From Issue to Form
Public Mobilization and Democratic Enactment
in Planning Controversies

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Abstract

Academics, experts and politicians have come to the conclusion that democracy is in trouble. The contemporary understanding is that new competitive pressures from the outside and unruly publics from the inside have drastically changed the way politics is enacted. Where it was previously provoked by ideological programs it is now engulfed in issues, and where it used to be framed by established democratic institutions it is now characterized by informal governance arrangements. In this environment, it is argued, only the reformed institution can bridge the gap between politics and democracy and restore legitimacy to the decision-making process. In Swedish planning, these reforms positions the citizen as the point of departure for democratic politics, manifested in procedural citizen dialogues and in authorities’ relinquishment of political responsibilities. But when unplanned publics do emerge, they are intuitively dismissed as NIMBYs and obstacles to the planning process – preemptively foreclosing opportunities for public democratic enactment.

The aim of this paper is to analyze this process by examining the public controversy over the ongoing redevelopment of Slakthusområdet in southern Stockholm. It draws heavily on Noortje Marres’ work. She suggests that politics pursued outside of established institutions could be occasions for democracy since the activity might indicate that issues are finding sites that are hospitable to their articulation as matters of public concern. However, her issue-focused reasoning also positions the citizen as the focal point for democratic politics, meaning that those who fail to accept this role inevitably have themselves to blame. Her work is therefore supplemented with Laurent Thévenot’s understanding of how forms, that is, ideals, rules, and procedures, can be just as important as issues in informing the decisions among actors.

Through interviews with those involved, this paper highlights the ease in which the city disarticulates the attempts at public democratic enactment, a proficiency largely stemming from its “reformed” management form. Moreover, while the public finally managed to settle their issue at stake, it came with the substantial cost of eroded faith in democracy. Drawing on this, the paper concludes that both issues and forms, publics and the public sector, are crucial in facilitating the enactment of democratic politics.

Keywords: Displacement of politics, post-politics, democratic deficits, public participation, planning controversies, democratic politics, NIMBYism.
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1 Introduction

[It] is in controversies of this kind, the hardest controversies to disentangle, that the public is called in to judge. Where the facts are most obscure, where precedents are lacking, where novelty and confusion pervade everything, the public in all its unfitness is compelled to make its most important decisions. The hardest problems are problems which institutions cannot handle. They are the public’s problems. (Lippmann, 1927, as cited in Marres, 2005, p. 45)

In the beginning of 2014, a group of people living in the moderately well-off neighborhood of Enskede in southern Stockholm organized themselves against an emerging transformation project in Slakthusområdet (the Slaughterhouse area), the century old meatpacking and distribution center located in their vicinity. Dubbing themselves Nätverket Nya Enskede (The New Enskede Network, NNE), they strongly opposed the city’s contractual plans with the Ikea Group for developing large-scale commerce in the area. The anticipated increase in traffic in the already highly congested neighborhood gave the locals a common cause and they quickly grew in numbers. Although the City of Stockholm is increasingly employing different public engagement activities beyond the statutory public consultation meetings, public officials have asserted that the sheer complexity inherent to the redevelopment of Slakthusområdet eludes prospects for wider public input.

The above quote, borrowed from sociologist Noortje Marres’ (2005) seminal work *No Issues, no Publics*, hints at a strikingly different understanding of the nature of publics. She elicits from the famous Lippmann-Dewey debate their shared assumption that complex issues which existing institutions fail to handle necessitates rather than discourages the need for the public. To Marres, public mobilization comprises a particular type of issue formation that serves to displace unaddressed issues away from established institutional arrangements to sites where they can be properly articulated as matters of public concern. Issues, their displacement, and their settlement, she argues, must be understood as the focal point for democratic politics. In this sense, she presents a strikingly different and somewhat uplifting perspective on the societal developments over the last decades that has seen decision-making and public engagement increasingly being shifted away from the boundaries of national representative democracy to converge under the informal arrangements characterized by multi-level governance. While conventional understandings treats these shifts as indicators of democratic deficits and a crisis of legitimacy in the decision-making procedures, to her, they might actually mean that the public is finding new sites for addressing their concerns while engaging in democratic politics in the process.

In planning, her understanding could shed a dramatically new light on public mobilizations formed in opposition to development projects. Since they are often perceived as vocal and resourceful NIMBYs (Not in my backyard), a nuisance to the expediency of the planning process, and an infringement on the interests of a silent majority or marginalized minority, their formation has increasingly been used to highlight a need for reducing formal means for public influence in planning. However, given Marres’ assumptions, they might actually indicate a need for unaddressed matters of public concern to be made aware, and their activity, furthermore, might entail an occasion for democracy. While these mobilizations are a
widespread phenomenon, the planning projects in Stockholm tend to manifest themselves in public controversies more than in other major cities and currently there at least 12 public mobilizations around the city in opposition to various development plans (StockholmDirekt, 2015a). In this sense, Marres’ work is important to grasp the issues at stake in a particular planning controversy as well as its implications for involving the public in their settlement. But only up to a point.

In Slakthusområdet, the supposed issue at stake has largely been settled. In response to the lack of dialogue from the city, the locals shifted their attention to other sites and the redevelopment plans for a commerce complex in Slakthusområdet were subsequently abandoned. At the same time, other issues have surfaced among the locals. The city’s approach to their predicament as well as its supposed disregard for democratic procedure has affected them to the point that their concerns for democratic forms, that is, ideals, rules, practices, procedures, almost equal their concerns for their environmental surroundings. In other words, their attachments to democratic forms have also become an issue in the controversy. This questions how successful the settlement of a public matter of concern can be if it also entails that feelings of disillusion and disenchantment of democratic practices have surfaced in the process. Marres’ issue-focused approach could therefore be contrasted and complemented with Laurent Thevenot’s (1984) understanding of the nature of forms. He shows that through investments in ideals, habits, practices, and procedures, actors may in time develop an attachment to them that is not necessarily subordinate to that of issues. This opens up the possibility that there may be actors who have invested in particular forms to such a degree that they weigh them above issues, or for whom forms have become the issues at stake.

Aim, intent, and addressees
The overarching aim of this paper is to contribute knowledge on planning controversies involving the public and the public sector by exploring their roles in the enactment of democratic politics and by making aware contemporary practices that serve to disarticulate and foreclose this enactment.

This paper takes as its point of departure that the familiar understandings of what is bad for democracy are not necessarily accurate and that the displacement of politics beyond established institutional and democratic arrangements might sometimes be occasions for democracy. This opens up the possibility that the publics sparked into being by the complex set of issues inherent to planning controversies might also be expressions of democratic enactment. However, from this, it does not necessarily follow that the same issues also inform every interest, action, and decision among the actors implicated in the controversy. Instead, it might also be the case that their attachments to forms play an important role in the development as well as whether the process can be considered successful or democratic.

Given this point of departure, the objective of this paper’s empirical work is to examine, follow, and analyze the issues at stake for the NNE and for the City of Stockholm surrounding the planning controversy in Slakthusområdet, but also to analyze the role their attachments to democratic forms have played in the same development. To be more specific, the empirical work is guided by these two research questions:
I. What are the issues at stake – the issue attachments – in the planning controversy for the two actor-groupings: NNE and the City of Stockholm? How have these issues been articulated and/or disarticulated? Where have they been displaced? How have they been settled? And, finally, has the settlement been (democratically) successful? (Part 4.1)

II. What type of attachments do these actors have to democratic form, that is, attachments to the formal planning arrangements and codes in relation to democracy and the attachments to democratic ideals, principles and practices in relation to planning? What role have these attachments played in the controversy in terms of enacting or foreclosing democratic politics? What has this role generated in terms of consequences and why is it important? (Part 4.2)

These two questions will be explored with the help of the theoretical framework and the chosen research methods. Following this, the empirical findings will be analyzed according to two more research questions:

A. How can these two, seemingly separate phenomena – attachment to issues and attachments to forms – be combined to better help explain the mobilization of publics and the enactment of democratic politics in planning controversies? Who is responsible and who should be responsible for this enactment? (Part 5)

B. And, to be even more normative, what could planning authorities do to not only avoid disarticulating matters of public concern but also to actively encourage unplanned public mobilizations and their engagement in democrat politics? (Part 6)

The theoretical framework has as its objective to, firstly, explore the contemporary and somewhat hegemonic understanding of what is bad for democracy with an emphasis on Sweden, and to highlight the implications of this understanding for Swedish planning practice. Secondly, it is to explore Marres’ critique of this understanding and how it relates to her thesis on displacement of politics and attachments to issues. Her approach will also be explored in relation to planning and analyzed in terms of both benefits and problems. These findings are mostly aimed at answering research question I. Thirdly, it is to explore Thévenot’s understanding of investment in forms and analyze the attachments it can create by exploring and exemplifying two competing management forms in the public sector: bureaucracy and New Public Management, the findings of which are used for research question II. The analyses of Marres’ and Thévenot’ approaches are together used for research question A, while the final research question draws on the findings and conclusions throughout this paper.

The intent of this paper is to provide a more nuanced picture of a contemporary democracy increasingly construed as being in “trouble” and facing a “crisis”, when in fact, democracy is being enacted right under our noses – by protest groups, by local mobilizations, by publics. Moreover, the intent is also to refute that this activity is solely a matter of addressing and settling issues or that the ideals, rules, and procedures implicated in planning controversies merely function as excuses to further a particular issue at hand. The argument of this paper is that both issues and forms matter very much and the intent is to highlight that downplaying either one can be detrimental to the planning process in a number of ways. By not acknowledging that public mobilizations often spring directly from the politically charged issues inherent in planning controversies, foreclosing the public’s opportunities to get
involved in politics becomes an intuitive and systematic process. And by only acknowledging the actors involved in a controversy as “rational-choice agents” that exploit forms in whichever way sways the issues at stake in their favor, the disillusion towards democratic procedure that develops out of these foreclosures is not fully recognized. Moreover, in both of these interpretations, the public is positioned as the focal point for democratic politics rather than other political institutions. In this sense, my foremost intent is to warn that burdening the public with the sole responsibility for democratic enactment inevitably bestows them with the responsibility for democracy’s reproduction. This can lead us down a dangerous path where those who fail to accept this role also fail to have the issues they are adversely affected by properly addressed.

While this paper functions as my degree project it is also partly developed on behalf of and addressed to the forthcoming 2014 Swedish Democracy investigation tasked with “analyzing the need and propose actions to enhance and broaden involvement in representative democracy and to strengthen the individual's opportunities for participation in and influence over political decision-making between general elections” (Dir, 2014:111, p. 1). The findings are also addressed to planning researchers, social sciences researchers, and others that are interested in or dealing with public involvement in planning and in governance. Here the intent is to contribute with knowledge concerning the crucial role of forms and to highlight that issues, while powerful, might not be some ubiquitous object that informs every interest, action, and decision in a political dispute. Perhaps more importantly, the findings are also addressed to the on-the-ground planners and decision-makers that are dealing with many of the concerns presented in this paper on an everyday bases. Here, it would be to highlight their own role in whether charged political issues are given enough attention and whether the people raising them are given proper output – and perhaps for the planning authorities to adopt some of the more practical suggestions presented in the conclusion. But maybe most importantly, this paper is also aimed at the people that are attempting or hoping to address a public matter of concern. The findings presented here might be discouraging, but they could also be helpful.

**Structure of the paper**

The paper is structured in relation to the research questions – but while it follows them chronologically it is only somewhat accurately and there is a lot of overlap where some of the secondary questions are emphasized or addressed in other parts.

This introduction is followed by part 2, *Theory*, where the theoretical framework is developed. Part 2.1 presents the first theoretical objective where contemporary understandings of democratic deficits are outlined and how it relates to planning, the latter of which also serves as a presentation of the previous research on public participation in planning. Part 2.2 comprises the second objective and presents Marres’ thesis on issues, publics, and democratic politics together with my analysis of its implications for planning. Part 2.3 corresponds to the third objective wherein Thévenot and the concept of form is introduced and analyzed.

Part 3, *Methodology*, outlines this paper’s underlying point of departure and assumptions, its research approach, how the research aim was chosen, what methods were used and how, as well as the rationale behind the selection processes.
Part 4, *Slakthusområdet*, presents the empirical findings – the results – beginning with a background to the controversy surrounding Slakthusområdet. Part 4.1, where research question I is addressed, explores the controversy’s issues through Marres’ approaches. The issues at stake are followed from their instigation to their settlement in a chronological fashion with analyses and interpretations throughout. In Part 4.2, where research question II is addressed, a rather different interpretation of the same controversy is portrayed when approached through Thévenot’s understanding of forms.

Part 5, the analysis proper, attempts to answer question A, that is, how can the two perspectives be combined to better explain enactment of democratic politics in planning controversies, followed by some normative conclusions on the roles of those involved. The paper is concluded with part 6 where the normative arguments of this paper are fully developed in an attempt at answering the final research question: What can be done differently in planning controversies to avoid some of the detrimental aspects of what has happened here?
2 Theory

2.1 Problems of Modern Democracy

The crisis of democratic legitimacy
According to a governmental directive from the end of the last millennia, Swedish representative democracy is in trouble (Dir, 1997:101). Tasked with investigating “the new conditions, problems and opportunities the Swedish popular government is facing in the 21st century” (Dir, 1997:101), the commission appointed by the directive was able to highlight a range of concurrent developments that have changed the political and democratic landscape. National borders, they determine in their final report, have gradually become less important for companies and capital, which in turn has affected the conditions for the Swedish business community and its social institutions. In other words, with globalization and with Sweden’s entry into the European Union, national scope for action has been severely limited. But the sovereignty of the nation state has not only been challenged by a growing interdependency on issues that transgress its boundaries but also by a growing sense of independency among its citizens. According to the investigation, this process of individualization is coinciding with a range of changes in how politics is enacted. While the amount of elected officials have drastically declined and traditional civic duties, such as voting and the willingness to be represented by others, have come under increasing pressure, new forms of political participation have emerged. Partly due to a growing civil society, politics has become as much a private as a public activity. Consequently, the investigation determines that one of the more “worrying developments” is that “faith in the political system has declined and a gap has arisen between voters and their representatives” (SOU, 2000:1, p. 179).

For many researchers, the background to the Swedish Democracy investigation goes much further. Amnå (2006) argues that the perceived crisis of legitimacy facing Swedish representative democracy described in the report partly stems from structural changes to the Swedish welfare state. Due to the “record years” impressive welfare output, Swedish democracy had solidified itself as a particular form of service democracy. In other words, democratic legitimacy came to be grounded on its ability to deliver welfare. When this capacity was showing sharp signs of faltering towards the second half of the 20th century, coupled with ideological alterations of both the cultural and political landscape, the crisis of Swedish democratic legitimacy was affirmed. Similarly, Magnus Dahlstedt (2006) frames the investigation within a larger societal shift from “societal-governance” to “self-governance” (p. 85). In his words, this shift is represented by a displacement

away from an earlier, mainly state-centered regime, focused on state and collective responsibility of both the social welfare of the citizen and the social development of society, with government interventions aimed at distributing social and economic resources as well as leveling social and other gaps in society, towards a regime with a growing focus on decentralization and market solutions, autonomy and individual responsibility, co-operation between state and non-state actors, citizens and officials, companies and organizations, schools and parents. (p. 85, emphasis in original)
In this sense, the “Swedish model” based on centralism and universalism, confronted with a perceived failure to deliver, has given way to a more liberal rationale where democratic rule is affirmed by not only strengthening the citizen’s individual autonomy, but also responsibility and accountability. To Dahlstedt it represents, in Foucauldian terms, a distinct “governmentality” whose logic is based on the assumption or otherwise creation of an active referent which willingly accepts the role of an accountable subject. He argues that the investigation, as well as countless other public inquiries on the nature of Swedish democracy from the 1980s and onwards, explicitly follows this rationale by situating the citizen as the point of departure for political enactment rather than state, governments, and other political institutions. To be sure, the commission’s “premise” is that the “Swedish democratic tradition both incorporates and should incorporate important elements of self-organization, decentralization and self-governance” and that the postwar expansion of the public sector to some degree “overshadowed” these “ideals of autonomy” (SOU, 2000:1, pp. 30-31). Moreover, the investigation also assigns democratic politics with a distinct moral order wherein engagement in political activities is said to have various civilizing effects on the citizen, such as furthering “respect” and “tolerance against dissidents”, while absence from the political arena serves to obstruct the “schooling and refinement of their more primitive instincts” (SOU, 2000:1, p. 33).

In this sense, the democracy investigation from the dawn of the new millennium represents an important crossroad in the trajectory of the Swedish political institution. On the one hand, the report insists that the growing independency and autonomy of the Swedish citizen presents an unparalleled problem for democracy. On the other hand, the moral obligation of the citizen to strive for independency and autonomy is presented as the focal point for democratic politics. Their resolution to this dilemma seems to have been an attempt at reformulating the social contract between the democratic institutions and its citizens. The gap between the two segments, they propose, can be alleviated by introducing new channels of influence and participation inspired by deliberative democratic theory.

Bridging the gap
The development described here is not unique to Sweden and the challenges to democracy that arise from decision-making and political engagement increasingly being shifted away from established democratic institutions have been portrayed by many. Ulrich Beck (1992) famously attributed this shift to the late modern era of western societies where the emerging hubs of the social and private economy, such as citizen initiatives, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the IT sector, became the key location for politics. Whereas he positions this shift as an all-encompassing movement specific to all parts of the post-industrial society, Jürgen Habermas (2001) and David Held (1999) have focused on how the transnational fora is increasingly becoming the center stage for political issues. For them, this transition is a justified response to the rise of global public affairs, such as climate change, which resist settlements within the confines of the nation-state. However, similar to the debate in Sweden, they all share the notion that the transition presents significant problems for democracy. Habermas and Held define this democratic deficit as a deficiency in legitimacy and accountability since the emerging actors within the social and private economy lack the requirements for procedures institutionalized via nation-states. To accommodate this deficiency they offer similar solutions as those presented in the investigation. For Habermas,
democratic legitimization may be established by instituting procedural connections of transparency and consultation between sites of decision-making and sites of the public. Similarly, Held affirms that the lack of legitimacy and accountability is an outcome of a discrepancy between the group of actors who are affected by processes and the group that commands these processes and, consequently, he argues that democracy requires that affairs are deliberated in spaces accessible to those affected by them.

Incidentally, the deliberative participatory approaches prescribed by the commission to bridge the gap between the decision-making institutions and the public were largely inspired by Habermas’ work. However, both Amnäs and Dahlstedt agree that the daring measures proposed by the commission ultimately failed to translate into official policy since its reformulation of democracy based on input radically opposed the established conception of Sweden as a service democracy grounded on output. Consequently, the government bill based on the Commission’s work was a somewhat watered-down version of the investigation where the participatory elements were largely deemphasized and the liberal rationale amplified into an explicit neoliberal logic (Prop, 2001/02:80). In this sense, welfare services are still conceptualized as one of the most efficient means for securing democratic legitimacy – but according to a different logic. This is evident in what Karlsson and Gilljam (2015, p. 16) refer to as the “marketization” of the Swedish municipality, an ongoing reorganizational trend inspired by management theories from the private sector that aims to limit the public sector’s political and hierarchical regulation by creating more autonomous roles for the officials in relation to the politicians. This New Public Management (NPM) serves to, on the one hand, impede the citizen’s political influence gained from municipal elections, but on the other verbalize their desires through their active choice of welfare service.

In this sense, the lasting impact of the commission’s work, and of the larger democracy debate centered on civic duty and autonomy leading up to the millennium, should not be understated and the conceptualization of citizen influence beyond elections as a core democratic virtue permeate virtually all aspects of society, not least of which in planning.

**Participatory planning**

In western countries, participatory planning based on ideas of deliberation and communication has managed to situate itself in a somewhat hegemonic position. In Sweden, the participatory approaches are evident in the legislation through statutory public consultation meetings (Programsamråd) as well as in the voluntary public engagement and “citizen dialogue” activities that are increasingly being employed by municipalities. Tahvilzadeh (2015) refers to all these approaches as a form of “invited participation”, meaning that while they may significantly differ in formality, methodology, and purpose, they all share the underlying idea of planning authorities inviting the public to participate in dialogues and activities around a specific issue and not the other way around.

