4. Hotels in Stockholm, strategic spatial plans and urban sustainability

A case for the creative city thesis?

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This working paper investigates a central but under-researched issue in the creative city thesis: the role of the external effects of changes in the urban landscape. This is an important issue as much theory in this field has a strong focus on the role of the qualities of cities, including their aesthetics, amenities, “buzz”, feel, openness and tolerance, particularly the ways in which these might be attractive to highly educated and “creative” people, high technology firms and other knowledge intensive industries. Seen in this way, the cityscape is a resource for economic growth and competitive urban development strategies.

The creative city thesis is an integrated approach to urban growth and development in which the interplay of people, firms and the urban environment is seen as an important influence on economic growth. However, within this perspective there has only been a limited consideration of the role of hotels and hotel developments (Chang and Teo 2009). Nevertheless, hotels can play an important role in urban growth and development and are entangled in both the inward and outward relations that form the city, its attractiveness and social environment. Hotels are thus a focus of interest when critically reviewing the creative city thesis. The creative city thesis is a people oriented approach to urban development, rather than business oriented, and central to the theory is the claim that for cities to succeed they should develop a good “people climate”. Essentially this notion of a “people climate” refers to an open, diverse and tolerant environment in which people with creative skills and high human capital can meet, talk and exchange knowledge. This exchange will give rise to new innovations which will help drive the urban economy. There are echoes here of economic cluster theory, but the main actors are not companies in business parks, but the (creative) workforce of these companies combined with freelancers, artists, the self-employed and entrepreneurs that inhabit the city and who together make use of the city as an arena for continuous learning, making contacts and generating new ideas through various forms of “spill-overs” and “spill-acrosses”. The thesis requires other things to be in place too, such as universities and high-tech companies, for the city or city-region to be able to compete successfully for highly educated labour and investment.

For innovation driven urban and regional economies, such as Stockholm and many other cities in high-cost economies, it thus seem central to have a good people climate in which the innovative capacities of “creative” people can be realised to their full potential. The work of Richard Florida (2002, 2005, 2007, 2010) and Florida, Mellander and Stolarick (2008, 2010) have been particularly important in championing this approach and cities worldwide are adopting people oriented policies which are heavily influenced by their theoretical position. In order to attract and retain the “creative class”, urban decision makers try to shape and market the urban landscape by building or preserving cultural quarters, developing leisure amenities, upgrading “soft” landscapes and developing consumption activities (particularly associated with “culture”) in order to meet the perceived needs of the
“creative class”. In short, investments are made in the cityscape, particularly in the area of culture and amenities, in the hope that these improvements to the people climate will have positive effects on the economy.

Academic critiques of Florida’s thesis in particular have been fierce (Peck 2005, 2011; Markussen 2006; Scott 2006; Hansen and Niedomysl 2009; Borén and Young 2011; for review of critical remarks see Borén and Young 2012a) but these critiques seem to have had a limited impact on urban decision makers who continue to pursue policies based in creative city theory and thinking. Nevertheless, recent research also suggests a more nuanced approach (Borén and Young 2012a, Romein and Trip 2012; cf. Storper 1997 in Öhrström 2006; Storper 2010) in which the role of creative policy and theory is understood within local and national contexts and their distinct needs and characteristics as well as considering the interests of different occupational and social groupings.

Several studies suggest that we need more detailed evaluations of the creative city thesis from the point of view of different “user” groups, eg. different occupational groups (Markussen 2006), as well as of the urban characteristics that are important for occupational groups in a particular local context (Tinagli et al. 2007; Romein and Trip 2012). Borén and Young (2012a) also noted a “creative policy gap”, the gap in understandings about what creativity is and how it works between policy makers and creative user groups, such as artists, that needs to be further investigated. Storper (2010), moreover, argues that in order to explain why cities grow, we need to understand both why companies and people locate in a certain place. It should thus not be a matter of firms following people or people following jobs, but both. Another line of inquiry necessary to get a more nuanced understanding of the creative city is to see the city not as one unit, but as a complex organisation, comprised of diverse interests extended over a variety of scales (Borén and Young 2012b). The creative city thesis could also be applied and discussed in relation to city specific problems, which would provide a better picture of how well it helps explain urban growth in different contexts. One way to do this is to study a particular aspect of urban development, in this case the cityscape as resource and in particular the role of hotel developments in the cityscape.

These calls for more detailed analyses reflect the fact that the creative city thesis is, scientifically viewed, a new theory in the sense that concepts have not been fully tried out, causalities are still being tested, its limits and generalizability not fully known, and relatively little is known about its actual impact. In short: “the creative city thesis is ‘in the making’” (Romein and Trip 2012, p. 27). Moreover, its relationship to other important urban objectives, such as sustainability, is only beginning to be analysed with hardly any studies connecting these fields (Lewis and Donald 2010; Ling and Dale 2011; Fernández-Moldonado and Romein 2012). According to Vallance et al. (2012) the urban sustainability discourse tends to be too heavily focused on the bio-physical environment, rendering the city and its residents almost “invisible”. This limits its contribution to any people-oriented approach to urban development, in which (creative) people are held to be the drivers of innovation and growth, although an important part of the argument is that the “creative class” will be attracted in part to “clean” natural environments. The bio-physical environment is largely regarded as an amenity to be used for recreational purposes in order to fulfil people’s leisure and emotional needs.

In order to start to address these deficits in the literature, this working paper centres on changes in the urban landscape with a focus on hotel development and planning. There are surprisingly few analyses within the creative city literature connecting urban development with hotels. Existing studies address the hotel as an
integrated part of the creative economy and urban development and explore how
they commodify heritage and shape the consumption of the city in ways that fit the
preferences of the “creative class” (Chang and Teo 2009). This paper adopts anoth-
er perspective. Rather than trying to understand hotels as part of a creative “ecosys-
tem” (Chang and Teo 2009) or as interesting “third places” in the “social structure
of creativity” (Florida 2006) catering to the needs of the “creative” class, the ana-
lyses here is based on the strategic spatial plans of Stockholm and the images of the
“ideal self” (Koller 2008) regarding how hotels and related issues are envisioned in
them. Images of the “ideal self” are social representations, functioning in similar
ways to brands, and thus are subject to change as social relations change. They
make communication between actors possible and also help in establishing social
relations and identities. Cities develop strategic planning documents which con-
struct certain imaginings, “visions” or representations of the city in order to com-
municate their “ideal self” into the public sphere to try and engage a number of
other actors, such as investors, residents and tourists, into relations with the city.
“Ultimately,” Koller writes, “this ideal self is meant to converge with the actual
self” (2008, p. 435) but in complex social environments, such as cities, other actors
have to be engaged as well in order to succeed.

