Sustainability policy in the Gothenburg Region

On cohesion and tensions between strong and weak sustainability

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Sustainability policy in the Gothenburg Region: on cohesion and tensions between strong and weak sustainability

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Content

Summary

This report examines urban sustainability policy in the Gothenburg Region and how the local authorities in the Gothenburg Region have chosen to jointly define it. A number of different authorities and organisations in the Gothenburg Region have been collaborating since the early 2000s with a view to promoting economically, environmentally and socially sustainable development. In a joint strategy, the Gothenburg Region Association of Local Authorities (GR) emphasised that 'Sustainable growth' would be achieved through investments in physical infrastructure and a number of other measures. GR wishes to foster "a strong and distinct growth region within Europe" whilst, at the same time, "striv[ing] for development which achieves a balance between the economic, social and environmental dimensions…" (GR 2013a).

The purpose of this report is to examine how coherent the Gothenburg Region's sustainability policy is, taking the "Sustainable growth" strategy as a starting-point. We examine three aspects of cohesion: organisational cohesion, the relationship between the different dimensions of sustainability and the correlation between ideas, policies and outcomes. Overall, we found that the Gothenburg Region has a coherent policy for sustainable development in terms of organisational collaboration. The political will among municipal leaders, various forms of networking and GR's five consultation processes with councillors in the municipalities of the Gothenburg Region have resulted in a number of different background papers and strategy documents which express a coherent idea of how the Gothenburg Region should be developed.

The ideas which unite this coalition are based on a shared vision of the development and future of the Gothenburg Region, a vision which is oriented towards growth. All GR's strategies derive from this overall vision, which puts forward the idea that it is possible to combine economic growth, environmental sustainability and social cohesion by focusing on barriers to economic activity and on expansion of the local labour market. The link between this dominant overall vision and a reduction in CO2 emissions and social cohesion can be seen as "weak sustainability". This interpretation focuses on the economic dimension of sustainable development. Negative environmental and social impacts are deemed to be justified by economic gains and measures to offset them.

Consequently, we see a number of paradoxes in the cohesion between the three dimensions of sustainability, which can, in reality, be regarded as relatively decoupled from each other. The level of ambition which the GR local authorities have set themselves through their target of a "fossil-free economy by 2030" and the achievement of "social cohesion" has therefore not been reflected in the strategy. We believe that climate issues have not been given sufficient priority. Certainly, the expansion of public transport may reduce emissions (although opinions are divided on this) but there is a risk that any such reduction will be counteracted by other objectives or the lack of political strategies. For example, "Sustainable growth" may also mean a further million flights landing at

Landvetter Airport, which is in sharp contrast to the objective of reducing emissions of CO_2.

Even if emissions from car traffic are reduced, research suggests that the Gothenburg Region's consumption patterns and air travel will result in a disproportionate share of emissions from a global perspective. Consequently, the CO_2 emissions generated by the lifestyles of Gothenburg residents may well remain unchanged and far too high in respect of both other parts of the world and future generations. In other words, as far as impact on climate is concerned, rhetoric and practice are decoupled.

We also believe that measures to counter social polarisation are not prioritised in the strategy and that the rhetoric on "social cohesion" and the practice in this field are therefore decoupled. Despite the target of 10,000 new inhabitants in the region every year, the GR agreement lacks specific measures for managing the increased geographic polarisation, segregation and disparities in income. These challenges were referred to in previous background reports as the greatest threat to social sustainability in the Gothenburg Region.

The absence of adequate measures to combat the shortage of housing is particularly obvious. Housing, like transport, is an infrastructure issue which was previously the subject of collaboration between the GR local authorities. The vast majority of those who move into the Gothenburg Region are resource-poor groups, mainly young people and foreign nationals who do not have sufficient income and capital to obtain a bank loan or pay high rents. The high costs associated with the small number of new rental properties and the increases in rent which result from energy efficiency measures and the renovation of rental properties risk making life even harder for these already vulnerable groups.

In parallel with the vision of "weak" sustainability which has been institutionalised in collaboration in the context of GR, we see an alternative critical vision which is not as dominant and organisationally coherent. This critical discourse is based on what has been defined as "strong sustainability", i.e. the idea that natural resources cannot be replaced by economic resources because they are unique and cannot be re-created. It points out the paradoxes in the growth-oriented agenda and highlights the need for both environmental resources and social cohesion. The critical coalition is considerably less coherent and lives in the shadow of the dominant sustainability coalition and its growth-oriented vision. The critical vision is however present in both public organisations and civil society[1], and amongst both new and old social movements and associations which, on both environmental and social grounds, express their dissatisfaction with current policies and propose alternative courses of action in the public debate. .

We ask ourselves how governance for sustainability can be developed to improve the prospect of the metropolitan region transitioning to stronger sustainable development. Whether an association of local authorities is the most effective model for achieving this is debatable, but as things stand at the moment the Swedish governance model only offers that option. The ongoing debate in the Gothenburg Region should therefore look for ways of achieving shared powers to tackle specific shared problems. We believe that new forums for dialogue within and between public organisations and interaction with civil society[1] may be of major significance to the development of the Gothenburg Region. Through

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[1] By "civil society" we mean organisations, associations and individuals over and above the public and private political organisations in the Gothenburg Region.

broader dialogue, consideration can be given to approaches other than those of the business developer.

The regulatory basis for this shared ambition may include the Swedish Constitution, which states that "… the public institutions shall secure the right to employment, housing and education, and shall promote social care and social security, as well as favourable conditions for good health" (Instrument of Government, article 1). The types of cross-sector collaboration developed in innovative initiatives such as HUR2050 and Mistra Urban Future's many research projects are suitable points of departure. Collaboration for a stronger sustainability policy should also create new and more in-depth forms of dialogue and interaction with players in civil society in order to make the Gothenburg Region's policy-making process more representative and improve the ability to solve problems.

Finally, we believe that stronger action must be taken to counter social polarisation and the shortage of housing. An attractive metropolitan region is a commendable goal which must include all inhabitants, both now and in the future. Creating an attractive city only to attract new "desirable" inhabitants does not create an attractive living environment for all the city's inhabitants. New visions are needed which can create security for all those living in the metropolitan region and which promote a sense of unity and belonging. The metropolitan region's purpose must be to constitute a basis which enables all residents, not just a minority, to realise their dreams. Such a basis cannot be offered by a socially polarised region. Thus, the local authorities in the metropolitan region must now take the next step and convert their visions and their shared objectives into concrete measures and new ways of working. They cannot meet the challenges individually. If they are to succeed, they must work together. There is a strong argument to suggest that long-term success cannot be built on anything other than a coherent and strong sustainability policy.

Chapter 1: Introduction: municipal sustainability policy in the Gothenburg Region

This report examines urban sustainability policy in the Gothenburg Region and how the local authorities in the Gothenburg Region have chosen to jointly define it. It is part of a major international research project funded under the auspices of Mistra Urban Futures, Centre for Sustainable Urban Development. The research project studies knowledge, governance and sustainable development policy in four cities: Manchester (UK), Cape Town (South Africa), Kisumu (Kenya) and Gothenburg (Sweden). The purpose of the project is to generate knowledge which can develop alternatives to current policies for a more sustainable society by adopting transdisciplinary research strategies in which research and practice are closely linked.

A number of different authorities and organisations in the Gothenburg Region have been collaborating since the early 2000s with a view to promoting economically, environmentally and socially sustainable development. In a ground-breaking joint strategy, the Göteborg Region Association of Local Authorities (GR), which acts as a political platform for the metropolitan region's 13 member local authorities, emphasised that "Sustainable growth" would be achieved through investments in physical infrastructure and a number of other measures. GR wishes to foster "a strong and distinct growth region within Europe" whilst, at the same time, "striv[ing] for development which achieves a balance between the economic, social and environmental dimensions…" (GR 2013a). The strategy document "Sustainable growth" has a significant impact on the way in which the Gothenburg Region manages the three main challenges for sustainable development identified by local, regional and national organisations in the region: social polarisation, climate change and poor infrastructure (Cullberg et al. 2014). These challenges correspond to issues which have also been identified at global level as urgent and increasingly important to tackle.

GROUNDS FOR REVIEWING THE METROPOLITAN REGION'S POLICY ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

There are a number of reasons why it is important to undertake a critical analysis of urban policy on sustainable development. By highlighting the fact that there are different views on what sustainable development may mean, demonstrating how certain aspects are overshadowed and pointing out tensions and paradoxes in the policy on sustainability, we hope to provide a basis for further debate around what actions may be desirable, essential and appropriate in order to promote more sustainable development. We begin by highlighting a number of general problems and challenges.

Increasing urbanisation, consumption of resources and growing climate threat

The increasing global rate of urbanisation which has gone hand in hand with strong economic growth has created huge opportunities and improvements in living standards for mankind. But there is a price to pay for this economic growth: it consumes the earth's limited environmental resources and the prosperity it brings is unevenly distributed.

The environmental changes which have been identified include increased emissions of greenhouse gases, over-fishing, a reduction in agricultural production in a number of areas, significant loss of forests and wetlands, a shortage of rare but important metals and a threat to the supply of fresh water (for an overview see, for example, Rockström 2013). All these are known phenomena and are often cited as grounds for political and economic transition.

In 2013, in its fifth report, the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) maintained that it was "very likely" that mankind had contributed to global warming.[2] As far as Sweden is concerned, national emissions of greenhouse gases fell slightly in 1993–2010, but if we consider emissions caused by consumption, these increased over the same period.[3] An increase in emissions is nothing new. On the contrary, it is a phenomenon the panel has identified repeatedly over a number of years.[4] There are those who argue that the ultimate consequences of climate change will be a climate which is unmanageable for mankind. While some may regard this as too apocalyptic a prediction, in some areas of the world, the consequences of climate change are already evident. Increasing desertification, rising water levels, extreme weather events and other climate-related changes have a major impact on millions of people's lives the world over, and many people are forced to leave their homes, often ending up on the outskirts of big cities in areas which are characterised by poverty, social tensions and violence (see, for example, Esmailian 2012).

Uneven geographical social development

Thus, increased emissions of greenhouse gases, which have primarily been caused by the economies, levels of consumption and urban lifestyles of the West, have negative consequences for the climate and living conditions of developing countries, which aggravates an already strained and uneven geographical social development (Harvey 2009). Extreme poverty has certainly decreased but, at the same time, disparities in income are increasing the world over. The OECD's 2011 report "Divided We Stand" reveals that the discrepancy in income in Europe has increased since the 1980s to reach a situation where the average income of the richest 10 % of the population is about nine times that of the poorest 10 %. In the northern European countries, which generally speaking have had lower levels of inequality, the ratio is currently 6 to 1, while in the 1980s it was 5 to 1. This growth in inequality results from a number of different reforms which were designed to improve economic 'flexibility': on the one hand, they improved economic growth and productivity but, on the other hand, they increased the gap in income, because most of the jobs which were created were part-time or low-wage positions. In Sweden, which is generally regarded as a pioneer on equality issues, the 20 % of the population with the highest incomes earn around four times as much as the 20 % with the lowest incomes.

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[2] http://www.ipcc.ch/index.htm#.UnKqYSj6B3o
[3] www.naturvardsverket.se
[4] http://www.ipcc.ch/publications_and_data/publications_and_data_reports.shtml#.UwHoxuIsZvY

According to another OECD report (2013), Sweden is the country in Europe where the proportion of relatively poor people has increased the most.

The impact of this increase in inequality on society is perhaps most evident in the major cities. In its report "State of the World's Cities" (2013), the UN programme for urban issues, UN Habitat, concludes that, in spite of the increase in global prosperity, the inequalities have continued to increase.

According to UN Habitat, the political focus on economic growth of recent decades may well have a negative impact on social cohesion, equality and people's general welfare. Among other things, greater disparities in income have a negative impact on health. According to the World Health Organization's highly regarded report "Closing the Gap" (WHO, 2008), the so-called 'Marmot Review', social injustice is the principle cause of inequalities in health. In some parts of the world, babies are born with a life expectancy of 80, while in other parts of the world life expectancy is less than 50. In the words of the Marmot Review, "social injustice is killing people" (see also Stuckler & Basu 2013). According to the report, this situation could be changed within a generation if there was a political will to do so. This would necessitate an improvement in the conditions of daily life, anywhere where people live, work, and age. And the inequitable distribution of power, money and resources would also have to be tackled collectively on a global, national and local scale, according to the Marmot Review.

How should the challenges be tackled?

These negative effects have become increasingly prominent, and it is suggested that cities and metropolitan regions are certainly the source of the emergence and spread of the problems, but that they also have great potential to manage and solve the problems and challenges (see, for example, UN Habitat 2011 and 2013). An ever-increasing number of cities the world over appear to have a heightened level of awareness and to be gearing up for the transition and re-distribution of the consumption of resources which sustainable development may be deemed to require. The question is, however, what one or more local authorities working together in a single metropolitan region can do to help tackle these global challenges. Even if local policies at city level are crucial to developments as a whole, a large part of the responsibility lies with political and economic institutions at national and global level and the resolve and initiative which they show. That said, political and other leaders in cities and metropolitan regions have to take a large part of the responsibility, which is perhaps most evident in issues involving urban planning and physical infrastructure. For example, an efficient infrastructure is generally deemed to have a positive impact on development and prosperity in cities and regions. In a comprehensive review of major cities worldwide, UN Habitat maintains that infrastructure related issues are crucial to the tackling of both social and environmental challenges (UN Habitat 2012). And infrastructure includes not only transport systems but also clean water, efficient sanitation systems, housing, energy supplies and information and communication systems (ICT).

In order to bring about a transition to a more sustainability focused policy, various kinds of knowledge-building institutions are also established with a view to developing research and practice concurrently. The Mistra Urban Futures Centre for sustainable urban development is a clear example of how an idea of this type can be realised. In this context, people refer increasingly to evidence-based policy-making but the relationship between

scientific knowledge, expert knowledge and policy is not without its problems (see, for example, Sanderson 2002). It is often stated also that sustainable development is a complex issue. Moreover, the concept is difficult to define, and it is virtually impossible to talk about a single specific meaning. In the same way as concepts like 'democracy', 'justice' and 'development', it is contested. It has to do with the future of the whole of mankind: It affects everyone in one way or another, local and global problems and challenges are interlinked and the degree of uncertainty is high. The Brundtland Commission's definition from 1987, according to which sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, provides a certain amount of guidance but it is not precise.

While the various disciplines and fields of research compete to try and present a 'correct' picture of a controversial reality, political organisations and other social institutions try to limit themselves to often fragmented and sometimes conflicting research results and recommendations and to compare them with their own ideologies, objectives or interests. It is difficult to determine how, when and in what way different types of knowledge become important in planning and policy processes (Meadowcroft & Steurer 2013). What we can say with certainty, however, is that "sustainable development" cannot be defined in a single meaning, because the definition of it is the subject of ongoing negotiations at the political level and in society as a whole. What is interesting to consider, however, is the meaning which is attributed to this concept and what causes a particular interpretation of it to be allowed to dominate over other alternative interpretations.

The institutional context

Above, we considered briefly a number of general problems and challenges for cities and metropolitan regions. Often, research on governance for sustainable urban development tends to treat cities and regions as more or less independent political entities with no clear link to nation-states (see, for example, Pearson et al. 2014). However, in order to understand the circumstances and parameters of urban sustainability policy in a specific country, it is important to consider also the institutional context, in this case that of Sweden.

To suggest that local authorities in Sweden are responsible for many different tasks would be an understatement. To put it another way, you could say that they are involved in many different areas of policy. Some of these are mandatory and governed by laws and regulations. In these cases, they have to implement what the Parliament and the Government have decided. Typical policy areas in this field are education, healthcare, social services, environmental policy, planning and building, roads and water, waste and rescue services. Several of these areas are classified as welfare and are sometimes called 'core activities'. These are structured on a sector-by-sector basis and are often managed individually by a political body. Other policy areas are not regulated in the same way. In this case, the Government mostly directs through 'soft' means, e.g. incentives or project funding which can be applied for, or through ideas management. Examples of these policy areas are support for female victims of violence, economic development policy, growth policy and climate policy. In these cases, it is more up to the local authorities themselves to formulate their aspirations and the nature of their organisation. Sustainable development is a policy area which belongs mainly to the latter group of 'unregulated' areas but which is dependent on the regulated areas. To what extent sustainable development includes several

different policy areas is largely for the local authorities themselves to decide (Montin and Granberg 2013).