Although these approaches have a specific origin based both on Habermas’ work and on 1960s Swedish social movements (Tahvilzadeh, 2015), the spread and consolidation of participatory planning theory around Europe can to some degree be credited to Patsy Healey’s (1997) influential work *Collaborative Planning*. Drawing on Habermas and his theory on communicative action, Healey provides the communicative planner with a constructivist approach in that they consider all forms of knowledge as social constructs. Accordingly,
interests too, no matter their diversity, are a result of their social contexts and can to a certain degree be converged through deliberation and consensus-building processes. In other words, knowledge and expertise is not understood to be reserved for a select few, but can through communication in a conflict-free environment be imparted on the public. Spatial planning, then, is about providing conflict-resolving forms of governance that can facilitate sustainable and decision-making for shared spaces. However, in academic circles the approach has also been widely contested. The critique is often aimed at communicative planning’s Habermasian roots which is interpreted to place rational discourse above power relations (Allmendinger & Tewdwr-Jones, 2002). This has led some to question its practical relevance (e.g., Brand & Gaffikin, 2007), some to reason that social and economic rights should be weighed above political rights (e.g., Fainstein, 2010), others to argue for Mouffian “agonistic” planning (e.g., Hillier, 2003; see part 5 where this approach is developed), and still others to equate the production of consensus to the conclusion of politics and the harbinger of the post-political, a condition which “eludes choice and freedom” (Swyngedouw, 2007, p. 26). In other words, the critique suggests that rather than transferring power from a select elite, consensus-generating activities often serves to legitimize their rule by neutralizing opposition, conflict, and diversity.

In Sweden too, a sustained critique has also been targeted at how participatory planning is manifested in practice. Extensive case studies suggest that the marginalized groups of society are rarely on the receiving end in the attempts at reassigning resources and influence. Furthermore, it also suggests that while many practitioners involved with participatory activities acknowledge an equitable and emancipatory component of engaging in dialogues with the public, the main rationale for the engagement often stems from assumptions that early public input serves to avoid conflicts and interruptions of projects further down the road. Moreover, these legitimization processes sometimes have the opposite effect, whereby participants are disillusioned towards participatory procedures due to their restricted influence. (e.g., Velásquez, 2005; Listerborn, 2008; Tahvilzadeh, 2015) Indeed, Henecke and Khan (2002) argue that in Sweden the main problems of translating participatory approaches into practice stem from the parallel and conflicting goal of providing an efficient, economic and more expedient planning process. The latter discourse, often propagated by both governmental and private actors, is also evident in the legislation. With efficiency and expediency as an explicit aim, the Swedish Planning and Building Act (PBL) was recently revised to allow for less municipal commitments towards public consultations (Regeringen, 2010). This development is showing no signs of slowing down and there is today an extensive discussion among policy circles on how the formal possibilities for appealing planning projects can be constrained to allow for a more expedient process (Zetterlund, 2015).

What can be drawn from this examination is that, on the one hand, there is a widely-acknowledged, albeit criticized, planning approach that uses procedural dialogue activities in order to further public influence thereby strengthening democratic legitimacy in the process. And on the other hand, formal possibilities for public influence in planning are under pressure. The implication of this will be further discussed, but in the next part, Marres’ assessment of democratic politics is introduced. She goes beyond the – by all means appropriate – critique of participatory practices highlighted in this part by reworking what, to me, has partially advanced the same practices: the underlying assumptions of what is bad for democracy.
2.2 Marres’ Issues

In her work on the nature of issues and publics, sociologist Noortje Marres (2005) attempts to highlight that familiar understandings of how informal governance arrangements by default entails a democratic deficit are highly misleading and instead proposes that this development can in fact beckon occasions for democracy. To fully give credence to the startling proposition that politics pursued outside the confines of established democratic procedures might be cause for celebration rather than concern, her work requires further elaboration.

The displacement of politics

Marres starts by positioning these emerging informal governance arrangements under the more encompassing concept of the displacement of politics, a process which describes quite a few set of developments; the fundamental shift in the locations of politics in the post-industrial society, as highlighted by Beck; or the increased importance of transnational political processes, as elaborated on by Habermas and Held; or even to characterize a change in the modes of societal intervention through the emergence of modern techno-scientific practices, a thesis most famously put forward by Latour (1988). However, shared among all these interpretations, explains Marres (2005), is the notion of a politics in a state of absence:

In each of these cases, the displacement of politics beyond established democratic arrangements grounded in the nation-state yields a politics marked by a lack: lack of legitimacy, lack of accountability, and/or lack of control. (p. 10)

Her problem with this definition of democratic deficit after the displacement of politics is related to a number of reasons. Firstly, it closely resembles that of circular reasoning by more or less fulfilling its primary assertion: that politics has drifted away from national representative democracy. In other words, the definition is of limited value since it is “applying a standard that precisely cannot be applied in these circumstances: that of a politics that is contained in democratic arrangements” (p. 5). Consequently, she argues, it no longer makes sense to assert that the displacement of politics beyond such arrangements itself is the problem.

Secondly, and related to this, familiar understandings of democratic deficit after the displacement of politics define it as a failure to contain politics in a singular democratic arrangement. Marres, however, posits that not only sites of politics and democracy are multiple, but also the subjects and forms that are involved in a specific affair. Moreover, this type of multiplicity defies attempts to order it into a cohesive whole. In other words, the sites, actors and forms that make up a controversy exist neither in a singular nor in a plural sense, that is side by side. Instead, characterizing the displacement of politics as an instance of multiplicity entails that these objects are both deeply enmeshed in, and different from one another. This means that the various sites forms and subjects that emerge during an affair are partial and contested and that none of them can singularly contain one understanding of democratic deficit. In other words, “none of these by themselves can provide the standard to which the controversy must live up for it to deserve the label ‘democratic’” (p. 20).

Thirdly, framing the problem of displacement of politics as a gap or disconnect between the sites of democracy and sites of politics inevitably leads to framing the solution as
instances where the distance between these sites are reduced or nullified. But for Marres, such proposals overlooks some of the defining aspects of displaced politics. To understand this, she draws on the work emerging out of Science and Technology Studies (STS) which conceptualizes the phenomenon as a particular practice or strategy. Thus, this understanding significantly differs from the ones presented by Habermas, Held and Beck where the displacement of politics more or less represents a historical event brought on by structural shifts in society. Consequently, understanding displacement of politics as a political practice has significant implications for the soundness in their solutions. Specifically, it implies that once sites of politics have been reconnected to sites of established democratic arrangements, politics may again be subject to strategic efforts of displacement to sites where procedural requirements of legitimacy, accountability and consultations are lacking – so called “forum-shifting”. Consequently, Marres determines that although it is clear that democratic deficits are proliferating after the displacement of politics, it is far from apparent how they should be defined.

The final, and for the purpose of this paper, most important aspect that familiar versions of displacement of politics – surprisingly – tend to leave out serves to disentangle this predicament: the actual objects that are subject to displacement. Once conventional definitions of democratic deficit come under pressure, she argues, another dimension of democratic politics becomes visible: “the fate of the issues at stake in a controversy” (p. 22).

**Issue formations**

For Marres, democratic politics constitutes a particular practice of issue displacement where democratic deficit stem from instances where the displacement moves the issue away from sites that are hospitable towards its settlement. To understand this process and to fully appreciate the part that issues play in democratic politics, she turns to the famous debate between Walter Lippmann and John Dewey on the role of publics. According to Marres, readings on this debate have tended to highlight the disagreement on how to properly counter the increasing complications for democracy they were witnessing in their time. Set in the US during the first half of the twentieth century, the debate was foregrounded by the complex set of affairs that pervaded their society: wars, depression, and striking advances in technology. For society to handle the sheer complexity of these affairs, Lippmann in these readings argues for a technocratic approach to democracy whereas Dewey tends to advocate for its expansion through citizen participation and public debate. But in Marres reading, the differences between the two thinkers are downplayed and she instead focuses on the similarities in how they treat the concept of democracy. The complexities of society, which Marres notes resembles our contemporary situation to a surprising degree, is for both Dewey and Lippmann – in his later work – not necessarily seen as a problem or a hurdle for democracy to overcome. As is implied in the quote that introduces this paper, complex, confusing and obscure affairs are for them precisely the types of problems that calls for the commitment of the public since, if they were manageable they would already have been settled by existing institutions. In this sense, publics are the only ones capable of addressing issues which established democratic arrangements are failing to deal with.

For Marres, this impressive feature of the public can be explained by how these issues are deeply implicated in the way publics come into being. She again draws on Dewey:
Dewey thus defines a public as a grouping of actors who are affected by actions or events but do not have direct influence on them. Lacking such influence, these indirectly affected actors must organise into a public if they are to address the problems ensuing from these actions and events. (p. 48)

This means that by being indirectly but substantially affected by an issue which existing institutions have failed to address, publics become the more capable instrument for its settlement. Moreover, it means that issues become the prime locus of democratic politics since “it is the emergence of an issue that sparks public involvement in politics” (p. 50) From this, it becomes more clear why it is not satisfactory to describe democratic deficit as an instance where politics escapes the confines of established democratic arrangements; it is precisely in these instances publics emerge in politics.

Attachment to issues

Marres goes on define the characteristics that set a public-in-the-making apart from, for instance, the private sector or a lobby group, by explaining how they operate. What makes an affair a public affair, that is, what opens up an issue for public involvement after its displacement, is that it makes aware the shared and exclusive attachments involved in the affair. Attachments, she explains, by again drawing on the work from STS, is a specific relationship between humans and non-human objects:

In this relation, actors are both actively committed to the object of passion ... in the sense that they must do a lot of work in order to create the situation in which they can be overtaken by the object. At the same time, actors are dependent on the object, it is stronger than them and binds them in the sense that their pleasure, and perhaps even the meaningfulness of their world, is conditioned by the object. (p. 128, emphasis in original)

When an actor-grouping can be said to be actively committed to a cause and when this cause involves a type of subordination, in the sense that it sustains the significance of the actor-grouping’s world, it portrays a type of attachment to an issue. In a specific controversy then, actors are brought together because of their attachments to the issues at stake – their cause – but they are also antagonistically implicated in them in such a way that a group’s particular attachment necessities a form of exclusivity in their associations. Without this antagonistic relationship over an object of contention – if everyone involved agreed – there would be no controversy, nor any reason for the public to get involved. A controversy that opens up the involvement of the public, Marres argues, is when these antagonistic attachments are made manifest to a larger number of actors that are relative strangers to the issues at stake. This is done by converging the issues into a concrete and accessible point of contention, such as a question or a statement. This may then generate a widespread mobilization of actors in support or against a particular issue which can exert a type of “pressure” that translates to its

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1 In contrast to Held for example, it seems that Marres does not justify a public’s involvement in politics with the fact that they might be adversely affected by an issue since who actually constitutes a concerned party can never be predetermined. In other words, whether or not a public has a legal or moral “right” to get involved in an affair is not what interests her, but the public’s superior capability to properly settle issues that are seemingly too complex for any one actor or institution to fully address; a proficiency largely stemming from a public’s strong commitment and attachment to the issues at stake and the external pressures it might induce. This is further explained in the next part.
settlement. Consequently, what characterizes a public-in-the-making in a particular controversy is that it actively pursues the course of action that makes the issues at stake manifest to larger public. This pursuit, then, also sets democratic politics apart from politics.

According to Marres, the enactment of politics involves the active displacement of issues between different sites. For an affair to be considered public and for it to open up possibilities for democratic enactment, it requires at least two issue displacements and one detour: one displacement away from the institution or community that fails to settle the issue, one towards an addressee that can, and one detour through the public where sufficient support can mobilized aimed at its settlement. This means that approaching democratic politics as an act of issue formation entails a dramatically different understanding than familiar ones of what is bad for democracy. Here, a widening gap between sites of conventional democratic arrangements and sites of politics can serve to signify institutional rather than democratic deficits, and that issues are finding other sites accessible to their expression as public affairs. But if such processes entail democratic participation in politics, then activities aimed at subverting them should entail the opposite. Thus, another definition of democratic deficit begins to emerge. For Marres, the tragedy of contemporary democratic politics is neither its displacement, nor established institutions failure to contain its issues:

The big scandal is the disarticulation of public affairs: the displacement of issues away from sites hospitable to their definition, which thereby undo the work of specifying what exactly is at issue, and cause publics that have organised around issues to disintegrate, leaving behind a blur of inscrutable – un-, dis- and mis-articulated – concerns that are pursued without consideration of the attachments with which they are intertwined in antagonistic ways. (p. 152)

In its essence then, Marres’ thesis is that a fundamental and pervasive component of political activity is the relentless effort by actors to displace issues towards spaces where their articulation and subsequent settlement are more likely to be in their favor. In this sense, political activity entails a constant struggle over the articulation of the issues at stake and what forms and spaces best serve their settlement. The implication of this, and the fundamental problem for Marres, is that whether this activity constitutes mere politics or actual democratic politics, as well as whether the actors involved constitute concerned democratic subjects or not, is not a priori given. Her proposition to this dilemma is to analyze the trajectory of the issues at stakes and at how they come to be articulated. If they are displaced from sites of public scrutiny and debate towards unintelligible networks of a select elite where the issues can be disentangled from the concerned voices of those affected, it most certainly serves to undermine the democratic legitimacy and accountability of the decision-making process, manifested in serious democratic deficits. If, however, they take a detour through a wider public where the issues at stake are articulated in an approachable manner while retaining their inherent conflicts and concerns so they can be properly settled, it might entail “occasions for democracy” (p. 135).

**Implications for planning**

It is important to appreciate the extent to which Marres differs in her approach to democratic politics from the, by now, somewhat hegemonic understanding of democracy and
participation presented by the Swedish investigation. She, for one, wholeheartedly rejects the idea of an inherent democratic virtue in engaging in political action: “political democracy is not about the fulfillment that can be derived from participation in community life as such – that seems to me to be a moral challenge, not a political one” (p. 56). In this pragmatic understanding of democratic politics, the notion that presupposes the emergence of democratic deficits when the gap between decision-making and established democratic arrangements grows is, in fact, an “artifact of the belief that such arrangements are to be valued for their own sake” (p. 151). One implication for planning is that conventional motivations for instituting procedural citizen dialogue activities might be misleading since attempts at closing or reconnecting the gap between sites of politics and democracy might actually entail an attempt to reconnect the citizen with sites of established institutions. To her, this legitimization process is ultimately doomed, of course, since political action is fundamentally about the active shifting of issues between different sites. This means that following a consultation meeting where the issue at hand is not properly “owned” by the public, the decision-making institution may seek to displace the issue to other sites beyond established democratic control where it can be rearticulated in a way that neutralizes the previously attached voices and concerns thereby foreclosing any opportunities for its settlement.

Consequently, this understanding of democratic politics can serve to highlight contemporary practices of political displacement that aims to disarticulate the issues at stake and unravel voices of opposition. In this sense, planning controversies are important instances where antagonistic and conflicting interests as well as competing discourses in urban planning can be made manifest. Furthermore, it highlights how the publics that are formed around a particular planning controversy cannot be preemptively planned for nor assimilated into procedural “invited participation” processes. They spring directly from the complexities, uncertainties and obscurities inherent to a controversy and their nature necessitates that they are in some way or other antagonistically implicated in the affair, that they demand to be heard, and that the issue is for them a matter of concern. For Marres, their formation may not only indicate significant deficiencies in established institutions capacity to settle a particular issue, but also the very focal point for democratic enactment.

Although, to my understanding, Marres point of departure has not been widely applied in Swedish planning research, Metzger, Allmendinger, and Oosterlynck (2014) suggest how her approach might shed a dramatically new light on the emergence of what in planning circles is often dismissively referred to as NIMBYs (Not in my back yard). Rather than intuitively construing public mobilizations against a particular planning project as a nuisance or obstacle to the expediency of the planning process, their formation might indicate the need for certain issues to be made apparent, and further, their activity might be an occasion for democracy. Unfortunately, they conclude that to accept in planning that public mobilizations that are essentially unplannable could be occasions for democracy would require the kind of radical introspection of the planning profession that might only arise from “more or less open professional revolution” (p. 21). However, an argument that will later be drawn from this paper’s findings is that introducing her approach to planning might not necessitate such a drastic measure.
The problems in Marres’ thesis

Despite the striking differences between Marres’ and conventional interpretations of democratic politics, similarities can still be discerned. Similar to the Swedish Democracy investigation, Marres positions the citizen, or in her taxonomy the public, rather than state or other political institutions as the focal point for political and democratic enactment. Like Dahlstedt, Marres (2005) seems aware of the fact that doing so inevitably imparts the citizen with the sole responsibility for democracy’s enforcement: “They must take it upon themselves to displace issues to sites that are hospitable to their articulation as matters of public concern, and identify an addressee that may provide a settlement for them” (p. 138, emphasis added). But in contrast to Dahlstedt, this is not presented as a problem by Marres since, to her, the procedural forms that make up the political and public office may actually function as an obstacle to the advancement of democratic politics: “the situation in which politics becomes necessary is a situation in which legitimacy, in the sense of working customs, traditions, and routines, is dissolving: the condition of innovation” (p. 142). This means that although she rejects the moral dimension to politics, her reasoning still requires an active referent that can willingly take initiative and responsibility for the reproduction of democracy.

The implication of this (neo)liberal governmentality, Dahlstedt (2006) argues, is that those who accept this role necessarily become the “norm” from which “the good citizenship” emanates from (p. 101). Indeed, to breach, discern and ultimately address the unruly set of issues inherent to controversies where, in Lippman’s terms, “precedents are lacking”, likely requires a privileged amount of resources, networks, and political and organizational know-how. No wonder then, that the “white, male middle-class” (p. 101) often plays this role of warden of democracy. This also means that those who do not, or cannot, “take it upon themselves” to address the issues they are implicated in and affected by as a result of established institutions failure to settle them, ultimately have “themselves to blame” (p. 102). Moreover, Marres’ assessment of the public sector’s “customs, traditions, and routines” as obstacles to “innovation” bears a striking resemblance to the neoliberal language that emerged in the 1990s and has consolidated in the 2000s under the umbrella concept of New Public Management, where the role of the state and public sector increasingly amounts to “rolling back” and withdrawing from the political stage.

An alternative and more active role for the public sector than the one presented by Marres will be discussed in the following part. Before that, however, it is important to try and discern from where in Marres’ thesis these implications stem from. The argument of this paper is that they are closely related to her explicit issue-focused reasoning. Issues are literally the point of departure and point of return in her take on the nature of publics and democratic politics, a point which is made abundantly clear in her ending phrase of the aptly titled work No Issue, No Public: “Public involvement in politics derives its value from the issues for which it alone can ensure a settlement” (Marres, 2005, p. 154). She is clear that her reasoning is not an attempt to “down-play the importance of ideals and procedures”, but rather to challenge the conventional approach of treating issues as ”excuses for the enactment of these ideals and procedures” and as mere means for the fulfillment of the “true ends of political democracy” (p. 148). Moreover, situating the settlement of issues as the backdrop for political enactment does not necessarily reduce democratic politics to a “problem-solving machine” since, as she has shown, how the problems are defined in any given controversy, who the concerned parties
are and what forms are most appropriate for their settlement, are a priori not given and inherently contested; the very opposite of settings to “managerial” politics which depend on a consensus on the problem at hand in order for its settlement (p. 148).

The predicament, however, is not Marres’ reduction of politics to a problem-solving machine but its subjects. They might well be antagonistically linked to their opposition in the controversy, but they are still jointly linked together within their own actor-grouping, sharing a consensual understanding of the issues at stake and most likely how to solve it. Moreover, ideals, rules and procedures play a crucial role in her issue politics, but only in the sense that they help determine how the issues come to be articulated, re-articulated or dis-articulated, meaning that they can serve both as an expansion of democratic enactment or as a foreclosure. But in both respects, taking Marres thesis to its conclusion, they ultimately function as a set of instruments to be used by rational “problem-solving” subjects in whichever way sways a particular issue to their favor. Ideals, rules, and procedures become the excuse for the enactment of issues politics and not the other way around.

It is of course tempting to conclude that this is more and more becoming the case in a time when adherence to ideological programs is at a minimum and civic duty more often than not consists of supporting whichever political party, association, or NGO that most accurately fits one’s own particular issue at hand, whether it be climate change, immigration laws, same-sex marriage, a planning project, and so on. It could at least be argued that issues rather than ideologies are becoming more accurate in describing the underlying architecture for how politics is manifested. And I will not argue otherwise. Indeed, so there is no misunderstanding, this paper is in no way attempting to rework the modern conception of democratic politics.

However, what will be discussed is how attachments to issues as well as attachments to ideals, rules and procedures play a crucial role in the outcome of planning controversies and how downplaying either one of them can be detrimental to the planning process in a number of ways. An important development that I will attempt to highlight is that while the apparent issues at stake in Slakthusområdet have to some degree been settled, others have emerged, including the locals’ eroded faith in the city’s democratic and decision-making processes. Marres seems to regards this type of “unsettling” of “popular sovereignty” (p. 92) as a necessary outcome of successful issue displacement; that any type of struggle over an object of contention will inevitably lead to a conflicting conclusion. Notwithstanding, the development begs the question: Does it matter if feelings of disenchantment and disillusion of the democratic procedure have surfaced if it also means that a public issue of concern is settled in the process?