The concept of “ideal self” is thus relational in character and is here understood
in a “reflexive economical” sense (Storper 1997 in Öhrström 2006), meaning that
the images of the ideal self are a result of deliberations by a specific actor or group
of actors about possibilities in the social environment. Moreover, these images, or
visions, are constructed by the actor or group of actors without having to consider
the normal restrictions inherent in any real world setting of the here and now, but
are rather focused on what they would like the place and its conditions to be like, if
they could choose. In other words, the deliberations strive to imagine and formu-
late what “could be”. As these images take root in the social environment, they
become influential in shaping development through structuring the conditions for
action of other actors (Storper 1997 in Öhrström 2006), and thereby play a role in
materialising the ideas of what “could be”. Obviously, some actors or groups of
actors are more powerful than others in their ability to produce and disseminate
their vision. In the Stockholm case, the documents analysed here were produced by
the City Executive Office in cooperation with other administrations, and represent-
aves of the educational system, businesses and other authorities, but not signifi-
cantly with other external organisations or the public. The documents were not part
of a public consultation process. Following Storper, this could be a problem for the
success of these visions, as strategic planning in which the qualities of the place
itself are mobilised requires the support of all actors, including households and
different social groups (Storper 1997 in Öhrström 2006). In the production of the
vision plan for Hong Kong, for example, the public consultation process was used
to gain support from the public and to convince them of its merits (Flowerdew
2004).

Vision plans and other such strategic spatial planning documents are often used
as a means to project images of the “ideal self” into the social environment. In this
paper, the concept of strategic spatial planning “refers to self-conscious collective
efforts to re-imagine a city, urban region or wider territory and to translate the re-
sult into priorities for area investment, conservation measures, strategic infrastru-
culture investments and principles of land use regulation” (Healey 2004, p. 46). Of
particular interest here is the strategic aspect. According to Healey:
Strategic is sometimes used to mean a higher level of administration, or a more general or abstract level of policy. But it is also used to mean an overview, or more specifically, a framework. It implies selectivity, a focus on that which really makes a difference to the fortunes of an area over time. (Healey 2004, p. 46, emphasis added)

The aim of this paper is thus to analyse Stockholm’s strategic spatial plans and the images of the “ideal self” produced in them, specifically focusing on the role of hotels in urban attractiveness and sustainability. This is done by analysing strategic spatial plans for Stockholm which seek to shape the development of the city between 2010 and 2030 ie. “A world-class Stockholm: Vision 2030” from 2007, “Vision 2030: A guide to the future” from 2009, and Stockholm’s municipal comprehensive plan from 2010 “The walkable city: Stockholm city plan”.

The analyses also draws upon recent urban development debates in the “creative city” literature and focuses on the external effects of large scale physical interventions in the urban environment. The latter is illustrated with a case study of Stockholm Waterfront, a recently erected 16-storey conference, hotel and office complex in the centre of Stockholm. This case was chosen as a good example through which to explore issues of how attractiveness and sustainability may relate to an open people climate, competitive urban strategies and the creative city thesis because it is a newly built major hotel and conference complex, explicitly mentioned in the strategic plans, much debated in public, and with clear impact and external effect on the cityscape. For cities to be able to make use of the creative city (or any other) thesis they have to be able to translate it into strategic and concrete planning measures. Hotel development is one aspect that should have a role in any city which, like Stockholm, is striving to position itself globally and to “re-scale”, as expressed in the overarching strategy to make Stockholm a “world class city” (Borén and Young 2011). Obviously, hotel supply is crucial for international trade and tourism.

Hotels and competitive cityscapes

Hotels denote not only that the guests of the city have somewhere to sleep: they also often have powerful external effects, both positive and negative. These could include, for example, spectacular architecture, changes in the cityscape, environmental impact through increased pollution, job creation in other parts of the urban economy, and the building’s integration – both physical and social – into the local environment, leading for example to a positive impact on the life of the surrounding neighbourhood.

There are many different types of hotels catering to different markets of tourists and travellers. However, more upmarket, large-scale hotels in inner cities often primarily address the “transnational capitalist class” (Sklair and Gherardi 2012), rather than the local people climate, and the buildings are often designed as landmark buildings or are special in some other way (McNeill 2008; cf. McNeill and Mcnamara 2009). Architecturally, they would in many cases refer to other (often international) ideals than the ones found in the buzzy cultural quarters and renovated old industrial buildings, or other parts of the “urban vernacular” (Chang and Teo 2009), or “authentic” places (Zukin 2011), commonly considered important in the creative city thesis.

Thus, hotels dovetail with the city’s inner and outer web of socio-spatial relations. The establishment of a hotel is an important economic event as it is often an inward investment in itself, bringing in capital and creating both managerial and service jobs. Moreover, it is also considered important by Stockholm strategic planners to have the leading global chain hotels represented in the city (Eriksson, J
2012) as part of making the city attractive and putting it on the global map. There is a symbiotic relationship between the city and hotels when it comes to marketing. Hotels make use of the city in their marketing material, and the city makes use of the hotels to present itself (see also Andersson 2012, in this volume). Hotels and marketing are part of the place-making processes (Eriksson, J. 2012) and the cityscape becomes a commodified resource for this end (McNeill 2008).

The cityscape of Stockholm is a pertinent part of the identity of Stockholm, and is held up as important in, among other places, the strategic plans. It is used as a resource for tourism and marketing the city. In addition, the specific characteristics of the cityscape make the city in many ways unique or special in an “objective” sense, with eg. a medieval core, islands, waterscapes and a well preserved historical skyline. The “uniqueness” of the cityscape in itself should in this context also be seen as part of the resource. Sharon Zukin writes:

In the last few years image has become an important part in the branding of cities. In the same way as image may help market individual buildings and places, it may also market the city more widely as creative, interesting and attractive. The branding process binds together the interests of building companies and the wishes of consumers with the rhetoric of the politicians; the purpose of branding is to portray every city as unique and better than the competitors.