Thus, the distinctive thing about sustainable development as a policy area is that it is difficult to define it in institutional and organisational terms. In some local authorities it is primarily dealt with by the environmental administration, while in others it is seen as something which both impacts on the local authority as a whole and which requires collaboration with other local authorities. It is increasingly common for local authorities individually and together with other local authorities (such as in the case of GR) to stipulate that sustainable development must cover economic, social and environmental aspects. However, the link between these three aspects can vary. Generally speaking, there are 'negotiations' going on over the concept of sustainability involving many different stakeholders. It is often emphasised that many different stakeholders should be involved, in order to identify the key problems and challenges, build knowledge of possible solutions and implement what is deemed to contribute to a more sustainable society. This 'negotiation process' has been in progress for a relatively short period of time.

Many of the welfare related institutions in local authorities date back to the late 19th century or the early 20th century (some go considerably further back in time) but local authority sustainability policy in the contemporary sense did not arrive in earnest until the 1990s. So, the fact that it has not been institutionalised in the form of special legislation, regulations, quality criteria and standards comes as no surprise.

The specific direction of urban sustainability policy is influenced by a number of different factors, such as political ideologies, structural problems and challenges, individuals (people with enthusiasm for the field), institutional relations, knowledge and skills (Olsson & Hysing 2012). What are defined as problems and challenges, and what action is deemed to be appropriate and possible to tackle these problems and challenges at local and regional level, is closely related to policies at the national and the EU level and to dominant discourses. For example, it has been suggested that there is a tendency for the traditional welfare state to be undermined, which makes it difficult to achieve some of the social objectives (Larsson et al. 2012; Stahre 2007) and that the 'urban policy' which is defined is primarily focused on economic growth and promoting a middle class with strong purchasing power (Dannestam 2009; Mukhtar Landgren 2012). Others, moreover, believe that the deregulation and market orientation within housing policy and the spatial planning processes have made it difficult for local players to manage urban planning (Engström & Cars 2013). It is also clear that local authorities in metropolitan regions both large and small are increasingly focusing competition over business investments and population behind them, and are instead working together and coordinating themselves in network-like structures, with a view to co-ordinating strategies for the development and growth of their metropolitan region (Leibovitz 2003).

Opinions vary as to what extent these urban collaborative bodies are designed to co-ordinate the management of complex problems such as socio-spatial inequality and environmental problems and to what extent they are actually the result of the requirements of global competition for a new political and economic geography in urban areas (Savitch & Vogel 2009). In short, opinions are divided over which politico-economic orientation promotes or obstructs sustainable development (Krueger & Gibbs 2008). To put it simply, urban and regional sustainability policy is negotiated and defined in a multi-level system

which comprises both a number of different vertical levels and collaboration with stakeholders at the horizontal level (other local authorities, businesses, interest organisations, citizens, etc.).

With regard more specifically to urban and regional sustainability policy in Sweden, a number of critical observations can be made in an analytical review. Here are a few examples: Very few of the municipal general (comprehensive) spatial plans clearly define and analyse issues associated with the concept of sustainability. It is usually more of an add-on term (Persson 2013; Cars 2011). Even if it can be demonstrated that co-operation between local authorities would promote sustainable development, co-operation of this type tends to be impeded, among other things, by institutional factors (Olsson & Cars 2011). It is unusual for an environmental perspective to be incorporated into urban and regional sustainability policy, except when it can be demonstrated to promote regional growth (Hilding-Rydevik et al. 2011). Moreover, generally speaking it appears to be very difficult to incorporate the social dimension into work on sustainability (Boström 2012). All in all, many critical observers believe that political rhetoric talks about one thing but, more often than not, political practice does another. The commonly occurring rhetorical consensus on sustainable development may even be an obstacle to a transition towards sustainable urban development (Fredriksson 2012).

PURPOSE AND FOCUS OF THE REPORT

So, how does the Gothenburg Region's sustainability policy fare in the context of these critical observations? How coherent is its sustainability policy? By 'coherent' we refer in the first instance to three aspects: *organisational cohesion, the relationship between the different dimensions of sustainability* and the correlation between *ideas, policies and outcomes.* The first aspect relates to the extent to which the organisational or politico-institutional players co-operate and create cohesion for sustainable development. In this report, we focus in particular on players which are active in the Gothenburg Region as a political territory. The second aspect relates to how the three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) are linked together in various strategic documents, plans and reports. The third aspect relates to the relationship between ideas about what is generally believed to contribute to sustainable development, policy formulations (as expressed in specific political decisions and municipal plans) and outcomes. The latter refers to actual situations which can be related to the challenges, targets and strategies included in the sustainability policy. Another way of expressing how coherent the sustainability policy is, is to investigate which *sustainability discourses* have been formulated in the region. By sustainability discourses we mean which ideas, perspectives and categories are associated with sustainability and which players are involved in defining them.

Certain delimitations have been necessary. Our focus is the strategies which have resulted from the work of different political bodies and temporary networks of public administrators, more specifically the voluntary inter-municipal collaboration within the Göteborg Region Association of Local Authorities (GR) within the framework of five consultation processes from 2002 to 2013. The four consultations in the early years, which led to the defining of the "Sustained growth" strategy in 2006, have been described in another context (Montin 2013). Consequently, we have focused here primarily on the fifth

consultation, which consisted in updating the document entitled "Sustained growth", which resulted in the new version, "Sustainable growth".

The fifth consultation took place in 2012–13. This process was observed in situ and reviewed through both individual and group interviews with key players and through documentary reviews.

The report attempts to answer the following general questions:

1. Which discourses, policy formulations and practices characterise the sustainability policy during GR's process for updating the strategy document "Sustained growth"? How do these different aspects of policy formulation and implementation relate to each other? To what extent are the three dimensions of sustainability decoupled or linked?

2. Which organised interests (players) influence the framing of discourses and policy in this process and how coherent are these interests in the strategies which are defined?

3. What opportunities for and obstacles to a transition to sustainable development are created through the type of collaborative planning processes which GR represents? How can this governance be developed to improve the prospect of a transition to more sustainable development?

RESEARCH METHODS AND COLLECTION OF DATA

The research and data in this report were obtained under a number of different projects. The starting-point was a trans-disciplinary research initiative within the "Multi-level governance" pilot project within Mistra Urban Futures 2010–12 (Elias et al. 2012). Within the framework of this project, two separate focus group interviews were conducted with 20–25 key players (councillors and public officers) within the public transport development programme K2020, the sustainable development programme S2020 and the GR consultation process. Within the framework of the Swedish Research Council funded project "Interplace: The interplay between citizen initiatives and invited participation in urban planning: an interaction research project" (2011–13), some 15 interviews were conducted with employees and councillors of the City of Gothenburg on issues of democracy and social sustainability. Within the same project, we carried out documentary reviews and undertook a number of passive and participative observations at seminars and conferences on the theme of sustainable urban development and civic participation. This material was complemented by further documentary reviews, interviews and observations in 2013–14, primarily carried out as part of Mistra Urban Futures' international pilot project *Governance and Policy for Sustainable Urban Development (GAPS)*.[5] During the first phase of this project, all relevant policy documents for sustainable development relating to Gothenburg and the Gothenburg Region were reviewed (Cullberg et al. 2014). In the second phase of the project, we focused on sustainability policy within the Gothenburg

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[5] 5 As well as the local platform in Gothenburg, platforms in Manchester (UK) and Capetown (South Africa) are also included as case studies for urban sustainability policy. The overall issues and framework for the project were formulated by Tim May and Simon Marvin from the Centre for Sustainable Urban and Regional Futures, Salford University. The overall purpose of the project is to investigate, using comparative methodologies, what *challenges* and *transition pathways* sustainable urban development is facing.

Region and the consultation process which led to the updating of the strategy document "Sustainable growth" (2013). Four consultations were passively observed in four different council meetings (January–February 2013) in the following municipalities: Gothenburg, Kungsbacka, Kungälv and Stenungsund. In addition, we observed the final meeting (March 2013) in the consultation process, to which councillors from the whole of the Gothenburg Region were invited, and the council meeting (May 2013) and board meeting (June 2013) of the Göteborg Region Association of Local Authorities (GR) at which decisions were taken on the strategy document. The methods used in these contexts were ethnographic in nature and included a range of different discussions and conversations which were documented in field study notes. Interviews were conducted with GR's chief executive and two board members and also with municipal commissioners in Gothenburg in order to complement the views which emerged during the consultation process and to obtain further insights into political tensions within Gothenburg City Council over GR's sustainability policy. This way, we were able to obtain and analyse perspectives from councillors in both the surrounding municipalities and the City of Gothenburg.

Two focus groups involving a total of 25–30 public officers were also held within the GR municipalities. One of the focus groups included officers from various local authorities who are involved with Mistra Urban Futures, and the other focus group included urban planning managers or equivalent from the member municipalities. A further 10 individual interviews and group interviews were held with around 15 key players. These were councillors from Gothenburg and GR, as well as people working for GR and Business Region Göteborg (BRG). In addition, a number of different official policy documents and reports were reviewed and the results of this review will be presented in this report. The County Administrative Board in particular submitted material relating to reviews of the municipal general (comprehensive) spatial plans since 2006.

STRUCTURE

First, we outline the significance of urban policy for sustainable development and define more precisely the key concepts used in the report to describe and explain the sustainability policy in the Gothenburg Region: *discourse coalitions* and *decoupling and cohesion.*

We then give an overview of the discourses which we believe are predominant both in the Gothenburg Region and in urban sustainability policy in general. In this context, we identify what we call the Gothenburg Region's sustainability coalition and growth coalition and the ideas, concepts and categories which characterise the respective coalition's approach to the ecologically, economically and socially sustainable development of the metropolitan region.

Finally, we summarise the observations and conclude by discussing in principle how a more coherent sustainability policy could be defined for the Gothenburg Region.

Chapter 2: Perspectives on the ideas and practices of sustainability policy

In this chapter we discuss the difference between 'weak' and 'strong' sustainability. In practice, we see that urban development in Sweden is based on weak sustainability. We discuss the meaning of social sustainability and 'discourse coalitions', which are a feature of the sustainability policy. Finally, we look at different types of cohesion or decoupling within the sustainability policy: organisational, inter-dimensional and between objectives and outcomes.

As discussed in Chapter 1, discussions on development the world over are increasingly framed in a rhetoric of 'sustainability'. This concept was launched and developed primarily in the UN policy declarations since the 1970s and 1980s, with the Brundtland Commission and the Rio and Johannesburg declarations as the main milestones. Sustainable development has also been taken up by the EU and other global institutions. It was primarily during the latter part of the 2000s that policies for 'sustainable development' began to be formulated in the Gothenburg Region (see figures 1 and 2, pages 31–32 below).

But opinions are divided as to the extent to which what we call 'sustainability policy' has changed the actual economic roadmap and its social and environmental costs for future generations the world over. In 2014, the UN climate panel stated, with regard to political measures adopted to reduce climate-impacting emissions, that thousands of cities the world over had drawn up action plans but that there was little evidence that they had reduced emissions. The panel also points out that urban action plans often relate to energy efficiency and that fewer focus on land use strategies and cross-sectoral measures which aim to reduce urban sprawl and the heavy dependence on transport. Krueger and Gibbs (2007:6) note that the cities of the Western world implement an *actual* sustainability policy in concrete form: cycle paths and footpaths are expanded and strategies are created to protect public places and various types of environmental resources and cultural heritage; plans are made in various ways to reduce CO2 emissions and to increase the amount of energy generated from renewable sources. At the same time, sustainability policy is embedded in the growth-oriented political economy, which has attracted criticism from researchers and society as a whole over its effectiveness and the contradictory nature of this situation. Consequently, it is not certain to what extent actual sustainability policy is in line with the Brundtland Commission's (1987) visionary principle of development which "...*meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*".

A growing body of critical opinion maintains that the paradox of sustainability policy is that it is embedded in a capitalistic production and consumption oriented economy which has both been proven to be heavily dependent on fossil fuels and which, moreover, creates social inequality, particularly in its contemporary liberal market form (Swyngedouw 2007). Despite the fact that all national and urban political regimes describe development policy as 'sustainable', it is also clear that development policy is an integral part of the social system

which created problems such as environmental destruction, global warming and growing social divides (Jackson 2012).

In spite of this criticism, an actual sustainability policy is in progress, and our remit in this report is to create a better understanding of how this is expressed in the Gothenburg Region's joint initiatives for 'sustainable growth'. From a general perspective, it may be useful, for the purposes of the forthcoming analysis, to create a general understanding of how the concept of sustainable development has come to be used in specific urban development initiatives. In this context, we believe it is helpful to make a distinction between a 'weak' and a 'strong' interpretation of the concept of sustainability (Neumeyer 2013, Gibbs et al. 1998, Rydin 2010, Larsson N. et al. 2012).

WEAK AND STRONG SUSTAINABILITY

In the Brundtland Commission's definition and the subsequent UN conventions which define the concept of 'sustainable development', for example, it is important that the dimensions of sustainability are balanced and on a par with each other. However, actual sustainability policy has often defined sustainability in a way which can be referred to as *weak sustainable development.* This interpretation focuses on the economic dimension, while negative environmental and social impacts are deemed to be justified by economic gains and measures to offset them. One example of this is an industry being allowed to produce environmentally harmful emissions, provided that this is offset economically through the purchase of emission rights. Different types of 'capital' (natural, physical and human capital) are essentially deemed to be substitutable. Values which can be attributed to nature and the environment or society are not regarded as being superior to economic capital. Moreover, the core of the weak sustainability model is that the total amount of capital grows. This perspective is attractive to decision-makers because patterns of economic activity and growth only need to be adjusted without major changes to patterns of behaviour or lifestyles (cf. Rydin, 2010).

Critics of weak sustainability argue that it undermines and dilutes the concept of sustainability because it underpins a 'business as usual' approach: economic growth, increasing consumption and exploitation of natural and human resources in favour of the legitimacy of the economic system. From an urban development perspective, weak sustainability means that economic growth is the key objective. The basic premise is that the richer we become, the easier it will be to tackle environmental problems, employment and social welfare. It may also mean that growth is desirable as long as it is 'green' or 'sustainable', the basis for this being technological innovation with a green slant which will promote an environmentally sustainable society. An example of this approach is when there are innovations in contemporary fossil-free technologies, where products are produced for the global market. This is often called 'ecological modernisation', which sees growth and consideration for the environment not as competing, but rather that they go hand in hand (Christoff 1996, Mol and Sonnenfeld 2000).

Strong sustainable development on the other hand focuses on the fundamental importance of the environment from the perspective that natural resources cannot be replaced by economic resources, because they are unique and cannot be re-created. Here, the ecology is seen as a prerequisite for all human activity, including the economy and other forms of interaction. It is therefore important that economic or social factors do not

come into conflict with the ecological systems and have a negative impact on them. A strong sustainability approach puts more pressure on the political system, because it requires a major overhaul of established patterns of behaviour, the economic system and people's lifestyles.

With this approach, 'the good life' must be created without constantly increasing consumption, and sustainable urban development should take issues of social injustice seriously (Jackson 2012). Without social and economic equality and inter-personal trust, society may break down almost independently of economic growth. Thus, socially sustainable development must be the objective, the economy a means and ecological requirements a powerful restriction on society's use of resources.

WEAK SUSTAINABILITY IN SWEDISH URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Despite the fact that Sweden internationally is regarded as leading the way on sustainability policy, the results of its policy on sustainability have not lived up to the vision of the 'Green Welfare State' ('det gröna folkhemmet') launched by Göran Persson's government in 1996. Despite massive support for green growth, which united different political parties and social stakeholders in a consensus over the objective of sustainable development, achieving the desired results has been difficult. Of the 16 national environmental quality objectives, very few are deemed to be possible to reach given present developments and for an increasing number of them indicators are unchanged or heading in the wrong direction (Elander & Lidskog 2012). To this can be added economic crises, rising unemployment (within certain groups at least), increasing social inequality and social and ethnic housing segregation, which are thought to be inevitable consequences of the economic policy.