Raising this question serves to highlight the need for further knowledge of how ideals, rules, and procedures interact with a contemporary politics that is increasingly understood as being centered on issues. Before answering, then, a better reading is necessary on how attachments to these forms are fashioned. This is attempted in the next part.
2.3 Thévenot’s Forms

**Investments in forms**

In one of his earlier works, sociologist Laurent Thévenot (1984) develops an alternative understanding to existing economic models dealing with investments while simultaneously offering an important reading on the nature of *forms*. Here, he outlines an analytical framework where a vast range of objects can be incorporated into a single model of “investment in forms”. This is done to allow for the study and comparison of phenomena which are usually differentiated through separate conceptual frameworks and disciplines. In economics for instance, these objects of investment are often distinguished by their material and non-material form, such that investing in a new machine is treated differently from introducing a new management arrangement. Thévenot argues that this is not satisfactory since they can both entail costly introductions coupled with profitable outcomes irrespective of their physical nature.

Analyzing the rise of Taylorism in dawn of the 20th century which introduced a large and comprehensive set of form-giving instruments to the industries of that time – ranging from actual tools to codes of conduct – he highlights how these seemingly disparate forms are very much implicated in one another and therefore require other distinguishable characteristics:

[I]nvestment cannot be thought of simply as a material form, like a machine, since it also requires standardization, the definition of norms and the codification of input and output. Because there is a need for articulation between the exploitation of the tools and the form-giving operations which make them function, there is every reason to put forward a definition of investment which can take account of all of these operations, whatever the material nature of the forms produced. From this point of view, it would appear that the most relevant way to conceive of investment … is as a costly operation to establish a stable relation with a certain lifespan. (pp. 8-9)

Here then, it becomes clear what forms are to Thévenot: objects and outcomes of investments that aim to fixate certain relations. Moreover, the value of the investment is linked to the established form’s area of validity and lifespan. Thus, when Taylor introduces the “task idea” in his handbook on modern scientific management, the value of its investment is evident in the lifespan of its form: “Today it has become so totally naturalized that one always talks of describing tasks in what a job involves, as though now the idea of the task were taken for granted” (Thévenot, 1984, p. 15). The spread of this form, furthermore, was possible by its high degree of validity to other sites not specific to the industry it was introduced in. This was possible because the definition of standardized tasks, as well as the coding of time, methods of payment, and so on, came “equipped” with more general forms already established on a national level, such as scientific rationalism or legal formalism, without which Taylor’s investments would not be fixated into such a widespread use. In this sense, investment in form “is only profitable if it is based on the use of forms with general validity, forms which are often public and inexpensive because they have already been constituted by the State” (p. 23).

For Thévenot, this linkage is more evident in investments that are time-consuming and not easily quantifiable. For the most individual of investments, where time is spent on training and cultivating experience and where form is fixated through habit and repetition, the
profitability beyond the individual requires established general forms that make it hospitable to forge the same skills in other sites. However, once these forms become fixed, once the purpose of their development is realized even through their maintenance, they may become the most robust of forms.

**Bureaucracy as form**

This process, where form is solidified through habits and validated through already established forms, can be seen in – for the purpose of this paper – a more fitting example: the rise of the bureaucratic office. Max Weber (1970), who still offers one of the most elaborate descriptions of modern bureaucracy, sees its organizational form as a development sprung from the rationalization of western society wherein exercise of power is governed and legitimized by rules rather than customs or charismatic leadership. Rules, laws, and regulations then, coupled with a hierarchical organization, record keeping, and the professionalization of the official whose career advancement is judged on their expertise and not associations, characterize Weber’s ideal-typical bureaucracy. Combined, it delivers decisions with “precision”, “speed” and “unambiguity” to such an extent that its capabilities are unrivaled:

>The decisive reason for the advance of bureaucratic organization has always been its purely technical superiority over any other form of organization. The fully developed bureaucratic mechanism compares with other organizations exactly as does the machine with the non-mechanical modes of production. (p. 214)

However, although efficiency and effectiveness in governance function as its fuel, the primary goal for modern bureaucracy is, according to Weber, the leveling of economic and social differences. It is from this conviction bureaucracy gains its uncompromising rejection of decisions based on privilege and association, and its characteristic commitment to those based on regularity and objectivity – where functions are discharged “without regard for persons” (p. 215). In this sense, its spread and validation presupposes the existence of other general forms. These include: the money economy, where modern capitalism’s naked pursuit of economic interests articulates particularly well with the bureaucratic watchword above; the growth of complexities in modern culture, which for Weber in contrast to Lippmann and Dewey, demands the personally detached expertise of the bureau; and, finally, the democratization of society which holds the same devotion to equality in governance as does bureaucracy.

Moreover, its lifespan, which Weber notes is of a particularly “permanent character”, is deeply linked to the individual bureaucrat’s “habitual” activity, a motion they are chained to by their “entire material and ideal existence” (p. 228). This deeply personal and individual attachment to the bureaucratic form transcends even its own attachment to written records, as Weber notes in his assessment of anarchistic attempts aimed at its dissolution:

>The naïve idea of Bakuninism of destroying the basis of “acquired rights” and “domination” by destroying public documents overlooks the settled orientation of man for keeping to the habitual rules and regulations that continue to exist independently of the documents. (p. 229, emphasis in original)
So, how does this discussion fit into Marres’ understanding of issue politics? And, more specifically, what does it mean for her implications on spatial planning? For one, by approaching forms through Thévenot’s perspective, Marres’ issue-focused reasoning starts to come under pressure. In his understanding of forms, that is, as a set of costly investments in habits, procedures, ideals aimed at fixating certain relations, they function as a kind of social construction which requires the constant commitment of the user for its reproduction. For some forms, this commitment can be so strong it encapsulates the user’s “entire material and ideal existence”, a condition which mirrors closely that of Marres’ attachment to issues where an object of passion makes up an actor’s life-world. In other words, Weber’s bureaucrat is both actively committed to the bureau in the sense that they must constantly reproduce it and dependent on its sustainment in the sense that their meaning and existence is conditioned by it. Consequently, this opens up the possibility that attachment to form is not necessarily subordinate to that of issues, and that there may be actors who have invested in particular forms to such a degree that they weigh them above issues, or for whom forms have become the issue at stake.

Secondly, it casts a shade of doubt over her assertions concerning the incapacity of established institutions to settle complex affairs as well as the abysmal role given to them in enacting democratic politics. For Weber, the advancement of the bureaucratic office – which still stands as a pinnacle of the established institution – stems from its superior execution of the former while its rise to power springs from its commitment to the latter. Furthermore, Thévenot’s main point of departure is that investment in form is indeed a costly endeavor, but given the existence of validating forms already in place, it guarantees a profitable result. This means that the withdrawal of the same form, or the investment in other forms that clash or somehow conflict with existing ones, might entail enormous and often overlooked costs that elude quantifiable measurements.

The roles of the public sector
In his review of the modern bureau’s contemporary state, Paul Du Gay (2000) makes an attempt at listing such costs. Drawing on the noticeable fact that the “speed” and “precision” in which Weber’s bureau discharges its functions bears little resemblance to contemporary notions of modern bureaucracy in general and the public sector in particular, Du Gay highlights how this organizational form is subject to a sustained critique from populist, philosophical, and entrepreneurial directions that, in their most elaborate iterations, remarkably use Weberian dictionary. While the populist critique focuses on the inefficiency and impersonality of the public sector, the philosophical one expands on it by taking Weber’s penchant for metaphors of machinery to its hyperbolic conclusion. In these readings, Weber’s supposed depiction of bureaucracy as an “iron cage” translates to a future devoid of moral substance and personal freedom. Meanwhile, the entrepreneurial critique combines these two elements to form the contemporary restructuring policies currently shaping the public sector in western countries:

If the new public management or “entrepreneurial governance” has one overarching target – that which it most explicitly defines itself in opposition to – then it is the impersonal, procedural, hierarchical and technical organization of the Weberian bureau. Put simply, bureaucratic government is represented as the “paradigm that failed” in large
part because the forms of organizational and personal conduct it gave rise to and fostered—adherence to procedure and precedent, abnegation of personal moral enthusiasms and so forth—are regarded as fundamentally unsuited to the exigencies of contemporary economic, social, political and cultural environments. (Du Gay, 2000, p. 6)

Much like the Swedish investigation’s conclusion on the state of democracy, the entrepreneurial critique asserts that an uncontrollable external environment is placing unparalleled pressure on the public sector to change and respond. Consequently, these new exigencies, manifested in uncertainty, unpredictability, and new competitive pressures, demand from the public sector a rejection of its attachments to procedure, objectivity, and neutrality, and a commitment to what is presented as its antithesis: an “enterprise” culture defined by risk-taking, self-reliance, and innovation (p. 83). Accordingly, entrepreneurial governance and NPM introduces imperatives based on economic efficiency and effectiveness as the sole response to the problems posed by external unrelenting change. Although these concepts are often used interchangeably, Du Gay highlights how their complex relationship does not necessarily mean that they follow from each other. To demand greater outputs from the same inputs (efficiency) or less (economy) to achieve an objective in an appropriate manner (effectiveness), all in the same time is simplistic at best, he argues, and dangerous at worst:

In not recognizing that efficiency, economy and effectiveness are plural and frequently conflicting values, reformers may unconsciously encourage public sector managers to assume that there are no real costs associated with the single-minded pursuit of any one of these because it will not be at the expense of any of the others. This constitutes a serious abnegation of what Weber referred to as the bureaucrats’ “ethos of responsibility” – the trained capacity to take account of the potential consequences of attempting to realize essentially contestable values that frequently come into conflict with other values. (pp. 105-106)

Here then, some of the costs associated with the investment of this particular form at the expense of the established institutional one comes into light. In Du Gay’s reading of Weber, his impersonal, procedural, and hierarchical depiction of the bureau is not intended to present it as ethically or morally bankrupt, but instead to highlight how bureaucracy is contained by its own particular ethical and moral conduct. This “ethos of responsibility” is conditioned on the democratic values from where bureaucracy is born and from specific political imperatives of public service that greatly transcend the imperatives of economic efficiency and effectiveness, including a sensibility to the complexities of the public opinion and interest, loyalty and honesty to those who are politically responsible, observing the political potentials and limitations inherent to the public sector, and so on. This means that although there is room for more efficient management in the public sector, it should not be allowed to obscure the limits imposed by the bureau’s own particular ethos. The costs of such indiscretions, Du Gay argues, are considerate:

If bureaucracy is to be reduced and an entrepreneurial style of management adopted, then it must be recognized that while “economic efficiency” might be improved in the short term, the longer-term costs associated with this apparent improvement may well include
antipathy to corruption, fairness, probity and reliability in the treatment of cases and other forms of conduct that were taken somewhat for granted under traditional arrangements. (pp. 94-95)

In other words, approaching the modern bureaucratic form as comprised of a distinct ethical and moral conduct designed to meet specific ends means that it is simplistic and potentially dangerous to try and govern it according to forms designed for other often conflicting ends.

Moreover, the dangers are not limited to the reduction of the bureau’s ability to constrain power, discourage corruption, or promote equality. As has been noted previously, NPM also aims to introduce clearer distinctions in the responsibilities between the politicians and the officials by assigning them with more autonomous roles. The assumption is that by making the politicians more responsible for policy and strategy the officials can focus their attention on the managerial day-to-day tasks thereby introducing more effective and efficient management as well as clearer democratic accountability. While Du Gay points out that there is certain a wisdom to the recognition of how politicians and officials carry separate and distinct personas it is not equally wise to reduce their distinction to a dichotomy of labor, that is, between policy and management, strategy and administration, and so on. Drawing again on Weber, he highlights how the official differs from the politician not because the former serves as administrator to the policies of the latter but because they are both subject to different demands formed from their particular ethos of responsibilities. Again, these demands are for the official greater than managerial tasks and they can to some degree overlap as well as conflict with the demands of the politician – where the latter is dedicated, publically accountable, and provisional, the official remains neutral, internally accountable, and permanent. Indeed, Weber (1970) himself takes great care to point out the inherent tension in the symbiotic relationship between politicians and officials – democracy and bureaucracy:

We must remember this fact – which we have encountered several times and which we shall have to discuss repeatedly: that “democracy” as such is opposed to the “rule” of bureaucratization, in spite and perhaps because of its unavoidable yet unintended promotion of bureaucratisation. (p. 231)

The point of such an exercise is that for responsible and accountable governance to function accordingly, the unavoidable tensions between the two life-orders of politics and bureaucracy need to be highlighted, not concealed – rejecting or reducing either one only serves the latter.

So seems to be the case, according to Du Gay, with the reconfiguration of roles and responsibilities introduced by NPM. Looking at the UK, he notes that where the relationship between politicians and civil servants originally resembled a partnership in strategy and management, albeit in a subordinate and subdivided manner, it has transformed to resemble a dichotomy, sharply engraving their roles and responsibilities into separate spheres. The problem is that in demanding greater individual managerial responsibilities from the civil servants they escape their anonymous and internally accountable sphere to become public figures with public accountability resulting in a situation where it is far from apparent who is to be confronted when matters of public concern arise or where policy ends and management begins. In other words, here, the attempts of NPM to make clearer distinctions in the roles between politicians and officials have served to reduce rather than add transparency and accountability to the decision-making process. Drawing on this, Du Gay (2000) concludes
that while the quantitative gains from introducing entrepreneurial management forms in the public sector could be substantive, the underlying assumption inherent to their demand is misplaced: “Bureaucracy may be more expensive than other types of organization but that is not surprising when democracy is not necessarily the cheapest form of government” (p.95).

**Conclusions**

This part began by presenting the current discussions in Sweden concerning the problems and challenges facing representative democracy in general and participatory planning in particular. The hegemonic understanding is that an external environment is changing the underlying architecture for how politics is manifested; where decision-making and public influence was previously contained within established democratic arrangements, it is now being displaced to sites that lack the requirements for transparency and accountability. In a world turned upside down, it is argued, only an institutional culture capable of responding to unrelenting change can bridge the gap between politics and democracy and restore legitimacy to the decision-making process. However, by inserting Marres’ issue politics into this discussion, conventional understandings of what is bad for democracy, as well as the solutions, starts to come under pressure. For her, displacement of politics beyond the control of established institutions is only a problem for democracy when matters of public concern are disarticulated in the process. But when the displacement follows a trajectory that makes the issues at stake accessible and approachable to a wider public audience it may actually constitute occasions for democracy, regardless of where they land. In this understanding, politics has always been about the active displacement and (dis)articulation of issues – the societal developments over the last decades that are drifting politics away from the boundaries of national representative democracy have only made this strategy more manifest. For planning, her understanding means a great deal regarding the different capabilities among actors to settle complex and contested affairs. In this environment, predetermined procedural consultations to mobilize the public become misguided since public mobilization derives from the complexities and uncertainties inherent to matters of public concern – in other words, they cannot be planned for. Moreover, rather than seeing public mobilization against development projects as an obstruction to the planning process they could be recognized as indicators of serious deficiencies in the decision-making institutions to handle certain affairs while their activities could be seen as a way for them to be democratically involved politics.

However, we have also seen that by making issues and their settlement the primary elements in democratic politics, Marres reduces rules, ideals, procedures – *forms* – to mere instruments for that end. Since the public becomes the focal point for settling complex and contested issues while institutions that uphold the forms are transformed to management of simple and familiar affairs, she places an undue burden on the individual person for the reproduction of democracy. This means that while she explicitly rejects the hegemonic understandings of democratic deficits she implicitly promotes their neoliberal solutions by positioning the citizen as the point of departure for democratic politics. The implication is that those who fail to act the role of democratic custodian and address the complex set of issues they are affected by ultimately have themselves to blame. Furthermore, her issue-focused reasoning might be severely undervaluing the public’s own attachments to democratic forms which means that their potential erosion is not acknowledged in her issue politics.
To me, this does not seem like a satisfactory approach to planning or democratic enactment more generally. So while Marres introduces a host of interesting and important aspects on the role of publics to planning that are often neglected, the continued disenchantment of marginalized groups in society is still not sufficiently addressed, and nor are the implications of further eroding the faith in established institutions. Accordingly, as a complimentary approach to Marres’ issue-focused reasoning, this part has also introduced Thévenot’s understanding of forms. By way of Weber, we have seen how investment in forms has the possibility to create a sense of overwhelming attachment that is comparable to that of issues – that through habitual activity aimed at fixating and reproducing certain relations, forms may in time come to condition and sustain the user’s entire life-world. This raises the possibility that rules, ideals, procedures, and so on, may act as more than instruments for the settlement of issues and in some cases may constitute the issue. Moreover, approaching forms as investments that are not easily objectified highlights the easily overlooked costs associated with their dissolution. In Du Gay’s reading of Weber, the distinctive life-world that is grown through investments in the bureaucratic form comprises a varied range of imperatives that greatly transcends the settlement of simple and familiar tasks, as is argued by Marres, or the bare pursuit of economic efficiency and effectiveness, as is proposed by entrepreneurial governance culture. By holding as their primary goal the leveling of social and economic differences, the bureaucrats’ activities can hardly be decoupled from political or democratic enactment. Consequently, the introduction of managerial forms in the public sector that conflicts or reduces these imperatives can be – and has been – costly in manner that is unquantifiable. Here then, a qualitatively different role for both forms and the public sector emerges than the one presented by Marres and NPM.

While the overarching purpose of this part has been to highlight the significance of Marres’ understanding of issues and publics as well as to introduce ways in which forms may be implicated in the enactment of democratic politics, the following parts will be concerned with how all these aspects might interact by looking at the planning controversy surrounding Slakthusområdet. But before that, a presentation of this paper’s methodological approaches is due.
3 Methodology

Most research methods books will often emphasize how the positionality of the researcher unavoidably shapes the research’s point of departure and point of return. Following this approach, architects Linda Groat and David Wang (2002) puts it the other way around by stressing that the “choice of a particular research design is necessarily framed by the researcher’s own assumptions about both the nature of reality and how one can come to apprehend it” (p. 21). In other words, the researcher’s ontological and epistemological assumptions have crucial influence over how the research questions are posed, the theories are chosen and interpreted, material is gathered and analyzed, the inquiry is conducted, as well as how and what conclusions are finally drawn.

The “philosophical” point of departure for this paper, then, is that “reality” is not independent from us and that our knowledge of the world is not a more nor a less authentic representation of what is “really” going on. Instead, it assumes a constructivist approach by understanding the world as multiple, socially constructed realities whereby our knowledge comes from how we choose to categorize it. This “anti-essentialist” understanding of knowledge corresponds well with Marres’ approach to political activity where concerned parties and their interests cannot be predetermined so long as their issues remain undefined. Similarly, in this paper’s interpretation of Thévenot and Weber, ideals, rules, and procedures also function as social constructions that exist only in relation to how they are categorized and reproduced by their users. (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002) Moreover, since this approach implies that there is no absolute truth or universal knowledge, it is neither possible nor necessarily suitable for research to pursue neutral and context-free “facts”. Instead, the researcher recognizes their own role in the recreation of reality and production of knowledge and must therefore conduct themselves with extra care and thoughtfulness during the research process. And given the crucial role the positionality of the researcher plays in the research, it is equally crucial that they are transparent about how it has been conducted, why certain choices have been made, and the possible implications of these choices. (Groat & Wang, 2002) Accordingly, this is the aim of this part.

Research approach

I would like to make clear, to the extent that that is possible, my theoretical frame of reference in relation to the three archetypical theoretical models: the deductive model where a theory is falsified or verified with empirical evidence; the inductive model where a theory is “built” from the evidence; and the abductive model or “grounded theory” that follows the inductive approach but repeatedly tests and refines the theory with more data (Czarniawska, 2014). Of course, few research processes fully comply with only one of these three models, but they are useful to demonstrate the theoretical purpose of this paper. To some extent, it is to “test” Marres’ thesis regarding the nature of publics and Thévenot’s understanding of forms with empirical evidence drawn from the controversy in Slakthusområdet, meaning that it follows a deductive model. On the other hand, it could be seen as way to develop a theory on the nature of publics with the help of evidence from Slakthusområdet as well as the two authors, which is more in line with the inductive approach. But, as has been noted, the purpose is not to
rework the modern conception of democratic politics and nor is it to establish a working theory of the public’s enactment of it. Rather, the theoretical purpose should be seen as an attempt to first introduce some aspects of Marres’ thesis to Swedish planning practice and then refine them accordingly with the help of other approaches (i.e., research question A, which is attempted in part 5). This means that, as is so often the case, it follows all three models to a certain extent, but without the intention of developing a theory as such. In accordance with the constructivist approach of this paper, the conclusions that are drawn at the end of this paper must be understood in relation to their contexts. This does not mean that the assumptions made are not transferrable to other cases (more on that soon), but it is not the only theoretical purpose of the paper. Metzger, Allmendinger, Oosterlynck (2014, p. 4) highlight how concepts and theories from the field of political and territorial governance can function as “intellectual equipment” for planning researchers hoping to make aware practices of “depoliticization” in the field. In this sense, Marres’ and Thévenot’s concepts and approaches are also used as tools and the controversy in Slakthusområdet as a heuristic which together help map out and highlight contemporary practices of disarticulations of public issues and concerns.