The result when every city strives for the same modern and creative ideals is, however, not authenticity, but an overwhelming one-sidedness that in a global perspective has not changed much from the blandness that [Jane] Jacobs fought. (Zukin 2011, p. 287, authors’ translation from Swedish)

The concept of “authenticity” is highly contested. It has been considered elitist in the sense that it is concerned with “a type of cultural power over space that makes the situation more difficult for the city’s old working class or lower middle class” (Zukin 2011, p. 15, authors’ translation) in relation to gentrification processes. This critique parallels other critiques of the creative city thesis, namely that it focuses on those places and people who are already well off, and does not significantly concern itself with those who are outside the “creative” centre (Peck 2005). Another critique is the essentialist character of notions of “authenticity”. However, theory in the field holds that it is the special characteristics of a place that make it attractive and that are strategically important. Richard Florida argues that places need to have a “distinct character” that could be used to “reflect over, and strengthen, our identities as creative people, where we can strive for the sort of job we want to have and where we have access to a range of amenities that suits our life styles” (Florida 2006, p. 41-42, authors’ translation) and states that what makes a city attractive are the “authentic” and “unique” features. Authentic is understood by Florida as the “the opposite of mainstream” and is about the particular mix (of old and new, people etc.) in each place, and in particular the sense of “genuineness”:

…a place that has genuine buildings, genuine people, genuine history. A genuine place also offers unique and original experiences. A place filled with chain stores, chain restaurants and nightclubs is thus not authentic; establishments like that look practically the same everywhere, and you get the same experience there as you would anywhere else. (Florida 2006, p. 273, authors’ translation from Swedish)

For the type of workforce which is the focus of the creative city thesis, ie. highly educated and creative people, the qualities of the city are apparently especially important. Not only jobs and salaries, or a place to live, are significant but also the city itself, with amenities, culture, universities, street life, cafés and other public
goods that make the city, first, interesting to be in (i.e. attractive to talent). Second, the city should be a place which functions as a breeding ground for ideas, informal meetings, social interaction and informal networking and other parts of a diffused learning process basically made up of the possibilities of an indefinite number of planned and coincidental face-to-face meetings – in other words, “buzz”. This is economic cluster thinking, drawing on the spill-over effects when people with weak social ties exchange information.

What is different from a “normal” cluster is that it is the city itself that is the arena which makes it possible for people of various professions and branches, including the self-employed, freelancers, free entrepreneurs, artists and other people in the cultural sector to meet, preferably in a tolerant, open and diverse urban environment that underpins the exchange of ideas. The city thereby becomes central as a place bringing all these people together. The city as arena is also what the city itself to some extent can influence and control (e.g. via policy and planning), whereas other important parts of the thesis, such as the role of universities (in Sweden a matter primarily for the state) or large high-tech companies, cannot be controlled by the urban authorities. To further underline the role of the local context, Romein and Trip (2012) argue:

Still, it seems that more could be made out of these contexts, making better use of the, often historically developed, particularities and authenticity of each city in terms of amenities, atmosphere, cityscape, specific cultural industries and clusters of (creative) people that give value to specific parts of the city. This should be preferred above long-term support of sectors only because these have proven viable elsewhere or the construction of flagship projects that lack sufficient embeddedness in the local context. Exploiting its uniqueness could make a city’s competitive advantage more sustainable as it prevents quick imitation by others. (Romein and Trip 2012, p. 46)

Seen in this way, how hotels are included in the development and planning of a city or a region is thus about much more than just the number of beds. In innovation based economies the role of place is ascribed important meaning and the city-scape in itself is part of what makes a place attractive and is thus one of the resources that fund economic growth. By studying strategic spatial plans it is possible to understand how the city itself is concerned with its development, what ideals and goals there are and how these will be achieved. There are two types of overarching strategic spatial plans that are directly connected to the development of Stockholm. These are visions plans and comprehensive plans. Other plans exist, such as regional development plans, that are strongly connected to the city of Stockholm, but as these are not primarily directing the municipality, and are generally considered less influential, they are not dealt with here.

**Vision plans in Stockholm**

Vision plans started to be developed in Stockholm in the 1990s (Wijkmark 2008) and all the plans since then, including the ones analysed here that were developed at the end of the first decade of the 2000s, have had 2030 as the “end year”. The vision plans fulfil an important function not only for shaping general development ideas for other types of planning documents within urban and regional planning, mainly Regulatory Detailed Plans (DRPs, legally regulating the physical forms and activities of the built-up areas), Municipal Comprehensive Plans (MCPs), and Regional Development Plans (RDPs). The vision plans of Stockholm should also guide all other work, activities and strategies within the municipality in all sectors. Also the companies and organisations that the municipality co-operates with are
encouraged to work in the spirit of the vision. Together with the yearly budget, the vision documents are the most important and powerful strategic documents for the city.

According to one of the leading civil servants at The Planning Administration in Stockholm, deputy director Arne Fredlund, almost all physical planning in Stockholm has its point of departure in Vision 2030 (L’Estrade and Westerlund 2012: 14). Interviews made by the authors (in 2008-2009) with planners and leading district officials also show that the vision is a document that shapes day-to-day practice (Borén and Yound 2012b), and that the City of Stockholm Executive Office ran an intense internal marketing campaign directed to all its c. 40 000 employees to focus their activities to deliver the vision to make Stockholm a “world-class” city.

The vision documents are the strongest stated political declaration of intent that there is for local urban developers and planners in Stockholm, and the images of the ideal self in them aim to guide development in the medium-long term (i.e. 20 years). Overall, the two vision documents analysed here are, to a large extent, concerned with the relationship between economic growth and attractiveness. Stockholm and the wider region should “lure” and “attract” and there are frequent references to “force of attraction”, “strong attractiveness”, “is a magnet”, “self-evident localisation” in the 2007 version, though these are less prominent in the shorter 2009 version. The comprehensive image of the ideal self portrayed in both versions is that of a strong, liberalized and growing economy in a “remarkable” and “unique” city (see pp. 4-5 in both documents) with an excellent system of schooling, higher education and research engaged in a number of interrelationships with both the private and public sectors (pp. 8-9), and a very high quality of life and welfare through all stages of life (pp. 12-13).

The international aspect is very strong throughout both documents and is presented in positive terms. In the introduction to the Vision from 2007 Kristina Axén Olin, mayor and then the highest political leader in Stockholm city, wrote: "globalisation brings with it tremendous opportunities in the shape of new, growing markets and expanding trade” and that together with the rest of the Stockholm-Mälarregion that “we are sufficiently large to offer the sort of qualities that will enable us to compete with the world’s great metropolises” (Vision 2030, 2007: 1). In the vision from 2009 the new top political leader of Stockholm, mayor Sten Nordin states: “What we plan and decide now will benefit future generations. […] When taking decisions, a long-term approach is essential to ensure that Stockholm can stand up to the growing international competition. Nothing is a given forever. We cannot rest on our laurels” (Vision 2030, 2009, p. 1). The wish to re-scale Stockholm and further strengthen its position in global networks is clearly seen in the visions, as is the conception that the city-region is competing with other (global) cities to keep up and attract its share of the global economy. In relation to urban growth theory, such as the creative city thesis, the visions make use of all its general elements and underline the role of education, the attractive cityscape with interesting natural and cultural amenities and an innovative business climate. The version from 2007 also underlines the role of culture, although this receives less emphasis in the 2009 vision. In general, the typically Floridean features of urban policy are less evident in the 2009 version and there is less focus on culture and diversity which are core elements of, and are taken to be indicators of, a tolerant and open people climate.