Again, as far as sustainable urban development policy in Sweden is concerned, current knowledge suggests that, generally speaking, development of the social and environmental dimensions is heading in the wrong direction. Despite the fact that Sweden's main cities are successfully attracting both businesses and people, and that they are succeeding in competition in the new global knowledge-driven economy, the growing affluence is, at the same time, thought to be having an adverse impact on the environment, climate and social cohesion.

Impact on climate

In a critical review of sustainability policy in Stockholm, a city which markets itself as 'Scandinavia's green capital' and which won the EU's new European Green Capital award in 2010, Bradley et al (2013) and Gunnarsson-Östling et al (2013) examine the inherent contradictions in the growth-oriented vision of sustainability which Stockholm has formulated, which is manifested, amongst other things, in the vision of the 'Walkable City' ('promenadstaden'). The city's emissions of greenhouse gases is one of the issues discussed. Official statistics published by the City of Stockholm state that emissions were around three tonnes per capita in 2005, which was less than many other cities in Sweden, and that emissions had fallen by 25 per cent since 1990. These statistics were used to portray Stockholm as being well on the way to achieving its objective of a fossil-free economy by 2050. However, this calculation of emissions only includes production, not consumption or transport. The Stockholm Environment Institute calculated inhabitants' carbon footprint; if consumption had also been included in the calculation, emissions of

greenhouse gases in Stockholm would have been 15.7 tonnes per capita in 2004 (Axelsson 2012, Bradley et al. 2013).

The carbon footprint of the country as a whole is also significantly higher if consumption is included. In 2011, the official figure for Sweden was seven tonnes per person, but if consumption is included this figure increases to around 10 tonnes. In actual fact, every person in Sweden is estimated to use 5.7 global hectares (gha), compared with an EU average of 4.7 gha and a global average of 2.7 gha. Global capacity was estimated at 1.8 gha per person, in order to achieve the objective of limiting global warming to two degrees (Lidskog & Elander 2012).

A report published by a Mistra Urban Futures project comprising employees of the City Gothenburg and Region Västra Götaland, as well as researchers from Chalmers University of Technology, outlines various scenarios for the CO_2 emissions of different types of household in Gothenburg (Bolin et al. 2013). The results indicate that those households which on average generate the most CO_2 emissions are located in areas of the city where the majority of people own their own homes, such as Askim, while those with the smallest carbon footprint are households who live in rented flats, e.g. in Angered (table 1).
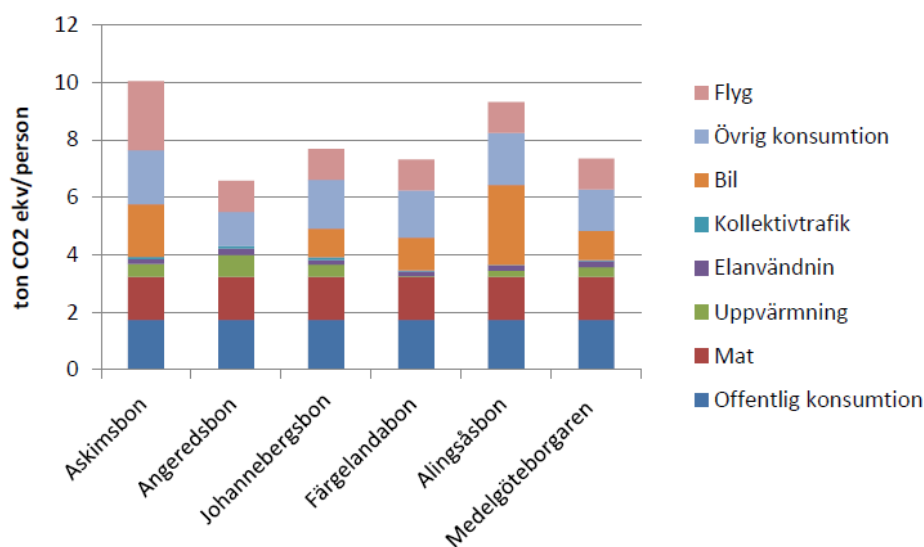
Utsläpp från de olika typhushållen 2010 uppdelat på olika områden.

Tabell 1. Utsläpp från olika typhushåll i Göteborgsregionen 2010 uppdelat på olika områden
Bohlin m.fl. 2013

A 'business as usual scenario', where prevailing lifestyles and systems are not changed, is estimated to lead to an increase in climate-impacting emissions of over 30 per cent by 2050 compared to current levels. Under the current weak sustainability strategies, it seems very likely that reduced emissions from transport and energy supplies would be offset by increased emissions from food consumption and air travel. Instead, the policies of Region Västra Götaland and the City of Gothenburg should focus on transforming infrastructures and lifestyles, among other things through a reduction in air travel and meat consumption and through a reduction in working hours (Bolin et al. 2013).

Infrastructure

Poor infrastructure is a key issue for the transition process for the region and for the City of Gothenburg itself. By this we mean the transport system, where the proportion of journeys made by public transport should increase and, at the same time, emissions from public transport should decrease, at the same time as car travel decreases. This would mean the city becoming more compact with opportunities for cycling, walking and using car pools increasing. But it would also mean reviewing the use of fossil fuels for the generation of district heating, making homes more energy efficient and reviewing the options for a reduction in working hours (ibid.).

Social polarisation

As far as *social polarisation* is concerned, much current knowledge also indicates that things are moving in the wrong direction. It is clear from above-referenced studies of Stockholm that the social justice perspective is generally absent from the definition of sustainability in the city's objectives. The most comprehensive analysis of the health inequalities present in Sweden's major cities was carried out by the 'Commission for a Socially Sustainable Malmö' (the Malmö Commission), whose research, which was based on the Marmot reviews, highlighted discrepancies in health between different population groups in the City of Malmö. The Malmö Commission indicates that the difference in average life expectancy has increased over the past 20 years and can vary by up to five and a half years between different areas of the city and by up to six years between poorly educated and well-educated members of the population. Poor dental health among 6-year-olds is approximately six times more common in areas which are characterised by low incomes among adults (Malmö Commission 2012, p.5). According to the Commissions's analyses, these, and a number of other health inequalities, are caused by factors such as education, gender, ethnicity and place of residence. The Commission proposes a raft of different recommendations (24 objectives and 72 actions) which it believes could reduce these inequalities within the framework of prevailing urban policy objectives.

Although Gothenburg does not have an equivalent of the Malmö Commission, the issue of growing social polarisation in the metropolitan region has been identified as one of the metropolitan region's greatest challenges (Cullberg et al 2014). This is evident in a number of different initiatives. A few years ago, Gothenburg City Council set up the *Commission for Integration and Community (Rådet för integration och samhällsgemenskap)[6]* (RIS), which was to make proposals and recommendations to the municipal executive, with a view to identifying new ways of increasing social mobility and, as a result, integration, and creating a greater sense of community in Gothenburg. The Commission put its proposals to the municipal executive in 2014 (Gothenburg City Council/RIS 2014).

Andersson, Bråmå and Hogdal who, in conjunction with Gothenburg City Council, compiled statistics on social and ethnic polarisation in the Gothenburg Region, indicate in their report *Rich and Poor – Segregated City (Fattiga och rika – segregerad stad)* (2009), that incomes between 1990 and 2006 were heavily polarised between different areas of the city. This polarisation was also described as being more manifest than that in Malmö. This

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[6] http://goteborg.se/wps/portal/invanare/kommun-o-politik/kommunens-organisation/kommunstyrelsen/radet-for-integration/!ut/p/b1/04_SjzS1NDexNLAwM9aP0I_KSyzLTE8syczPS8wB8aPM4gMMvQItnAwdDfzdLd0MPEO8A9z8vH38g7xNgAoigQoMcABHA0L6_Tzyc1P1c6NyLABZD6MS/dl4/d5/L2dBISEvZ0FBIS9nQSEh/

social and ethnic residential segregation derives from the structure of housing in the metropolitan region, where around half of the population own their own homes. But while in the municipalities outside Gothenburg around 70 per cent or more of people own their own home, within the municipal boundaries of Gothenburg, which accounts for half of the region's population, less than 30 per cent of the population own their own home. In essence, families of Swedish origin are moving out of the city centre to detached houses in the surrounding municipalities, while foreign nationals are moving into areas where the socio-economic situation is already strained. GR's report *Quality of Life Indicators for the Gothenburg Region (Välfärdsbilder i Göteborgsregionen)* (2012) presents statistics on, amongst other things, average income, unemployment, people claiming benefits and ill health, for the region's municipalities and the ten districts of the City of Gothenburg. Angered and Eastern Gothenburg have the highest levels of unemployment and people claiming benefits in the region, and the statistics for ill health are getting worse. There are roughly similar gaps between districts of Gothenburg, whose housing stock predominantly dates back to the Million Programme (a public housing programme in 1965–75), and surrounding municipalities such as Kungsbacka and Lerum.

This picture of geographical inequality is confirmed in a recently published report by Gothenburg City Council, which indicates that the difference in income between, for example, Östra Bergsjön and Långedrag was as much as 511,000 kronor in 2011, while in 1992, this difference amounted to 197,000 kronor. In just under 20 years, therefore, inequality in the city has more than doubled (Gothenburg City Council 2014).

These socio-economic differences between the region's various municipalities and the various districts of Gothenburg are very much ethnicity related, which means that being rich or poor depends to a large extent on ethnic background and skin colour. This socio-economic segregation and the negative consequences it entails primarily affects groups with a non-Western background and non-Whites, particularly those who originate from Somalia, Ethiopia, Iraq, Lebanon and Bosnia-Hercegovina (Andersson et al. 2009, p. 29). The majority of people moving into the Gothenburg Region are foreign nationals. Permanently high levels of unemployment, discrimination in the labour and housing markets (Region Västra Götaland, VGR, 2011) and a programme of house-building which is out of sync with the increase in population in the metropolitan region (GR 2012, p. 11) are in danger of further aggravating the already very precarious situation in which a significant proportion of Gothenburg residents currently find themselves.

The most obvious and acute social issues which Swedish metropolitan regions have to deal with would therefore appear to be, on the one hand, unemployment which excludes large groups of people from equal participation in society, and, on the other, the construction of new dwellings, since the shortage of housing and the constantly increasing costs of housing reinforce the socio-economic divide. Alongside issues of class and ethnicity, attention must also be paid to the gender dimensions of inequality: women generally have lower incomes and poorer health than men (GR quality of life indicators 2012).

MEANING OF SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

In spite of the large amount of in-depth background knowledge and the many indicators which document the social differences in society, the term 'socially sustainable

development' is still used in a rather vague way: it is not clear exactly what a 'socially sustainable' society is meant to achieve (Gustavsson & Elander 2013). Murphy (2012) documented the variations in how the social pillar of sustainable development is defined, based on declarations and reports from the UN and the EU and other multi-lateral policy documents, and the academic debate on sustainable development in five separate policy fields. He found that the term 'social sustainability' can be linked to four distinct concepts:

1. *equity,* in the sense of equitable distribution of welfare, goods and life chances for everyone in society irrespective of class, gender, race, generation or other circumstance;
2. *awareness for sustainability*, which means that individuals must be aware of sustainability issues so they can take greater responsibility for them;
3. *participation of all social groups* is expected to form the basis of sustainable development, both because it allows people to improve their own situation and because it will help make the policy on sustainable development more legitimate; and
4. *social cohesion*, which is defined differently in different contexts but which can generally be linked to objectives which promote people's happiness/well-being, trust and social capital and sense of purpose and belonging.

Thus, there are many potential factors to be taken into consideration in policy objectives which are designed to promote "social sustainability".

The content of 'The Bristol Accord' may help define how the concept can be used in spatial urban planning in line with shared EU objectives. This document, which is based on Agenda 21 and the Aalborg Charter, defines a socially sustainable society as places "… *where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all.*" (Dempsey et al. 2009, 290)

The extent to which the vision of a socially sustainable society and the policy formulated within this discursive framework actually differs from the traditional aims and objectives of the Swedish welfare state, with its principle of the fair distribution of income, is a matter for further discussion. The opening paragraph of the Planning and Building Act states, for example, that the purpose of urban building is to promote "... with due regard to the individual's right to freedom, societal progress towards equal and good living conditions and a good and lasting sustainable environment for the benefit of the people of today's society as well as of future generations." If nothing else, 'social sustainability' has become a policy field which is increasingly beginning to mobilise discursive and material resources for political action. Gustavsson and Elander (2013) investigated how the concept of social sustainability has been applied 'from below' by reviewing eight investment projects with a focus on urban construction which received financial assistance under the Government Delegation for Sustainable Cities. Not entirely unexpectedly, they found that application of the concept varied between the different projects, but that they could nevertheless be classified under three distinct themes: social inclusion, participation and local identity.

DISCOURSE COALITIONS AND SUSTAINABILITY POLICY

During the 2000s, ever clearer political discourses emerged on 'sustainable urban and regional development' which take into consideration the ecological, economic, and social dimensions of sustainable development. By 'discourse' we mean 'an ensemble of ideas, concepts and categories through which meaning is given to phenomena' and which are formed into a particular way of looking at the world (Hajer 1995), such as, for example, 'sustainability', 'environment', 'growth' and 'social justice'. The discourses reflect perspectives on the world, i.e. social structures or perceptions of how the world is made up. In different political areas and academic disciplines, different discourses are formed which compete for dominance. The discourses frame problems by focusing on certain aspects of a phenomenon, whilst, in reality, other aspects of the same problem may exist. They may therefore be prescriptive, i.e. characterised by specific values around how the world should be, or analytical convictions. However, the discourses' perceptions of reality do not 'float' freely but are tied to institutions and players; certain discourses are more successful and dominant than others.

The extent to which the discourses are successful, and therefore also constitute how we see the world, has to do with how well the discourses are institutionalised. This does not happen automatically but, as Hajer points out, is the result of persuasion, coercion and other exertions of power where players use their positions to mobilise others on the basis of their own insights and convictions.

It is, however, important to be aware that different discourses co-exist in parallel, which is only natural given the number of players and institutions involved: e.g. scientific disciplines, ideological conflicts within and between parties, and organisations with different functions and tasks in the multi-level system.

The question which springs to mind when examining the discourses around sustainable development in the Gothenburg Region is why one or more discourses become dominant in an institutional context. Here, Hajer's concept of 'discourse coalitions' would appear to be relevant. A discourse coalition can be seen as a group of actors who share a view of reality. A coalition of this type can be identified by studying how discourses are articulated verbally and in texts, documents and other types of declarations and statements. Every discourse also has a 'story line' on specific problems and challenges which, for example, need to be managed by political organisations. Political problems are usually tackled by different actors, individuals and institutions uniting around specific story lines which give meaning to the reality, formulating future courses of action and therefore influencing the practice. A coalition can therefore be studied by investigating which actors are united around which story lines relating to a specific phenomenon (ibid). New discourses are constantly emerging but, at the same time, certain coalitions dominate over others. According to Hajer, this dominance is determined by two criteria:

1. The coalition dominates the discursive space. i.e. key players are persuaded by, or forced to accept, the rhetorical power of a new discourse *(discourse structuration)*.
2. This is reflected in the institutional practices of that political domain: policy processes are conducted according to the ideas of a given discourse *(discourse institutionalization)*.

Using the concepts of discourses and coalitions to analyse the sustainability policy of the Gothenburg Region allows us to understand why political strategies and patterns of behaviour occur in specific contexts and institutional practices. It also gives us the tools to understand any controversies on specific political problems in a broader historical and political context. The discourse coalition perspective also gives us insights into how different political interests respond to different discourses and helps us to understand how different players re-create the discourses or offer resistance to them.

The fact that coalitions are created does not mean that the players included in these more or less loose networks necessarily agree with everything; it is more a loosely associated group of players united around the formulation of shared visions and objectives for a sustainability policy. It is in the meeting between different coalitions that the strategy for sustainable development in the Gothenburg Region can be interpreted and understood as it is expressed in the strategy document "Sustainable growth".