In accordance with the philosophical assumptions and these theoretical aims, that is, to refine the authors’ concepts and approaches in a Swedish planning context and to use them as intellectual and critical tools, the research has taken the form of a qualitative case study with practical methods borrowed from the social sciences.

This is not say that other approaches are not suitable for similar purposes. Quantitative studies or the combination of both could also serve to highlight particular aspects of public mobilizations as well as the range and extent of their foreclosure within one site or multiple. But given how the theoretical concepts that are used, such as attachments and forms, are not easily quantified, significant aspects in relation to the aim would be overlooked. For Groat and Wang, (2002) qualitative research requires first-hand encounters with the phenomenon of interest with the aim of gaining “understanding of how people in real-world situations ‘make sense’ of their environment and themselves” while it “acknowledges, rather than disavows, the role of interpretation in the collection and presentation of data” (p. 179). In this sense, a qualitative approach can help to better understand both the different attachments among the actors in the controversy in Slakthusområdet as well as how they make sense of what has taken place there, while my own positionality has a necessary but also acknowledged influence on this understanding.

Approaching the research through a case study seemed appropriate for a number of reasons. Groat and Wang define it as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon or setting” (p. 346) wherein three of the primary characteristics they attribute it with makes it particularly suitable for this study: the possibility to focus on only a single case which is studied in its real-life situation; the use or development of a theoretical backdrop; and the possibility to generalize the findings. In other words, given the need for qualitative studies to be close to the phenomena in question, this paper’s limitations in terms of time and resources, its heavy use of theory, and the possibility (but not necessity) to be able to transfer the findings to other sites, a single case study was chosen. There are of course other qualitative approaches that would perhaps be more or less appropriate for this paper’s aim, including ethnographic approaches that explore multiple phenomena from a single case or site. But
given the comparatively focused aim of this paper, its limited scope, as well as my partial familiarity with other qualitative research approaches they were not extensively considered.

On a similar note, the practical methods used for choosing and gathering data do not follow a single developed methodological approach (e.g., discourse theory, actor-network theory, etc.). Due to my limited experience with a single approach and limited time to research them properly, I would not be able to apply them here in a resolute or comfortable fashion. However, this paper has relied heavily on Barbara Czarniawska’s (2014) textbook *Social Science Research: From field to desk* where multiple research methods from the social sciences for gathering, analyzing, interpreting, and finally presenting the data are described. This type of “cherry-picking” has benefits in terms of being able to actively customize the research design in accordance with the aim, but flaws in how my positionality might have an undue influence on how the research is conducted. In this sense, it is important to consider the methods’ applicability in terms of validity and reliability.

Czarniawska, and many others, are heavily critical towards the application of these two quality standards since they *a priori* attempt to determine a research’s success (which is, following a social constructivist approach, often the only indicator of whether research is considered “good”). However, Groat and Wang (2002) proposes that research should be evaluated by the standards that have been developed within the respective philosophical paradigms. In this sense, constructivist research can “substitute” validity (equivalence of data and inquiry) with *credibility* which involves a holistic approach to the complexities of the research problem by using multiple and varied data sources and methods, as well as double-checking data with the original providers. Meanwhile, reliability (reliable replication of results) can be substituted with the notion of *dependability* which suggests that there exists an underlying consistency in the data while simultaneously acknowledging the complexities inherent to the phenomena being researched. To ensure this standard, it is important to keep an “audit trail” (p. 39) of notes, journals, records or transcripts which, if possible, can also be presented in the final results. This paper has adopted Groat and Wang’s approach to the methodological applicability and in the end of this part I present how.

**The case**
The choice of the phenomenon, public mobilization against planning projects; and the setting, the planning controversy surrounding Slakthusområdet, stems from my previous affiliation with the case. In the summer of 2014, I developed a report on the controversy for a forthcoming KTH research project on citizen participation and public engagement in the planning process. The aim of the report was to map the formation of opinions and activism surrounding the redevelopment of Slakthusområdet and involved a widespread media search and review, a less extensive review of the official documentation on the subject, as well as interviews with the business association in the area and members of the local protest group Nätverket Nya Enskede (NNE). In light of all the material and personal interest I had developed on the controversy, it seemed suitable as a focus for research and following the advice from my supervisor on the theoretical angles I chose the phenomenon in question. In this sense, the site and setting was chosen before the actual research phenomenon and aim. The benefit of this approach is that I had enough previous knowledge on the setting to recognize whether it was suitable for my aim and theoretical backdrop (i.e., validity): a
presumably complex set of affairs and developments, public mobilization that has not been preemptively planned for, displacement of issues beyond the established democratic arrangements, and so on. The detriments are that these preunderstandings might have overshadowed other more suitable cases and settings and provided me with a preconceived notion of what has taken place in Slakthusområdet. But in relation to my philosophical approach where preunderstandings are not necessarily a concern and given the advantages of already having a lot of data, I weighed the benefits as stronger the potential detriments.

While the paper is also developed on behalf of the forthcoming Democracy investigation, the case and overarching aim was chosen before I came in contact with its secretariat. However, following discussions with them, the scope of this paper has been somewhat widened to include a more general discussion on Swedish democracy so as to be more relevant to the issues the investigation is tasked with addressing.

An important aspect of the setting that was only recognized after it was chosen is that it may also function as a type of critical case. Flyvbjerg (2006) understands these cases as having strategic importance in relation to the general research problem, meaning that the particularities of the case of study makes it so that the problems and conclusions drawn from there can likely be applied to other settings and sites as well. In Slakthusområdet, the issue that sparked NNE into being has already been settled, and yet the locals have still lost faith in democratic practices and procedures. This means that there is no causal link between addressing a matter of public concern and attachments to democratic forms, and in this sense, the same type of erosion could be found in other controversies regardless of whether the primary issue at stake has been settled or not. What will later be shown is that, instead, the link can be drawn to the forms and practices among Swedish planning authorities. In this sense, the possibility to generalize the conclusions of this paper is partly related to the particularity of the case and partly dependent on how prevalent these practices are more generally. But, again, the conclusions should be seen in relation to the context of the findings and how they have been interpreted by me.

Materials and methods

Much of the first report’s research material has been used to research and present the background to the controversy for this paper. The media research was done with the now defunct Newsline Arkiv, a database search engine that gathered news articles and press releases from approximately 90 printed sources, 200 blogs, and over 5 000 web sources. The searches spanned a ten-year period and gathered material related to Slakthusområdet coupled with its potential plans for redevelopment. This material has been extensively complemented with further research through other search engines and official documentation in accordance with this paper’s aim and to be up to date with what has taken place during the last year. There is of course always a problem with basing research on secondary sources but the credibility is strengthened by the extensiveness of the searches which generated a broad range of news articles and materials on the same activity.

The majority of the material used for answering the research questions and, consequently, pursuing the aim of this paper, comes from interviews with some of the actors involved in the controversy. Concerning this method, Czarniawska (2014) explains that
In order to exploit the technique in full, it is essential to understand that interviews do not stand for anything else; they merely represent an interaction that is recorded or inscribed. That is all they stand for, and it is more than enough. (p. 30)

What she means is that the material elicited from interviews constitutes the interviewees’ interpretations of their life-world – their subjective surroundings – and nothing more. At the same time, these interpretations can be extremely valuable since, even if interpretations are not the focus of the research, it can be assumed that they informed many of the actions and processes that are being studied. In relation to the research focus of this paper, eliciting these interpretations with interviews have therefore been crucial, both in terms of better understanding their attachments and in how these attachments have informed their actions. Other methods could also have been used for this purpose, such as observations and shadowing, or panel discussions and surveys. However, the limited resources of this paper largely excluded the former methods while the limited focus and the reasonably small amount of actors chosen to study lessened the need for latter.

**Selections and delimitations**

The interviewees where selected based on a number of factors. Obviously, given the paper’s aim to explore a public mobilization, interviewing members of NNE was a necessity. Five interviews with five different members were conducted in 2014 for the earlier report where the members were reached through e-mails (see appendix 6) and through an acquaintance. In the spring of 2015, four more separate interviews were conducted for this paper, three of which were with the same people as before and one was with a member I had not previously spoken to. In other words, nine interviews in total were conducted with six different members of NNE between 2014 and 2015 (see appendix 1 for a list of all interviews). From the time the group was formed, it has consisted of an active core ranging from six to twelve people. The selection among them, to the extent that there was one, resembled snowball sampling in how the interviewees would advise me on who could contribute with further knowledge on a specific matter. Although it would also have been interesting to interview people who were members of the group through their popular Facebook page but not necessarily active in the controversy, time constrains limited this possibility.

Since the controversy surrounded the City of Stockholm’s plans for Slakthusområdet, interviewing representatives of the city that were somehow implicated in the redevelopment was also crucial for this paper. The central project team for the redevelopment consists of four officials, three of whom were interviewed for this paper: a planner from the Urban Development Office (Exploateringskontoret, oversees land allocations), a planner from the City Planning Office (Stadsbyggnadskontoret, responsible for building rights and zoning), and a project communicator responsible for delivering information on the project to the public and to the media. They were also reached through e-mails and an acquaintance who had previously interviewed them in relation to the same KTH research project.

Moreover, four politicians more or less implicated in the redevelopment were also interviewed: two from the Urban Development Council (Exploateringsnämnden, politically responsible for the Development Office), one from the City Planning Council (Stadbyggnadsnämnden, politically responsible for the Planning Office) and one from the local City District Council (Stadsdelsnämnd, see part 4.1 for its rather complicated range of responsibility)
which oversees the area where Slakthusområdet is located. To reach the politicians, interview requests through e-mail were first sent to the planning and development councils’ chairmen and vice-chairmen of both this term of office and the previous one. Since only one person responded, I sent requests to all the regular members of both councils whereby a few more responded (see appendix 7 for an example of the e-mails sent to the officials and the politicians). The selection process at this point was largely based on trying to develop parity in the political affiliations among the interviewees. Because of time constraints, this was largely unsuccessful. (See appendix 8 for a timeline of the interviews in relation to the redevelopment plans for Slakthusområdet).

There are of course many more actors that are in one way or other implicated in this controversy: the businesses and the business association actually located in Slakthusområdet, the art studio that recently moved out of the area but still takes an interest in its redevelopment\(^2\), the many people concerned about the fate of the century-old buildings located there, other businesses and residents in its proximity, other sectors and people within the city departments that have stakes in the outcomes, and of course the private party that the city developed the latest plans with: the Ikea group. But again, given the time constraints and the focused aim of this paper, which is derived from exploring the relationship between NNE and the city, I chose to only concentrate on the four actor-groupings, that is, NNE, the planners in charge of the redevelopment, the politicians responsible for it, and the local politicians that are implicated in it.

The question, then, is whether the material collected among these groupings is enough. Czarniawska’s (2014) answer is quite cryptic:

The advice is simple, perhaps deceptively so: When your field material (interviews, observations, documents collected) becomes repetitive, it is time to stop. Not immediately, of course – repetition may prove to be misleading. (p. 144)

She highlights the need for reaching a kind of saturation in the data, but warns that it might also be a reflection of the similarities inherent to having a small pool of sources. In terms of the data collected from NNE there has been a strong saturation. While the pool is rather small, the core group of people is also small and the research should also reflect this. And while there are differences of opinions, interpretations, as well as socio-cultural characteristics between the members, this paper has treated them as part of one actor-grouping since they are collectively implicated in the controversy in relation to the same issues. The official in the project team that was not interviewed comes from the Real Estate Office (Fastighetskontoret) which oversees the city-owned buildings; an exclusion due to time constraints and due to how the research is focused on the controversy between NNE and the city rather than the controversy surrounding the buildings and the businesses that currently occupy them. That being said, the paper would have benefited from more interviews with officials involved the redevelopment, especially considering its strong theoretical focus on the “ethos” of officials. This is, perhaps, more true for the politicians where it was difficult to reach a “repetition” in their interpretations despite the lack of parity in the political affiliations. However, most of these differences were still related to their political ideologies. But more importantly, as will

\(^2\) The cover photo of this paper is of a manifestation organized by them that aimed to raise awareness surrounding the redevelopment.
be shown, there was considerable repetitions among almost all the city’s representatives concerning the perception of public mobilizations in planning which means that I have often, but not always, treated the city as one actor-grouping too. In other words, because of this saturation and because of the time constraints, I have not pursued more field material.

The interviews
The interviews lasted from 40 minutes to over an hour and were conducted in cafés, interviewees’ workplaces, and with one of the interviewees on telephone. All of the interviews used for this paper were fully recorded and later transcribed mostly in full but sometimes partial pieces. For Czarniawska, eliciting narratives from the interviewees is of great value for the researcher since these kinds of interpretations often incorporate more meaning and more information concerning their life-worlds than, for instance, a list of factors. In accordance with this aim, I used a semi-structured approach to the interviews where I had a list of questions I wanted to ask (see appendix 3, 4, and 5) but tried not to follow them dogmatically, often switching the order, phrasing them in more open ways and through different examples, and leaving some out in favor of others. The intention was to give the interviewees room to speak and hopefully form narratives of their interpretations of publics, the public sector, and their role in the enactment of democratic politics. To my understanding, it was mostly successful. However, since five of the interviews with NNE were conducted in relation to the previous report, the validity of this material can be question. But although both methods and questions differed from the recent ones (see appendix 2), they have still been tremendously useful since the subjects of the earlier report and this paper significantly intersect. Moreover, the older material also highlights how NNE’s faith in democratic procedures has eroded over time and provides this paper with an important temporal aspect that is developed in part 5.

There are always problems in representing research material in way that makes it significant to the wider aim while still making it sincere to the original contributor’s intentions. Consequently, I tried to use methods during the analysis phase to the representation phase that acknowledges rather than disavows the researcher’s own influence. Generally, this meant applying Czarniawska’s suggestions for text analysis to both the theoretical readings and to the transcriptions. This approach begins with explication which aims to understand the text and what it is trying to say – the “What?” This is followed by explanation which is analytical and introduces the “Why?” and “How?”, meaning the text is read in relation to its context whereby the influence of the interpreter becomes more apparent. The final stage is exploration wherein the interpreter becomes the “author” and reconstructs the text through critique or espousal. This is not to say that I have reformulated the interview material in accordance with the aim of the paper; in the text, quotes are used from all the interviewees, many quite lengthy so as to convey their meanings and be transparent in how they were formulated. Rather, it is to say that all the quotes used have to a more or a less extent gone through this analytical process and have a purpose for being incorporated. This approach is also important considering what Czarniawska highlights as the politics of representation. Drawing on Latour she raises the problems concerning who and what is most

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3 The interviews with the business association in 2014 were not recorded but have only been used in this paper to present some of the background to the controversy.
often represented in research. In this sense, given the political nature of the interviewees and the aim of this paper, contextualizing their meanings becomes especially important.

Regarding the quotes, they have all been translated from Swedish to English by me where emphasis has been at representing their meaning. This means that long pauses and such, have been left out while idioms, sayings, the order of words, have been translated in way that tries to capture the statements original intention rather than their complete literal form. There are a lot of dimensions lost when doing it this way, but in relation to the analytical methods used – and not used – it seemed more appropriate.

A key question that has emerged during this stage is the extent to which the interviewees are acting as representatives and subjects for analysis or witnesses to phenomena in the controversy. Mostly it has been the former, sometimes the latter, and sometimes both. But when it has been as witnesses, their statements have tried to be verified through other means which, to the extent it has been possible, has also been presented. Credibility has also been pursued in other ways. The majority of the interviewees were asked if they want to read their transcripts before they were used for the paper, while only some followed through on this query. Moreover, the recent interviews with NNE could be seen as using varied data or double-checking against the older ones. Dependability of the research has been pursued by keeping e-mails, transcripts, notes, and so on, but the recordings with the interviewees have been deleted following the transcripts. While some of the “audit trail” is presented in the appendices, the interview transcripts are not considering the sheer extent of its material.

All research requires ethical considerations, no less so when part of the material is directly facilitated by individuals. Consequently, this research was conducted according to the ethics principles recognized within the humanities and social sciences and, more specifically, the individual protection requirement (Vetenskapsrådet, 2000). This included informing the interviewees of the general aim of the research, making sure that they consented to take part in it and that they agreed to being recorded. All the members of NNE have been assigned with assumed first names in this paper and information that could otherwise identify them outside of those in the group have been excluded. Since politicians are public figures with public accountability their full names, affiliations, and other aspects concerning their person that would have bearing on this paper’s aim have, with their consent, been included. While this might have obstructed possibilities for them to speak more freely, using assumed names might also have eluded the possibility to more accurately depict the characters, responsibilities, and actions to the controversy. While the officials consented to having their full names used in the paper, I chose to only depict their title and their department since they are not public figures. The choice of still providing some information on them was based on how their professional roles and areas of responsibilities have also been important in the controversy in Slakthusområdet. This also highlights how the ethical requirements are not unproblematic and should be used as guidelines together with the researcher’s own judgment and as a way to reflect on questions such as how to weigh the interest of the research against that of the participants, or, at what point the researcher becomes part of their own research. Arguably, these are questions without answers but they serve the purpose of making the researcher aware of their presence and, as a result, their impacts. (Pripp, 1999)
4 Slakthusområdet

Background to the controversy
Slakthusområdet is a 300,000 m² industrial district located in Johanneshov in southern Stockholm. It is bordered by villas and housing on its western and southern sides, an above ground metro line on its northern, and one of the county’s main freeways, Nynäsvägen, on its eastern periphery with the two stadiums Ericsson Globe and Tele2 Arena nuded in between. When it was inaugurated in 1912 its activities were under municipal control and the district served as the only place in Stockholm where slaughter was allowed. Over the years, following a series of technological and institutional changes, the area and its activities significantly expanded: In the 1930s, the city’s wholesale trade in meat was centralized to Slakthusområdet; in the 1980s, the activities were privatized; and in the 1990s, slaughter ceased in favor of processing and packaging. But expansion has continued and significant refurbishments of buildings and infrastructure were still carried out well into the 2000s. Although activities not exclusive to food processing has moved into the district in the recent years, such as restaurants, offices, an artist studio, and nightclubs, over half of the district’s approximately 250 businesses are still active in the food industry, together providing the majority of the meat consumed in Stockholm. (Stockholms Stad, 2002; Svenska Dagbladet, 2006)

Nevertheless, with the continued growth of Stockholm, Slakthusområdet has gone from a periphery to being surrounded by a central urban environment. This has led to a political agreement in City Hall (Stadshuset) on how it represents one of the city’s next big redevelopment areas, and since 2006, various large-scale renewal plans for the area have succeeded one another. The consensus seems to stems from how it constitutes what Wiberg and Metzger (2015) refer to as a brownfield development; inner-city industrial areas which for planning purposes are generally understood as hollow, closed-off, and lacking in connections to its urban surroundings – in other words, a kind of urban terra nullius where any type of redevelopment is considered to be in everyone’s general interest.

The first plan, Evenemangstaden (Event City) launched under the Social Democratic rule, comprised a transformation of Slakthusområdet into a new city core with 7,000 houses and a giant stadium for 50,000 spectators (Dagens Nyheter, 2006). These plans were quickly cancelled by the center-right coalition following the 2006 power shift in City Hall and in 2009, when the coalition presents the vision document for Stockholm’s new comprehensive plan, Matstaden (Food City) is presented in its place. The redevelopment of Slakthusområdet is described as one piece of the larger development of Söderstaden (South City), an area that will extend from southern Skanstull in Södermalm towards Enskede in the southern suburbs, and will function as Stockholm’s event and entertainment hub were “a wide range of events in sports, culture and entertainment will serve to strengthen the entire Stockholm region's attractiveness as a location for world-class experiences” (Stockholms Stad, 2009, p. 4). Meanwhile, Slakthusområdet’s history and tradition in food, combined with inspiration drawn from how places for production around the world are transformed to places for consumption (such as New York’s Meatpacking District), will merge to form the concept of Matstaden (Dagens Industri, 2009). In this conception, most of the area’s businesses and buildings, of which a significant number are evaluated to have a cultural-historical value with the strongest
possible protections (Stockholms Stad, 2015a), will remain in Slakthusområdet to strengthen its gastronomic identity (Dagens Industri, 2009).

