point of view, to a new found interest in gardening. During an interview, one informant stressed that she wanted a gardening plot closer to home than she had today, and that the idea of a community garden, though welcome, was promoted by the municipality. Another informant described the project as a playing field, a place to learn in order to prepare for further transition in a coming societal collapse.

5 Aspects of the local initiatives

In this chapter I will discuss how central aspects of the local initiatives become apparent through different practices and ideas that circulate throughout the initiatives. Though quite different in their outlook and operating in different contexts, I will discuss the similarities of the different initiatives, based on my analytical entry points.

5.1 A sense of community

The initiatives are, to some extent, manifestations and creators of a local community. They are made up of constellations of people that have come together not only based on practice, but by being residents of a specific locality. They form a local collective, a group of actors that are connected through a shared place. A local community is hence not something that exists as a self sustaining entity, based on pre-determined boundaries. Its boundaries and the shared understanding of the community are negotiated through practice. The local community could be seen as a contrast to the neighbourhood. Where the latter can be described as the physical and social spaces where people live, the former is based on meanings and descriptions given the place through social interaction (Appadurai 1996). Perhaps this becomes most prominent in the case of SHA, as they have an outspoken agenda to promote a sense of community within their district. Through various actions, such as the midsummer celebration or the organizing of guided historical tours, they strive to create a sense of the specific, the sense of Hammarby Sjöstad as being apart from the adjacent districts, not only in terms of location but in traditions and way of life.

The snow falls outside the windows of the building that serves as both an information centre and a local meeting area for the organisations of Hammarby Sjöstad. I'm currently attending a

presentation about the historical buildings that can be found along the shores of the water that have given the district its name. The power point presentation is made of slides that show maps, photographs and drawn pictures of the buildings and their surroundings. The presentation is conducted by the chairwoman of the homestead association and the room is filled with interested participants most of whom are elderly. And they are participating; the presentation often becomes an interaction, and people discuss which building the picture depicts or what a particular map describes. They also share information about the local history, such as where you might find remnants of an old harbour. During a discussion about a map, a man suddenly stands up and points towards the picture, describing how he grew up around the buildings that are situated across the lake from where we currently are. He describes how he and his friends found skeletal remains during a relocation of an old graveyard, and his father and he worked together on renovating a roof on one of the houses in the picture, while he still was a teenager.

(Participant observation, Hammarby Sjöstad Homestead Association 13/2 2013)

Study circles and presentations that concern the history of the local area help to place the community within a greater context. Through the investigation and uncovering of history that is connected to physical space now occupied by the modern city district, it is given a position in time. The time span extends throughout history and become much grander than just the decade that the new houses have been standing, promoting an air of authenticity. The memories and stories becomes an anchorage in time. During the meeting described above, the man is not only telling a story, he is sharing history that flows from his individual experience and becomes part of the collective history (cp. Hansen 2006:13). Thus it becomes a way to establish a shared idea of the district. The description of the man's childhood and the following discussion about the buildings is underlined by the Chairwoman Maria's words:

"Oh is it not wonderful to learn more about your local community?"

(Participant observation, Hammarby Sjöstad Homestead Association 13/2 2013)

The last concluding remark from the present spokesperson of the collective is not only a sign of gratitude for the shared stories, but a demonstration that this is a description of their collective history. The statement also signifies that this description was relevant for the historical discourse of the homestead association. Should the description have been viewed as a rude interruption of the presentation, it could be understood as way to usurp what has been established as the collective history.

In the other initiatives focused on urban gardening, the term "community" is not as central to the discourse but is still expressed through other words. The communication within the group concerns other terms that signify locality and belonging, which is the basis for a local community. Work-

days, garden parties and picnics are ways to create a sense of the collective, of a group of people that are connected not by friendship but by their relation to their community garden. It also becomes a reality through the practices that are connected to the initiative, and by the fact that they have a place in the community gardens. In this sense, the community garden is a communicative community, constant creation and recreation based on the care and interest for the garden (Delanty 2003:119). Since the gardens are localized, this communicative collective also has elements that make it, in part, a local community.

The perception of what constitutes the local community is, is outlined by a declaration of boundaries, which might be physical but could just as well be based on symbols. Such symbols could be the naming of place which the community is connected to like *Sjöstadens* Homstead Association or *Bagisodlarna*. It can also be done through indicators such as welcoming signs and maps. One of the activities that gave rise to quite an extensive discussion during the yearly meeting of the homestead association was that of the placement of welcoming signs, which would tell visitors and inhabitants that they had arrived to Hammarby Sjöstad. With words of welcome, or perhaps maps at the tram stations and main roads, local boundaries are presented, both for the inhabitants and visitors alike. The framing of the district becomes a way of teaching visitors and co-inhabitants to see what is not physically there. In the community gardens, posters and announcements on websites create an awareness of the activity at the site of the garden. These signs, although open and welcoming, show the initiative's connection to the local space. The most evident example of this can be found in the names of the gardens, which mirror that of their district and clearly show their local anchorage.