COHERENT OR DECOUPLED POLICY?

The next step in our analysis is to investigate how coherent the sustainability policy is. In our study of the sustainability policy in the Gothenburg Region, we identified several types of decoupling, which we will account for empirically but which we will first define theoretically. We believe that a coherent policy for sustainable urban development is a prerequisite for achieving pre-defined visions and objectives by political means. We would like to highlight three particularly important aspects of a coherent policy:

1. *Organisational cohesion:* there is collaboration and mobilisation between political players and other parties which are significant to the content and outcome of the sustainability policy.
2. *Cohesion between the dimensions of sustainability:* there is a balance between the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.
3. *Cohesion between the ideas, policies and outcomes of the sustainability policy:* there is a logical connection between the visions, objectives and practices of the sustainability policy.

Organisational cohesion

Organisational cohesion has to do with collaboration between players with a view to creating the ability to solve shared problems. Since the beginning of the 1990s, regional policies have been applied which reduce active Government measures to mitigate the impact of structural change (Andersson et al 2008). Rather than being controlled directly by central Government, regional players must increasingly fend for themselves (notably with the help of EU structural funds) and achieve sustainable regional growth by calling on their own collective devices. In this context, the issue of (inter-)organisational cohesion, i.e. how organisations, authorities and sectors collaborate or otherwise over sustainability policy, is crucial. One expression which is often used is 'drain pipe' or 'silo', i.e. that each sector may be effective at managing clearly definable problems individually but may be less effective when it comes to managing shared problems (The Delegation for Sustainable Cities 2012). The fact that organisations do not collaborate even when 'everybody' knows that collaboration is essential is a classic dilemma (Ostrom 1990). A particular feature of the concept of regional development in general is the expectation of inter-municipal

collaboration. The majority of the visions and strategies adopted by VGR and GR assume that the municipalities in the Gothenburg Region will work together and thereby observe the agreements which have been concluded. Previous studies highlight a number of factors which may influence progress towards both loose and more integrated collaboration (see, for example, Mörck 2008; Rader-Olsson & Cars 2011).

A commonly used concept in this context is 'governance', which refers, among other things, to the different forms of management which occur to promote the development of common objectives and strategies (Wurzel et al. 2013). This may be anything from 'forcing' coordination by means of regulations or creating financial incentives to promote collaboration to convince other organisations of the benefits of collaboration. An apparently successful collaboration in terms of shared visions, objectives and strategies may, however, revolve around shared ideas but lack shared actions. It may also be that beneath the surface of shared ideas there are tensions and conflicts which are not apparent. To refer back to the discussion on discourses above, it may be that different players in the collaboration subordinate themselves to the shared idea and strategy in order not to damage the discourse coalition. Moreover, it may be that ideas and strategies for sustainable development are so broad that most of the players involved will at least find something which is in line with their objectives or interests. GR appears to be one of few examples of successful collaborations in this respect.

Cohesion between the dimensions

Cohesion between the three dimensions of sustainability is a subject which is often broached in the literature on sustainability, i.e. that ecologically, economically and socially sustainable development are often discussed and tackled individually. Not least, the literature suggests that the social dimension is often conspicuous by its absence. Even if there is a clear desire to co-ordinate, balance or integrate the three dimensions, it is difficult to find a political practice where this actually happens (Meadowcroft 2011). At the same time, it is important to highlight the efforts which are actually being made to link different aspects of sustainability together. Based on our discussion above, we can argue therefore that 'strong sustainability' implies a fairly coherent or 'balanced' strategy for sustainable development. 'Weak sustainability', which gives economic growth priority over the other two dimensions, can therefore be regarded as a decoupled strategy.

Cohesion between objectives and outcomes

The third aspect of cohesion relates to *the degree of correlation between political ideas, objectives (policies) and outcomes*. Within research on policy processes, the reality is often described in such a way that ideas, in the form of visions and strategies, can lead their own lives: the policy which is implemented has its own objectives, and outcomes of various kinds are not necessarily related to that policy's objectives or to strategies and visions.

Decoupling in this context means that political ideas and objectives are not consistent with the practices adopted by the organisations concerned (Meyer & Rowan 1992). In the day-to-day governance of all organisations, the institutional conditions, i.e. the resources, rules, structures, values and cultures which characterise each organisation, must be managed, at the same time as demands and expectations are imposed on the organisation by the outside world. For political organisations, the 'outside world' may be social forces such as globalisation, media, social movements and changes in culture and values, but also, more

specifically, the demands and expectations imposed by political institutions higher up in the multi-level system. It is common for the demands which the outside world imposes on the organisation in question to change when the internal institutional conditions do not. Different political objectives are constantly being formulated, but rarely are more resources allocated or do employees' values and attitudes change, which means that organisations adopt a rhetoric which is communicated outwardly but which is decoupled from the actions which are actually being taken. This may mean that the leaders of an organisation say one thing but do another. It may also mean that an organisation has so many objectives that, in practice, it is impossible to fulfil all of them. Since it is not always acceptable to let it be known that less priority is being given to some of the objectives, the situation is ignored and decoupling becomes reality. Finally, it may be that different levels and sectors within public politics formulate policies which are not consistent with each other.

Certain documents and statements may essentially be regarded as ideas, whilst others may be regarded as expressions of political objectives and precisely formulated measures. In our case, the ideas level primarily consists of background papers, visionary and strategy documents and discussions relating to the production of these documents. As policy level, we classify political decisions with a relatively short timeframe, such as budgets, but also local authorities' spatial plans (general and detailed plans), and specific projects and plans which can relatively easily be related to the idea of sustainable development. To put it simply, it is assumed that the stronger the linguistic link between ideas level and policy level, the more likely it is that the ideas will actually materialise.

To these two levels, we add a third: outcomes. It is becoming increasingly common to measure the success of a sustainability policy in relation to the environmental quality targets (see for example Lidskog & Elander 2012). A number of different sustainability indicators are used to follow up the economic, environmental and social dimensions. Some of these are designed to be used as a basis for evaluating specific measures, whilst others are designed to outline the current state-of-play as a basis for discussions on conceivable and feasible actions. In the Gothenburg Region, for example, statistics are regularly presented of different statuses which can be used to describe outcomes, e.g. progress reports from GR, "Quality of Life Indicators for the Gothenburg Region", the Swedish Union of Tenants' "Hard facts about how we live" ("Kalla fakta om hur vi bor") (2012) and the annual reports of various organisations and authorities.

Linking outcomes to specific policies is difficult: there is rarely any clear evidence of cause and effect in this respect, so the scope for interpretation is great. The only thing you could possibly conclude is that if the problems (unemployment, segregation, CO_2 emissions) have got worse, the policy has not been particularly effective but, on occasions, with the proviso that things could have been even worse if the measures had not been taken. They have, in any event, not been adequate. Observed outcomes can also be related directly to ideas level. In the same way as policies, outcomes can be interpreted in different ways depending on which discursive light is shone on them. One outcome could be that the number of people travelling by air has increased. When seen from an 'environmental restrictions' perspective, this outcome does not appear to be positive, but when seen from an 'environmental modernisation' perspective it can be interpreted as relatively unproblematic, since the increase in emissions is offset by other activities which the

increase in the number of flights has contributed to. If it is seen from a regional economic growth perspective only, the outcome is nothing but positive.

In this report we consider the outcomes of the sustainability policy through follow-ups by different organisations of various social, environmental and economic factors. The County Administrative Board's opinions on the municipal comprehensive spatial plans, as issued during the initial consultation and review process, and its mid-term reviews of said plans to ascertain their continued relevance give an indication of the impact the GR strategies are having on the planning activities of its member local authorities. The focus was the County Administrative Board's views on inter-municipal issues and regional programmes such as "Sustained growth" and the "Structural Framework" ("strukturbilden"), where there is also a particular focus on social sustainability.[7] It is important to note that these comprehensive spatial plans have not been specifically affected by the "Sustainable growth" strategy from 2013 but rather by the previous agreements. Moreover, municipal comprehensive plans are not binding in themselves but give guidance for subsequent planning. For various reasons, the municipalities can deviate from particular strategies in their own comprehensive plans in order to give priority to other aspects. Consequently, our measurements of 'outcomes' for the general (land use) plans should be regarded as indications rather than absolute outcomes in municipal spatial planning and its implementation.

Given the complexity of the sustainability policy, the existence of decoupling of various kinds is hardly surprising. What, on the other hand, is more interesting and relevant to investigate is how the decoupling is counteracted or does not occur at all. When different organisations work together, a number of factors help or hinder them from achieving consensus and joint strategies (Montin et al. 2014).

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7 Between 2004-2007, the County Administrative Board's opinions on general (land use) plans relate to the following local authorities: Ale, Gothenburg, Kungsbacka, Lerum, Mölndal, Partille, Stenungssund and Öckerö. Between 2011–2012, the opinions relate to general (land use) plans adopted by the local authorities of Härryda, Kungälv, Lilla Edet and Tjörn.

Chapter 3: Sustainability policy in the Gothenburg Region: "Sustainable growth" development strategy

We start by describing the process which resulted in the vision of "Sustainable growth" adopted by the GR local authorities. We then consider the overarching discourse which characterises development work in the region: regional expansion and urban densification. We go on to analyse the discourses which are evident in "Sustainable growth". Focus is in particular on how these discourses have impacted on the strategies for managing the three challenges: climate change, poor infrastructure and social polarisation.

Until the late 1990s, when collaboration over shared regional problems and challenges began in earnest, the Gothenburg Region, like many other metropolitan regions, had been characterised by discord and mutual distrust between municipalities. Many municipal players in the region felt that they were competing with each other and with Gothenburg in particular. From the late 1940s until the mid-1970s, there were two different collaborative organisations in the Gothenburg Region: the Greater Gothenburg Consultative Committee (Storgöteborgs samarbetskommitté) and the Regional Planning Association (Regionplaneförbundet). These two organisations were merged in 1974 to form the Göteborg Region Association of Local Authorities (GR). In 1940–94, the Gothenburg Suburbs Association (Göteborgs förorters förbund) also served as an interest association for the municipalities surrounding the City of Gothenburg. As a symbol of the new ethos of collaboration in the metropolitan region, all of the region's municipalities have been members of a collaborative body (GR) since 1995 (Ronge 2002). Over the course of the years, a number of structural development trends fuelled the competition between Gothenburg and its adjoining municipalities in various ways. One such trend was the development in the housing market. The majority of the new dwellings built in Gothenburg between 1950 and 1980 were blocks of flats in outlying areas. This paved the way for the housing segregation which was reinforced at regional level in the 1980s and 1990s, when the majority of new buildings were detached houses in attractive suburbs. Before that time, the middle classes had also started to move out of Gothenburg to an increasing number of detached houses in several of the surrounding municipalities, including Kungsbacka, Partille, Mölnlycke and Kungälv (Jörnmark 2005).

Another factor was the competition to attract businesses to the region. As recently as the late 1990s, the local authorities were competing with each other over where Ericsson should relocate its business after it had grown out of its premises in Örgryte. Possible municipalities included Mölndal and Härryda but, following the development of the 'norra Älvstranden' area on the north bank of the Göta River into an attractive 'cluster concept', Ericsson ended up relocating within Gothenburg (Jörnmark 2005). Mistrust and competition was turned into consensus and collaboration thanks, among other things, to a political leadership which managed to convince the municipalities that they would all

benefit from the successful development of Gothenburg. This political leadership was personified primarily by Social Democrat Göran Johansson (chairman of the executive board, or Mayor, of the City of Gothenburg and a member of the board of GR) who, according to information from other councillors, had lunchtime meetings with each of the chairmen (Mayors) of the 12 local authorities to discuss regional development (Elias et al. 2012). This helped the 13 GR local authorities to formulate a shared perspective on regional development.

Another important factor in the municipalities' mutual understanding of specific local problems was the consultations with local authority councillors, which have been held in five rounds since 2002. Consultation is defined as a planned and structured dialogue and interaction between stakeholders within a particular geographical area. During these consultations, municipal officers and political representatives from GR attended each of the council meetings of the region's 13 municipalities in four rounds. The consultations ran for between approximately three and 18 months, and it is estimated that around two thirds of all councillors took part in them. Each consultation began with an introductory talk, after which attendees were organised into groups for discussion purposes. Two steering documents were produced in 2006 and 2008, the latter being adopted as an 'agreement' by GR (GR 2006, GR 2008). In the autumn 2012 and the winter 2013, a fifth round of consultations took place which resulted in the 2006 strategy document "Sustained growth" being updated and re-named "Sustainable growth".

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABILITY POLICY IN GR

The invitation to the first round of consultations (GR 2002) expressed first and foremost the hope that the consultation would lead to the emergence of an "understanding of the importance of regional collaboration, a common approach to overarching planning issues and a consensus over tools and working practices". It was stated at the outset that GR had a regional but also a national and global responsibility to help "ensure long-term sustainable development". That sustainable development was described in the form of three dimensions: a social dimension ("civic empowerment"), an ecological dimension ("sustainability") and an economic dimension ("competitiveness"). The social dimension came first. In the introductory text which defined the three dimensions, the social dimension also came first, and the first question was: "How can we build a region with as small a social divides as possible?" (GR 2002, p. 8). When the three dimensions are described individually in slightly more detail, the social dimension also comes first, and it is asserted, among other things, that "(a) society with minimal social differences has its own intrinsic value irrespective of whether it is a factor in competition" (GR 2002, p. 10).

HUR 2050

This definition of sustainable development was in line with the definition produced by Region Västra Götaland (VGR)'s officals' network "HUR 2050". "HUR 2050" comprised of 35 representatives from 14 different authorities and organisations which were involved in various ways with local and regional planning (general and detailed spatial planning, infrastructure planning and transport planning). The purpose of the network was primarily to encourage dialogue between professional players from different sectors with a particular focus on developing the physical infrastructure in the Gothenburg Region. The idea was

that investment in infrastructure would promote long-term sustainable development which would integrate the economic, environmental and social dimensions of sustainability.

The network's activities were described and analysed by Merritt Polk (2010 & 2011) based on the different views of what forms sustainable development can take and how collaboration and joint knowledge development can be promoted.

What emerges from these studies, and from the documents produced by the network, is that HUR 2050 is a fairly successful example of how it is possible to implement the increasingly popular and sought-after concept of organisational cohesion, i.e. cross-sectoral collaboration which leads to a better understanding of the nature of sustainable development and formulates strategies for promoting such development. At the same time, Polk's analyses indicate that HUR 2050 is also a good illustration of the well-known dilemma between, on the one hand, proposing and discussing approaches which are critical of the dominant growth approach and, on the other, subordinating yourself to a policy of constant growth.

HUR 2050 adopted a fairly precise definition of sustainable development. In this, social sustainability is the objective ("development with less social division and where everyone is equal in value"), economic sustainability is the means ("development with a differentiated expanding economy and a highly educated workforce") and ecological sustainability is the framework ("development which does not deplete important resources or destroy the environment") (HUR 2050, 2006). This view of sustainable development is consistent with what is referred to above as 'strong sustainability'. However, in practice, this definition was deviated from in the visions actually proposed for 2050, where the overall heading was "Western Sweden – a strong and distinct growth region within Europe". This vision makes it clear that the economic dimension has been allowed to dominate, primarily in terms of economic growth. Since the growth objective was allowed to dominate, some of the results of the network's knowledge process were diluted. The knowledge resources on what may be sustainable were not taken into account, the long-term perspective was toned down and the discussion on how the three dimensions of sustainability could be integrated came to a standstill (Polk 2011). The debate around sustainability within HUR 2050 went from 'strong sustainability' in principle to 'weak sustainability' in practice. The growth argument effectively took control, not least because it was, and indeed still is, the political priority.