But in 2011, when the starting memorandum for the redevelopment of Slakthusområdet is presented to the City Planning Council, it becomes clear that most of the businesses are evacuating to make room for 2,500 – 3,000 new houses in the district (Stockholms Stad, 2011). It is argued that the addition of housing is considered difficult to reconcile with the larger industries’ cooling systems, whereby Larpsboda, further south of Stockholm, is presented as the new food packaging and processing center. Although the coalition promises that the protected buildings will remain, the changes appear to have altered the vision for the area whereby the name Matstaden is dropped in favor of keeping the name “Slakthusområdet”. (Dagens Nyheter, 2011) Björn Ljung of the Liberal People’s Party (Folkpartiet) who currently makes up part of the center-right opposition in the City Planning Council explains this change in direction:

In the beginning it was Matstaden and it was great. I sat in the Real Estate Council at the time. It’s a great idea. It's just that then, we didn’t have the critical housing crisis that we have today. It's actually a phenomenon that has developed over the past 12 years.

Nevertheless, the business association that represents the numerous companies involved in food processing in Slakthusområdet is far from pleased. As a means to gain greater control over Slakthusområdet’s future use, it is reported that the city has aggressively been acquiring land and property in the area while reducing the duration on the leases in its current holdings. (Fastighetsvärdlen, 2011; Dagens Nyheter, 2009) Without a clear strategy for their evacuation, the association is worried that the networks and synergies formed between the businesses in Slakthusområdet will disappear with the redevelopment (Chairman, personal communication, 2014).

But not until the beginning of 2013, following Slakthusområdet’s 100 year anniversary, further news about the redevelopment is revealed. In a press conference, the Mayor at the time, Sten Nordin of the Moderate Party (Moderaterna), presents their “letter of intent” with the Ikea group surrounding the development of Slakthusområdet (Svenska Dagbladet, 2013a). The agreement, described as an early land allocation deal, has been developed by the Urban Development Office and the Ikea group over the last year and tasks the city with investigating the conditions for developing a commercial complex of 136,000 m² comprised of an Ikea store, a shopping mall, and 4,000 parking spaces in Slakthusområdet’s southern parts, as well as 550 houses developed by Ikea’s housing branch Ikano Bostad (Stockholms Stad, 2013). The plans are confirmed as still being part of the bigger vision for Söderstaden and motivated by how an Ikea store would boost the area’s status while a shopping mall would create 1,000 new jobs for the area in the long run. Moreover, Nordin argues that selling the large patch of city-owned land to a private developer is a necessary measure to secure finances for various other infrastructure projects around Stockholm. (Svenska Dagbladet, 2013a) The agreement forces the city to exclusive negotiations with the Ikea group surrounding the development of Slakthusområdet’s southern parts over a period of two years, but the plans that pertain to the agreement are not legally binding. Nordin however, assures that it is “significantly stronger than a gentlemen's agreement” (Svenska Dagbladet, 2013a). Maria Östberg Svanelind, leader of the Social Democratic party in the local district and who served in the opposition as vice
Firstly, we didn’t like the very idea of a letter of intent. We thought, “What is that? We can’t plan the city with a handshake. It requires much more”. We thought the planning process was wrong. We thought that you first need to look at the conditions: “Is this a good idea?”, then you strike a deal. By doing a letter of intent in this way you exclude other actors. Other actors didn’t have any opportunities to submit proposals for this part of the district.

According to the planner from the City Planning Office involved in the project, the reason for the early agreement and the deviation from typical procedure is related the sheer complexity inherent to the project:

In this case it’s such a unique set-up that it’s too difficult to discern how a larger commerce complex functions and to develop some kind of framework for it now and then later start to cooperate in more detail – if we would continue into the detailed planning stage. So that’s the main reason really; the complexity.

The criticism towards the project is not limited to the political opposition however – media outlets, editorials, experts, and interest groups all make their own contributions to the debate in the following years. Shortly after Nordin’s press conference it is revealed that an initial analysis of Slakthusområdet’s future traffic situation shows a marked increase in congestions and environmental hazards before the new plans have even been taken into account (Svenska Dagbladet, 2013b). An older commerce analysis of Söderstaden (Niras, 2011) also resurfaces that excludes the possibilities for large-scale commerce in Slakthusområdet given the land’s high market value, the traffic situation, and the competition with nearby commerce (Svenska Dagbladet, 2014a). Editorials and interest groups join in by arguing that the city’s overarching vision for Slakthusområdet as a new creative district is severely undermined by its plans’s for large-scale shopping in the area (Barth-Kron, 2013; Kronqvist, 2014; YIMBY, 2014), and further that positioning commerce of such magnitude so close to the city center is counter-intuitive since it is the periphery that is in demand for more commercial activities in their surroundings (Barth-Kron, 2014; Stockholm Skyline, 2014; Carlberg, 2014). Many politicians in the ruling center-right coalition, including some of the city’s commissioners, also express their grievances towards the plans, arguing that they will not accept a full-size Ikea store with warehouses and that the store should adopt the form of a “showroom” with home delivery so that customers are encouraged to utilize public transportation rather than cars (Ankersjö, 2014; Sjöstedt, 2014; Svenska Dagbladet, 2014b).

In the beginning of 2014, a year after the agreement was disclosed, the business association is doing significantly better. After going public with their concerns the city is more understanding towards their predicament, and to meet the many logistic and technical demands of the new food processing center in Larsboda they collaboratively establish a project team that oversees the evacuation (Chairman, personal communication, 2014). However, around this time, another party emerges that also feels directly affected by the redevelopment of Slakthusområdet but is significantly less pleased. Formed by a small number of people living in the vicinity, NNE strongly opposes the new plans. Similar to the
ongoing critique, they are not convinced of the possibility to successfully integrate housing, culture, and small-scale services with a large-scale commerce complex. But above all, they voice a strong concern for how the latest plans could generate increased traffic and environmental problems in their neighborhoods. Given that the statutory procedural consultation meeting (Programsamråd), where the public is given their first formal opportunity to affect a planning project, has been postponed from the previous autumn to late spring 2014, the group hopes to influence the redevelopment through other means such as recruiting more members, collecting and distributing information on the project, and contacting politicians and the media. They also see the autumn elections the same year as an important opportunity to highlight their issue and believe that politicians will want to be clear about where they stand. (Tidningen Årsta/Enskede, 2014) Their strategy proves fairly successful. With Marre’s approach to issue formations, the following part examines how.

4.1 Issues

Attachments to, and (dis)articulations of issues

Currently, in the summer of 2015, NNE has approximately 2,000 members in their Facebook group, but the active part still consists of around twelve people. There are more women than men in this core and most of them share a similar ethnic background and socio-economic status, that is, Swedish and above average income, with careers in the advanced service sector such as consulting, marketing, design, and so on. Also in common is that most of them live in Enskede, perceive themselves as neighbors to Slakthusområdet, and have for a long time experienced an environmental deterioration in their surroundings. This became most apparent after construction on Tele2 Arena finished in 2013. Rebecka recounts that since then, traffic, noise, and pollution has increased markedly in and around Nynäsvägen and where she lives, which prompted her to consider the limits in accessibility around her neighborhood:

Children cannot move freely. Even when they reach a traffic-mature age, so to speak, it’s impossible. It doesn’t work. I don’t have driver's license, I walk a lot, use public transportation. So I had thought a lot about the inhumane urban planning in the area.

Consequently, the plans to develop a commercial complex right next to the new stadium came as a surprise. Malin, for instance, had difficulties in digesting the news:

As a neighbor you get into a sort of shock and think, “What should we do now? Should we move? What does it mean? It can’t be so crazy that they actually build an Ikea as big as Kungens Kurva?”

But not all of the people that later formed the group took the news the same way. “It seemed exciting at first”, says Jonas who always aims to be open towards new planning projects. But the more he learned about this project the more unreal it seemed. Rebecca explains:

How does this live up the holistic perspective, that is, the social and the environmental? The economic perspective is obvious in a way, but the others? It
becomes so paradoxical. Especially considering the rise of E-shopping and the demise of shopping malls, and how this area is so full of environmental toxins.

All of the interviewees from NNE recount the same feeling of contradiction inherent in the latest plan for Slakthusområdet. That it seemingly disregards the comprehensive plan for Stockholm, *Promenadstaden* (Stockholms Stad, 2010), that aims to link the inner city to the suburb with a heavy emphasis on accessibility, vibrant neighborhoods, and sustainability. Indeed, Nynäsvägen is currently one of the busiest roads in the county with over 60,000 cars passing through it each day. It is marked as red on SLB’s (Stockholms luft och Bulleranalys) map of Stockholm’s roads meaning that the concentration of PM10 (heavy particles from studded tires, brakes, and exhausts) is above the limit of 50 micrograms per cubic meter of air. This can be directly harmful and people living or working around such levels run a higher risk of developing cardiovascular disease, respiratory diseases, lung cancer, asthma, and many other illnesses. (Mitt i Söderort, 2011)

To discuss these concerns, some of them started the Facebook group in the end of 2013 and organized their first meeting shortly after. They first focused their attention on making sense of the agreement but quickly expanded their work into finding more knowledge about the area; reading protocols, investigations, and documents concerning the plans, as well as making it all available in their Facebook group, which in part seems to have contributed to the rapid increase in membership. However, Hanna explains that they noticed fairly early that they need to be more structured and develop an overarching goal for their activities:

> We organized ourselves in different teams to be as efficient as possible and not having to put in double work. And we set a common goal. And an approach to our activities – what type of attitude we should have.

Thus, if the primary issue that sparked the group into being – their issue attachment – is an environmental concern for their immediate surroundings and all that it implies in terms of health, livability, accessibility, and so on, their primary goal – the road towards its settlement – is the dissolution of the plans for the commerce complex; that is, both the shopping mall and the Ikea store, no matter the conception of the latter. Jonas explains:

> If Ikea doesn’t build a store with warehouses in Slakthusområdet, it would still become a large-scale store, even if you choose to call it showroom. It’s the flow of trucks, cars, and parking spaces that will make it into a full-size facility. There’s also too much focus on the Ikea store and the huge shopping mall is rarely mentioned in the discussion. If they’d choose not to build a store or a shopping mall, roughly 1,500 more houses could fit in the area.

Many, including Malin, also want to emphasize that this goal is not about mistrust towards the Ikea group:

> Fantastic company and I have absolutely nothing against it as a company and concept, I shop there myself. But placing large-scale commerce in Slakthusområdet will lead to traffic chaos. The surroundings will be insufferable. This is where our children go to
school. It will jam up. And I don’t mean it in a NIMBY-spirit since there are ways to do something better when planning the city.

Both quotes are characteristic of how the interviewees formulate their goal: they always choose to converge it with other alternatives that still involve a redevelopment of Slakthusområdet which would significantly depart from its current industrial usage. In this sense, their critique of the latest plans and their hope for its termination almost becomes inseparable from what Hanna referred to as their approach and attitude. Jonas continues:

You can’t be one of those whining groups. That gets you labeled as a NIMBY – and that’s not what this is about. We are not against building. Stockholm is growing, this is a place that is going to be developed, there is a big shortage of housing, there is a vision called Promenadstaden. So let’s realize it.

Helene, also part of the core in the group, relates how one of the reasons for her Villa association not becoming as involved as NNE in the controversy surrounding Slakthusområdet is a concern for how the association might be perceived: “It’s also the case that it’s very easy to turn against privileged villa owners that don’t want Ikea as a neighbor. It probably wouldn’t look good in the media”. Moreover, she feels that one of the most important aspects to NNE’s activities is their vocal desire to redevelop Slakthusområdet since “that makes it so much harder for the politicians to just steamroll us”.

This means that the members of the group, from very early on, consciously chose an approach to their activities that articulates well with the hegemonic planning discourse. This is done by, firstly, endorsing a redevelopment design of Slakthusområdet that seems to agree with the comprehensive plan for Stockholm and, secondly, adopting a public language that is difficult to misconstrue as a voice of opposition. In this sense, by explicitly dissociating themselves from so called NIMBYs and encouraging the growth and expansion of Stockholm, they articulate their issue, and by extension themselves, in a way that makes the settlement more likely to be in their favor. Pertinent to this is that many of the interviewees find Slakthusområdet’s current usage off-putting and intruding. Helene describes it as “completely dead in the evenings”, and Malin, who lives very close to the district, has been in contact with the Environmental Office (Miljöförvaltningen) since 2007 concerning noises exceeding acceptable levels. This means that almost any type of redevelopment of Slakthusområdet that does not include a massive commerce complex might be a significant improvement to their surroundings. The point is that whether a group is for or against “development” in a given planning controversy, or for that matter, like Marres would argue, whether a group can be considered a legitimately concerned party or not, is fundamentally contestable and highly dependent on how the group is articulated – both by themselves and by others.

In this controversy, these articulations seem to be one and the same, meaning NNE has somewhat successfully presented themselves as being “progressive” towards planning and development. Elin Olsson of the Environmental Party (Miljöpartiet) and member of the Urban Development Council explains her perception of them:

It’s fun with these types of arrangements that have a very positive approach. That is, that they are discussing what kind of development they want to see rather than just
oppose. I also find them to be a very constructive party in how they are discussing what type of city they want to live in.

The project communicator for Slakthusområdet’s redevelopment has a similar impression:

They’re not fundamentally opposed the development of Slakthusområdet and to open it up and making it a vibrant urban environment. And that is the foundation of our assignment as well. But then there’s the Ikea facility that they oppose that’s now also a part of our assignment.

Indeed, all the interviewees from the city share this impression of NNE’s approach except Björn Ljung of the Liberal People’s Party in the Planning Council who still isn’t sure of their intentions:

There’s one thing I see. For example, certain names that pop up in all kinds of contexts when there are various mobilizations against something, because it’s nearly always against something. … There are probably a lot of motives for this but that they feel that they live close by, I have a bit of a hard time understanding. I think there’s a strong unwillingness among people towards development altogether – change.

But whether they perceive NNE as for or against change, their impressions highlight the tangible stigmatization inherent to being construed as the latter – a NIMBYist – which most certainly would diminish the chances of, if not being heard, then at least listened to by the city in a planning project.

So, which are the city’s issue attachments? Surely, it is not possible to uncover its overwhelming amount of concerns in this planning project given its numerous institutions and actors all possessing diverging interests and responsibilities; whereas NNE was formed out of their particular issue in this project, the same is obviously not true for the City of Stockholm. Fortunately, ascertaining these attachments is, for the purpose of this part, not relevant. Although the representatives of the city certainly emphasize particular issues over others in the interviews, these have already been adopted by NNE: housing, linking the inner-city to the suburbs, providing culture to the area, and so on. In other words, these are issues attached to the planning project and not the controversy. The issue that has turned the project into disagreement – the issue at stake – is the one that NNE and the city are antagonistically implicated in: the plans for the commerce complex. Building it in Slakt-husområdet is, in this sense, the city’s issue in the controversy.

Despite the broad disapproval against the plans presented in this paper, ranging from politicians and media pundits to local businesses and movements, translating them into practice has still been an important imperative for the city over a long period of time. The planner explains:

As to the question of why, it is of course the case that we still believe it’s possible to do something great. … In one way or other we believe, both among politicians and officials in multiple levels, that it’s possible to make room for commerce in Söderstaden. … But if there was a consensus that this is impossible or that it’s a bad idea, then of course we wouldn’t be continuing with this.
Although all the politicians interviewed for this paper were generally against the plans for the commerce complex, only differing in their level of disapproval, the planner makes it clear that there has also been an overall support for the plans. Indeed some of the politicians interviewed were still hoping for a way to integrate some large scale commerce with an overarching plan for creating an environment that parallels with the inner-city. Elin Olsson of the Environmental Party in the Urban Development Council again:

We still haven’t seen any plans that we are confident could work. But if we are presented with it in way that makes us understand how that piece of the puzzle can fit and what sort of added value it can create, both in an urban and a social sense, to this district, then obviously it’s not something that we just say no to.

Björn Ljung in City Planning Council delivers a less cryptic depiction of his assessment of the plans:

When I heard about it, sure, it sounded good but it was doomed to fail. It’s too congested. It requires too much parking spaces. You can’t bury that much in this area too since the metro is going to pass through eventually. Parking of that size we couldn’t accept in [the City Planning Council]. An Ikea, a kind of showroom, where you sort walk around and look and feel around the stuff and then order it all to your home – that might have worked. And then you’d buy all the little gadgets in a little store. But nothing with a loading bay and all that stuff, it would never work.

As has been noted previously, the idea of a showroom is a recurring theme in the discussions concerning Ikea and Slakthusområdet. Maria Östberg Svanelind of the Social Democrats and vice chairman of the Urban Development Council at the time explains her impressions of this concept:

There were no ideas in the letter of intent about a showroom. This might have been something that was developed in the press conferences. I’m not really sure where it came from. It was just this buzz that everyone embraced. And I used to highlight that it might be a good idea but in political councils and in city councils [Kommunfullmäktige] we don’t make decisions on fun ideas. We’re not a suggestion box for Ikea. And if you feel that Ikea should develop this concept, then leave it to Ikea, in a sense.

The notion that politicians in their roles as members of planning councils should contribute with concepts for how a privately owned retail store best markets and sells their goods is, in a sense, unusual. Jonas alludes to a possible reason for this appeal:

And now they’re starting to dress the language in different ways. They’re talking about Globenområdet instead of Slakthusområdet. Just a small thing like that makes you think, “Oh but okay, Globenområdet. I suppose it’s okay then with huge shopping malls and facilities with Ikea”. And then their talking about this showroom that Ikea never mentioned. But it caught on and it’s a cute idea and it made a lot of people think that it’s all called off. And now no one is talking about the huge shopping mall.

Indeed, to my understanding, neither the Ikea group nor the last two mayors have ever used the concept of showroom when referring to the plans, and when the concept has come up,
Ikea has been clear that they dismiss the possibility for anything other than a conventional facility with warehouses (e.g., Tidningen Årsta/Enskede, 2014). In fact, the concept of a showroom in relation to Slakthusområdet seems to be a remnant from the plans for Matstaden where it was used to describe how consumers could meet with suppliers in small specialized shops (Fri Köpenskap, 2008). Moreover, in media and in politician’s announcements, Ikea and its retail store is typically the matter of discussion rather than the actual commerce complex that comprises both the store and the shopping mall. In this sense, much like NNE, representatives of the city are articulating their issues in a way that fits well with the contemporary urban planning discourse so that the outcomes of the planning project is more likely to be in their favor. The difference between the two approaches is that with the city’s articulations, the local’s concerns are disarticulated in the process.

**Complex, sensitive and legal issues**

A similar process is taking place in how the planning project is discussed among the representatives of the city. All the members of NNE, without exception, find that the dialogue with most of the politicians and officials as well as the insight into the project has been abysmal. Helene again:

> No, I’m very disappointed. I was a lot more optimistic in the beginning and really thought they would listen to arguments and welcome an open dialog. And everything is classified, even a traffic analysis. We can’t understand it. And no answers. Is it an Ikea with or without warehouses? That’s a huge difference. Why is it so important with the shopping center?

According to the interviews with the city, it is the politicians in the councils that decide on the budget for citizen dialogue activities – the early and voluntary procedural consultations with the public that municipalities are increasingly employing – but the officials are usually the ones who deem whether they are necessary or not in any given planning project. The planner from the City Planning Office draws on the area’s spatial elements and usages as well as the complexities inherent to the agreement to explain some of the reasons why this was not considered for Slakthusområdet:

The difference here is that this is an area that’s very closed off. It was only a couple of years ago that you could even enter with your car and use the area. It’s very cut off from the outside. And it’s also different since everything surrounding the analysis for the new commerce area has been a very introverted process. A lot of it has been in cooperation with Ikea/Ikano and it’s difficult to find a way to make that into some kind of dialogue – in the middle of that process.

The planner from the Urban Development Office also draws on the political aspects inherent to the project to explain the differences:

We started developing Slakthusområdet before Ikea/Ikano became relevant. And as I understand it, what with Early Dialogue, it’s actually used before you even start considering what to use an area for – that’s when you use this dialogue. But it’s been very clear regarding the focus and approach from the whole city and our politicians on what
we wanted to with this area. It’s to transform this industrial area into a dense urban inner-city environment.