Although hotels are only mentioned specifically four times in the vision documents (Vision 2030, 2007, 2009) much of what the plans talk about as strategic
goals would be linked to the need for increased provision of hotels to service international visitors. Here we analyse one of the more concrete images of the “ideal self” (Koller 2008) in Vision 2030 – namely that of Stockholm, as it is formulated in one of the section headings, as an “international meeting place” – although the inherent logic of other images would also contribute to increased travel and thus hotel demand. An example of the latter is that, under the heading “The centre of a strong, growing region”, the city writes:

The region’s strong appeal to knowledge-intensive companies has created a growing market for business related services. Lawyers, accountants, economists and other qualified business professionals are in great demand, as are the services provided by restaurants, hotels, cafés and shops. All this has led to the establishment of many new, exciting service sector companies. (Vision 2030, 2007, p. 8)

The examples below are from the 2007 version of the vision as it is this version that has been agreed by the City Council, and it is also the document which directs the work of the comprehensive plan from 2010. The 2007 and 2009 versions are similar overall, apart from the diminished role of culture in the later version. Stockholm Mayor Sten Nordin, however, said in a talk followed by questions at Stockholm University (27 August 2012) that these changes in the documents did not reflect a change of policy regarding the visions and role of culture in Stockholm.

The ideal self as an “international meeting place”

In the vision plans a number of factors suggest an increasing demand for hotels up to 2030, particularly as the ideal self image promoted frequently refers to or infers increased (international) travel. The image of Stockholm as an “international meeting place” portrays Stockholm as an important city for meetings and conferences. Under the heading “International meeting place” the Stockholm-Mälare region is held up as:

one of the world’s more important meeting places, with a decidedly international flavour. The region hosts many major international congresses, trade fairs, meetings and events that attract people from all over the world. The new congress facility in the city centre, the exhibition centre in Kista, developments at Stockholm International Fairs and the big increase in the City’s hotel capacity have made Stockholm one of the world’s leading cities for congresses and conferences. (Vision 2030, 2007, p. 9)

One area is explicitly mentioned in the vision as a place where a hotel will be built. It is at “the Central Station area, [where] a hotel and conference centre of top international standard is being planned as part of the development of the western city centre” (Vision 2030, 2007, p. 17). In winter 2010/2011 this project was completed and the hotel and congress centre Stockholm Waterfront was inaugurated in March 2011.

Other parts of this ideal self are concerned with international exchanges of various kinds. These have a clear connection to the hospitality industry. The city vision states that:

The Stockholm–Mälare region’s status as one of the most knowledge intensive regions of the world also attracts foreign students and researchers, who come to Stockholm either for short stays or for extended periods. Similarly, artists and musicians of all kinds seek out the creativity and the new art forms that the region has to offer. Alongside residents, newly arrived practitioners of the arts help maintain this attrac-
Stockholm is conceived to be a “strategic gateway” for Eastern and Central Europe meaning that: “Numerous international companies active in these markets have set up their European headquarters and R&D departments in the [city] region” (Vision 2030, 2007, p. 9).

In the final paragraph under the heading “International meeting place” transportation is treated in both versions, and both have a focus on air transport. In the 2007 version of the vision it is envisaged that the Stockholm-Mälardalen region:

is supported by highly convenient air, sea and rail connections with the rest of the world. Stockholm–Arlanda Airport is the Nordic hub for all air traffic, offering frequent departures and non-stop flights to all the world’s metropolises.

The airports Stockholm–Bromma, Stockholm–Skavsta and Stockholm–Västerås, largely relieve the pressure on Stockholm–Arlanda Airport, and a Skavsta Express rail link has been constructed to ensure rapid transfers between central Stockholm and Skavsta Airport. (Vision 2030, 2007, p. 9)

To sum up, Vision 2030 portrays an image of an ideal self that implies increased travel and connections with other city-regions which in turn would signal an increased demand for hotels in Stockholm. If so, it would be important for the comprehensive plan, which is more concrete in directing land use, to take this into account.

**Hotels in “The Walkable City”**

In a shorter time scale, but still on a strategic level, comprehensive plans are used to direct socio-spatial development. These plans have spatial connections that are more concrete than in the vision documents and should describe more specifically how the land and waters of the municipality should be used. In the MCP of Stockholm – “The Walkable City” (2010) – it is also stated that: “The City Plan is a clear example of how this vision of the future [Vision 2030] can be made more concrete” (The Walkable City 2010: 11). The city plan was adopted by the City Council in March 2010.

The Walkable City (2010, p. 4) identifies nine “focus areas” that are considered to be “a distillation of the public interests that the city considers most important and most pressing”. Connected to these are “planning aims” that should “act as guidelines for subsequent planning”. It would thus be expected that if hotels are considered important and pressing, then they should have a place in one of the focus areas and be mentioned in the planning aims. The plan also identifies a number of strategic areas and nodes in the outer part of the city. Hotels are explicitly mentioned once in connection with a strategic node (the one at Telefonplan). For many of the other nodes there are general statements about strengthening service provision and mixing activities, which thus also could include hotels.

In many of the nine focus areas hotels or related services are weak or not relevant but in a few there is a stronger connection. In the first focus area and planning aims, named “Stockholm as the city on the water”, it is mentioned that the city should promote tourism and that the port area Värtan-Frihamnen should become “a specialist ferry and cruise terminal and a new port for Stockholm” (p. 15) (while at the same time freeing up waterfront areas for development). In the second focus area (about business and education) there is a table showing that c.4% of employ-
ment in Stockholm in 2008 was engaged in restaurants and hotels (p. 16). The other focus areas prioritise development in their respective area, some of which in general or indirectly could mean increased interaction with other places and hence an increased demand for hotels. However, in the focus area “A city rich in experiences, culture and history” hotels are explicitly dealt with and the analysis below proceeds from this focus area and connect the results with the images of the ideal self in the visions.