Consultations 1–4 and "Sustained growth"

A similar trend of allowing 'weak sustainability' to dominate can also be seen in GR's strategy development and consultation processes. Montin (2013) studied GR's consultation processes from 2002 to 2008 and believes that the social dimension of sustainable development was the dominant dimension for collaboration initially, but that in 2006 the direction changed to focus on the economic dimension. The third consultation, which took place between January and March 2006, involved councillors in the thirteen municipalities discussing and taking a stand on a proposal entitled "Sustained growth – objectives and strategies with a focus on sustainable regional structure". Other working material presented in the third round included a study entitled "Growth in the Gothenburg Region – a basis for strategy". It is stated in the document entitled "Sustained growth…" that the purpose of the document "is to provide a solid basis for ongoing efforts to develop jointly the Gothenburg Region into a strong and distinct growth region within Europe – a region which is attractive

to live, work and play in and to visit" (GR 2006). Although it is also stated that the intention was to strive for a "development which achieves a balance between the economic, social and ecological dimensions", the document does not specify the nature of this balance or how it would be achieved. Only the economic growth aspect is considered and, in this context, it is also emphasised that there is scientific support for a specific focus: "economic research indicates that there are strong links between a region's size and its ability to generate growth" (ibid., p. 4).

Interviewees consistently stated that an expert on regional development from Business Region Göteborg (BRG), Ulf Strömqvist, played a key role in the continuation of the process in this direction. Some called him a 'preacher', a 'missionary' and a 'growth guru' because he had a very clear message which he communicated clearly to his audience (Elias et al. 2012). In short, his message was that sustained economic growth was the key objective and that this would primarily be achieved through regional expansion. It was important to make it easy for businesses and other players to relocate within the region. According to information from interviews with people who took part in the consultation process, the speaker was not invited by the municipalities but rather the initiative came from GR's then chairman, the Social Democrat Göran Johansson (ibid.).

The specific objectives and strategies agreed in the document "Sustained growth" (2006) were to stimulate an increase in population in the Gothenburg Region of at least 8,000 inhabitants a year and for the local labour market to include 1.5 million inhabitants. The proximity to Nature was to be safeguarded in order to make the region more attractive, and urban environments were to be developed in order to "offer a rich urban and everyday life". Moreover, the City of Gothenburg, the 'heart' of the region, was to benefit from an additional 40,000 workplaces and housing units for a further 30,000 inhabitants. Finally, a transport infrastructure which would be sustainable in the long term was also to be created by developing an attractive public transport system which would increase the share of public transport of passenger journeys from 20 to at least 40 per cent. Measures to achieve the objectives set included creating a structural framework and developing a 'sustainability model'.

Prior to the fourth round of consultations, an even more consolidated proposal was drawn up which, with a number of additions, also came to be what the municipalities agreed should constitute a common foundation for their work on developing 'a long-term sustainable structure in the Gothenburg Region', or the 'Structural Framework' for short (GR 2008). The fact that the fourth round of consultations took only two months, in the spring of 2008, was a clear sign that the member municipalities were on the way to formulating a joint strategy.

The Structural Framework for the Gothenburg Region relates to spatial structures and essentially constitutes a framework within which the member local authorities are expected to develop in terms of transport infrastructure, building in proximity to stations, etc. This is expressed as follows: "We have a shared responsibility to ensure the long-term sustainability of our regional structure. Locally, we do this by taking responsibility for our own parts of the regional structure and by helping other local authorities develop their parts." (GR 2008, p. 2) Linguistically speaking, the economic growth perspective is not the only perspective to feature in the agreement. But it is fairly clear that the economic sustainability dimension is dominant. The social dimension is conspicuous by its absence

and the ecological dimension is primarily mentioned in two contexts: in connection with the fact that an increase in the proportion of public transport may reduce emissions of CO_2 and the fact that the Göta River should be protected in various ways.

"SUSTAINABLE GROWTH" 2013: THE FIFTH CONSULTATION PROCESS

GR's fifth consultation process involved 'updating' the strategies in the "Sustained growth" document from 2006. GR's executive board explicitly wanted to highlight issues on "social cohesion, the environment and climate".[8] What distinguished the background to this process from previous once was the electoral success of the 'Alliance for Sweden' both nationally and in the GR municipalities except Gothenburg, which affected GR in that the Conservatives assumed political leadership in the form of Jan Hallberg and succeeding chairman Jonas Ransgård, both of whom were municipal commissioners at the City of Gothenburg. Moreover, the explicit aim was to reinforce the sustainability dimensions in the strategy. GR was also keen to encourage councillors in its member municipalities to discuss to what extent outcomes were 'on the right track' against objectives, what the needs were and how the municipalities could help further development in the region.

This consultation began with a presentation by planning officers from GR, who presented statistics on the results since 2006. Overall, the tone was optimistic, the phrase "we have achieved the objectives" being used to refer to various positive results. The population had grown by approximately 10,000 people compared to the target of 8,000, and the Gothenburg Region had performed well in an international comparison of growth in terms of gross regional product (GRP). Moreover, in the period 2000–11, Gothenburg had a higher income growth than Stockholm and Malmö and the level of education in the region had increased. The labour market region was also starting to look increasingly coherent, and the share of journeys made by public transport had increased. However, the GR local authorities also had a number of challenges to contend with. The most worrying aspect of the official report was that highly educated people in the region tended to move to the Stockholm area, and that the majority of those moving into the city were people with limited means, either young people in their 20s or foreign nationals (BRG 2011). Although many people in the Gothenburg Region were happy with their lifestyles, a group of around 8 per cent are not happy on account of factors such as unemployment and ill health. CO_2 emissions were increasing and, at a rate of approximately 2,000 new-builds a year, the construction of new dwellings is out of sync with the demands being placed upon it by 10,000 new inhabitants a year. The councillors involved in the consultation process were therefore asked to consider which of these challenges, i.e. issues around climate and social polarisation, "should be tackled jointly" and "when GR was deemed to be a good platform for ongoing work" (GR 2012b).

Following the consultation in the member local authorities, some 200 councillors met in Gothenburg in March 2013 to reflect on the results of the fifth round of consultations and to discuss regional development at inter-municipal level. Ylva Löf, head of planning at GR, summed up the consultation as follows: "We are well on the way to achieving our

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[8] According to GR's webpage on the consultation process
http://www.grkom.se/toppmenyn/politiskstyrning/radslagsprocessen/radslag5.4.2032fbd513a0358ed0a80001538.html

objective, but the infrastructure objectives will not be met in time. We need to take a shared perspective on social sustainability and we must take greater responsibility for the environment and climate related issues" (GR 2013b).

Sustainability policy: a breif history of global, national and local policy for sustainable development
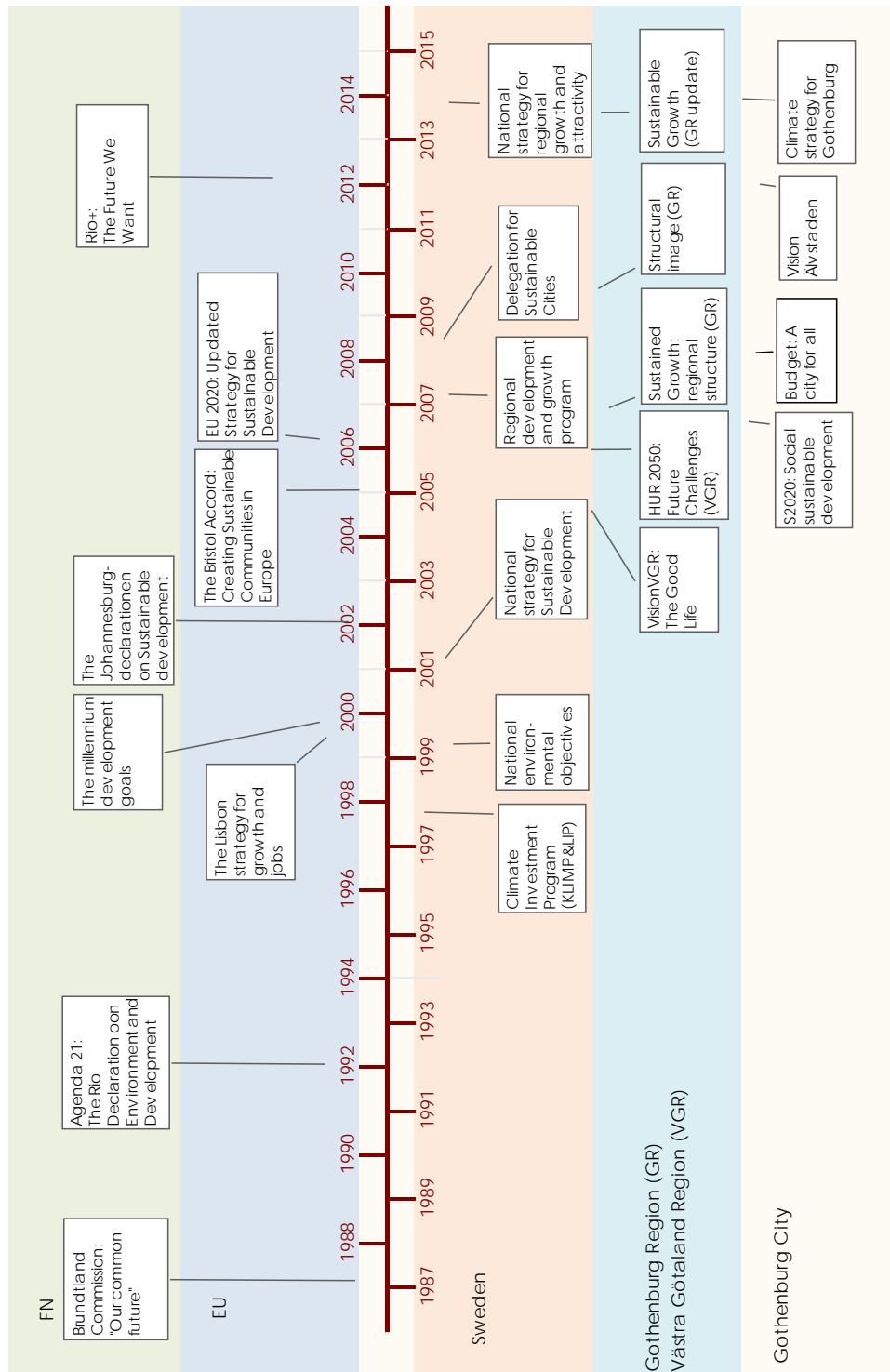
Figure 1. Sustainability policy: a breif historu of global, national and local policy for sustainable development

(Bild: Nazem Tahvilzadeh)

Centrala policydokument, processer och kunskapsgrunder för hållbarhetspolitiken i Göteborgsregionen 1987-2014

Policy

Structural image (GR)	Sustained Growth: regional structure (GR)	HUR 2050: Future Challenges (VGR)	Vision VGR: The Good Life

Processes

Cons. 5: How meet future challenges? (GR)	Cons. 4: Structutral image (GR)	Cons. 3: Sustained Growth(GR)	Cons. 2: How collaborate? (GR)	Consultation1: Municipal collaboration a strenght (GR)	

Knowledge bases

Social Sustainable Development in the GR	Sustainability models: what is sustainable development? (GR)	HUR 2050: Future Challenges (VGR)	Growth in the Gothenburg Region (BRG)	West Sweden and the new Economic Geography (VGR)

Timeline years: 1987 1988 1989 1990 1991 1992 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015

Figure 2. Central policy documents, processers and knowledge bases for the sustainability policy in the Gothenburg region 1987–2014

(Bild: Nazem Tahvilzadeh)

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Below, we analyse the discourses which lie behind the strategy document "Sustainable growth" based on the above-mentioned aims. W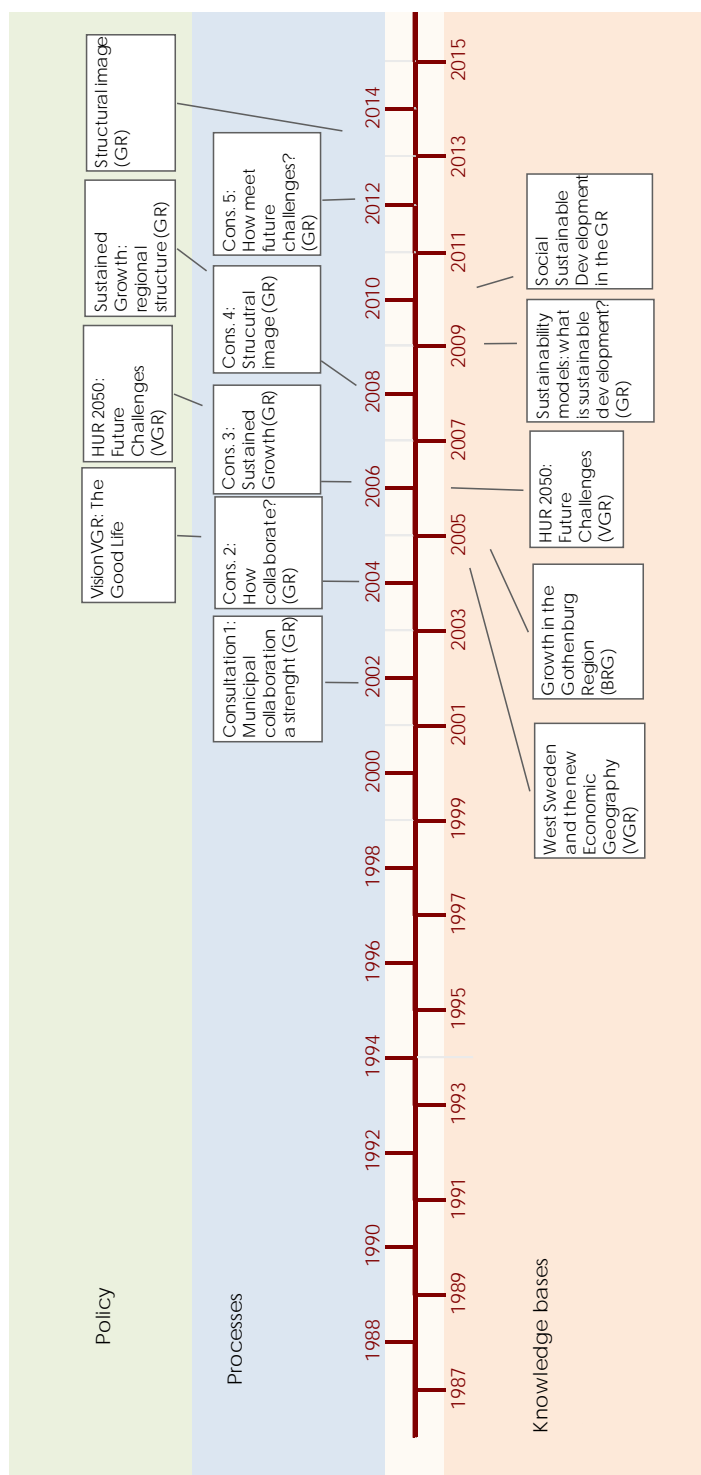e focus in particular on how these discourses have impacted on the strategies for managing the three challenges: climate change, poor infrastructure and social polarisation. We begin, however, with the overarching discourse which characterises development work in the region: regional expansion and densification.

ECONOMIC GROWTH: EXPANSION AND DENSIFICATION

In essence, it is clear that many of the contemporary regional development and growth strategies are heavily inspired by what has come to be known as 'the new economic geography' (NEG). This applies in particular to Region Västra Götaland (2005) and the Gothenburg Region, primarily as a result of BRG's background study (BRG, undated). In principle, NEG has nothing to do with sustainable development. It is more a collection of ideas on what promotes economic growth, which have then been interpreted in a way that corresponds to what is also thought to promote sustainable regional development.

The person most obviously associated with NEG is prize-winning economist Paul Krugman who, in the early 1990s, formulated a theoretical economic model which had a major impact in the field of economics and economic geography (Krugman 1998; 2011). One of his contributions was to give economic theory a geographic dimension, i.e. the idea that economic development is location dependent. Suggesting that companies seek out geographical locations where there is a good market for their products or services and that this encourages other companies to do the same is hardly a revelation. Other earlier economists, e.g. Gunnar Myrdal and Bertil Ohlin, highlighted the geographical factors involved in economic development but they did not put forward an economic theory as to how and why this happens and how it can be that economic growth occurs in some regions but not in others. Research on NEG and political exploitation of prescriptive conclusions from this research has increased significantly since the early 2000s. Although its conclusions are primarily based on abstract models, NEG has had a clear political impact (Garretsen & Martin 2010).