The project communicator, who still hadn’t met with NNE at the time of the interview, explains why it has also been difficult to conduct informal dialogues and consultations with the public during the process:

And the fact that one hasn’t had any straightforward dialogues during the project is also probably related to the uncertainties surrounding it. The timetable has changed a number of times as you probably know. So every time you have something and you think you can make it more public, everything gets postponed again. And the letter of intent with Ikea was nothing that we knew about in advance. So there are new things that arrive, and there are a lot of political issues. There aren’t a lot of projects that have been this political. And that’s why we haven’t been able to plan so far ahead and initiate bigger dialogues, and so on, without waiting for the next step and the next decision.

It seems to be the case that with the perception of Slakthusområdet as a closed off urban terra nullius, where no one is assumed to really care about its on goings and any redevelopment is considered a “good” redevelopment, a strong political agreement has developed on what the city wants for the area without any considerations for early dialogues with the public. And, furthermore, once this process was initiated and the agreement was underway, the project was deemed too complex, too politically sensitive, and too uncertain to open it up for public input and scrutiny before a final proposal could be presented. The reasoning and rationale is fairly understandable of course, as is the project communicator’s frustration over how these complexities are impeding on her work. But according to Marres, it is precisely these types of controversies, where the issues are too complex for even established institutions to fully settle, that demand the attention of the public.

NNE would seemingly have agreed following their numerous fairly unsuccessful attempts at pursuing what Helene calls “the proper political route”, including reaching out to the politicians in charge as well as awaiting the statutory public consultation meeting. On the latter, she explains:

It feels like they open it up for the public in a stage that is too late, when everything is already done. Maybe you can make a few adjustments, but on the whole everything is already done and it has already cost so much money and has gone so far and so many promises have been made. So it feels more like window dressing.

Another important aspect here is how the procedural planning process accommodates – or fails to accommodate – informal grassroots movements such as NNE. Following a public consultation meeting and during the development of the legally binding zoning plan, appeals are only taken into consideration if they are made by an “affected party” (sakägare) (Boverket, 2002, p. 24). This means that for the group’s collective appeals to be taken into consideration during this later process, it would require that they function as a legal entity. As a result, one of their ongoing plans developed by an attorney active in the group is to form an association out of NNE. When asked about the implications of becoming a formal
entity on the rest of their activities and the obligations it might demand, Jonas, as well as the others, is quick to point out that they are mostly keeping their eyes on the prize:

I mean the network is focusing on the issue in Slakthusområdet. But it’s connected to other parts as well, like transparency, that’s also a huge issue. It’s also about the consequences of what would happen if there were no establishment, and if we gained influence. But we’re not going to form an association and conduct Stockholm planning policy. … When the issue is settled, the association is settled.

So more than highlighting one possible effect of the encounters between informal grassroots movements and the formal planning constitution, the responses from NNE also points to what Marres sees as an inherent aspect to issue politics. In this instance, forms – that is, the procedures, rules, and obligations that would develop out of forming a legal entity – are not only subordinate to the group’s issue at stake, they are also used as an excuse, it seems, to politicize it.

Another somewhat similar process can be seen in the city’s approaches. To learn more about the environmental consequences surrounding the redevelopment, NNE had requested access to the city’s working material on an extensive traffic analysis that was being conducted as part of the new plans. The group was partially denied the request, only receiving material that Hanna refers to as “garbage – documents that haven’t been relevant or documents without descriptions of what it was”. The Urban Development Office responded that providing the material before the full proposal had been made public could “influence stakeholders and have a negative effect on the office’s bargaining position” (Stockholms Stad, 2014a). Like Helene did earlier, all of the interviewees in the group refer to this outcome as a reflection of how they are increasingly encountering a democratic deficit in transparency and insight during their dealings with the planning offices. The official from the same office, however, also invokes democratic principles when defending their decision:

And there’s also a democratic aspect. Because if we would go out with unfinished working material, then it’s not democratic, because what comes out is really nothing and it can be interpreted in a lot of different ways, and above all it can be interpreted differently by different people. And then there is no picture. I would call that undemocratic in a way. If everyone should have the opportunity to proceed from the same preconditions, then you need – what I can I call it – the same platform to discuss from.

While both sides are invoking democratic principles (albeit ones that seem to contradict each other) when discussing the redevelopment, they significantly differ in how they use them. For NNE it is to highlight the city’s resistance towards opening itself up for public scrutiny, whereas for the city it is to legitimize this foreclosure. And the dispute over the material takes the latter approach to its definitive conclusion: by verbalizing the political sensitivity of the project with appeals to democratic fairness and due process the city seemingly transforms democracy into a legal instrument that serves to protect its interests and further its issues in the ongoing redevelopment. Forms, again, are made subordinate to issues.
The group subsequently appealed the decision to the Supreme Administrative Court (Högsta förvaltningsdomstolen) but were denied leave. Nevertheless it highlights one form of displacement attempted by the group: taking their issue from the planning offices responsible for the redevelopment of Slakthusområdet to the courtroom. Although it proved unsuccessful, other displacements did not.

**Displacement of issues**

One team in the group with skills from public relations works specifically with the transparency issues. Their purpose is to share information about the project by reaching out to as many other actors as possible, both in the media and among the public. Jonas who works in this group sees the internet and social media as crucial elements of these efforts:

Transparency isn’t there so that’s what we’re trying to develop. It wouldn’t have been possible before the internet; to do this in a few months with very little resources, mobilize contacts and be able to uncover some of these things.

The Facebook group is regularly updated with links and discussions by other members than just the active core and some of the politician’s in the planning councils, both detractors and supporters of the plan, have also been members of the group, which Malin describes is most likely a way to “gather information and see what’s going”. All the interviewees from NNE view this part of the group’s activities as one of the most fundamental aspects of their democratic legitimacy. Rebecka again:

It is democratic that we spread the word, and create a kind of platform. It’s in this platform that we publicize the reports that we find, where we update with information. I find that democratic.

In other words, according to NNE, the displacement of their issue to sites not contained by the established democratic arrangements has served to further rather than reduce democratic legitimacy to their activities. The fact that they might gain influence over the project outcome through informal means given that the constitutional democratic arrangement for public input has not been initiated yet, is for them not a problem of democracy. Jonas explains his point of view:

But that’s the way it is. Just look at all the unions, interest groups, businesses, all of them are doing as much as they can in pursuit of influence. So I don’t have a problem with that. If you’d just follow the formal process, it would be someone else that affects it. That’s how it works. Had it been more open it would have been better. Because then it would’ve been transparent who is influencing. The lack of transparency I think is much more problematic. We’re open about what we want. We say, “This is what we’re doing, we want this, look at these documents, this isn’t a good idea because of these reasons”. We have no money. Where we can compete is with good ideas, perspectives, opinions. I think it’s a much bigger problem with massive companies with billions in turnover behind closed doors steering the process. That’s problematic. Not the 2,000 citizens who fool around in a Facebook group and a bunch of people trying to send signals. It’s a joke if one sees that as a problem.
Much like Marres, they highlight how political pursuits beyond the boundaries of established representative democracy are, in themselves, not a sensible indicator of democratic deficits, but rather it is the trajectory of the pursuit and how they are articulated that is defining. NNE is quite clear in their articulation of, if not what they want, then at least what they don’t want by translating their antagonistically implicated issue in the controversy – their environmental concerns – into an approachable and concrete point of contention: Should we or should we not plan for a commerce complex in Slakthusområdet? Furthermore, by pursuing a detour through the public and making the issue at stake more manifest to wider audience they are, by Marres’ every single account of the process, enacting democratic politics. By contrast, the city has in this project displaced their issues away from the established institutional practice of land allocation deals into a confounding letter of intent drawn up with a multinational group of companies which, per the agreement, necessitates the exclusion of not only other potential clients but also public input and scrutiny.

Meanwhile, in the spring of 2014, the Urban Development Office is given SEK 26 million more to investigate the agreement plans, amounting to a total of SEK 46 million (Stockholms Stad, 2014b). At the same time, NNE’s displacement and publication of their concerns have finally found enough traction in the media that the group is able to set up informal meetings with the city representatives concerning the redevelopment. But with the investigation demanding more resources, the public consultation meeting has been postponed again, from late spring till after the elections the same year, whereby the group focus their attention on making their issue into an election issue. The media attention also proves indispensable in this regard as most parties want to make clear their position concerning the commerce complex. In the group’s own survey where they asked all the City Council parties’ were they stand on the issue prior to the election, only the Moderate Party declined to answer while the red-green parties – the opposition at the time – were overwhelmingly negative towards the plans (NNE, 2014). However, although the majority of their work was diverted to these activities, Rebecka highlights how there were still doubts about what it all meant in the group:

In the autumn it’s been a lot about the election. It permeated a lot of what was happening on the Facebook page. [Hanna] and […] were meeting with the politicians and all that. And for me, the election was a bit of chapter in itself. The election is about other things too of course, and I felt all the time that it didn’t really matter what the politicians were saying in this regard. Because it’s not possible to – it’s not something you can depend on in a way.

The settlement

Indeed, in February 2015 when the two-year agreement with the Ikea group has expired and six months have passed since the power shift in City Hall in favor of a red-green majority, there is still no word on the fate of Slakthusområdet. The new City Planning Commissioner, Roger Mogert (s), informs the press that they will review whether they are extending the agreement with the Ikea group or not in the following months

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4 Except the Sweden Democrats, the populist, far-right party in the council.
In the beginning of June, however, the development is still unclear. Elin Olsson in the Urban Development Council and now in the majority, refers to the particular nature of planning projects to explain the delay:

So when cases arrive to us in the councils, especially when they are urban planning cases and projects, it’s a very long process. So of course it takes a long time before cases arrive that we have actually initiated. … So it’s also a process to administer and pick up the previous majority’s work. It’s not something that you just throw out. You pick it up and you try to find success factors while emphasizing what the new majority wants to do, but without throwing the process away.

Pertinent to this is the arrival of yet another complication in the redevelopment. Given that virtually all the city’s political parties have come to the agreement that the 4,000 parking spaces specified in the letter of intent are simply too much for the area, the Ikea group have been openly demanding other means of accessibility to their facility; “If I could be straightforward, it’s the fact that there must be a metro connection very close by for our department stores to work”, says Ikea’s CEO of Sweden in an interview with the press (Dagens Handel, 2015).

What they are referring to is the outline of the new metro junction through Slakthusområdet that is being prepared in conjunction with the plans to link the Blue metro line with the Green Hagsätra line as part of its extension to Nacka. Since the Blue line is being extended underneath Saltsjön before it links up with the Green line in Gullmarsplan, its two following stations above ground, Globen and Enskede gård, will either need to be dug underground or closed in favor of a new station somewhere in Slakthusområdet (SLL, 2015a). Accordingly, during the spring, the Stockholm County Council (Stockholms läns landsdisting, SLL, which oversees public transportation in the county) has been conducting consultation meetings with concerned institutions as well as the public surrounding the layout of the new metro junction. Although four alternatives are presented in the first consultation (SLL, 2015b), some of the interviewees from NNE feel that the Ikea group might have been pressuring the city and SLL (where the center-right is still in majority) in one way or other to favor the alternative that is closest to the planned commerce area – the alternative also furthest away from the existing stops. Helene explains:

But it’s connected of course. Ikea wants an entrance within 100 meters from their entrance. And that’s seemingly how it will be if Ikea is established there. … I don’t see it as a disaster if they would move it to Slakthusområdet. But if they’re doing it to please Ikea, then of course it’s not right. … I mean, if it’s because of pressure stemming from the fact that Ikea might be placed there. If the city is so starved for Ikea that they’re prepared to let us tax payers cough up billions to reroute the metro.

At this time, without answers or news from the city surrounding the redevelopment, NNE focus more of their attention on the local politicians in their city district (Stadsdel). Although Stockholm’s district councils lack any power of decision over urban planning issues and instead function as a more local extension of the City Council with responsibilities related to social and cultural services, they still have to be considered in proposed legislation (remissinstans; Stockholms Stad, 2015b). Consequently, the City
District Council that oversees Slakthusområdet was also conferred during the consultation process of the new metro junction. Although Ulf Walther, chairman and group leader of the Social Democrats in this council, views the connection between the metro location and the other actors as more complex than NNE, he still interpreted them to be pulling in the same direction during this process. Moreover, he found the information presented during the consultation as extremely thin, lacking in any form of analysis of the quantitative and qualitative costs of the different alternatives:

The preconditions to function as an effective consultation body weren’t there. Not for us politicians in the district. Maybe for the politicians in the county who’ve been swamped in this for years, or for the politicians in City Hall whose officials have been working with the County Council, which understandably has a lot more knowledge on this. But for us politicians in the district, it was just this colorful four-page brochure. And then we have citizens yelling at us: “What the hell are you doing? Why is the District Council closing these metro stations?” It’s a difficult kind of pedagogy to explain that we’re not the ones doing it.

As a result, Walther explains, the District Council wrote a fairly critical review of the proceedings, objecting SSL’s plans to move towards a decision without more informative consultation meetings. Despite their perceived favoritism over the “Ikea alternative”, the city, which was the consultation body proper during this procedure, adopted the local district’s critique in their comments to SLL (Stockholms Stad, 2015c), leading to a fairly surprising conclusion according to Walther: “You know what? The County Council bloody listened”. A second, less formal, consultation meeting is initiated in the late spring wherein the public as well as SLL explicitly favor the “middle” alternative: a new station in the center of Slakthusområdet, roughly halfway between the existing stops and the planned commerce area (SLL, 2015a).

The point of retelling this tangled tale of Swedish political administration is to highlight the puzzling route and capacity of something that would seem to be small and fairly contained; a few people in Enskede raise a concern for their local environment and are quickly joined by thousand which, through various reroutes within and beyond the established Swedish institution, lands the issue on the doorsteps of the county plans for Stockholm’s new metro line – where it is finally settled. In the middle of June, a few days after the interview with Walther, the Ikea group and the city release a joint statement affirming that they are terminating their partnership in the plans for the commerce complex in Slakthusområdet (MyNewsdesk, 2015). In subsequent statements with the press, an Ikea spokesperson partly refers to the drawn-out process and partly to their disagreement with the planned location for the new metro stop in Slakthusområdet saying, “For the equation to work, a station would be needed in the immediate vicinity of the entrance“ (SVT, 2015).

When the City Planning Commissioner, Roger Mogert, is asked whether the termination from the city’s side is related to local public opposition he delivers a fairly cryptic answer:

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5 Although it is actually eight pages, it does seem to lack a lot of crucial information concerning the consequences of the different alternatives (SLL, 2015b).
Not really, but obviously we and Ikea wanted to deal with the things that the residents were concerned about, namely traffic, parking and how the new construction meets the old. Clearly these are factors that contribute to us parting of ways. (SVT, 2015)

It seems as though the discontinuation of the plans was not completely one-sided, which is supported by Maria Östberg Svanelind: “I’ve been talking to Roger about this and I think that they collectively agreed that it’s not going to work, and that they chose to communicate the traffic, that it wasn’t possible to solve the traffic”. Following the election she removed herself from the Urban Development Council but she has continued her responsibilities as leader of the local district’s Social Democrats. She is one of the few politicians that NNE have had good and recurring dialogues with concerning Slakthus-området’s redevelopment and Svanelind feels that this relationship has also been crucial in the outcome. In April earlier the same year she had submitted a motion to the city’s Social Democratic year-meeting urging the party to terminate the plans for a commerce complex in Slakthusområdet. The motion was also approved:

If I would be brash, I would say that it was significant. These kinds of decisions are binding. If it’s decided, then it would be really difficult to develop a commerce area when we are in the majority. So if there was a limit, it was at that point. I decided at that point, so I could look in their eyes, the Network’s eyes, that I needed to do this. Because during the elections everything was clear. We were saying “No” to the commerce area. And then with the new mandate term the development just continued and everything was unclear. So I felt that, for my own sake, I need to push this all the way and we’ll just decide in our party. So I wrote the motion. But otherwise I wouldn’t do it that way. … It was a way for me to have a sense of honor attached to the issue, because I hadn’t change my mind.

In this sense, NNE’s displacement of their concern to local politicians in the City District Council has served to bolster the city and the county against the demands surrounding traffic and accessibility propagated by the Ikea group, thereby reducing the incentive for the latter party to continue with the agreement. And similarly, the displacement to other politicians in the district, in this case Svanelind, seemingly led to a reduction of the political incentive for the city to continue with the plans. Interesting here is also that both these politicians seem to have gone beyond their area of responsibility, defying the established forms for procedure, to see this issue to its end. Again, In Marres terms, the public has managed to displace an issue of concern too complex for any one institution to address, place it in other sites where forms are circumvented for its settlement, and with the detour through the public have enacted democratic politics in the process.

Unfortunately, this is not the whole story. Though the members of the network are of course extremely happy and relieved that their neighborhoods are for now relatively safe from more traffic, pollution, and environmental toxins, the whole process has also taken a toll on their relationship with the city. In informal conversations with NNE following the settlement it is evident that the outcome, fortunate as it was for them, has not spontaneously restored their faith in the city’s approaches to democratic procedures. Accordingly, it is easy to question Marres’ assertion that processes such as these can be described as both successful and democratic when, as Svanelind puts it, “the result is that
we won’t be facing this commerce complex for furniture, but we have a group of disillusioned people who’ve lost their faith in us.” It seems their attachments have not been limited to environmental concerns, but also democratic forms.

So, to fully appreciate the extent to which attachment to forms have played in this controversy, and to find a suitable answer to the question raised in part 2 – whether it matters that feelings of disillusion emerge if it also means that a matter of public concern has been settled – the next part will examine the controversy according to Thévenot’s understanding of forms.

4.2 Forms

New Stockholm Management
It was noted previously that the city’s issue of concern in the controversy, their issue attachment, was seeing the plans with the Ikea group to its completion. Also shown was how this imperative contributed to the city’s attempts at disarticulating and displacing the issues at stake which partly resulted in the feelings of disillusion and disenchantment among the public. But it has not been fully discussed from where this attachment and imperative stems from. Svanelind understands the plans as a “prestige project” where the political majority at the time “for some reason must have felt that Ikea is really exciting and they wanted Ikea within Stockholm’s borders”. Though true as that may be, it can hardly account as the only reason – nor does it describe the underlying reason – the city has actively been pursuing the plans for years despite widespread opposition. And especially considering how, as one of the urban planners highlighted, there has been a strong political and managerial agreement that it is “possible to do something great”. Of course, in hindsight, it now seems rather obvious that it was a bad idea given all the logistic, technical, environmental, and economy issues the plans were wrought in. But dismissing the planner’s statement as hyperbole or feigned conviction would not be responsible, neither to them nor to all the work they have put in, and it is fully conceivable that they, among many others, believed it was possible to develop a great plan out of the letter of intent.

As to why, some of the answers might be found in the vision document for Söderstaden which in its opening paragraph highlights the challenges facing Stockholm, and more importantly, how they should be addressed:

Stockholm doesn’t measure itself primarily to other Swedish cities, but to other international major cities. With globalization, the world is becoming smaller and competition between attractive regions is increasing. To utilize, develop, and manage Stockholm’s potential in this environment requires efforts that are determined and concerted. Stockholm’s ambition for Söderstaden in 2030 will be a neighborhood with world-class experiences and entertainment. Here, in the extension of the stone city, people from far and wide will live and experience sports and cultural events intermingled with establishments in commerce and service. (Stockholms Stad, 2009)

Despite NNE’s assertions that what they want for Slakthusområdet is supported in the vision for Söderstaden, the document seems to disagree and, in fact, very much supports the concept of a commerce complex positioned next to the sports and entertainment stadiums in the
vicinity. But more interesting is how the document’s portrayal of the preconditions and demands for the area closely mirrors the dominant understanding of the changing nature of democracy wherein an external environment is used to rationalize the introduction of a new type of management that can better adapt to the competitive pressures from the outside. Indeed, urban planning is by no means contained from NPM’s advancement seeing as how development projects are increasingly being framed in terms of their potential to enhance competitiveness, efficiency, and economy (Fainstein, 2010) while the procedural invited participation approaches increasingly being employed in planning bear more than a resemblance to the private sector’s streamlining procedures but actually incorporates a number of concepts and processes from there (Metzger, 2013). My argument here is that the city’s attachment to this entrepreneurial management form can be used to better understand both the city’s attachment to the plans for Slakthusområdet and the resulting feelings of disillusion and disenchantment among the public.

Indeed, the imperatives inherent to NPM is not only visible in the vision for Slakthusområdet. When Ulf Walther, the Social Democrat of the local City District Council, explains that the letter of intent can be better understood in relation to the Ikea group’s organizational structure, another of its imperatives is made clear:

There is a greater responsibility in all this. Because if we want to do something good in Slakthusområdet, that is, build housing, then we need to incentivize actors to build. And a key player here is Ikano Bostad, who is of course associated with Ikea even though they function as different companies. So this is an opportunity to solve the land allocation issue, and getting Ikano to build rental apartments, and what have you. So there’s a possibility to get a good package deal in this. And that’s important.