A sense of specific locality can also be established through more participatory practices. Anki is an entrepreneur who, among other things, performs guided tours, both about the present day Hammarby Sjöstad as well as its history. She is a member of several organisations and during an interview we touched upon the understanding of local history in Hammarby Sjöstad.

The older generation, they have an interest in history, community history, about what happened before ... It's not easy when you have something that everyone thinks is brand new and doesn't have any history, because that's not the case, there is a lot of history... The buildings that we live in are new, but the place has been inhabited for a long time, and businesses and industry have been here for a long time and are still here, to some extent, today

(Interview with Anki, member of Hammarby Sjöstads homestead association 5/3 2013)

In Anki's description one might see two images of one place. The new residential area, built with studious planning, the place that now is known as Hammarby Sjöstad. This image can be described, in the words of Marc Augé (1995) as a non-place. This is a site where history and tradition is made irrelevant, a site where people co-exist, without sharing a sense of belonging. One of the characteristics of the non-place is how planning and information allows people without local knowledge to navigate in an unfamiliar milieu. From this perspective, the use of roadmaps and signs is somewhat paradoxical; it is a non-place method used to create a sense of place. The other image that is presented above is that of a place where traditions and history is rooted to the soil, similar to that of an old village. Anki's guided tours, the study circles of local history and the establishment of maps, local celebrations of Swedish traditions and barbecues in the garden are practices that all aim to transform the non-place into a place. Anki describes the people within the community by the certain way in which they behave. This is shown by a concern for the local environment and its inhabitants, something that she calls the Hammarby Sjöstad spirit.

Through practical activities the community initiatives become a meeting places with several functions.

We are just three there at the start, a young mother, an older woman and me. Soon Amanda, who is a professional gardener and working with children from local preschools, arrives and starts, describing what is going to happen. When I ask if I can help out in any way, she hands me a wad of paper which I am to staple to the tables that are at the heart of the food park. They are for anyone who would like to draw or be creative. More people arrive, an older man who is babysitting his two grandchildren. They play and help to plant rhubarb; all the while Amanda is teaching her gardening skills to anyone who might need them. The children play and work. When we are done planting the rhubarb several more have joined us, and people start weeding the soil in the food park's boxes. Meanwhile children play around us, chasing each other and from time to time help dig in the ground.

(Participant observation Folkodlarna 28/4 2013)

The garden can become a platform for recreation, playing, education and political action. On Folkodlarnas webpage, they state that an important part of their mission is not only to grow vegetables but to help create a sense of community, social security and a beautiful environment

(www.folkodlarna.se). During one of their workdays, they spend just as much, if not more time lounging around the flowerbeds, talking about their work, the crops and playing with their children. The obvious practice of gardening is but one part of the activity which creates a sense of community.

Within the community also lie rules of conduct, a framing element on how to behave. This side of the community and indeed in all collective action is one of conformity and identity, where the members of the collective have moral obligations that to some extent abide the rules of the game. All the initiatives are open for everyone to join, and participate, but at the same time they have rules that push the individuals towards the “right” action or belief, such as an organic production or a certain way of celebrating the National Day of Sweden. The frame can be formal and reached through open discussion, i.e. during a conversation about what type of production should be pursued in the garden. But they can also be informal, based on a hidden but joint understanding of what a “true” celebration of the national day entails. The initiatives provide opportunities for debating these frames and can thus increase a sense of solidarity.

...We have helped each other, shared opinions. We have, like, exchanged knowledge and experiences when we have been out there on the plots. Those who are really into food prices and peak oil have made others interested in that and someone else might be into health food and you get another point of view. I can't really find the word... permeate?.. We share knowledge with each other and then get a common point of view... It grows, now everyone seems to share the view that the world is crazy and we have to [change], questions about the environment have grown.

(Interview with Liz, Folkodlare 22/3 2013)

The collective nature of the community also makes a base for mobilisation and empowerment. The quote indicates that the community garden is a place where reflexivity in the light of individual opinions is present. In the newly formed initiative Bagisodlarna, the young collective forces the gardeners to reflect upon the identity of their garden, what to sow, who should do what and why they do it. In this sense, the local initiatives are community initiatives and at the same time arenas which encourage reflections on meaning and practice.

All the initiatives contain members that address a political aspect of their practice. The road towards a more local community can be seen as a way of transforming the conditions of their neighbourhood. It might be in form of a

local democratic platform, such as a community centre, or a more environmentally sound way of life, through local food production. In relation to this, the community initiatives can be considered methods to promote the idea of *Gemeinschaft*. The idea stipulates that the contemporary society is flawed and that a sustainable local community can mend this flaw. As such, the local initiatives are an act of protest, against a world dominated by *Gesellschaft* and an attempt to recover the loss of *Gemeinschaft*, similar to the Back to Nature movement in the 1970s (Asplund 1991:91pp)

5.2 Practice, meaning and political action potential

The local initiatives that I have studied are characterized by individual engagement in a common practice. The community gardens as well as the meeting room or the guided tour in local history are places where the actors that have an interest in a certain practice come together. It is the interest in this practice that both motivates their gatherings as well as keeps them together.