Under the heading “Tourism increasingly important” in this focus area the city writes:

Tourism is becoming increasingly important to Stockholm. Tourism in the city has increased by more than 40 per cent over the past ten years, particularly in terms of the number of hotel stays and restaurant visits. The city has a good standard of hotel accommodation, with many top-class hotels, although there is a shortage of hotels in the budget category.

[…] In addition, the city is a central launchpad for tourists who also visit other parts of the region, not least the archipelago. There is scope to build on the role that Stockholm plays in tourism within the ever-expanding Stockholm-Mälaren region. (The walkable city, 2010, p. 29)

The ideal self of Stockholm as an international meeting place is clearly visible in this focus area although it is also present in other focus areas as well. Under the heading “Focus on exhibitions and events in Stockholm” the plan seems to be in line with the image of the ideal self in the vision documents concerning congresses:

Stockholm also has a strong position as an exhibition and congress city, with Stockholm International Fairs and recent investment in Kistamässan and Stockholm Waterfront. Planning is under way for a new national arena in Solna and for the Stockholm Arena in Globen City. There are also numerous ideas for other arenas for sports and events. One problem at the moment is a lack of central spaces where temporary events can be held. It should be possible to use the city’s water in a new way for these short-term activities. (The Walkable City, 2010, p. 29)

Concerning the planning aims for these issues, which should guide actual planning decisions, it should be noted that hotels are not mentioned. This might be due to the fact that there is no shortage of hotel beds at present in the city, apart from in the budget category. Without planning aims one might, however, expect that this deficit would be more difficult to address successfully. It was, moreover, not long ago (in the 1990s) that the city experienced a great demand for hotels, and one could also expect that a new deficit will arise if the city succeeds in realising the vision as an international meeting place with several major congresses and trade fairs, a number of large arenas with tens of thousands of visitors and an increase in trade and tourism. Will there be a large enough hotel capacity in the city if several large events are happening at the same time?

In summary, the analysis of the vision documents points to an increased need for hotels up to 2030 whereas the comprehensive plan does not directly address hotel capacity in the region as a problem, apart from in the budget category. The city notes, however only in the Swedish version (p. 27), that if the number of visitors continues to increase, then it “might be actualised with a strengthening of the hotel capacity”. There are certain differences between the two types of strategic spatial plans but the analysis shows that both portray an image of increased travel and more visitors. In light of this, and in connection to the ideal self of Stockholm as a global city and important node, it is also important to examine actual devel-
opments in the cityscape. Below a recent and much discussed hotel and congress development project is examined as an example of the external effects that hotels and buildings of this type might have on the cityscape.

Stockholm Waterfront

As mentioned in the vision document from 2007, Western City around the Central Station was identified as a place for the development of a hotel and congress centre. In March 2011 the “Stockholm Waterfront Congress Centre” and the adjacent “Radisson Blu Waterfront Hotel” was inaugurated. The congress centre has the capacity to house 3000 delegates in the large conference hall, which is also used for concerts and other events. The conference hall is flexible and its functions, size and number of seats can be made to vary with movable walls and other technical solutions. In the congress part of the complex there are also smaller spaces for meetings, a dining hall (for up to 2000 persons) and other facilities. The congress centre is closely connected to the hotel via the lobby and indoor corridors. The hotel contains 414 rooms including three suites situated on the 16th floor, and also has a restaurant, a bar (but not a sky bar) and a fitness lounge (Stockholm Waterfront Congress Centre 2012a). The whole complex also contains one more building, as high as the hotel and filled with offices.

The congress part of the complex might be considered spectacular as its roof is surrounded by a wall of metal pipes that undulates around the top, while the hotel and the office parts are housed in a black and white and a black 16-storey building respectively with right angles of a more typical modernist style (Figure 4.1 and 4.2). The conference centre and the hotel are both part of the Rezidor Hotel Group, a global company with about 86,000 rooms in over 400 hotels in more than 60 countries (Stockholm Waterfront Congress Centre 2012b). The congress centre and the hotel are marketed together (by the Rezidor Hotel Group) whereas the office part of the complex is run by the global real estate consultant Jones Lang LaSalle.

The complex is situated in the most accessible location in Stockholm, right by the Central Station, the hub of transportation in the city, with escalators to both the airport shuttle train, trains, commuter trains and the subway. It is located adjacent to the World Trade Centre and the central bus terminal. The central location is a selling point for the hotel and the conference centre, but so is the cityscape of Stockholm. Information material about the conference centre (Stockholm Waterfront Congress Centre, not dated – a glossy brochure), accompanied by photos of the cityscape, states that: “Located in the heart of Stockholm, across the water from the City Hall, the modern architecture is a spectacular addition to the city skyline” (see Figure 4.1). The text presenting the conference centre emphasizes the surrounding cityscape:

The congress centre is built right on the edge of the water. It offers impressive views overlooking Lake Mälaren. Across the waterway in one direction you can see the City Hall and in the other direction you’ll see the Old Town and Parliament. And should you want to get closer still, the waters of Stockholm are some of the cleanest in the world which means you can go swimming or fishing right in the city centre.
Figure 4.1 The Stockholm Waterfront Congress Centre at the front with the Radisson Blu Waterfront Hotel behind. View from Klara Mälarstrand. Photo: Thomas Borén, April 2012.

Figure 4.2 The office part of the Waterfront complex (in the centre) and the Radisson Blu Waterfront Hotel (to the left) from Klarabergsviadukten. The Central Station is in the foreground. Photo: Thomas Borén, April 2012.
This in itself, apart from being PR for the conference centre, also functions as PR for Stockholm as a city. This is further underlined in the brochure under the heading “Stockholm”:

Stockholm was the first city to be named “European Green Capital” in 2010. But Stockholm is much more than green and clean. It’s vibrant. It’s laid back. It’s beautiful and it’s got something for everyone. The city is known for producing innovative IT and media businesses, sleek designs, edgy fashion and world-class nightclubs. It offers a cosmopolitan atmosphere with a bustling café and restaurant culture and has one of the highest concentrations of museums and galleries in the world. Beyond the buzzing metropolis of the city centre’s boutiques and restaurants, Stockholm is laid out in a system of 14 interconnected islands. Yet the city centre is small enough to allow you to take it in on foot. The waters of Stockholm offer a stunning backdrop to everything else the city has to offer.

This kind of symbiotic relationship between the city and the Rezidor Hotel Group, in which the Rezidor Hotel Group write about Stockholm in, in fact, Floridian terms, is an example of how the two parties jointly could benefit from the same basic cityscape resource – if it were not for the fact that some consider the complex to actually destroy the resource it capitalises upon.