In this sense, the plans can be seen both as a means for the city to further Stockholm’s economic growth and competitiveness and as an arrangement made out of economy and efficiency. An editorial in a conservative national newspaper from early 2014 follows this line of reasoning by arguing that the city’s bleeding finances from the neighboring Tele2 Arena are closely intertwined with the agreement with the Ikea group. To finance the stadium during its development, two large adjacent building rights owned by the city were to be sold as soon as possible. One of the building rights comprises the southern part of Slakthusområdet where the commerce complex was subsequently planned, and the editorial sees the agreement as a short-term way for the city to cover its losses in the stadium despite how the plans might contradict with other long-term goals. (Svenska Dagbladet, 2014c) Another editorial in a left-biased newsmagazine takes this reasoning further by arguing that in light of the city’s previous arrangements with the Ikea group, including where Ikano Bostad bought up a municipally-owned company’s complete housing stock in Hagsätra through a confidential deal, the agreement over Slakthusområdet’s future should be seen as a part of a long line of relinquishments of municipal responsibilities in favor of a kind of “Ikeacity” (Dagens Arena, 2014). How accurate these depictions are in describing the underlying arrangements in the plans is of course debatable, but clearly the imperatives inherent to NPM concerning economy, efficiency, and effectiveness have played an important part.

To be sure, so has the more autonomous role given to officials in relation to politicians as part of NPM. Björn Ljung of the Liberal People’s party in the City Planning Council explains
that since the majority of all the city’s planning cases are rather small and straightforward, most of them are prepared, processed, and finalized by the officials without any supervision from the politicians in the councils. However, bigger cases which either fall under the national interest category or are deemed politically interesting or sensitive enough often demands the attention of the councils as well as City Hall. Slakthusområdet constitutes one such case:

Yes, that’s one of those. It will also reach the City Council and the Executive Council eventually. But where the limit goes on how large a project should be, I can’t say. But there are policies in Stockholm City for that. Årstafältet has been up. Slussen belongs to the national interest Innercity Stockholm so that’s been up too.

Despite this fact, the politicians in the planning councils seem to have taken a somewhat hands-off approach to the redevelopment process in Slakthusområdet. Elin Olsson of the Environmental Party in the Urban Development Council – the institution responsible for the letter of intent – further explains the lack of answers to the public concerning the agreement after the elections:

The issue surrounding the letter of intent has been up here, that is, how to proceed with it. But it’s also a process where you as a politician can’t be inside the cookie jar. I mean there are certain points in time during the process where you can come in. But otherwise it creates a situation where you are controlling the offices in detail. And micro-management is something we should stay away from. And I can of course understand that that can be frustrating when you as a citizen think, “But you have the power now, why aren’t you throwing out the plans for this blue box?” But we’ve begun talks and we need to reach the point in time where we can choose a course of action.

But while Olsson’s concerns for the “too involved” politician are understandable given Sweden’s strong rejection of “ministerial rule” (ministerstyre), Björn Ljung sees a general problem in the current relationship between the planning councils and their offices that is not limited to Slakthusområdet’s development:

I do feel that democracy, for our part in the management of the City Planning Council, sometimes doesn’t work since a lot happens in negotiations between the private developers and the City Planning Office. And we believe that we make a decision about something and then key parts of the decision are negotiated away on the road. … This is also about political control. That if we want something we must direct it in way so that it works and also follow up on our decisions. And there I think we fail. The political leadership doesn’t follow up on its decisions adequately enough, which gives the leading officials in the Office the impression that: “Yes, but then we have a freedom to work that way”. Formally it’s not wrong, nothing legally wrong here. But in a real sense it’s a problem.

The more autonomous role of the office could also help explain the silence surrounding the agreement. Maria Östberg Svanelind again, who was in the Urban Development Council at the time:

[The letter of intent] was a new form that only served to exclude others, and also make the whole planning process very secret. Sometimes you could see – sometimes you got
this leaked material about what it meant. And at some point we got to see some sketches of these big facades. And then we didn’t get to see anything. … Everyone [were excluded] except the offices. Now it may also be the case that – when the City Planning Office are working on a plan, at some point they have way of working where they must be able to sketch plans without them becoming public. But it was extremely closed off.

She also adds that being in the opposition usually implies that you receive less information surrounding projects, but her general portrayal is substantiated by Hanna, from NNE, and her impression of the ignorance surrounding the project when she was meeting with the council politicians:

Since the politicians in the councils who decided on this largely knew nothing about it when they clubbed through the letter of intent – many of them hadn’t even read the letter of intent when they approved it, it turns out – a lot of our work was about showing what it actually meant. So the great challenge in all this was to puzzle together all the information and make it into a picture: “How will the traffic flow into these parts?”, for example. These were things the politicians hadn’t taken part of themselves. The information they had received was quite scarce from the office.

As a result, NNE has for long time struggled with who they should raise their concerns to: the politicians or the officials? Furthermore, Rebecka stresses that a problem with approaching the latter sector is their confusing structures and roles of responsibility: “to understand how these offices communicate internally with each other is a chapter in its own right and it makes it difficult to understand what is happening.”

It seems that what we have here is an example of what Karlsson and Gilljam refer to as the marketization of the Swedish municipality wherein the public’s influence through municipal elections is severely reduced as a result of the more autonomous roles given to the public sector. It also helps explain the lack of answers for such a long period of time and the lack of faith among NNE towards the politician’s promises, expressed by Rebecka as “it’s not something you can depend on”. Furthermore, these new roles seem to have added confusion over who is considered to be responsible and accountable as discussed by Du Gay. Moreover, the secrecy they produce coupled with the greater imperative for providing an effective, efficient and economic outcome has, as highlighted by Henecke and Khan, seemingly obstructed the conflicting (and subordinate) goal of providing an inclusive, transparent, and participatory process. Combined, this has resulted not only in an erosion of faith in the city’s political leadership among NNE, but also a simmering conviction that democratic and perhaps even constitutional procedures have been violated during the process. Helene explains again, before the issue was settled, why she feels so disillusioned:

Part of it is that we’re not getting any information. One person from the network has gone to court to try and get information, but that became a No. And part of it is that a lot of politicians have thrown out what they said before the elections: that they were categorically against it. And now they’re still negotiating with Ikea and they’ve seemingly forgot what they said. I really don’t want to deride politicians. I think a lot of politicians work really hard and are serious. But I get incredibly disappointed. I wonder a bit that if everything really is proper, then why can’t we get any information? Why can’t
we know anything? If they’re doing everything by the book, why is everything so secret? It makes me think that there must be something dirty in this.

As is hopefully clear, the point here is not to try and make manifest unconstitutional practices in the redevelopment process of Slakthusområdet. I have not been made aware of such activities nor have their disclosure been an aim of the paper. Rather, the point here is to highlight that the city’s attachment to an entrepreneurial management form has created a situation where, from the public’s side, it could easily be perceived as such. Before developing what this means for the long-term relationship between the public and the city, some immediate costs inherent to this form will, however, be made manifest.

**Ethos of responsibility**

When the officials are asked the genuinely difficult question about their roles in relation to democracy, their answers resonate with a Weberian sensibility to the complexities of public interest. The planner from the City Planning Office explains the challenges inherent in public influence when planning for democracy:

> How do we sift through, for example, that many comments are negative, but on the other hand a lot of people have not been heard? How do we deal with the fact that different neighborhoods have very different socio-economic conditions, different cultural capital, different understandings of how society works, different power networks? How much should we try to interpret it or manage it? It’s very difficult. Because if we look at Stockholm it’s a very segregated city and there are very different conditions to plan and work in a planning process from one neighborhood to another. Should we then act the same way in all districts? And you could say that maybe we should. But if you are getting a new house outside your window it shouldn’t depend on whether you are wealthy, well-educated, your gender or ethnicity. On the other hand, if we say that we shouldn’t listen to anything, that we’ll just go on our professional expertise, then we also have a problem. So it’s all about navigating between these two extremes.

While the response has a hint of the familiar discontent for a vocal but resourceful minority that is a priori considered to be “negative”, the planner raises important questions and stresses the overwhelming amount of dilemmas and conflicts inherent to their profession. I would not attempt to answer them but rather highlight how awareness of these challenges and being able to attentively weigh them against each other comprises parts of the Weberian ethos of responsibility and what Du Gay (2000) translated to the “the trained capacity to take account of the potential consequences of attempting to realize essentially contestable values” (p. 106).

Similarly, while Elin Olsson, the politician in the Urban Development Council, is very interested in the early citizen dialogue activities that are increasingly being employed, she does not shy away from many of its potential problems:

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6 Of course, the locals’ erosion of faith in democratic procedure and the project’s lack of public input and scrutiny can be traced to aspects independent of the city’s entrepreneurial management form as well: the intentional or unintentional disarticulations of the issues at stake, the complexity and sensitivity of the project, the difficulty in distinguishing between the local district’s responsibilities and the city’s, and so on. But for the purpose of this part, which is mainly to highlight that issue attachments are not necessarily the only defining aspects of planning controversies, the fact that the entrepreneurial form has still played a crucial role in foreclosing democratic enactment is important.
I think there might exist a naivety, or whatever you could call it. That it’s easy to demand but difficult to accomplish. And most of all, difficult to accomplish before we have seen the consequence of poorly implemented dialogues. That’s how it is with buzzwords that pop up and you think that it’s the solution to a lot of things. … But then it’s easy to make people feel exploited, or that they don’t feel listened to, or that they become their own background noise. And then there’s an even greater democratic deficit. And in relation to the representative democracy, it’s easy to hide behind citizen dialogues as a universal answer and to avoid making tough decisions. Because there is nothing cute about citizen dialogues, it requires both a lot of work and you have to know exactly what you’re doing for it to be meaningful.

Indeed, other answers also highlight the imperative towards leveling social and economic differences while also stressing the importance of loyalty but honesty to those in power, and transparency and inclusiveness concerning the local administration. It is surprising then, that when asked whether the planning process in Slakthusområdet can be considered democratic the answers are not equally extensive. The planner from the Urban Development Office explains that the process has been
democratic in the sense that politicians that are elected democratically have set a direction, and in continuous budgets they are setting a direction, and that’s the one we are working from. And then we haven’t gotten anywhere yet. It’s a tough word “democratic”.
Yes, but I think it is. We haven’t done anything that I find undemocratic. No, I don’t think so.

Generally, they frame the process in Slakthusområdet in relation to their constitutional and legal responsibilities rather than the greater imperatives they highlighted earlier; the other planner also admitting that “a big part of the process has been pretty internal”. In this sense, the answers resonate more with the entrepreneurial attachments that have been shown to be strongly present during this redevelopment process. The reason for this dual commitment to democratic imperatives, I believe, is partly related to the nature of the public opposition in Enskede. Important here is that most of the politicians also display the same kind of conflicting approach to the second question. Björn Ljung for instance has been shown to have a rather broad definition of democracy, arguing that democratic wrong-doings does not necessarily require the presence of formal and legal wrong-doings, but he still sees the development in Slakthusområdet as democratic given that the formal arrangements for public influence hasn’t been initiated yet: “Yes, absolutely, no doubt. Actually, the answer is quite easy. As you said, the process hasn’t started when it comes to the various democratic elements: consultations and the like”. He also carries the same kind of displeasure as most of the other interviewees towards resourceful local oppositions – NIMBYs – that are seemingly obstructing the planning process, but he takes this frustration further by arguing for a more limited appealing process in planning projects thereby reducing the formal possibilities for public influence further:

The democratic element is about meeting perceptions, viewpoints, and local residents, but also those who need housing. And I don’t mean the housing queue where half of Sweden will soon be lining up. Someone must also carry their voice in this debate, not just those
who protest. And I would like to further the voice of those who really need somewhere to live.

Although he raises an interesting question concerning the housing crisis (that will be discussed in the conclusion), the point I want to make here is that the privileged resourcefulness of protesters seems to be used by representatives of the city to reduce the imperatives inherent to the Weberian bureau in favor of the ones characterized by the entrepreneurial management form. The irony in all this is that by attaching to the latter form, that is, by subordinating broader democratic imperatives in relation to economic efficiency and effectiveness and by not opening itself up for public input and scrutiny, the city has here created a situation where only a privileged and resourceful public has the capacity to displace an object of contention to other sites so as to influence the outcome. Hanna confirms this picture when discussing the nature of their group:

The reflection is maybe that what we’re doing is needed. That the public needs to organize itself in this way to be significant. And that’s also a bit scary. Because it takes time and energy and strength and also quite a lot of knowledge. And that’s not something everyone has the same access to. And then we’re touching on the democratic aspects.

Rebecka has also been reflecting on NNE’s own role in reaching people with less access:

And much has been about keeping the Facebook page alive. And what's funny is that people are taking more and more initiative, so to speak, so now it is driving itself. But at the same time, I'm starting to feel a little nervous. That a bigger range of networks should be created for people … that isn’t just digital but in reality too. But I'm struggling a little bit with that. I don’t want to the work that I feel the city should do: carry citizen dialogues. … I'm not so sure I can reach them. That’s where I think the city should play a role.

These reflections emphasize one of my two foremost criticisms against Marres’ thesis: that her issue-focused and practical approach to politics and democracy underestimates not the role that a contemporary – entrepreneurial – public sector is currently playing in enacting and furthering democratic politics, but the role that it should play. By placing the burden solely on the public to settle complex matters of concern, only the privileged few will have the capacity to do so, as in the case of Slakthusområdet. These then, are also some of the immediate costs inherent to NPM when enacted in planning. Next, we look at the long-term effects of attaching to this form as well as this paper’s second criticism.

**Investment in democracy**

Thomas, also one of the core members of NNE, has experienced the same kind of alienation towards the city as the others, but he also points to the consequences of this when asked, before the issue was settled, what he would have wanted for the process:

More transparency in the planning process and don’t let the citizen not have any insight into what is actually happening. The political is of course a lot about trust and the political capital gained from trust. And the political is burning a lot of this confidence when it goes from “No” to “Yes” and not explaining why. It’s been half a year now and I'm very interested in this matter. I still haven’t been told what it was that made them
swing. And it destroys a lot of this trust in the democratic processes, and on whether how right and proper PBL is followed, and it creates a distrust that, long-term, can’t be good.

The erosion of trust obviously has implications for politicians and authorities to govern accordingly, but he also hints at other aspects. While Chantal Mouffe (2005) uses a somewhat different understanding of “the political” than Thomas, she has fully developed some of the potential consequences. To her, politics comprises the institutional arrangements and procedures that organize the social into the everyday practice of governance, while the political is what comprises the social: relations of power that order our collective identities according to antagonistic, conflicting alternatives. Truly political issues are based on fundamental conflict and involve choosing between irreconcilable alternatives. In this sense, these issues cannot be dissolved or suppressed through rational discourse, but rather they seem to require a kind of Weberian sensibility to attentively being able to weigh essentially contestable values against each other. But more than making tough political choices, the real challenge for democracy is to find channels that can transform antagonistic conflicts into “agonistic” ones where political opponents are treated as respected adversaries, since the alternative, she argues, is enemies. In other words, attempting to rationalize away or, worse, suppress the fundamental disagreements that are pervasive to society will only serve to promote a “post-political” condition which invites anti-democratic practices through other channels resulting in a further disillusion of “politics” at best and violent confrontation at worst.

Those who would preemptively dismiss the latter as hyperbole given the middle-class nature inherent to many of the emerging public mobilizations would drastically undervalue the exceptionally strong sentiments urban planning can evoke. Maria Östberg Svanelind, the Social Democrat from the Urban Planning Council, explains:

I think it’s important to meet with various dedicated networks. I think it’s good to have – among politicians or decision-makers and also officials – to have a dialogue with people who have a strong opinion and want’s something, or is against something. And sometimes it just so happens that you don’t agree, and then you have to be able to say, “We understand what you’re saying and we think of it this way”. Because some groups can get quite militant and quite unpleasant.

So, does it matter that feelings of disenchantment and disillusion of the democratic procedure surfaces, if it is also a result of successfully settling a matter of public concern? The argument of this paper, as should hopefully be clear, is that it matters very much. In fact, Mouffe highlights that settling conflicts might not be the most important aspect to political disputes, but that it also requires a sensitivity to how they are enacted, what channels that are used, and so on. Marres makes us rightly aware of “the big scandal” of disarticulating antagonistically implicated affairs and how it may neutralize the concerned voices of those affected, but only in the sense that it may obstruct their settlement. In this sense, she does not properly warn us of the repercussions from having the public create the new channels of displacements. The big scandal, I would argue, is also the failure of the established institution to properly create these

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7 In other words, what Du Gay speculates might lead to an antipathy towards corruption, fairness, and other practices that are often taken for granted under established “democratic” arrangements – but, in this case, from the public’s point of view rather than the public sector’s.
channels for the public. What I mean is that even though NNE has settled their issue at stake, the lengths they have had to go as a result of the city’s foreclosure of public channels has still disposed them with something that resembles the post-political condition. This then, brings us to this paper’s second criticism of Marres’ thesis: that issues and their attachments are both the point of departure and the point of return in democratic politics with the implication that forms function as instruments to that end. While it is most certainly the case that NNE’s concerns for their surroundings sparked them into being, the city’s steamroll approach to their predicament has affected them to the degree that attachment to democratic forms has emerged as an issue for them, both during and after settling their initial concern.

But given that Thévenot has shown that form often requires investments over a long period of time and that attachments are fixated through repetition and habitual activity, then from where would NNE’s new form attachment stem from? How have they invested in this democratic form to the degree that, in Weber’s words, it makes up their “entire material and ideal existence”? To me, the answer is simple: from being a citizen. This includes investments in conventional “civic duties” such as voting and paying taxes as well as other general and particular everyday practices that continuously contribute to the investment and reproduction of the democratic state.⁸ They are invested in it as much as they are conditioned by it, committed to it as much as they are dependent on it, and so on.

If forms, in this case, have not been used as an excuse to enact issue politics and instead have become an issue at stake in its own right, then how can these seemingly separate phenomena in the controversy – issue and form – be distinguished? How do they interact? And more specifically, how can they be combined to help explain the role of publics in their enactment of democratic politics in planning controversies? This will be analyzed in the next part.

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⁸ To use Thévenot’s taxonomy: these form investments are profitable (i.e., they have a high degree of validity and lifespan) beyond the individual since they are based on a more general form already constituted by the state.
5 Issues, Forms, Publics – and the Public Sector

From issue to form
Seeing as how NNE’s attachment to their issue at hand has not served to subordinate their attachment to democratic form, other situations in the redevelopment where forms are seemingly used as an excuse to enact issue politics might be seen in another light. NNE’s issue-focused approach to forming an association is certainly a testament to the established nature of issue politics, with Jonas bluntly stating that “when the issue is settled, the association is settled”. But given that the group have not yet invested any time or resources in the association, using it as an instrument to only further their issue at stake is completely reasonable. Furthermore, Elin Olsson’s lack of commitment to her election promise can be seen as placing the procedural forms and practices inherent to planning councils (where you don’t “just throw out” the previous majority’s work) above her own political “issue”. On the other hand, Svanelind who went beyond her area of responsibility and defied the established practices and procedures inherent in party politics to settle her issue at hand, also notes that she did it to have “a sense of honor attached the issue” given all the political promises that had been made to the locals – an attachment to the representative democracy form if there ever was one. Similarly, the City District Council’s brashness towards municipal hierarchy was not necessarily an attempt at promoting their favored design of the new metro junction, but also a response to SLL’s abuse of the procedural consultation form. Indeed, as has been discussed, the city’s attachment to the issue at stake in the controversy – the commerce complex – seems to stem from their attachment to an entrepreneurial management form.

Two things can be drawn from these reflections. Firstly, given how forms in this controversy can become issues in their own right and given how easily it is to construe the redevelopment process’ different activities according to both issue politics and “form politics”, it raises the question of how different these two phenomena – issue and form – really are. To put it more bluntly, has the majority of this paper’s discussions been a matter of semantics? Or maybe “worse”, has it been a detached philosophical abstraction of real problems and concerns with little bearing and use for the on-the-ground publics and planners that are dealing with these conflicts on daily basis? I think not, and I would hope not. Though a semantic examination would be interesting it is not an aim of this paper and there is at least one important difference in how issues and forms are implicated in this controversy which I believe has strong bearing for the everyday practice of those involved with them.