I went there because I was interested to see if there could be beehives. I went there in order to learn something new. I'm not someone who is into the transition town movement. Of course I think it is nice to have a beautiful and fine environment to live in but I'm not an "organization" oriented person. I think I'm not as non-profit as I think one should be, it is like "Can I learn anything from this or can't I?" But then again I think it is fun to create and work in a garden, I like to create nice environments.

(Interview with a Anja, Bagisodlare 2/4 2013)

The quote points to wide set of interest that might be incorporated in the community garden. To Anja, as to several of the other members of the initiative, the community garden is a way to pursue a practice and learn something new. It is a way to extend the reach beyond the practical consciousness by immersing oneself in situations where the discursive consciousness has to be activated. Through habituation the discursive become practical and thus engagement in the local initiatives is also a way to expand the practical consciousness of the agents. What starts as a new opportunity to pursue your interest in gardening or a chance to do something for your community can in time turn into your everyday life.

When asked why and how the different members of the initiatives would motivate their actions and their reasons for joining up with the group, I was presented with a multifaceted picture, a mesh of ideas that are all connected

to the common practice of urban agriculture or an interest in the local history and governance. Some of the informants were, for example concerned about the quality of their food, others wanted to grow flowers. The sense of community and the common practice is thus the unifying factor, while the meaning, the reasons given for the practice, represents individual angles of why people engage themselves in the activity.

I don't care that much about the produce, because I have my own plot [at the summer house]. I'm not that interested in what we reap, and can give it away to other residents in the area. [Growing] Collectively, it is a way to learn from each other, to network.

(Interview with Jim, Bagisodlare 5/4 2013)

Jim claims that a positive result of their efforts is needed in order to keep the group motivated. If things do not go as planned, if the practice does not yield output, the actors will lose interest and move on. For him, the community garden is an educational project and a chance to network. His will to learn is motivated by his belief in the need of a bigger transition of our way of life due to climate change. In order to fulfil the personal goal that entices the agents to engage themselves in the initiatives they also have to acknowledge goals stipulated by the collective. In this sense, Jim has to relate to a social framework that partly controls the outcome of his engagement (Goffman 1974). This framework is made up of the rules of social interaction, how to behave and how to speak, what to and what not to do.

One thing that has been so interesting with Folkodlarna is that it has been such a diverse group of people that have come together with the shared interest in that one wants to grow crops, but then from totally different viewpoints. Some have a political engagement, a perspective from above, that damn it, we have to do something, we can't live in the world as it is today, something has to be done. Others join because they don't have an allotment of their own and want to learn how to farm. Others have come due to reasons of health; it's healthy with self-produced [food]... From anarchists, activists to sixty- to seventy- year- old pensioners, I mean, totally different people...It is a really exciting mix which might not have any other reason to come together...

(Interview with Liz Folkodlare 22/3 2013)

Collective practice is filled with negotiation, and within this negotiation the actors are forced into a state of reflexivity (Giddens 1984). If the actors worked in their own allotment gardens, they would not have to discuss their intentions or declare why they engage in the activity. When the practical consciousness is challenged by a need to motivate actions it transgresses into the discursive, which opens up for a re-evaluation of the motives

behind your actions. As indicated in the discussion about community, Liz can also describe how the meetings in the gardens are filled with discussion that in time leads to a fusion of the meaning behind the practice. The shared concerns can become the basis for mobilisation and creates a political action potential.

The interaction between the actors is also formed through their understanding of the practice, in that you might be a curious beginner or an experienced farmer. The division of practical and discursive is also present in the realm of knowledge. Knowhow about gardening, how to work with a fork and spade is important for the practical tasks that come with a garden. Discourse on the importance of local production in the face of global crisis can be unifying, become a common goal and give new meaning to the collective action. Here we enter a field of both knowledge and power, where the opportunity to define the discursive nature behind the practice might go to the most knowledgeable, those who can tutor the other members in how to grow crops and flowers, who can provide a story of the local history or provide contacts that open doors to resources important to the collective. Depending on the dominant discourse, certain species of capital (for example social, cultural, economic and symbolic capital) become relevant for each agent's position within the initiative (Bourdieu 1994). In a community garden with a transitional outlook, both practical and theoretical knowledge of sustainable agriculture are assets, not only for the collective but for the agent possessing these resources. The relevance of the personal history given by a man during the weekly meeting of the homestead association is confirmed by how the collective react to it. In this situation, acknowledgment by authorities within the collective makes the story important knowledge. The joy with which Maria exclaims that this is a part of the local history is also what makes it a part of said history. In Folkodlarna one of the main actors is Amanda, who is a professional gardener and a driving force in the collective as well educating the children from the local preschools in gardening. In SHA Maria is not only chairwoman but an architect with a deep interest in collective city planning. They are both experts, and as such have the opportunity to define how the practice should be conducted, but only as long as they have the legitimacy

of the collective. Understanding and knowledge is also the cause of tension and conflict. Before establishing SHA Maria was a member of another organisation, which conducted a Walpurgis Night celebration in Hammarby Sjöstad. Maria and the leading members of the organisation could not see eye to eye regarding what a “proper” way of celebrating Walpurgis Night would entail. After some friction, Maria left the organisation and founded SHA, which now provides an alternate celebration, adhering more to Swedish traditions.