Aesthetic logic and sustainable use of the cityscape?
Generally, one goal of strategic spatial planning is to try to secure a development that is sustainable (Healey 2004) and the Stockholm plans are no exception to this. The plans can be seen as part of the “institutional dimension” of sustainable urban development connecting and balancing social and economic concerns (Fernández-Moldonado and Romein 2012). In relation to planning and sustainability a particular point must be made about the planning context in Sweden. The Planning and Building Act from 1987, last updated 2010, give the 290 municipalities a “planning monopoly”. This means that they are free to plan according to what they believe will be the best path of development for themselves, as long as they keep within the legal framework of national legislation. However, in practice the control functions of the superior authorities are weak (Hrelja et al. 2012, p. 129), thus leaving the municipalities with additional room for strategic manoeuvring. Moreover, the municipalities generally seek to be flexible in finding planning solutions, which means that, in relation to the decentralized planning system and the weak regional or national control of plan fulfilment, they often do not adhere to their own goals and objectives, if there are other priorities, for example to attract inward investment. Hrelja et al. (2012, p. 141) conclude that:

Although urban planning visions may encompass broad sustainability goals, municipalities do not adhere to them.

Stockholm as the largest city in Sweden obviously has a stronger position than most municipalities in negotiating the planning terms for inward investment with larger external actors, but the point here is that the city nevertheless can act very much as it pleases in relation both to its own objectives, and to overarching regional and national goals, when it comes to particular projects. This also seems to have been the case regarding the Stockholm Waterfront development.

The complex is built on the site of an old post terminal. The terminal was torn down and by 2000 the city, who had bought the land, planned to build a hotel on the site. This first project met with protests because the building was considered too high and the project was cancelled, although the new building is even higher
than the one originally planned (Eriksson, E. 2010). Gert Wingårdh, a leading Swedish architect responsible for the original hotel design, stated: “It is completely absurd that there is an unbelievable examination the first time, when my project was reviewed. While the next round passes through more or less unnoticed” (quoted in Silberstein 2011, p. 44). According to Eva Eriksson (2011) it was a need to increase real estate profitability which gradually made the hotel higher and added the office section. The City had bought the land from the postal service and needed a return on its investment. Thus, in the Waterfront case the city was both land owner and contractor, as well as the planner who should protect public interest in urban development. The City sat on many chairs at the same time.

Public debate around the development has been running for several years in the leading newspapers in Stockholm, Dagens Nyheter and Svenska Dagbladet, and in architectural journals. One of the major issues is that the building affects the skyline of the city which is protected as a “national interest” for the cultural environment. The protection considers both individual buildings, particular environments as well as the cityscape and the skyline at large in the inner city. Among other things the national interest protection concerns:

… the fronts towards the water spaces and the water straights (inlopp) to Stockholm, both from Saltsjön [in the east] and Lake Mälaren [in the west]. The views from important viewpoints, perspectives (blickfång), the contact with the water. […] The city skyline with limited height of the houses in which it is only church towers and public buildings that have been allowed to raise above the lot. (The Walkable City, 2010, attachment “Riksintressen enligt Miljöbalken”, p. 11)

The “national interest” preservation protection is part of the environmental laws of Sweden and concerns cultural, natural or recreation areas that are considered of value for the nation at large, rather than only of local concern. It is the County Councils, ie. the regional state authorities, which are responsible for enforcing compliance by the local authorities, who are the institutions that have executive power over these areas. In the County Council of Stockholm’s statement regarding the detailed regulatory plan to construct such a high and wide building facing the waterfront, they approved of the Congress Centre but were critical of the high parts of the complex and said it risked becoming “too dominant” in the cityscape and that the building was unconvincingly “allowed to depart from the surrounding more irregular (uppbrytna) cityscape”. They stated that in this:

… extraordinarily important, sensitive and complex location the city should […] enlighten alternative solutions. The planning documents should therefore be complemented with alternative design solutions/volume studies. (Länstyrelsen i Stockholms län 2006)

These critiques from the state were ignored by the City and the Stockholm Waterfront was built. It is significantly higher than its surroundings and affects the view from the water straights from both directions. It is clearly visible from the western water straight arriving from Lake Mälaren, but also from the eastern straight as the building is seen over the Old Town from larger cruise ships and ferries entering from the Baltic Sea. It also clearly affects the urban scenery from important viewpoints (eg. Monteliusstigen, Fjällgatan and Katarinavägen). From Fjällgatan, for example, it is seen over the Old Town, making the medieval city look small.

The complex, moreover, is not a public building and the public has access only to limited parts of it. All the high parts are closed to the public. To get into the office part you have to pass a reception with security guards. Regarding the high
part of the hotel, which is the part where the hotel rooms are situated, the classification of this is “semi-private” (McNeill 2008). The parts of the hotel and conference center that are open to the public, like the restaurant and bar, are considered “semi-public” spaces, which could be said to also apply to the congress centre. None of these are situated in the high part of the building.

The building has, as mentioned, also provoked considerable debate. To summarise the public debate: critics of the complex highlight that the Stockholm Waterfront has in several ways harmed the national interest and the cityscape as a resource (see eg. debate articles by Eriksson 2011; Hagelqvist 2011; Murray 2011; Lidmar 2011; and comments by a number of architects in Arkitektur 2010). They argue that the buildings are considerably higher than their surroundings and have therefore markedly changed the skyline. The proximity to the landmark the Stockholm City Hall is another point of critique as the Waterfront complex is argued to diminish the value of the City Hall’s architecture (sometimes referred to as a masterpiece, and one of Sweden’s most famous buildings). The Waterfront buildings are moreover large and totally flat, which clearly does not fit with the historic city’s uneven rooftops. From the west the large body of the development screens the tower of the Klara Church but the spire points up above it. From certain angles the modernist architecture at Kungsklippan is belittled. A further critique is that the Waterfront’s architectural style differs little from a standardised ‘international’ style of design which can be found all over the world.

The building as a whole does not fit easily with the aesthetic logic of Stockholm in which only certain types of buildings should stand out in the skyline. The logic is based on the national interest and on the fact that the well preserved inner city and its skyline, together with the waters, is what makes Stockholm globally special and beautiful for many people. Both aspects would be considered valuable assets in any people-oriented urban growth theory and would thereby be of value for Stockholm as strategic resources in marketing and competing for investments, tourists and skilled labour.