In summary, NEG can be said to have two main messages: one is that economic growth primarily occurs in urban and dense regions. Regions, not the country as a whole, bring competitive advantages. Global competition increases between ever bigger metropolitan regions rather than between cities. But these regions do not only make things easier for export businesses, they also constitute marketplaces for supply and demand for goods and services. The other message is that the larger the region, the larger their local domestic markets (VGR 2005b). The conclusion is that geographical concentration of companies and jobs is a positive thing. This means that NEG encompasses both regional expansion and densification of cities and metropolitan regions.

Regional expansion

The concept of regional expansion primarily refers to the growth of labour market regions, i.e. to an increase in the number of people working in one and the same labour market region. This increase can be achieved through inward migration into a region or through more people commuting to work within a region. Regional councillors and administrators

presenting their 'region' therefore have a vested interest in portraying a large, but at the same time concentrated and coherent, labour market region (Westholm et al. 2008).

How does this relate to sustainable development? Firstly, it can be argued that economic growth corresponds to the economic dimension in the concept of sustainability. That it must be 'sustainable' may then quite simply mean that constant growth is desirable as a means of furthering social and environmental objectives.

Secondly, regional development is often about promoting the transport of goods and people. Generally speaking, for example, reducing CO_2 emissions in the transport sector is deemed to be difficult, not least because there is a tendency for road transport to increase and this transport is clearly associated with economic growth. What is highlighted as more sustainable is to increase rail transport and public transport. This has been given particular priority in the Gothenburg Region, where the objective is to increase the share of journeys made by public transport from 20 per cent to 40 per cent. Moreover, the national objective for the transport sector is to double the share of public transport (number of passengers) by 2020. The idea is that if the share of public transport increases and the share of car travel decreases, emissions of CO_2 and other greenhouse gases will also decrease. Thirdly, the regional development and growth policy is related to the social dimension, primarily in that it promotes mobility for people who do not commute by car, generally women, young people, less educated people and people with limited means. When the share of public transport increases, they get better opportunities to commute. Moreover, an expanded infrastructure which focuses on public transport can reduce unhealthy emissions, which can help improve public health.

The idea that regional expansion is positive for regional development and sustainable development is clearly not without its opponents. Critics argue that many smaller locations end up outside the priority areas of a region, not least when public transport is planned. Another criticism is that roads are given priority over railways, which means that emissions of CO_2 will not be reduced. A further criticism is that infrastructure, in the form of roads and railways, constitutes barriers and takes up large areas of land, which may have negative environmental and social impacts.

Densification

Just as the view of the region has changed in contemporary policy, the view of the city has also changed, as expressed in the emergence of urban policy (Granberg, 2004). Urban policy (even if, formally speaking, there is no such thing) involves the city itself driving development initiatives which aim to make it more attractive and more competitive (Dannestam, 2009). In practical terms, this means marketing the location (the city), such as through urban regeneration projects. One dominant idea in Swedish urban policy is that cities should be made more compact. Regional expansion and urban densification are essentially based on the same logic, i.e. bringing different resources, people and activities together in spatial terms. The Delegation for Sustainable Cities, which was active in 2008–12, was very clear on this point, i.e. that urban sprawl must be restricted in favour of the densification of existing developments.

There are a number of theories within international research to which this approach to urban policy relates. Perhaps the main focus here, which encompasses both researchers and practitioners (planners and architects), is 'new urbanism', which strives for a 'compact city' in contrast to the sprawl which is a feature of many cities, both large and small (Neuman

2005). New urbanism is primarily an American phenomenon, partly because US cities are often considerably more spread out than European cities. A prominent work often cited in this context is Jane Jacobs' classic study on New York's modernistic renewal (Jacobs 1961/2005). The ideas have, however, very much gained a foothold in Europe too, and in Sweden in particular. Gothenburg is unusually sprawled compared to other Swedish and European cities.

A further line of research which is used to justify both regional expansion and urban densification is what are popularly known as theories on 'the creative class' (Florida 2002). The idea is that a city, or rather a metropolitan region, should, in various ways, attract creative and talented people. This will bring with it a good chance of new businesses being set up and investors being attracted to the region (for an overview, see Antoni 2010).

What then are considered to be the benefits of a compact city from a sustainability perspective? The list can be long but the following are often cited:
- The geographical distance is reduced, which means fewer car movements, which means reduced emissions of greenhouse gases and pollutants.
- Since the new buildings are energy efficient, densification leads to greater energy efficiency, which also helps to reduce emissions.
- Densification is thought to give rise to greater social and economic interaction, which promotes the growth of social capital such as innovation and creative thinking in different areas. It is emphasised in particular that urban life provides scope for interaction between people from different backgrounds, which is thought to counteract various forms of xenophobia.

Here too there has been criticism. Both researchers and politicians have notably argued that:
- The reduction in emissions of greenhouse gases which this densification could lead to is often counteracted by an increase in leisure journeys, and reduced energy consumption for heating purposes is outweighed by increased consumption of goods and services, which leads to increased emissions of greenhouse gases at global level.
- In practice, the social and cultural interaction between people is not so obvious. On the contrary, segregation tends to increase. One explanation for this is that properties increase in value and rental prices rise as a result. This gives rise to so-called 'gentrification', i.e. the middle classes move into blocks and areas which were previously inhabited by people on lower incomes. When rents and house prices increase, people on lower incomes are forced to move to other areas.
- Green areas may disappear and noise levels increase.

Urban densification, or what is often known as 'smart growth', relates to a large extent to physical structures, not economic and social conditions. However, this contemporary planning paradigm has gained a strong foothold, partly because it is in line with neo-liberal and competition-oriented growth strategies and, at the same time, embraces pre-modern urban structures and lifestyles in which a car-free movement pattern prevails (Krueger & Gibbs 2008).

Critics believe that 'the new urbanists' think, like earlier the modernists, that you can change human behaviour through design (Tunström 2009). Some researchers believe that supporters of densification need to understand a paradox: the most effective tool for developing a city is spatial planning but spatial design is of little significance to environmentally sustainable development. People's everyday lives and consumption patterns have more significance, but they are not as easy to control (Jensen et al. 2011, Bolin et al. 2013). Thus, there are limits as to what spatial planning can achieve in terms of reducing emissions of greenhouse gases or restricting the overall use of resources. Clearly, the starting-point in a given city affects the extent of the influence it can have.

As we said above, the discourses in "Sustained" and subsequently "Sustainable growth" are based on NEG, with regional expansion and densification as fundamental strategies. In other words, it is a collaboration in which the economic dimension of sustainable development takes precedence. As we will describe below, based on the three challenges of sustainability, this creates paradoxes with regard to the environmental and social dimensions. The main challenge to meeting the objectives for regional expansion and densification is, at the same time, the poor infrastructure in the metropolitan region. As we demonstrate below, the search for a solution to this challenge has resulted in a push to create organisational cohesion between key players in the Gothenburg Region.

IMPACT ON CLIMATE

So, how was the issue of climate reflected in "Sustainable growth" after the deliberate attempt to raise its profile through the fifth consultation process? It seems that the issue of climate change came to the fore relatively late in the Gothenburg Region. It began to feature in strategy discussions in around 2006 but not until six years later did it become part of the Gothenburg Region's overarching development strategies. By way of comparison, in 2007, over 80 per cent of the country's municipalities had drawn up a climate strategy. It appears that the consultations which took place prior to the update demonstrated the municipalities' desire to take responsibility for climate change, that GR "would help create a fossil-free economy by 2030", that there was support for VGR's climate strategy (which was adopted in 2009) and that a climate-smart transport system would need to be developed (GR 2013).

Before the three strategy documents were formulated, HUR 2050 had published several reports, including one on the environmental criteria for sustainability, which focused on emissions of greenhouse gases (CO_2). No specific strategies were mentioned but there were general statements about the need to reduce energy consumption, to switch to renewable sources of energy and to build a smart transport system, together with a reference to research which indicated that the cost of converting the energy system could be offset over time given continued growth in the global economy. It appears from what they write that the authors subscribed primarily to the 'weak' sustainability approach.

The background information which appears to have been most significant for the development of "Sustained/Sustainable growth" and the "Structural Framework" is BRG's background paper "Growth in the Gothenburg Region". This makes no reference whatsoever to impact on climate or climate change. In summary, based on documents and conversations with the players involved, it appears that the issue of climate did not feature in the Gothenburg Region's discussions on sustainability until fairly recently and that it was

not considered in the region's growth strategy. The HUR 2050 network discussed the impact on climate, but only in "Sustainable growth" is it related to specific sustainability objectives.

Cohesion and decoupling in the case of climate impact

If we consider the way impact on climate is dealt with in the region using the previously described concepts of decoupling and cohesion, the following conclusions can be drawn:

The links between ideas, policies and outcomes are vague. Impact on climate has been defined as one of the three most important challenges but no specific measures have been proposed to meet this challenge. Rather, emissions of greenhouse gases are automatically expected to decrease if the proportion of public transport is increased and as a result of a reduction in energy consumption. This can be expressed as smart growth (densification) leading to a reduced impact on climate. As far as adapting to forthcoming changes in climate is concerned, here again, tangible measures are conspicuous by their absence. If we look at outcomes: there was no reduction in CO_2 emissions in the 2000s.

Conversely, it can be said that impact on climate is linked to the economic sustainability debate by the fact that regional economic growth is expected to be achieved at the same time as a reduction in emissions. A link between environmental and social sustainability cannot be identified, although it is clear that groups with different resources also rank differently in terms of their consumption of CO_2 (Bolin et al. 2013).

SOCIAL POLARISATION

It is important to remember that the social dimension and social divides in the region were the issue which was at the forefront of the initial consultations. After the first round of consultations, it was concluded that "the social divides and their geographical polarisation are a common source of concern for all of GR member municipalities" and it was recommended that a concerted effort be made to counter "increasing social rejection" and "security issues" (GR 2002). Prior to the second round of consultations, the issues of "social structure" and "civic empowerment" were the first items in the consultation documents. It is not until the third consultation that the growth discourse overshadows the others.

In several of the Gothenburg Region's policy documents social inequalities are defined as "unsustainable" and therefore to be rectified in an effort to achieve a sustainable society. In the background work on social sustainability there is a distinct tendency for the various knowledge producers to look for ways of legitimising regional expansion and densification through social sustainability indicators. In HUR 2050, for example, a special background paper by medical researcher Peter Vährborg was devoted to the issue of social sustainability. Vährborg identified five potential social issues in addition to widespread ill health in a future Gothenburg in 2050: isolation (ethnic segregation and unemployment), uncontrollable dependency (food, sugar, gaming etc.), deviant behaviour (gangs and organised crime), need for social support (seriously deprived groups) and participation/influence (less local influence) (HUR 2050, undated, p. 12). Polk (2011, p. 489) believes that this definition was strongly influenced by Vährborg's medical expertise but that it was difficult for the network to find anyone else to take on the job of defining the concept.

Vährborg links social sustainability to the expansion and densification discourses by developing a number of scenarios and a recommendation for a strategy. The starting-point in his analysis is that primarily two variables influence the impact of regional growth on health and social problems: the degree of densification and the distribution of economic resources. His recommendation, which expressly assumes that economic growth is a prerequisite, is to develop the metropolitan region into a "multi-centre – equitable" infrastructure, in which what is described as a "local society structure", with resource redistribution measures, is expected to have a number of positive effects on health and environment: greater opportunities for physical activity, leisure, social proximity etc. (ibid. p.15).

BRG's "Growth in the Gothenburg Region" also linked ideas on expansion and densification to the region's social development. In the context of the change in Swedish economic policy in the 1990s, BRG argued that the development of the welfare society, in terms of employment and sustainable housing policies, was to a large extent dependent on the economies and growth of the metropolitan regions (BRG undated, p. 97).

According to this report, the Gothenburg Region must therefore devise a clear strategy for growth, which aims to unite the region through more and more efficient public transport and to increase the city centre's capacity for housing and jobs. It is also alleged that "theory and facts suggest that the size of metropolitan regions plays a crucial role in economic development, competitiveness and prosperity" and, more specifically: higher growth in employment, higher level of education, higher incomes, lower unemployment and less dependence on welfare benefits (ibid, p. 9).

Although Gothenburg did not have an equivalent to the Malmö Commission, where strategies for a socially sustainable future were combined in an organised collaboration with researchers from various different fields, it is clear that researchers, through various types of collaboration (BRG and HUR 2050), contributed background information which was linked in various ways to political action plans. Alongside these policy collaboration bodies, it is clear from the statement in Gothenburg City Council's red-green majority budget (2013) that the Council has an overarching social objective: "a city for all". The task of developing the strategy for socially sustainable development was delegated to the Gothenburg City Social Resources Administration (Social resursförvaltning) in 2007 and the strategy was given the name 'S2020'. This small unit, whose function is to gather and disseminate knowledge, was tasked with raising awareness of the social dimension of sustainable development among the city officials, in order to put it on an equal footing with the environmental and economic dimensions. Under this initiative, much attention was paid to social polarisation within the city, which was referred to as "segregation". As well as recruiting researchers with expertise on the social aspects of physical planning, S2020 created a forum which acts as a knowledge hub for social sustainability. The unit also played a key role in developing a number of internal management tools which integrate social perspectives into planning, such as child impact analysis, social impact analyses, the "knowledge matrix" and the development of methodologies for civic engagement in urban planning (Cullberg et al. 2014).

Socially sustainable development in GR's strategy
So, how did GR approach and define issues of socially sustainable development, and how can we relate this policy formulation work to the framework for cohesion and decoupling?

"Sustained growth" is based on VGR's vision "The Good Life", *Vision Västra Götaland* (2005), i.e. "development which achieves a balance between the economic, social and environmental dimensions and application of the perspectives: a cohesive region, equality, integration and internationalisation" (p. 4). However, the five strategy areas contained in "Sustained growth" are not expressly linked to social sustainability. Rather it is stated in one of the four measures for achieving the strategies that GR will collaborate to develop a sustainability model in which one of the "current major challenges" is identified as "narrowing the social divide". It is also stated that sustained growth is dependent on working together to "achieve balanced investments in housing" (p.7). So, in this strategy document, there is little correlation between ideas and policies on social sustainability and little integration of the three dimensions of sustainability. The aim appears to be more to develop collaboration over the concept of sustainability in order to promote a way of working which can incorporate the social challenges.

What margin for manoeuvre did "Sustained growth" create with its infrastructure programme for joint measures for socially sustainable development? It appears that GR primarily acted as a generator of ideas, supplying its 13 member municipalities with perspectives and ideas and, most importantly, with a language on the concept of sustainable development. To further reinforce the collaboration over social sustainability, GR produced the baseline analysis "Socially sustainable development in the Gothenburg Region" (2010). This emphasises that collaboration over infrastructure involves not only transport infrastructure and environmental issues but also safeguarding and improving "the opportunities for human interaction" because it is not roads that unite a region "but the people who use them" (p. 3).

Four social factors are highlighted particularly relevant for developing "the good life" through regional structures:
– An attractive living environment which offers a good living environment and places to meet.
– People's ability to find meaning and purpose comes from employment but also from involvement in society.
– Good welfare is crucial to people's sense of security and justice, which, in turn, are essential for an effective democracy.
– Regional cohesion is mutually dependent on all of the above factors and is fundamental to socially sustainable development. (Cited from GR 2010).

This baseline analysis emphasises that the challenges GR is facing include facilitating the increasing requirement for travel in the region, the ageing population, the increase in inward migration and ever more diverse family and life situations. The "accelerating segregation with larger gaps and geographical polarisation" is also identified here as "the single largest threat to a socially sustainable development" (p. 22). The baseline analysis makes recommendations as to how GR can reinforce collaboration in the context of these challenges. Questions asked include: "How can we improve the opportunities for people to enjoy a good housing standard in the region irrespective of their resources and situation?", "How can we make better use of regional expansion to offer more people a route out of unemployment and better career development?", "How can foreign nationals and young people be given more opportunities to enter the labour market?"