The intertwining of discursive knowledge and of meanings might also be an opening into new fields of expertise. Through interaction in the gardens new insights may be gathered on how to conduct farming, but this hunt for knowledge is also a reason to seek new understanding elsewhere, through books, websites and other media that contain relevant information connected to the practice (Giddens 1991:140).

The homestead association, headed by Maria, was present at a workshop where the concept of local community was discussed. They asked questions about what the local community is, where it occurs and about its place within an urban setting. This discussion is activity situated in the discursive consciousness, but the findings will in turn provide a new or deeper understanding of the “why” behind the practices that are required to sustain the homestead association. For the SHA, this process is kept alive through informal meetings.

The steering committee has been having meetings at Café Spoon where we have had the opportunities to brainstorm together about Hammarby Sjöstad, it has been fantastic!

(Direct observation, Maria talking at Sjöstadens homestead association’s yearly meeting 17/4 2013)

The local initiatives are operating in an institutional landscape which has an impact on how they conduct their practice. Even though they promote a change of local environment, both political and physical, they do this within the boundaries of a surrounding structure of rules and resources that flows from the institutional landscape in which they are imbedded (Inglis & Thorpe 2012:230). The practice of the initiatives is thus shaped by two different factors. One is made up of their specific interests, gardening, history, a sense of community. The other is derived from the institutional

framework which flows from governmental organisations such as the municipality office or Stockholm Water³.

Within Bagisodlarna, some of the group members had the initial idea to create a garden based on agroforestry, others were hoping for extra allotments plots. The municipality had adapted the same concept as they had held during the reconstruction of the Indian park in Skarpnäck which, through negotiations with Folkodlarna, became the food park. The municipality agreed in both cases that they should provide necessary material to create the seed beds and manufacture the boxes that would frame them. The land would be lent to the interested groups provided that they were open to all who wished to use them. Through this demand, the gardeners had no other option than to turn to community gardening or to establish a garden themselves through other means.

We said that it should be open for everyone, if there is someone who wishes to pick a tomato they should be able to do so. The park must be inviting and should feel like a public area, not private. There were some questions about this, but this also corresponds with the view of folkodlarna. They make open invitations to everyone.

(Interview, Tina, Municipality Official 13/3 2013)

The instructions and demands made by the municipality office decide how the community gardens could be shaped. In this sense the community gardens are examples of grass root initiatives that work within the boundary of the structure provided by the municipality. This means that even though they have their legitimacy granted through the governmental officials, they are also called upon to follow certain rules that are stipulated by the same. In contrast to these, there are other types of initiatives, such as guerrilla gardeners that operate through a similar socially constructed community, but outside the structure and thus the legitimacy of the civic authorities.

In Hammarby Sjöstad, SHA, together with the community centre group, is currently involved with securing a meeting place, a building which is to be available for the organisations of Hammarby Sjöstad and which can work as a local meeting spot and speakers corner. Currently, the homestead association is using the premises provided by GlashusEtt through the grace of Stockholm Water. During one of our interviews Maria claims that there is a sort of *glass ceiling* between the local groups and the political power that

³ Stockholm water is a company owned by the City of Stockholm and the provider of water and sanitation within the city.

are represented by the local and regional elected politicians. The metaphor of the glass ceiling is a way to describe what SHA perceives as a gap between the political power and the local interests. In order to circumvent this barrier, they try to establish networks into the political offices, thus creating a channel for political impact. The SHA has also tried to establish a dialogue, focused on the other residents of Hammarby Sjöstad

-The dialogue is an attempt to create a platform where the grassroots can meet those who take decisions. Ordinary people have no voice in which to speak to the ruling power [about the community]

(Interview with Maria 18/3 2013)

They also operate through partnerships, based on collaboration between NGO:s, like the community centre and neighbouring homestead associations, the academic, private and political sector.

The relationship between the local initiatives and their co-actors is somewhat ambivalent. The interaction between Folkodlarna and the municipality office is an example of this relationship. Resources as well as constraints flow from the district administration. The community garden is provided with land owned by the municipality and is at the same time given material for the seed beds. This, under the conditions that the garden is open to everyone who wish to use it, in the hope that it shall become a meeting place and a source of contentment within the neighbourhood. At the same time the initiative is critical of how our society is constructed and maintained. The municipality and the community gardeners thus have a common interest in the practical aspects of the garden, but are not on a discursive level. What is understood as a transition initiative to some of the gardeners could be perceived as an outsourced maintenance scheme by parts of the municipality office. The channel between the initiative and the municipality is open both ways and the community gardeners can, through their actions, provide new solutions or ideas that change the way the institutions operate. This can be seen in how the municipality office presented the same concept to the new gardeners in Bagarmossen, which then had to adapt their practice accordingly, creating a new community garden.