One argument in the public debate goes further than the architectural critique. Eva Eriksson (2011) argues that the Waterfront development capitalizes on the surrounding cityscape but rather than contributing to this resource it diminishes its value by “distorting the proportions in the cityscape”:

This illustrates an important problem in the development of Stockholm today, which is appropriate to reflect on when gazing at the magnificent view from the congress hall: if the desire to profit from a beautiful city image generates larger and higher buildings in sensitive locations, then finally we will not have anything left of the beautiful city image. (Eriksson 2011, authors’ translation from Swedish)

Some voices in the debate also defend the complex or parts of it (e.g. Slottner 2011; Nerlund 2011). These tend to argue that every era has to be allowed to make its own architectural impact on the city, that high iconic buildings enrich the cityscape, and that Stockholm “needs” development. Some also argue that the area could have more high buildings that would embed the Waterfront complex, so it would not be solitary but part of an ensemble of high-rise buildings. Many of the Waterfront defenders tend to be politically affiliated to the governing right-wing alliance in Stockholm who had the complex built. Martin Rörby also points out that from some angles the high-rise part strengthens the connection between the City district and the district of Kungsholmen (Arkitektur 2010).
The public debate has, however, mainly been of concern for experts – architects, politicians and others with a specific interest in urban development issues. However, what about the “ordinary” citizens? And tourists? How is the waterfront buildings perceived in relation to the cityscape at large?

In an interview survey made in March 2012 by urban and regional planning students at Stockholm University, a number of questions were asked about the cityscape from the viewpoint of Katarinavägen (Figure 4.3). From this viewpoint you see the waters, the medieval Old Town and part of other districts from mainly the 19th century with the characteristic low skyline with church spires needling the sky, as well as the Waterfront Hotel rising up behind the Old Town. The students summarize the answers from the 11 tourists and 10 citizens interviewed regarding the Waterfront hotel:

A lot of people thought the building was ugly, grey, industrial and boring. But on the other hand it was associated with a working place and a contrast with the surroundings. It’s seen as a very powerful and groundbreaking building. Only a few people made positive comments, such as ‘interesting’. (Söderholm Duarte et al. 2012)

These results are in line with an “enlarged public consultancy” (utvidgat samråd) carried out 2011 in connection with the development of an architectural strategy for Stockholm. During the public consultancy process there was also an exhibition by the City Building Office (Stadsbyggnadskontoret) which attracted 12,000 visitors between 11 June – 28 August 2011. The purpose of this exhibition was to “inspire and stimulate Stockholmers to share their dreams and visions on the future city” (Stockholms stad 2012a). Regarding new buildings the opinion of the visitors,
who in a number of ways shared their views on the future of Stockholm, are summarised thus:

Many people express their views on the architecture of Stockholm. For the future, the visitors call for more variation of the buildings, more colour and details in the facades and more exciting architecture. When building in the current districts there could well be more new thinking and recent architecture, but it must be done in harmony with the present buildings. (Stockholms stad 2012b, authors’ translation from Swedish)

Judging from the interviews, the statement by the County, and the public debate, the Waterfront hotel is hardly built in “harmony” with the surroundings, and seems thus to be a building which is at odds with the general preferences of Stockholmers as stated in the enlarged public consultancy. On the other hand, the Rezidor Hotel Group has a conference and hotel centre that in their marketing material makes use of the city. Thus, the cityscape is used as a resource by the Rezidor Hotel Group without the building adding value to the cityscape, according to the aesthetic logic of this resource. Quite the opposite, the building makes the cityscape of Stockholm less special and not as unique as it was, but more like any other city, with high buildings, iconic or not, interspersed in the central parts.

In addition to the questions regarding the use of the cityscape as a resource in the Waterfront case, it must also be noted that even if the complex is built to reduce energy consumption compared to other buildings (Stockholm Waterfront Congress Centre 2012), and its location close to the Central Station presumably leads the conference and hotel guests to arrive and depart by public transport to a higher degree than otherwise, it could also be assumed that internationally oriented conference and hotel facilities contribute to an increase in air traffic. This would then mean that the Waterfront complex indirectly leads to an increase of carbon dioxide and other emissions in the region. Increased international air traffic is furthermore implicit in the ideal self of Stockholm as an international meeting place, and even if the Waterfront complex and other buildings are built with new, energy saving techniques the impact on the air and other vital resources most likely will increase as well.

Conclusions and discussion
This working paper started with the ambition of relating the creative city thesis to hotels and strategic spatial planning in order to better understand the role of external effects and large scale interventions in the cityscape in processes of attractiveness and sustainability. The aim was also to further critically review the creative city thesis in a concrete and specific case of an urban development project. We have, however, not considered the relation between hotel development and different types of hotels, different groups of hotel users, or their relation to “creative” user groups of various kinds. Rather, the specific contribution here is to relate urban growth theory to strategic planning and actual changes in the urban landscape and to explore these in the light of the creative city thesis.

To specifically address the issue in the title, are hotels in strategic planning documents of relevance for the creative city thesis? In the creative city thesis a strong emphasis is placed on that which is special and unique, that places have a distinct, “authentic” and genuine character and are not mainstream. According to the creative city thesis, then, serially reproducing urban forms and architectural styles which can already be found in many other cities – as the Waterfront case illustrates – and while doing so erasing part of the particularity of Stockholm would thus
make Stockholm a less attractive, “authentic” and interesting place for highly educated and creative people to be in, which in the end might affect the innovative capacity of the city (which is the core purpose of the “creative city” thesis). Obviously, the skyline of a city is only one aspect of many urban features which play a role in making a city “attractive”. A city interesting to the “creative class”, Florida writes (2006), would include individualised, customised or more special experiences in which the “creatives” themselves have a more or less active part in forming the experience. Rather than places of mass consumption, like large sports arenas (to which could be added large ordinary hotels), which would be more significant in an industrial economy and older paradigm of city development, places attractive to the “creatives” would be boutique hotels, smaller music scenes, ethnic restaurants and bars, outdoor recreation facilities and the like. These kinds of meeting places could also, according to the creative city thesis, be expected to function better both as places for “buzz”, development of contacts and a diffused learning process, and for strengthening the identity of the “creatives”, than would large-scale chain hotels. Hotels, however, could also be a part of this creative “ecosystem” of interesting “third places”, both by adding to or preserving the architectural qualities of the cityscape, and/or by their interior designs, which could be of cultural interest (see Chang and Teo 2009), and services, such as bars and restaurants. These issues are, however, not visible in the strategic plans of Stockholm when it comes to hotels. However, they are more emphasized in other parts of the plans, but not in direct connection with hotel development. Also, as Julia Eriksson (2012) shows in her interview study, urban strategists and planners in Stockholm believe that small, boutique hotels, which are often family owned (which is a good basis for a varied and diverse hotel scene in the city), are not possible in Stockholm as there is no tradition of that form of hotel enterprise. There would also, according to them, be a lack of suitable buildings and prohibitively high land rents and rebuilding costs to make such enterprises viable. Urban strategists and planners thus prefer larger chain hotels in the city centre.