However, the results of the four previous consultations with the region's councillors made no reference to specific collaboration on the social perspective other than networking and knowledge dissemination within the framework of GR. According to a number of informants, the social steering group (a political group responsible for social issues within GR) proposed that there be a specific consultation on socially sustainable development but, for various reasons, this proposal did not feature on the agenda. It appears that a key factor in this was that the City of Gothenburg was reluctant to give GR greater powers of decision over social issues because the councils of other local authorities were dominated by parties to the right. The ruling red-green coalition in Gothenburg feared that control over a number of important policy areas could be lost if the predominantly middle-class GR municipalities were given greater powers over social issues.

In the fifth consultation round, approaches to and evaluations of social sustainability varied significantly in council discussions. There were, however, a number of dominant themes. One such theme was the slow production of new homes which led to high rents and housing prices. Gothenburg City Council discussed the reasons for this and the fact that the new homes which were being built that not be accessed by the majority of the newly arrived urban population, while in municipalities such as Kungsbacka, Kungälv and Stenungsund it was pointed out that it would be difficult to keep young people in the area due to the shortage and cost of housing.

All of the municipalities also referred to strategies for creating a sustainable situation for the ageing population in terms, for example, of housing and leisure, and discussed how childcare and schools could manage the major challenges posed by inward migration, an increase in childbirth and the requirement for flexible working hours.

Thus, 'social sustainability' and 'social cohesion' were made tangible in the form of these socio-political challenges, the main thrust of which was that the building of new homes was not keeping pace with inward migration and that this, in turn, created a range of social problems. It was also clear that discussions were dominated by a different interpretation of the concept: the term 'cohesion' tended to be used in the sense of a collective *identity* for the metropolitan region. In this interpretation therefore, social sustainability does not necessarily involve justice, welfare and democracy but rather the extent to which the region has a shared identity as the 'Gothenburg Region'. Thus, in several of the discussions observed, in spite of GR's framing of the concepts, there was no clear definition of the concepts of 'social sustainability' and 'cohesion'.

In the final document, the precise nature of 'social sustainability' was just as unclear as it was in the document "Sustained growth". The updated strategy "Sustainable growth" refers once again to VGR's "The Good Life" strategy, stating that:

> *Positive development in the region is dependent on social cohesion between people who live under different conditions and in different circumstances. This cohesion will be achieved by creating mutual relationships between people and by everybody having the opportunity to be actively involved in society.*

We want to increase inter-municipal collaboration in order to increase social cohesion and create a safer environment for people to live in. This is an important driving force for development in the region and the basis for a positive view of the region. The first step will be to identify which areas will benefit most from inter-municipal collaboration.

<div align="right">GR 2013, p.11</div>

What is meant by 'social cohesion' here is essentially left to the reader to decide. The wording suggests that the objectives are "cohesion between people who live under different conditions" and "everybody having the opportunity to be actively involved in society", with a view in particular to promoting development and "a positive view of the region". But how this is to be achieved, through what measures and by what means, is not defined further, but is rather postponed, once again, until future rounds. Compared to the previous document "Sustained growth", the strategy is slightly more vague, since it no longer refers to "closing the social divide" or "balanced construction of new homes" as desirable measures. In concrete terms, the aim is to increase the provision of housing in the city centre from 30,000 to 45,000 new homes, but no objectives are formulated for the types of housing which are to be built. This is clearly the responsibility of the City of Gothenburg. The objectives of "Sustainable growth" are also vague in comparison to the areas put forward as areas for collaboration in GR's baseline analysis of socially sustainable development (2010).

At least this interpretation can be made after the first reading. If you go back to the concept of 'social cohesion' in GR's discourses, a different interpretation would be possible: According to Murphy (2012), *social cohesion* is an extremely vague concept which is defined differently in different policy documents, and, as stated above, the concept can be reduced to efforts to create a shared identity rather than evening out social divides. In GR's definition however, the concept of 'social cohesion' can be interpreted in very ambitious terms as a shared effort to create attractive living environments for all, welfare, security, justice and engagement (GR 2010). In the context of this interpretation, the objective would appear to be ambitious but lacking in a specific action plan, other than expanding the city centre and connecting corridors and uniting the region by increasing the share of public transport to at least 40 per cent. How the concept of social cohesion is interpreted in specific ongoing initiatives is, however, up to the individual member municipalities to decide.

Cohesion and decoupling in the context of social sustainability

BRG's analyses link regional expansion (growth) through economic modernisation (increased public transport) and social sustainability, which is understood as reduced unemployment and greater prosperity. Although "Sustainable growth" does not take a stand on socially responsible development, the general thought is that growth and prosperity (reduced social divides) are linked, and that an increase in public transport will primarily benefit the mobility of lower income groups. However, there is no discussion or analysis of the extent to which increased growth in the region could lead to a reduction in social divides and spatial segregation.

The County Administrative Board's opinions on the content of the municipal comprehensive spatial plans include many observations on the plans from a social

sustainability perspective, in particular the general unwillingness to plan for inward migration. For example, it is pointed out that the municipalities of Härryda, Kungälv and Tjörn certainly refer to social aspects of sustainable development, but that the comprehensive plans lack focus and a willingness to accept the municipalities' part in the ethnic segregation of the region, because they have a low proportion of foreign nationals among their residents and that they do not adapt the provision of housing to the groups which are moving into the region. Thus, according to the County Administrative Board, the issue of making room for people moving into the area is not given priority in the spatial planning of GR's member municipalities.

Chapter 4: Summarising discussion: coherent sustainability policy?

Having described the sustainability policy in the Gothenburg Region, with a focus on inter-municipal collaboration within GR and the "Sustainable growth" strategy, we will now discuss opportunities for and obstacles to the creation of a coherent policy for sustainable urban development. The focus is three aspects of cohesion: organisational cohesion, the balance between the dimensions of sustainability and the relationship between ideas, political objectives and outcomes.

TWO CONFLICTING VISIONS OF SUSTAINABILITY

Overall, we found that the Gothenburg Region has a coherent policy for sustainable development in terms of *organisational collaboration*. A political will among municipal leaders, various forms of networking and GR's five consultation processes with councillors in the municipalities of the Gothenburg Region have resulted in a raft of different background papers and strategy documents which express a coherent idea of how the Gothenburg Region should be developed. Inspired by Hajer's reasoning (1995), we can see that a 'sustainability coalition' has been formed which can be understood as a group of political institutions which voluntarily participate in collaboration with other players (HUR 2050, K2020, GR, VGR, BRG) with a view to improving their ability to achieve shared objectives. These forums for collaboration can be seen as informal in the sense that they work in parallel with the formal decision-making forums in the representative democracy: council meetings, municipal executives, policy committees, etc. The players in the sustainability coalition are united under a shared, growth-oriented discourse, or vision of 'sustainable development'. The strong cohesion within the coalition is expressed, not least, through the infrastructural investment known as the "West Swedish package". It is therefore not only a shared vision, manifest in specific ideas and strategies, which unites this coalition, but also specific, resource-heavy investment packages.

The sustainability coalition's vision

The ideas, or discourses, which unite this coalition are based on a shared vision of the development and future of the Gothenburg Region: this has a growth-oriented starting-point based on the vision of "the good life" in Region Västra Götaland's overarching strategy. All GR's strategies derive from this overall vision, which puts forward the idea that it is possible to combine several different things: economic growth, ecological sustainability and social cohesion, by focusing on barriers to economic activity and expansion of the local labour market. The specific ideas which underpin "Sustainable growth" as a strategy are based on theories of *new economic geography*, which presents regional expansion as a mechanism, *new urbanism* or *smart growth*, which sets targets for urban densification as the main strategy, and *environmental modernisation*, which takes an optimistic view of opportunities offered by technical innovations for the management of climate change, for example.

The link between this overarching dominant vision and reduced emissions of CO2 and social cohesion can be seen as what we defined in Chapter 2 as *weak sustainability* (Rydin, 2010). This interpretation focuses on the economic dimension of sustainable development. Negative environmental and social impacts are deemed to be justified by economic gains and measures to offset them.

This discourse has been institutionalised in the Gothenburg Region's political collaboration, networks and organisations and therefore dominates the view of what it is desirable to achieve and how it should be achieved. This vision is associated with a powerful rhetoric which succeeds in uniting large, powerful and, under other circumstances, even divided institutions. The vision permeates national and regional politics, the business world, as manifest in the work of BRG, councils and municipal executives and a raft of different researchers. This vision therefore clearly has the power to achieve organisational cohesion. The processes which preceded "Sustainable growth" and the strategies defined in "HUR 2050" (Polk 2010, 2011) and "Sustained growth" (2006) show how this weakly sustainable and growth-oriented strategy has had the power to overcome ideological and political opposition. Despite critical comments and symbolic protests, all parties included in the coalition, from left to right, can have their own interests satisfied in the agreements. The result is, however, that the idea of sustainable development, like the link between policies and outcomes, is not particularly coherent.

The critical vision

However, this organisational cohesion is threatened by tensions. Public criticism of the congestion charge in the City of Gothenburg, which notably led to the formation of a local political party known as 'Vägvalet' ('Choosing Paths'), could damage the cohesion. Critics argued that the City of Gothenburg and GR were adopting a "car-phobic" policy, and public opinion resulted in a referendum in the City of Gothenburg in September 2014, the negative result of which puts a significant part of the funding for the infrastructure package in jeopardy. There has also been criticism of the infrastructure package within GR's management, most recently from a Centre Party member of GR's executive board who maintained in an article in local newspaper G-P that there were serious problems with the "West Swedish package" (Wassenius 2014).

In parallel with the 'weak' sustainability vision institutionalised within GR, there is an alternative, critical vision which is not as dominant and organisationally coherent. This critical discourse is based on what has been defined above as 'strong sustainability', i.e. the idea that natural resources cannot be replaced by economic resources because they are unique and cannot be re-created. This critical discourse points out the paradoxes inherent in the growth-oriented agenda and highlights the need for both environmental resources and social cohesion in the Gothenburg Region. For example, some people argue that threats to local and global environmental systems must be taken into account from both a production *and* a consumption perspective. Others believe that we are exploiting many times the share of Earth's resources to which we are entitled from a generation perspective and that we are approaching the limit of what ecosystems, the environment and climate can withstand. From this standpoint, radical changes in lifestyle are required, such as a significant reduction in climate impact, re-use, recycling and breaking the link between exploitation of resources and economic growth (Rockström 2013). Many argue that the growth objective should be adjusted to 'down-growth', where economic sustainability is not equated to

economic growth but rather indicates the need for a re-distribution of the resources which are already available to meet people's needs for "the good life" (Jackson 2011). In other words, it is not just an ecological perspective but a perspective which presents social justice and welfare and the negative consequences of segregation, the shortage of housing and disparities in income as contrasts to the objective of economic growth.

This critical coalition is considerably less coherent: it is fragmented and lives in the shadow of the dominant sustainability coalition and its growth-oriented vision. It may seem strange that this critical vision has not been institutionalised in GR's political processes, particularly since it is driven by internationally renowned researchers, well-established civil servants, political parties, politicians and comprehensive background documentation which was used to formulate what ultimately became "Sustainable growth". In the debate on sustainable development, the Green Party, for example, has openly expressed this criticism of the growth perspective and put forward proposals for tougher action on emissions of CO_2 (GR 2013b, 2013c). In the City of Gothenburg, S2020, for example, takes a 'strong' sustainability approach, and the 2013 environmental programme adopted a consumption critical approach. This critical vision is therefore present within local government. It is also present in civil society, among both new and old social movements and associations which, on both environmental and social grounds, express their dissatisfaction with current policies and propose alternative courses of action in the public debate.

DECOUPLED POLICY IN TERMS OF CLIMATE IMPACT AND SOCIAL POLARISATION

Based on the 'weak' sustainability policy outlined in "Sustainable growth", we can point to a number of paradoxes in the cohesion between the three dimensions of sustainability. The aim of the strategy is said to be to "strive for a development which achieves a balance between the economic, social and environmental dimensions". In reality, the three dimensions can be regarded as relatively decoupled from each other. The strategy is essentially a policy for economic growth. The level of ambition which the GR municipalities have set themselves through the target of a "fossil-free economy by 2030" and the achievement of "social cohesion" has therefore not been reflected in the strategy.

We believe that climate issues have not been given sufficient priority. Certainly, the expansion of public transport may reduce emissions, but opinions on this are divided, and there is a risk that any such reduction will be counteracted by other objectives or the lack of political strategies. For example, 'sustainable growth' may also mean a further million flights landing at Landvetter Airport, which is in sharp contrast to the objective of reducing emissions of CO_2. Even if emissions from car traffic are reduced, the region's consumption habits and air travel will result in a disproportionate share of emissions from a global perspective (Bohlin et al. 2012).

Consequently, the CO_2 emissions generated by the lifestyles of region's residents may well remain unchanged and far too high in respect of both other parts of the world and future generations. In other words, as far as impact on climate is concerned, rhetoric and practice are decoupled. The ideas of a fossil-free economy, the political objectives for investments in infrastructure and the actual emissions of CO_2 (outcome) are not coherent.

We also believe that measures to counter social polarisation are not prioritised in the strategy and that the rhetoric on 'social cohesion' and the practice in this field are therefore

decoupled. Despite the target of 10,000 new inhabitants in the region every year, the GR agreement lacks specific measures for managing the increased geographic polarisation, segregation and disparities in income. These challenges were referred to in previous background papers as the greatest threat to social sustainability in the Gothenburg Region.

The absence of adequate measures to combat the shortage of housing is particularly obvious. Housing, like transport, is an infrastructure issue, and was previously the subject of collaboration between the GR municipalities. The vast majority of those who move into the Gothenburg Region are low-income groups, mainly young people and foreign nationals who do not have sufficient income and capital to obtain a bank loan or to pay high rents. The high costs associated with the small number of new rental properties and the increases in rent which result from energy efficiency measures and the retrofit of rental properties risk making life even harder for these already vulnerable groups.

Chapter 5: Concluding reflections; options for a coherent and 'strong' sustainability policy

We do not intend in this final analysis to attempt to define what the sustainable development of a metropolitan region 'actually is'. Our message is rather an appeal to acknowledge different views on the policy which is being pursued and the positive and negative consequences of this policy on people and the environment (and to create forums for dialogue based on these views). Firstly, we highlight divergent opinions, at both political level and among professionals, which must be allowed to be expressed in joint discussions within the planning organisations. Secondly, we propose a regulatory basis for the ongoing debate and, thirdly, we make proposals on how the ongoing debate on sustainable development in the metropolitan region could be formulated. Fourthly, we discuss the fact that the people who have influence over developments in society are not representative, and how new types of interaction with civil society could be an important means of achieving broader participation and alternative perspectives. And finally, we discuss the challenges which the municipalities in the Gothenburg Region are facing.

The municipalities in the Gothenburg Region have chosen to work together on sustainable development in a way which both creates opportunities for and poses obstacles to a transition to a sustainable society. The type of collaborative planning processes, which the association of municipalities (GR) represents, creates a forum for co-ordination and for the development of joint solutions. But it can only tackle the challenges which the municipalities can and wish to agree to tackle jointly. Consequently, there is a risk that the really tricky issues – particularly different aspects of socially sustainable development and the limitations imposed by the economic structures – are not tackled.

We ask ourselves how this governance can be developed to improve the prospect of the metropolitan region transitioning to a more sustainable development. Clearly, we believe that the local authorities must tackle all the key shared challenges, particularly at a time when cities are faced with a dramatic increase in population. Whether an association of municipalities is the most effective model for achieving this is debatable, but as things stand at the moment that is the only option offered by the Swedish governance model. The ongoing debate in the Gothenburg Region should therefore look for ways of achieving shared powers to tackle specific shared problems.

One objection could be that the City of Gothenburg, in its capacity as Sweden's second largest city and the region's economic and political powerhouse, is more important to development of the metropolitan region than the association of municipalities (GR). We agree in part with this view: the City of Gothenburg is a more powerful organisation than GR and clearly has a very significant impact on the development of Western Sweden as a whole. Moreover, the city has adopted a stronger sustainability policy than that adopted jointly by the GR municipalities. This is evident from both the creation of the social

sustainability and civic participation initiative S2020 and the 2013 environmental programme, which is an internationally acclaimed example of the use of a consumption-critical approach to reduce the carbon footprint of Gothenburg residents.