In this chapter, I have discussed how the members of the initiatives come together under the umbrella of a common practice. The practices are infused

with a number of meanings, dependent on individual agents. Due to the communal nature of their activities, the initiatives become platforms where agents must reflect upon the different meanings assigned to their shared interests. Thus meanings or discourses adhering to the practice can be developed, confirmed or conformed to under a collective banner. The localisation of the collective action ties the agents to a specific place, and promotes a sense of local community.

The local initiatives can be understood as networks of actors that come together through their common practice. The common practice and shared locality create a community platform which has the potential to transform the shared physical and political space in which they operate. The three initiatives that I have presented above are in no sense anomalies within the cityscape of Stockholm, but are examples of what seems to be a more general trend. Furthermore, the groups are all embedded in networks of similar initiatives and thus, they can be seen as a representation of a larger movement. In the next chapter, I will give a presentation of these networks in relation to a theoretical discussion on contemporary social movements.

6 The local community initiatives – actors in a social movement?

In the previous discussion, I have shown how community gardens and the homestead association share certain characteristics. They are working within a local context, promoting or producing a sense of community and have to some extent a comparable political agenda. They are also embedded in a wider network of similar initiatives, focused on agriculture, culture and empowerment with regard to their local neighbourhood or district. But can it, within reason, be claimed that the initiatives are part of one and the same social movement? In order to give a satisfactory answer to this question, I will illuminate the components that constitute a social movement and in the light of this discuss how the initiatives relate to these.

Social movements are made up of collective action, arranged through various groups that contain individuals who, through their practices, are working for the change of the dominating order of society. As such they can be described as spearheads for societal change. Many scholars have commented on why social movements are interesting areas for research. Anthony Giddens (1984:206, 1990:162) claims that social movements are flowing collective organisations that can establish new ways of social life, thus giving an insight into possible futures. This view corresponds to that of sociologist Alberto Melucci (1996), who is among the scholars who have focused on social movements. Social movement theory has been around in sociology since the 19th Century and has been used to describe all types of political and organisational movements within a society (Melucci 1989). This has, according to Melucci, not been an adequate description of the complexities of what a social movement is. A social movement does not need a prominent leading organisation, such as a political party. Instead, he

describes it as a process of change, made up of a collective of actors (ibid: 10). The proposed change is provided by the alternative lifestyle that the movement is promoting, deriving from collective understanding of what this lifestyle entails.

According to Melucci, a social movement is linked to the social construction of a collective identity and has three central components (1989:10). 1) A feeling of solidarity: the movement is made up of different actors who can identify with the other actors within the group, thus creating an idea of a collective “we”. 2) A conflict: A social movement has an antagonist counterpart, they are in conflict with the current order, which does not share their views and becomes “the other” and finally 3) they promote social change: Through the practices and ideas that challenge and transcend the current order, the social movement produces social change. Although somewhat categorical in its definition, the three components can serve as an outline for the analysis of the initiatives.

The community gardens and the homestead association are not in any way unique, other than in a very strict sense of the word. Throughout my case study and especially during the interviews, I have become aware of how the initiatives are part of an extensive network of groups with similar projects. They share interest and members. Liz is a member in *Bagisodlarna* and *Folkodlarna* and eagerly describes herself as an activist. Anki is engaged in the homestead association, the community centre group and other locally based organisations. Both the community centre and SHA are steadily working on creating a physical locale where the citizens of the district can meet, discuss and take part in local culture as well as public opinion. *Folkodlarna* are embedded within a network of similar projects, such as the guerrilla gardening group, *Tillväxt*, and the loosely organised *Nätverket Linje 17*. *Linje 17* refers to the subway route that connects the districts of southeast Stockholm. The network shares the ideological standpoint of the importance of local governance, sustainability and belonging (forsjutton.se). The network of initiatives can be seen as the base for a social movement. The different groups have some similarities on both a practical and discursive level. One example of this is the focus on local and collective practices. Through websites they link to the other initiatives that are

operating within the same context; by doing so they are also acknowledging each other as actors that have something in common. This acknowledgment is furthered still by the movement of members between the groups. The movement of members and the connections that stem from shared interest in practice, as well as discourse, can create a sense of homogeneity within the network. The similarities of the groups and their interactions provide opportunities to exchange knowledge and points of view. This might mean that the discursive consciousness of the agents in each initiative is beset from outside as well as from within the initiative. The network of actors can thus come to perceive the other initiatives as partners in terms of goals, establishing a sense of solidarity. Solidarity is also something that is an important element of the initiatives themselves. As I have shown, SHA and the gardens are operating on a collective basis, promoting a sense of “we”. This unity is the basis for constructing a shared ideology, which defines the movement’s purpose. This definition does not have to be apparent to all the individuals of the movement, but could be shared on a higher level. Such a level could, for instance, be the collective aim of the initiative.

During an interview, Liz describes her initial contact with Folkodlarna, as well as their connection to Linje 17.

When the invitation popped up in my inbox, I thought, this is great I have to get in on this! The social aspect, to get to know your neighbours, and those who live in the local area, but also to connect with people, there weren’t any of these types of general interest, or something that you can gather around in your neighbourhood. ..Folkodlarna was in on the start-up of Linje 17 and now you can just walk around and talk to almost everyone you meet. And then, if things should go bad and you need to mobilise for or against something, it is much easier to do so now.