Another general conclusion is that the ideal self in the vision plans suggests a need for more hotels by 2030 but that the comprehensive plan says little about hotel development, even though the ideal self in this plan also implies more visitors to the city. According to the comprehensive plan there is only a deficit of budget hotels at the moment but the plan does not include hotels in its planning aims, and speaks only explicitly once of hotels outside the city centre. This issue is empirically demonstrated by Eriksson (2012) who demonstrates that the discourse regarding hotel development among strategists and planners in Stockholm is only directed towards the city centre. This also points to a more general critique of the creative city thesis as an urban growth theory, namely that it is mainly concerned with the centre of cities and the “creative” and highly educated people, whereas ordinary places for living, mostly in the high-rise suburbs where most of the “creative-have-nots” (Peck 2005) could be expected to live, are left in what might be called the “plan shadow”. Most resources and effort become directed not to the places and people that maybe are in more social and material need of planning attention, but to urban environments and groups that are already well off. When strategically selecting what to focus on, the flip side of the coin is that certain areas and themes are over-shadowed and not addressed by plans, i.e. they fall in the plan shadow.

To conclude, hotels are not a particularly salient issue in the city’s strategic plans in relation to the creative city thesis. Therefore it is also difficult to discuss the validity of the creative city thesis based only on that material. On the other hand, when relating the creative city thesis to the cityscape as a whole, the thesis
seems more useful where it focuses on “uniqueness”, compared to other cities, for understanding the attractiveness of a city as expressed in the interviews, the public debate and other urban actors when considering the specific case of the Waterfront complex. To conclude this paper, the external effect of the Waterfront complex on the cityscape is discussed in the context of place-based urban strategies.

As selection is an inherent quality of strategic planning (Healey 2004), it is important that all concerned parties agree on what should be selected, and hence what should be left in the plan shadow. That all parties are included and work together is also, according to Storper (1997 in Öhrström 2006), essential in making place-based competitive strategies successful. In Stockholm, this has not been the case and that large and central development projects like the Waterfront Complex are carried out in spite of other actors’ explicit critique and disapproval is a sign of a social and political environment in which the cooperative qualities needed for optimising the effects of strategies are absent. The vision documents were, moreover, not the result of cooperative efforts by many actors to be a strategy that all actors could share. Rather the visions are the result of a narrow group of centrally positioned decision makers and have also been criticised by the political opposition (Stadsbyggnadsnämnden 2009, p. 4) for not being anchored enough in local life. It could also be noted that vision plans are not regulated in the Planning and Building Act, but they are still allowed to function as a plan directing all other plans in the decentralised planning system of Sweden.

For a city like Stockholm, which wants to rescale, it is likely that it is relatively more important to have support from all actors – to get strategies to work, everyone must cooperate and try to fulfil the visions. Hence it does not seem like a constructive path to “build to break” and destroy a cityscape that many – both experts and laypeople as shown by the public debate, the interviews and the enlarged public consultancy – appreciate in its own right. The public debate is, however, also concerned with more than the individual Waterfront project – the public debate and its emotion is symbolic of the political environment that development takes place within. For a city not to adapt to or listen to other actors than itself (in the Waterfront case, Stockholm City was the landowner, contractor and planner) before large scale projects are carried out, could in the long run be counter-productive and shattering, when urban growth theory on the other hand requires cooperation and inclusiveness.

A further example illustrating the contested nature of Stockholm planning and politics is the redevelopment plans for Slussen, another sensitive place in the inner-city, that were recently (2011-2012) agreed by the City Council. The plans for this project, which include placing more buildings at the waterfront, have been rejected by many Stockholmers and many notable figures in the cultural sector, including former ABBA member Benny Andersson who took a prominent role in the debate and in organising the protest. Slussen is located in the district of Södermalm where a large proportion of “creative” people live and work. It could generally be considered a “creative district”. The City closely managed the politics of the planning process, eg. not allowing its own City Museum to address the issue, although it is located close by, or to lease their venues to others with different points of view. When the project was finally decided, Benny Andersson asked the City to take down his portrait from the international Arlanda Airport, where he and other famous Swedes form a long Hall of Fame of large photo portraits welcoming visitors to the city. This debate, and the city’s confrontation with leading figures in the cultural sector, is a further sign emphasizing that the city, rather than working together with other local actors, pursues its own agenda. An alternative planning
solution for the “new” Slussen developed by The Royal Academy of the Arts was also disregarded.

Apart from the problems in Stockholm of including more actors in order to optimise strategies and their operationalization it also seems like badly conceived policy-making to infringe on what is a strategic resource for the city. In the case of the Waterfront complex it is argued that the cityscape of Stockholm has become less special and unique. In strategic terms, moreover, it would have been difficult for competing cities to copy the advantages stemming from Stockholm’s originality and uniqueness, but any city can introduce high-rise developments in the city centre. And, it could be argued, the comparative advantage of retaining the distinctive historic core and its typical low-rise features would only have increased as other cities keep adding to the height of their cores. The more other cities build high buildings, the more special the cityscape of Stockholm would have become. The uniqueness-factor of the city would thus have increased with time. This strategic aspect of the special characteristics of the cityscape in Stockholm seems not to be understood in the current policy which, apart from building the Waterfront complex, has opened up space for more high buildings close to the inner city.

To sum up, it seems fair to say that the attractiveness of Stockholm has been negatively affected by the changes in the cityscape caused by the Waterfront complex. This external effect of the height of the Waterfront complex would thus also mean that one of the strategic resources of the city has diminished in value with possibly harmful effects for the competitive capacity of the city, which, according to the creative city thesis, should include as many special, unique and “authentic” urban environments as possible. Moreover, a planning system that allows resources to be destroyed could hardly be said to be a well functioning “institutional dimension” of urban sustainable development. Finally, in addressing the cityscape as a resource for economic growth the city in itself becomes more “visible” and hopefully, following Vallance et al (2012), also more a part of urban sustainability discourse. Further research would, however, be needed to integrate that discourse with urban growth theory through finding careful and nuanced ways to understand the policy implications.

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