In this report we have frequently made reference to the crucial role which business development bodies play in how the municipalities in the Gothenburg Region have chosen to approach sustainable development and the shared challenges. Organisations which give priority to economic development and competitiveness appear to have been given significant influence over both the focus of collaboration and over which objectives and means are appropriate. It is primarily their vision of what 'attractiveness' means that has taken root in the sustainability coalition. Whether this was intentional or otherwise, the dominance of these bodies has contributed to the region ending up with a 'weak' interpretation of the concept of sustainability in which insufficient attention is paid to the tension between increased growth and sustainability. Clearly, at the same time, the responsibility lay with those who received and acted on the guidance documents on the basis of which decisions were made. We believe that new forums for dialogue within and between public organisations and interaction with civil society may be of major significance to the development of the Gothenburg Region. Through broader dialogue, consideration can be given to approaches other than those of the business developer.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HIGHLIGHTING POLITICAL DIFFERENCES IN SUSTAINABILITY POLICY

An analysis of how sustainability policy has been formulated in the Gothenburg Region over the past ten years indicates that it is dominated by a weak concept of sustainability. This is not in any way unique. Well before the concept of sustainability took centre stage on the political agenda, the metropolitan regions were constantly struggling to manage tensions between growth, environmental consequences and the inequalities which quickly manifest themselves in the physical space. In actual fact, there is probably no metropolitan region in the world which unequivocally pursues a strong sustainability policy. Neither should it be seen as a question of one or the other, but rather as degrees on a scale. Thus, GR's strategy for sustainable development appears to be more oriented towards strong sustainability than its equivalents in Cape Town and Manchester, for example. Nor is it surprising that it is the economic dimension or, to put it more clearly, the idea that population growth and economic growth will make the city more competitive, which dominates the approach to sustainability. Generally speaking, the dominant strategies for increased sustainability in different cities appear to be based on creating structures which are designed to increase the number of journeys made by public transport and a smart city paradigm which focuses primarily on preparing for the arrival of well-to-do individuals who are expected to be attracted by the city itself and the job prospects it offers, some of which previously lived in a detached house outside the city centre (Savitch & Vogel 2009, Gibbs & Krueger 2008).

In Gothenburg, as in other cities, it is strong coalitions that unite the techno-economical idea of growth and densification as sustainability. This idea generally lacks visions for a more equitable society other than the social system which in many ways has created the problems with which we are now confronted. Formulating a coherent idea of 'prosperity without growth', or an alternative approach to growth and how it is measured, does not

appear to be politically viable at present. Clearly, there are political tensions within the overarching sustainability discourse, but there is a fairly clear consensus of opinion that reduced growth does not lead to greater sustainability. In other words, the focus on continuous economic growth is strongly entrenched. What possibly distinguishes Gothenburg and Sweden as a whole from sustainability policy elsewhere is the strong support for ideas on welfare and equality in both political organisations and society as a whole.

The fact that the issue of social sustainability currently features in negotiations over regional development clearly acts as a springboard for a strong sustainability perspective which highlights the social aspects and consequences of the economic and environmental strategies.

It has also been suggested that regional collaboration over sustainability policy tends to be 'non-political', in the sense that no significant party political differences are expressed. The desire to achieve a consensus over the idea of growth and political measures to create an economically competitive region causes the parties to converge and unite around a common vision of current challenges and future opportunities. In simplistic terms it is the degree of 'greenness' or the degree of equality which differs from one party to another. This is however a simplified picture of reality. Behind the apparently consensus-oriented sustainability policy lie ideological divisions which are not always expressed in the political debate and which are not always represented by elected politicians either. Different ideas about what sustainable development is and what encourages it are present everywhere but are often concealed under a warm blanket of vague shared objectives and strategies. We believe that the divisions in the debate must be highlighted, whether they are party political or not.

It is also important to note that public institutions have different tasks and roles. GR cannot adopt an independent policy on sustainability which, for example, would challenge local authority autonomy over taxes and budget issues. In Sweden, it is primarily national and local authorities which have the political tools for defining and promoting sustainable development (although these tools have been adapted to a large extent as a result of Sweden's membership of the EU). GR's responsibilities have been delegated by the municipalities. It is up to the local authorities to implement what the executive board of GR agrees, but they cannot be forced to do so. Thus, sustainable development is primarily an issue of local authority autonomy.

Moreover, there is a clear division of labour between the different regional and local institutions. BRG, for example, is responsible for promoting regional economic growth and business development, while parts of GR are responsible for question of education and training, for example. At municipal level, the division of labour is also expressed in the form of different views on the nature of sustainable development. In the same way as different municipalities have different ways of approaching sustainability issues, it is also important to note that different organisations within a municipality can adopt different roles and logics. This distinction in roles is particularly evident in the structure of the sector-based networks coordinated by GR. Within the same organisation therefore, the growth-oriented focus may be presented as virtually unproblematic in some networks, while in others it is regarded as a problem. Different activities are driven by different logics. This can be referred to as 'sector-specific logic' or, in everyday language, siloes which need to

be connected, a holistic perspective and coherent logic. Once again, we believe that differences and tensions between sector-specific perspectives and approaches must be highlighted.

But the transition to a sustainable society requires more than a debate or organisation in which differences are made clear. There is probably no way of avoiding that the transition to a sustainable society will require ideologically and organisationally coherent strategies and endeavours. Sooner or later, these endeavours must be combined into a regulatory basis which can guide collaboration and strategies.

REGULATORY BASIS FOR DIALOGUE AROUND STRONG SUSTAINABILITY

A regulatory basis for cross-sector dialogue, which could result in the adoption of a strong sustainability approach, involves revisiting what the relevant legislation actually says and taking it seriously. Sweden's welfare-based society is based to a large extent on the medieval premise 'the land is built by law'. In other words, legislation is an important instrument of social change. The popularly elected representatives in parliament agreed on a number of universal social objectives which, in many cases, were defined well before people started talking about 'sustainable development' but which today appear to be extremely relevant in this context. We will start with the Constitution and then consider the purpose of three Acts of Parliament which we have chosen as examples because they are particularly significant to 'social structures' and as a regulatory starting-point for the three dimensions of sustainable development. One of the basic pillars of the Constitution is:

> *The personal, economic and cultural welfare of the individual shall be fundamental aims of public activity. In particular, the public institutions shall secure the right to employment, housing and education, and shall promote social care and social security, as well as favourable conditions for good health.*
>
> Instrument of Government, Art. 2

These principles in turn permeate a number of different areas of legislation which affect the visions on which efforts to achieve a sustainable future can be based. The first example is the opening paragraph of the Social Services Act (2001:453):

> *The social services shall, on the grounds of democracy and solidarity, promote people's*
> *– economic and social security;*
> *– equal living conditions;*
> *– active participation in society.*
>
> Social Services Act, Art. 1

Another crucially important example is the Environmental Code. According to the wording of the Code, its purpose is as follows:

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The purpose of this Code is to promote sustainable development which will assure a healthy and sound environment for present and future generations. Such development will be based on recognition of the fact that nature is worthy of protection and that our right to modify and exploit nature carries with it a responsibility for wise management of natural resources.

<div align="right">Environmental Code, Section 1</div>

Finally, the Planning and Building Act (2010:900) is also an excellent example. The preamble to the Act says that...

... the purpose [of the Act] is, with due regard to the freedom of the individuals, to promote the development of a society which offers equal and good social living conditions and a good living environment which is sustainable in the long term both for those living in today's society and for future generations.

<div align="right">Planning and Building Act, Art. 1</div>

The Constitution and other statements of basic principles in special legislation are not directly enforceable rules but rather express objectives which indicate a desired direction. At the same time, the legitimacy of the political system is based on people being able to recognise that society is being developed in accordance with these objectives. These and perhaps similar opening paragraphs in other legislation could constitute a regulatory basis for dialogue on the sustainability policy being pursued in the metropolitan region (and at local authority level) and the consequences of this policy. We believe that this would increase the likelihood of more *strong* approaches to sustainable development being pursued.

TWO EXAMPLES OF A CROSS-SECTOR CRITICAL APPROACH

How can the ongoing dialogue be made deeper and broader in a way which allows advocates of different logics and approaches to sustainability to feel welcome and motivated? In this context, two examples can be highlighted:

The first is HUR2050, a network of civil servants (municipal officials) in Västra Götaland which had a significant part to play in the development of current transport infrastructure planning, for example. The work of HUR2050 is well documented, and many of those involved can certainly help by sharing their experiences with new cross-sector networks. We believe that HUR2050 is a fairly successful example of how it is possible to achieve organisational cohesion, i.e. cross-sector collaboration which leads to a better understanding of what sustainable development entails and the formulation of strategies to promote it. At the same time, we believe that HUR2050 also highlights the dilemma between, on the one hand, proposing and discussing approaches which are critical of the growth-oriented approach and, on the other, being part of processes which have a growth-oriented focus.

The second example is the fundamental principle of co-production of knowledge by academics, policy-makers and practitioners on which Mistra Urban Futures is based. Here, practitioners and academics are united in the co-production of knowledge to provide insights and to facilitate the decision-making process.

However, neither of these role models really includes the political arena. There is an institutionalised division of work and responsibilities between politicians, practitioners and academics, but efforts should also be made to increase the interaction between them.

In parallel with the vision of 'weak' sustainability which has been institutionalised in the Gothenburg Region, we have seen the emergence of an alternative critical vision which is based on 'strong sustainability'. This critical discourse points out the paradoxes inherent in the growth-oriented agenda and highlights the need for both environmental resources and social cohesion in the Gothenburg Region. The critical coalition is considerably less coherent and more fragmented, and lives in the shadow of the dominant sustainability coalition. The critical vision is driven by civil servants (municipal officials), political parties, politicians (councillors) and background documentation which was used to formulate what ultimately became "Sustainable growth" but has not achieved dominance in the programme's key strategies.

It is clear from Mistra Urban Futures' ever greater portfolio of reports and knowledge production that a strong sustainability approach is emerging and is establishing itself in research processes involving both academics and civil servants/administrators. We see background reports which are critical of consumption habits and air travel from both a social and an environmental perspective (the WISE project10[9]), and we see reports which highlight issues of social polarisation, segregation and democratic participation (the KAIROS project11[10]). Creating a bridge between the knowledge generated in these reports and the political processes which formulate future strategies for sustainable development is not too great a challenge. Mistra Urban Futures already exists and builds a whole host of 'institutional bridges' between academics and practitioners in a way which can easily be used in future critical perspectives.

REPRESENTATION AND DIALOGUE WITH CIVIL SOCIETY

Dialogue in political processes is influenced not only by the separate logics which result from sector-based organisational structures. The nature of the parties involved in the dialogue, in the sense of their backgrounds and life experiences, also has a major impact on the content and focus of the debate. The social and ethnic background and gender of the politicians and civil servants (municipal officials), who formulate strategies for sustainable social development, is bound to influence the direction of the debate. Politicians and civil servants are driven by issues on the basis of ideological or professional considerations. However, these perspectives are not dissociated from their own life situation or experiences (Tahvilzadeh 2011). Young people, residents with a foreign background and people living in deprived areas ('Million Programme' areas) in particular are significantly under-represented in the forums where sustainability strategies for the Gothenburg Region have been discussed (primarily council meetings in the respective municipalities). These groups are also under-represented in the administrative organisations. Representation in these forums is determined by elections and recruitment processes which are generally slow-moving structures. In the long term, the objective should be to make participation in all public decision-making bodies more representative. Before this happens, however, there are

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[9] http://www.mistraurbanfutures.org/en/project/wise-%E2%80%93-well-being-sustainable-cities
[10] http://www.mistraurbanfutures.org/en/node/448

other methods which could help offset this distortion in representation, such as various forms of civic dialogue and civic participation. These methods have been used frequently in various urban planning projects, dialogue over the planning of Älvstaden being a prime example (Åström & Brorström 2012).

Cities generally have a wide range of organisations and associations which, in various ways, strive to develop and maintain a sustainable day-to-day existence for various groups of people and which advocate issues which may complement the views represented in the political and administrative arena (Kings 2011). A lively, ongoing dialogue which strives to listen more carefully to civil society may change the basis for dialogue in the political processes. Obviously, there is no guarantee that local associations will advocate a strong sustainability approach: clearly, quite the opposite could be the case. But it is in the everyday thinking of society that new and alternative lifestyles are developed which aim to tackle contemporary challenges associated with sustainability in civil society (Bradley & Hedrén 2014). Often, practices like this are developed and are then established and formalised in politics and economic systems.

When the strong sustainability approach and the critical discourse are side-lined in political processes they take root in civil society. Both new and old social movements and associations highlight problems with current policies and propose alternative courses of action on both environmental and social grounds. These voices should be used as a resource in future background and analysis work on sustainable development by GR and other bodies.

Being open to civil society's ability to solve problems may be an innovative approach in local political processes involving sustainability strategies. Mistra Urban Futures should also involve civil society more extensively in its mutual knowledge work, since these forums for civic cooperation contain a broad and often neglected source of knowledge of the society which the Centre wants to be instrumental in changing. Specifically including those voices which are furthest from the political decision-making process could be a transformative way of informing future decision-making processes of perspectives which may otherwise go unnoticed. Including, for example, the views of racial and ethnic minorities, the homeless, disabled, unemployed and long-term ill and those whose lives are most negatively affected by the housing segregation in the region could allow for other interpretations of what sustainability may actually be, rather than the definitions proposed by business developers. At the same time, people involved on a day-to-day basis with the rich network of associations and organisations in Sweden could provide both local knowledge and insights into complex issues which could certainly not be covered in full by experts in the public sector. By devising new solutions to include these groups, GR could act as a role model for the rest of the world on issues around engagement and regional development.

SPECIFIC PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

Thanks to unique and wide-ranging efforts to embed them, "Sustainable growth" and the Structural Framework for the Gothenburg Region have created a stable basis and framework for ongoing efforts to develop a sustainable metropolitan region. The municipalities now need to consider what they must convert into practical measures, both individually and together. What must they do to meet the challenges: segregation and social

polarisation, shortage of housing? What do attractiveness and regional expansion mean? How do they benefit residents and enhance their well-being? The municipalities are responsible for planning their areas in a way which promotes, or which at least does not hinder, the common objectives.

Social polarisation and segregation are not just a problem for the City of Gothenburg. The whole of the metropolitan region is segregated and is experiencing the tensions associated with social polarisation. This challenge cannot be resolved by measures in the City of Gothenburg alone, it also requires significant input from the entire region. The middle-class suburbs are just as segregated as the deprived 'Million Programme' areas: they are the other side of the same coin. Clearly, efforts will also be required at national level, which, in all likelihood, the region's politicians will have to claim within their own parties and jointly from the National Government. The same applies to housing: measures and changes in working practices are needed in each and every municipality as well as nationally. If we continue as we are now, things are unlikely to improve. The problems of a shortage of housing and elitist new housing developments will remain. A socially and culturally mixed city will not evolve; rather, its antithesis risks becoming a permanent feature for a long time to come.

An attractive metropolitan region is a commendable goal which must include all inhabitants, both now and in the future. Creating an attractive city only to attract new 'desirable' inhabitants does not create an attractive living environment for all the city's inhabitants. New visions are needed which can create security for all those living in the metropolitan region and which promote a sense of unity and belonging. The metropolitan region's purpose must be to constitute a basis which enables all residents, not just a minority, to realise their dreams. Such a basis cannot be offered by a socially polarised region.

Regional expansion must also have a positive impact on the cohesion and development of the metropolitan region as a whole. Better public transport is particularly important for vulnerable districts and residents who cannot afford their own car and who have to commute long distances to get to work. The West Swedish Package is primarily directed at measures which have a positive impact on travel between the surrounding municipalities and central Gothenburg. The requirements of vulnerable districts, where the number of people using public transport is often at its highest, have not been taken sufficiently into account.

Thus, the local authorities in the metropolitan region must now take the next step and convert their visions and their shared objectives into concrete measures and new ways of working. They cannot meet the challenges individually. If they are to succeed, they must work together. There is a strong argument to suggest that long-term success cannot be built on anything other than a coherent and strong sustainability policy.

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