(Interview with Liz, Folkodlare 22/3 2013)

As the quote indicates, the feeling of solidarity within and between the different initiatives creates a sort of mobilisation potential, a recruiting network where a collective identity can become apparent through their shared interest in the groups’ activities (Melucci 1989:46). This is not to say that they have an evident structure or leader, and conflicting interests about the meaning of their common activity is always present, between and within the groups. One example of this could be initiatives of guerrilla gardening and the community gardens, with similar practice but different position within the community and its institutions.

Central to the idea of the contemporary social movements is that they are made up of a myriad of actors. They can be understood as a large network of groups that share similar goals but can have very different morphological, and to some extent different ideological, outlooks. The unifying factor in the initiatives is the common interest in a certain practice, be it gardening, cultural performances and such. These practices, in relation to the openness of the groups, give anyone the opportunity to enter the collective, provided that they share the interest in practice. The collective can thus be made up of many different ideological or discursive interests reaching from a recreational to a political point of view. In most parts of the world, urban agriculture is practiced as a way of supporting oneself. Central to the type of recent agricultural projects carried out within the Western and Swedish cities is that they do not predominantly stem from a need to produce nutrients or market goods in order to sustain oneself. Instead they are rooted in ideology and recreation, which is the case in both of the community gardens. In the SHA there is a relatively low interest among the members in those areas that have a political nature, such as Sjöstadsdialogeen, but the attendance and interest is high regarding events that relate to local history. The ambivalence within the initiatives makes it hard to discern if there is a general view that the groups' and the initiatives' agenda lies in conflict with encompassing society. On the other hand, the organised initiatives also have collective meanings behind their practise. Both SHA and Folkodlarna, have formal statements of a political nature.

Why do we exist?

There are many reasons but perhaps first and foremost we see a severity in the growth based system, which is so intimately connected to exhaustible resources, which might even now be on the verge of their existence. How will the economic system and the food producing industry be affected? Perhaps nobody knows. But we are utterly convinced that a local transition is necessary. It is not only about securing our own resources but about creating a just and sustainable world. That the need for transition is a necessity might seem tedious and hard. We, on the other hand, think it is a source for energy and willpower. We do not only grow vegetables, but a community, security and a beautiful local environment, and thus a new beginning.

(Folkodlarnas, web- site, author's translation.)

The aims of SHA

- *To create and give depth to a sense of community in a new city district*

- *To make the members aware of the history of the place*
- *To support the citizens by promoting their knowledge of the development of the district*
- *To co-operate with other homestead associations on a national and international level*
- *To co-operate with other organisations and institutions whose operation is attached to Sjöstaden [the district]*
- *To be a forum for debates and discussion about Sjöstaden and its development*

(SHA statutes, author's translation)

On a discursive level, Folkodlarna as an entity reacts against the current system, by suggesting an alternative lifestyle. SHA does not have the same open agenda, but is still clear in that it aims to provide a platform for political engagement, which will then exist outside official institutions. To this point, one could argue that there are, at least on a discursive level, elements of conflict which promote a striving for change. The initiatives might then be considered a protest against post-industrial society. The formation of a sense of local community, through local food production and the creation of a place-bound identity can for example be seen as a way of turning away from the composition of urban life. In this sense, the initiatives may be seen as a form of *everyday resistance* (Scott 1990:198pp). Engagement in this alternative lifestyle might not be perceived as resistance by the people who partake in the collective actions of the initiatives. Even so, through their practices they are moving against the common sense understanding of city life and, in so doing, are providing an alternative.

In Bagisodlarna the formal objective is to establish and maintain a community garden. Within the initiative there are many different viewpoints, ranging from a recent interest in gardening to a fully fledged idea about the need for transition. This is also an example of how the initiatives provide a possibility for self-realisation, a chance to learn or gain symbols that enhance a personal identity. This is, according to Melucci (1989), a tendency that demonstrates the difference between modern and postmodern movements. The network of local initiatives shares the element of collective action. However, the individuals that are involved in the activities join on an individualistic basis. Seen from this perspective, participation in local community initiatives can be a source for personal self-fulfilment, where you can pursue and develop your interests (Melucci

1989:69). The distinction between a modern and post-modern or “new” social movement can be understood in how the aim of the social movements of modernity was change the system. In the contemporary social movement, systemic change can be understood as a consequence, rather than as a goal in itself. The momentum of a social movement is thus not linear, and political activism is not a requirement of the movement. The fact that different discourses can be connected to the same practice makes it possible for an action to mean many different things within the initiatives. To participate during a work day in the garden is perhaps perceived as leisure time for some of the gardeners. During a participant observation with Folkodlarna an elderly lady discussed the benefits of working in a collective garden in contrast to having a private allotment. To her, it was a way to keep a garden with all the joy she got out of gardening, but at the same time she did not need to worry about the plots all the summer and she could travel without feeling guilty. One could say that her presence in the garden was based on personal interest in gardening, but under the collective umbrella of Folkodlarna, her actions become political, since they are furthering their cause. In the initiative, the political and the private become intertwined and the interpretation of actions is based on the collective goal of the initiative. Similarly, in initiatives that do not have the same openly transitional agenda like in Bagisodlarna, the common goal is to carry out urban agriculture, which means that a political discourse becomes hidden. In this context, urban agriculture, as a political action, is not part of the collective agenda although there are agents that have a clear political engagement within the initiative.

Depending on what is defined as the formal aim, different resources become relevant for the actors within the initiatives (cf. Bourdieu 1995). In Folkodlarna, Bagisodlarna, as well as in the guerrilla gardening network Tillväxt, a production free from chemical use seems to be the norm. Once again it becomes clear that within the initiatives only certain types of knowledge, or cultural capital is relevant for agents, and possession of this knowledge is important for one’s position within the initiative.

A common understanding of what could be understood as important resources between the initiatives is also a point where both solidarity and

power become apparent. Knowledge of how to carry out collective and urban gardening in the *right way* could be relevant for how the initiatives perceive each other. Agricultural practice connected to the use of chemicals such as industrialised fertilizers and pesticides is frowned upon in both Folkodlarna and Bagisodlarna. The relationship between resources and power can be shown in how the municipality dictates the form in which the community gardens are organised. The municipality is in possession of the material resources of land, and it is only by accepting the terms of the municipality or any other landowner that the community gardens can be realised.

Melucci suggests that the third component of a social movement should be a transformation of social structures (1989:10), producing social change. This component is rather vague, as social change can present itself in different ways as well as different areas of the social context in which the social movement operates. Perhaps the most obvious example of this is how the community gardens as well as the homestead association are providing new arenas for social interaction. Through engagement in the initiatives the members can extend their social network, not based on previous contacts but on locality and practice. By creating a sense of belonging the initiatives are transforming districts and neighbourhoods into local communities. In so far as the initiatives are successful in this transformation, they could be said to have a commonality in the production of social change. When viewed as single initiatives, they are also providing transformation on local level. The community gardens create meeting places which extend further than simply the production of flowers and vegetables; they become areas where a sense of community can be constructed. They are also places of debate and learning. Similarly SHA is trying to transform the local social arena. Its work may not have the same physical impact other than open celebrations of holidays, but SHA is, through its work with history, signs and celebrations, creating a symbolic outline of its district, turning it into something more than a residential area. In certain ways, the local initiatives can be said to create what critical theorist Jürgen Habermas calls public spheres.

The public sphere emerged in the coffeehouses, newspapers and social clubs of 18th Century Europe, which became platforms for debates and free

thought where independent members of the new bourgeoisie could discuss political matters through rational communication (Outhwaite 2009:7pp). In these discussions the best reasoned arguments would prevail, and from the public sphere a critique of the current system could emerge, creating the potential for change. The state or system which incorporates a public sphere could then be transformed by pressure from the public (Habermas 1964). The public sphere is an arena where free speech can form new ideas, which can put pressure on the political sphere. The success of this free arena means that it increases in power and influence, which in turn makes it more and more institutionalised. When this happens, the free, undistorted communication is replaced by formalised communication, which is rigid and instructive (cp. Outhwait 2009:9). The public spaces are essential for a democratic society, when they are free from the political influence of institutions. They can be found where individuals come together in a common practice, outside the private sphere of social relations and the official arena of the state (Melucci 1991: 178p). Within the boundary of the public sphere, people can engage in undistorted argumentation.

Undistorted argumentation between peers is based on what Habermas calls a communicative rationality. This occurs in a situation where everyone is allowed to take part in the communication; the content of the communication is free to be questioned by the actors. All participants are free to express their own attitudes and needs and finally, no one partaking in the communication is prevented by external or internal coercion (Habermas 1985). The aim of this communication is to reach a consensus (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2009:151). This suggested form of communication is based on what is described as an ideal speech situation, and can be considered to be an ideal type and therefore never fully realized. Habermas handles this problem by stating that even though a consensus will not be reached, discourse within the public sphere can at least reach a rationally informed compromise (cp *ibid*:153). The community initiatives are places where communicative rationality, at least partially, can be realised. Entrance into the community initiatives is ensured by practice and belonging, which make them available to everyone on a local level. However, Habermas is rather ambivalent towards the idea of community (Delanty 2003:113pp). His

critique is based on the fact that communities have a tendency towards exclusion and are institutionalised by values and traditions. These can be conformative, hampering the possibility of a free flowing act of rational communication which cannot become an actuality in the face of the power structures inherent in the community. Thus a community can be a dominating factor that only provides another type of structure that creates conformity, rather than alternate public spheres. Still, the community can become an outlet for creativity in that it offers a space where individuals can pursue self-fulfilment, and in the course of so doing, become open to influences of their fellows within the community (ibid). In this sense, the community initiatives have at least some of the qualities that are suggested to be a part of a public sphere.

To a certain extent, the initiatives that I have presented in this study can be said to show some of the aspects that make it reasonable to view them as being part of a social movement. I would argue that although these components are always debatable, the initiatives can be understood as representations of a larger field and if not a fully fledged social movement, they at least show the potential of becoming one. However, the similarities among the initiatives with emphasis on the local community, together with the indications of a contemporary social movement, are part of a greater social phenomenon: a transitional project, which will be presented in the next chapter.

7 Glimpses of a rurban movement - the concluding words

The networks of initiatives in the south of Stockholm are not isolated occurrences, and can be seen as an expression of a more general transitional project, which is growing throughout the Western world (cp. Rockström 2012). They are part of a much larger field, characterized by a strong and growing interest in gardening, artisanal production of food (such as sourdough bread, cramming, and slow food), beekeeping, and tillage. In Sweden the urban interest in gardening, either on lots belonging to residential houses or on balconies, is increasing rapidly, as well as the number of marketed merchandises (tools, seeds, plants etc.) and information (magazines, books etc.). The border between social movement activism and the more general interest in gardening is vague and, to a large extent, dependent on the context in which the gardeners act. The individualized gardeners tend to be kept together through commercial media while other groups organise themselves around cultivation or cultural projects, such as those described in this thesis.

In addition to this increased interest in gardening, recent years' Sunday supplements of national newspapers as well as different lifestyle magazines have had numerous references to what they label rurbanism. In the media rurbanism is primarily described as a process in which groups of people are involved in what is perceived as rural practices and values in urban areas. In one sense rurbanism is obviously a media construction; on the other hand the narratives given about the local initiatives give glimpses of a more tangible phenomenon. Within the networks, people are practicing inter alia local food production, urban agriculture, methods of recycling and

community reconstruction. The concept of “rurbanism” as a way of describing the merging of two societal spheres was used by Sorokin (Granberg 2012:208) in the early 1930s when discussing a future where the urban and rural worlds become more and more intertwined. Not since the urbanely based counterculture of the Back to Nature Movement and its aftermaths, starting in the early 1970s (and lasting for about a decade and a half), has the Swedish countryside and the call for sense of locality had such a strong discursive or ideological strength in public opinion. Even though it is questionable whether or not this rurbanism – comprising both rural activities in urban areas and urban people moving into rural areas – is actually a new social movement, it is beyond doubt that the range of activities in themselves form an emerging social field with a potential of radical changes in the urban social landscape as we now know it.

Afterword

While I have discussed if it is reasonable to claim that the network of initiatives is part of a social movement, I have not dwelled on the aspect of perspective. From my perspective as a researcher, I can identify similarities within all three of the initiatives, and also see common social movement potential. Yet SHA and the community gardens are operating in different fields and have little knowledge of each other. To Melucci, one of the components of social movement is the sense of solidarity within the movement, which would mean that awareness is essential for a group of actors to become a social movement. On one hand, this could indicate that there is in fact a potential for two similar social movements. On the other hand, perhaps solidarity through awareness is not a factor necessary for a social movement. The problem might stem from the difficulty in determining if a societal tendency is in fact a social movement while it still is in the making. Another important aspect that I have left out in these discussions is social stratification. The initiatives’ composition in relation to class, as well as gender and ethnicity, are all interesting aspects to include in further and more extensive research in this rurban field.

Appendix A: Empirical Material

Interviews:

Interview, Hammarby Sjöstad, Stockholm: Member of Homestead Association 2012-03-05
Interview, Hammarby Sjöstad, Stockholm: Member of Homestead Association 2013-03-18
Interview, Hammarby Sjöstad, Stockholm: Member of Community Centre 2013-04-08
Interview, Hammarby Sjöstad, Stockholm: Inhabitant of Hammarby Sjöstad 2013-03-25
Interview, Bagarmossen, Stockholm: Member of Bagisodlarna 2013-04-02
Interview, Stockholm City, Stockholm: Member of Bagisodlarna 2013-04-05
Interview, Skarpnäcksfältet, Stockholm: Member of Folkodlarna 2013-03-22
Interview, Björkhagen, Stockholm: Municipality Official 2013-03-13

Observations:

Participant Observation, Hammarby Sjöstad, Stockholm, Meeting of the Homestead Association 2013-02-13
Participant Observation, Hammarby Sjöstad, Stockholm, Yearly Meeting of the Homestead Association 2013-04-17
Participant Observation, Bagarmossen, Stockholm, Meeting between the Municipality and Bagisodlarna 2013-04-15
Participant Observation, Skarpnäcksfältet, Stockholm, Guided Tour 2013-03-22
Participant Observation, Skarpnäcksfältet, Stockholm, Work Day 2013-04-22
Direct Observation, Hammarby Sjöstad, Stockholm 2013-03-18
Direct Observation, Skarpnäcksfältet, Stockholm 2013-03-22
Direct Observation, Bagarmossen, Stockholm 2013-04-02

Written Material:

Written Material, Hammarby Sjöstad, Stockholm Statutes of the Homestead Association
Written Material, Hammarby Sjöstad, Stockholm Notes from the yearly meeting of the Homestead Association
Written Material, Bagarmossen, Stockholm, Notes from a meeting of Bagisodlarna
Written Material, Skarpnäcksfältet, Stockholm, Invitation and information about Folkodlarna

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