This difference is related to the second reflection that can be drawn: that issues and form can regularly come into conflict with another, or more specifically that a subject’s attachment to an issue can come into conflict with the same subject’s attachment to a form. Though this does not necessitate a difference in their constitution it does mean that in any given controversy issue and form are not necessarily in sync. From this, I believe, it follows that while actors are by necessity antagonistically implicated in a controversy through their attachments to a specific issue – the object of contention – the same might not be said for their attachments to forms. In other words, while NNE and the city have been embroiled in a
contentious struggle over the issue at the heart of the controversy – the commerce complex – they might not be antagonistically implicated in what has later become an issue for NNE: democratic form. In this sense, there is an important temporal aspect to controversies that needs to be considered.

Marres (2005) touches on this subject in her work but not extensively enough. Drawing on Schattschneider, she highlights that once a conflict expands to involve other actors the role of the original participants, the balance of power between them, and the definition of the object of contention, may undergo drastic changes. Indeed, these are the prerequisites for a successful settlement of a matter of public concern; without the shift in power that comes from displacing the issue to a wider audience and without the articulation of the issue as such, the kind of “pressure” that is needed for its settlement would not develop. In this sense, none of the actors may ever have complete control over the issue at stake, but rather, it is the issue that controls them as well as their interests. This, again, explains how it is misleading to preemptively define protests groups as for or against “change” since their interests remain under-defined so long as the issue they are attached to also remains so. But since this is the extent of her analysis, it would seem that to her, while the issue at stake in a controversy might be redefined, it is never subject to change and its complete influence over the development never put under pressure. In other words, it functions as some kind of ubiquitous object that governs every interest, decision, and action among the participants until it is settled. Again, the subjects become “rational-choice agents” where all other objects involved are valued only according to their capacity to settle their issue at hand, and again, we are back to where we began. But while the object at heart of this controversy has not changed until its settlement, new issues have been introduced during the course of the development. For NNE, these issues, such as transparency and inclusiveness, are hinged on their attachment to democratic forms and their introduction to the controversy stems from the city’s perceived violation of such forms. Furthermore, these new issues hardly become excuses for the settlement of their original issue, that is, they are not important only after the settlement. As Jonas puts it, while their focusing on their issue at hand “it’s connected to other parts as well, like transparency, that’s also a huge issue”. In other words, with time, new issues may be introduced by one of the opposing actor-groupings which for them may be just as important and just as powerful as the original issue at stake in a controversy.

However, as was noted earlier, the difference between the issue at the center of the controversy and the ones that are later introduced is that the opposing actors are not necessarily

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9 Other than the difference in how form and issue are implicated in the affair, an interesting aspect worthy of evaluation is also the difference between their attachments and when form actually becomes issue. While this paper has argued that the “intensity” in how actors’ might commit to issue and to form might be similar, it does not follow that the two attachments have the same constitution. It could be the case that issue attachments are less reducible elements of a subject’s attachment to a more encompassing form (e.g., Jonas transparency issue stems from his attachment to a wider democratic form). In this sense, issues and their attachments only come into existence when their overarching form is subjected to an external pressure, meaning that it is not the form itself that becomes an issue but some of its elements. This could also mean that until the new issues are properly addressed, the subject’s attachment to its form remains unsettled. In this sense, NNE’s erosion of faith in democratic arrangements could be understood as a destabilization of their attachment to democratic form, which further highlights how this development might invite undemocratic practices in the long-run. Nevertheless, a more extensive theoretical and empirical framework would be needed to substantiate these speculations, and here, the difference in how issue and form are implicated in a controversy is examined and not their difference in constitution.
antagonistically implicated in the latter. This might sound contradictory since for something to become an issue it requires an object of contention. But here, as was noted, this object of contention has for both parties always been the original issue – the commerce complex – not the definition of democratic principles. Indeed, it must be remembered that the politicians and officials displayed extensive definitions of democratic forms when they were asked about the concept more generally and it was only when inquired about this controversy that the answers lacked the same substance. (See appendix 8 for a map on how the two actor grouping’s issues and forms relate to each other during the redevelopment plans)

This has three implications. Firstly, the disregard for this more extensive democratic form by the city was not something that had to happen in the controversy. Because despite how attached the city was to the commerce complex, what has been shown – indeed what has been an overarching argument of this paper – is that attachment to forms is not subordinate to that of issues. In other words, in controversies involving the public and the public sector, the “unsettling of popular sovereignty” is not a necessary outcome for an issue to be settled successfully. Secondly, since NNE and the city do not necessarily disagree on what constitutes as democratic form, there could be opportunities for the city to repair the erosion of faith it has produced in the process of the controversy. I say had and could because another overarching argument of this paper is that Stockholm municipality is currently fostering precisely the type of reductive entrepreneurial form that attached them to the commerce complex in the first place and that also made it so easy for them to disregard their other more extensive attachments to democratic procedures. To what extent Stockholm is invested in this form over others would require further research, of course. But it does not seem like the city has a lot of other choices in the matter since, thirdly, the new emerging issues for NNE stem directly from the inability of governmental institutions to live up to these forms. In this sense, these are precisely the kind of issues that demand the attention of the city and not the public. While they are complex, uncertain, and sensitive, they are the result of perceived violations of democratic procedure that could only be inherent to governmental practices. My point is, for what possible reason would a public take it upon themselves to displace these issues to sites beyond the established institutions when it is precisely this type of action that would make them loose further faith in the established institution?

Less rhetorical and more relevant questions – which I believe have bearing on the people involved in controversies such as these – would then be: how can this be avoided, and how can it be repaired? But before answering, another more pressing question that has developed over the course of this paper finally needs to be addressed: What does it mean for Marres’ important contributions on the role of publics if we discard or alter what she holds most central to her thesis – that issues are the point of departure and point of return in democratic politics? Might we, so to speak, have the cake and eat it too?

**From the public to the public sector**

To my understanding, there is no reason why it would not be possible. Only going by the developments in Slakthusområdet it would seem that Marres’ seminal reworking of the constitution of democratic deficits still holds. The Swedish investigation construed the problem for democracy as a crisis of legitimacy derived from uncontrollable pressures from the outside and unruly publics from the inside which could only be levitated through procedural,
“dialogical” links between sites of politics and sites of democracy. But the members of NNE did not necessarily see the displacements away from the established institution as problematic and even engaged in it themselves. Rather, the problems as they saw it, and what eroded their faith in democratic procedures, was partly the attempts by the city to disarticulate their issue and partly the lack of transparency in how the city’s decisions were being made. While the latter might sound like the problems developed by Habermas and Held and who therefore argue for establishing procedural links of consultation and transparency, it must be remembered that NNE did not demand the establishment of institutions that could oversee such links, but something that they themselves would have wanted insight to. At the same time, an argument of this paper has been that democratic deficits may still develop as side-effect of a public’s engagement in political displacements even if it has been successful. In this sense, democratic deficits after the displacement of politics may not only be understood as the absence of transparency and the disarticulations of issues, but also the failure of governmental institutions to actively provide channels for public output of the truly political “Mouffean” issues. Such provisions may not necessarily lead to a settlement that favors the public, given their nature as channels of output rather than input, but it may stifle anti-democratic practices that would otherwise be pursued through other means.

All this being said, I see no convincing reason why procedural links of “input” between the public and sites of politics must be a bad thing for planning. While a decision-making institution might displace an issue at hand to other sites if it was not properly owned by the public following a procedural consultation – it also might not. To be fair, Marres does not seem to argue against procedural consultations but against how they are often used as way to legitimize democracy. Indeed, Elin Olsson from the Urban Development Council who strongly argues for the expansion of citizen dialogues also warns against such attempts, saying it is easy for politicians to hide behind them “as a universal answer and to avoid making tough decisions”. Furthermore, like Olsson also aptly points out, there is nothing “cute” about citizen dialogues and serious considerations need to be made before they are attempted since it might otherwise lead to further alienation and disillusion of democratic procedures. Moreover, it is equally important that they do not serve to position only the citizen as the point of departure for democratic enactment. But an argument that this paper will later make is that planning authorities could perhaps avoid some of the detrimental aspects of invited participation by reworking what it means to be “invited”.

Which leads us to Marres’ issue politics and what we might “keep” in relation to planning. To her credit, the importance of issues must not be understated. Not only do they function as a mobilization tool for the public to get involved in politics and to actually perform democracy, they also introduce a multitude of concerns, interests and forms that together might reflect the charged conflicts and disputes of society – in other words, the political in politics. In this sense, whether Marres would agree or not, this paper argues that their articulation is just as important as their settlement. Furthermore, she also highlights how the nature of complex, uncertain, and sensitive issues that are too unruly for any one institution to address are precisely the ones that demand the attention of the public, since if they were simple, they would already have been solved. This intuitive and straightforward reasoning is surprisingly groundbreaking when it comes to planning where, from the authorities’ side, complexities and uncertainties preemptively forecloses any considerations
for wider public involvement. Moreover, when “unplanned” public mobilizations do emerge they are often intuitively construed as being afraid of “change” and “development” which ultimately also serves to disarticulate them together with whatever concerns they might have. While the former foreclosure was an ever-present aspect to the redevelopment process in Slakthusområdet, the latter was only narrowly avoided by NNE and seems to have required a constant commitment, and a resourceful kind of sensitivity, to the contemporary planning discourse. In other words, we most certainly want to keep this surprisingly radical contribution to planning since the emergence of a public might be both an occasion for democracy and an indicator of serious deficiencies among established institutions to address an important issue – in this case the dissolution of a rather “objectively” bad plan for Slakthusområdet. If we then add to Marres’ thesis the possibility that the emerging public’s issue could be the kind of charged political issue that demands a democratic output or else might find other channels that invites undemocratic practices, it only makes this contribution that much more important. But with this addition we must also accept the crucial role that attachment to forms can play in controversies – in this case leading to feelings of disillusion towards democratic procedures – and the crucial role that the established governmental institution should play in maintaining these attachments. From this, I believe, it follows that responsibility of the reproduction of and investment in democracy is not placed solely on the public but just as much on the public sector.

So, to summarize the arguments – or cake – made in this paper in the most concise way possible: From Marres we learn that public mobilization against planning projects could be occasions for democracy and from Thévenot, by way of Weber and Du Gay, we learn that for this to be possible it requires active efforts from the governmental institutions to acknowledge this. In the next part, one outline of such efforts are proposed when an attempt at finding answers to the previous questions are made.
6 Conclusions

So, perhaps, to be able to judge what a successful planning process is we need to make accountable the outcomes of a planning process in all their dimensions – and it may well be that once we add up the multi-dimensional results of ostensibly successful planning projects that have “gotten things done”, it turns out that these outcomes have been produced at insurmountable costs in eroded democracy, while other supposedly “failed” projects may have been important producers of democratic values, as they have contributed to increasing concrete citizen empowerment and engagement in societal affairs. (Metzger, Allmendinger, & Oosterlynck, 2014)

That there is room for different approaches, that there is a will between the private and the public and the political to interact and work out what is best for locals. That you plan for a social, environmental, and economic sustainability. Focusing merely on the economic aspect, which is happening now, is very far from democratic. (Thomas, personal communication, 2015)

Open professional revolution or new professional tools?
What the authors in the first quote are describing bears a striking resemblance to the development in Slakthusområdet. Because while the locals have “gotten things done”, it has come with unquantifiable costs in terms of disillusion and disenchantment of democratic practices and procedures. What both Thomas and the authors are therefore implying is that contemporary planning lacks a proper way to take the latter outcomes of projects into account. For Thomas, this absence partly stems from how the economic imperative is positioned above the other two “pillars” of sustainability. But the authors also go on to argue that the current benchmarks of social, environmental, and economic sustainability is perhaps not enough, and that a fourth “political” yardstick might be needed to properly measure the specific and cumulative effects on democracy when engaging with the public in planning. This paper agrees and further argues that developing such a tool could comprise parts of the much needed efforts from the public sector to acknowledge how public mobilizations in themselves might be occasions for democracy. In this sense, to answer the two previous questions; the erosion of democracy that was an outcome of the development in Slakthusområdet might have been less substantial and perhaps even had an opposite effect if the city had made an institutional effort to take the democratic costs into account during the process, and similarly, this erosion might be substantially repaired if the city chooses to follow up on these costs. The outline of such a tool would, of course, require further research and given how other unquantifiable costs in planning are often easily overlooked (such as the “social” in sustainability) its obstacles are already numerous. But the costs of not engaging the possibility of such a tool could be, as has been discussed, vastly more detrimental to planning.

But there is an important difference between the authors’ example above and the development presented in this paper. There, the varied dimensions of a project outcome is shown through the perspective of governmental institutions, while here the outcome can only be seen as “successful” if viewed from the public’s side – for the city, it quite obviously “failed”. My point is that while instituting measuring tools for public engagement in planning has
challenges, it is certainly feasible for a range of projects. Indeed, the City of Stockholm (2014c) recently conducted an extensive follow-up on their citizen dialogue activities to analyze its potentials for promoting democracy. But the difference again is that these are projects where procedural dialogues have been initiated in the beginning of specific projects with the explicit aim of furthering public participation. Not the kind projects where public mobilization has spontaneously developed out of the complexities and uncertainties that are inherent to a majority of planning cases – the kind of mobilizations that cannot be planned for. What this paper is arguing for is not necessarily more of the procedural dialogue activities with the public. Given how mobilizations might emerge in virtually all planning projects – even in the seemingly “simple” redevelopment of an urban terra nullius – this paper is arguing for an institutional benchmarking tool that weighs all planning projects against their democratic potentials; the kind of approach to planning that encourages the mobilizations of “unruly” publics and, consequently, the kind that the authors’ concluded might first require “open professional revolution”.

To be sure, the reluctance towards spontaneously mobilized publics is deep and varied even if we were to discount their innate unresponsiveness towards the streamlined procedural consultations that characterize modern participatory planning – where the public is invited to dialogue only in predetermined projects.

As has been shown, part of it seems to stems from the perception of protest groups’ privileged resourcefulness and how their influence might infringe on the interests of both a marginalized few and a silent many. In this sense, it might seem strange that this paper began by warning that positioning the citizen as the point of departure for democratic politics might reproduce the white, male, middle-class norm of “good citizenship”, and then follow it up by explicitly stressing the crucial role a similar kind of category plays in the enactment of democratic politics. Indeed, this paper could be interpreted as a resounding praise of so-called NIMBYs and not be very far off. But it is important to note that although the public studied in this paper arguably live up to parts of this category (discounting the gender aspect), far from all local protest groups consist of a privileged middle-class. But even if they did, I would point out that it takes a special kind of logic to argue that a reduction of the constitutional means for public influence (i.e., appealing planning projects) in favor of targeted consultations in predetermined projects (i.e., invited participation) would serve to increase the influence of those without voice or resource. As has been shown in Slakthusområdet, the city’s foreclosure of public influence meant that only people with loud voices and privileged resources could gain influence. Of course, here, NNE’s interests rarely opposed that of a silent majority since they explicitly demanded more housing in the area. But there does exists a range of local protest groups that demand the opposite, whereby their possibilities to appeal, it is argued, can significantly slow down the planning process, or worse, shut it down. But regarding the former argument, I would also attempt to point out that there is no conclusive research that suggests that the severe housing crisis in Stockholm, nor in other major cities in Sweden, can be directly linked to the appealing process as such. In fact, both in Stockholm and in the rest of the country the number of appealed zoning plans has decreased during the last years and the number of approved plans has increased (Boverket, 2015; Fastighetsnytt, 2015). Moreover, in Stockholm, the County Administrative Board (Länsstyrelsen) relates part of the decrease to how the municipalities are now given clearer instructions on what is
constitutionally allowed when zoning close to congested areas, meaning a lot of the appeals might actually have had merit (Fastighetsnytt, 2015). But even if the appealing process as such did slow down planning projects, I would again point to the development in Slakthusområdet and highlight that despite that no possibilities for public influence has been initiated there – neither in terms of consultations or possibilities to appeal – the redevelopment has still been wrought with enormous delays and interruptions that have cost the city at least SEK 46 million and at least 3,000 unfinished houses. Finally then, even if public mobilizations have the capacity to completely shut down planning projects, rather than again point to the development described in this paper, I would also ask: Who are the ones endorsing a reduction of public influence in planning? In Maria Östberg Svanelind’s response to these emerging discussions she hints at a possible actor-grouping:

I think that it if there’s a sufficient amount of land allocations for housing annually, it doesn’t matter if it takes seven years on average to build them, since its constantly accumulating. If that’s the price to be paid for democracy, that citizens can still get involved, then maybe we should accept it. The point is to always manage the volume. Now we are of course in a position where we haven’t built enough, and to catch up is of course a problem. But to reduce the opportunities to participate I think is wrong. It’s the construction industry, it’s the strong lobbyists – they are the ones who’ve developed this picture that this needs to be done.

Here then, we might find the deep rather than the varied reluctance towards public mobilizations in planning. Because even if a public is sparked into being out of notions of preservation rooted in a deep-seated mistrust towards planning authorities that can be traced back to large-scale redevelopments decades ago (e.g., inner-city Stockholm; Stockholm-Direkt, 2015a), or because of the suspicious financial transactions of municipal companies implicated in corrupt activities only recently (e.g., Solna; StockholmDirekt, 2015c), or because of a concern for traffic, pollutions, and toxins in their neighborhood (e.g., Slakthusområdet), or even out of a clear-cut “selfishness” related to economic standings and social surroundings, they all might as well look the same from the authorities’ side: an obstacle to growth and economic competitiveness that needs to be dealt with.

My point here is that even the most self-centered of reasons for mobilizing against a planning project might be attached to the type of political issues that needs an outlet – indeed, even questioning the expansion of housing in Stockholm. Because despite its post-political status, the growth of the Stockholm region (which accounts to nearly half of Sweden’s), is very much a deliberate political pursuit by the state spurred by a consensual understanding that the region functions as “growth engine” for the rest of the country (Länsstyrelsen Stockholm, 2014). In other words, while we might not agree with whatever issue a public mobilization is pursuing, or on whether they constitute concerned parties and democratic subjects or not, we ought to agree on their democratic right to voice their issue without it being disarticulated or them being stigmatized in the process. And this is why a revolution might not be necessary. While planning authorities arguably disagree with the issues of the majority of public mobilizations, they most likely share, as has been shown, a lot of the same attachments to democracy. In this sense, this paper is not arguing for positioning the public as
the point of departure for the enactment of democratic politics. They obviously would need help from authorities.

Indeed, there are ways to more actively encourage unplanned public mobilizations even without instituting benchmarking tools across all planning projects. Here, Rebecka explains what different approaches she would have wanted to see from the city during the redevelopment:

I would like to bring along some politicians and some urban planners, I would like them to come with us. Let them join my children when they are crossing Nynäsvägen. Let them sit in the kitchens of those who live closest to Nynäsvägen and drink coffee at 3 o’clock. Let them bike with the home care services when they are attempting to move around this area. Oh God, now I’m getting upset [laughs]. This panel discussion that I talked about. I would have loved to see that they, the politicians and the planners came to us. That we slap up a meeting space right here across Nynäsvägen. Let’s have it here and actually feel how it is here. Or walk with their own 8-year old here when it’s a football derby, or when you need to get across to the cultural center. Or go home from work through this area and walk through an empty Globen shopping mall. And there, I think that we as a kind of civil organization could develop. But it’s also very tricky. This expectation of the active civil society and the citizenship. Because you need energy, you need time, and you should be well-read.

While stressing the problematic implications of placing too much responsibility on the public to enact democracy, Rebecka also points to an aspect that many up-and-coming NGOs and civil society groups will confirm: that it might be easy enough to get invited to forums surrounding their issue of concern, but it is much more difficult to successfully invite people capable of addressing it to their own settings. The “invited participation” inherent to contemporary planning has many merits, especially in terms of circumventing some of the detrimental aspects of placing too much responsibility on the public to perform democratic politics, but it regrettably discounts the planning authority as a potential actor to “get invited”. In this sense, perhaps a type of “reversed invited participation” would address some of the professional reluctance towards unplanned mobilizations. In other words, an approach where planners, officials, and politicians are actively encouraged to not only seek out the voices of those that are not heard, but also listen and accept the invitations from those that are.

The new Democracy investigation
Fifteen years has passed since the comprehensive Swedish Democracy investigation first made its mark on the debate surrounding public involvement in politics and its influence has been enormous – for both better and worse. This paper’s strong emphasis on the latter has partly been an attempt at stressing the power and authority these investigations might sway in the still ongoing debate. In this sense, the upcoming investigation’s challenges are not limited to addressing the external and internal forces that are seemingly pressuring representative democracy, but also to not repeat some of the same misjudgments made by the former investigation. Democracy is, and should be, a constantly evolving form of governance that is shaped by, and should shape itself to, the changes of society. But the investigation’s complete break from earlier models of “societal-governance” and unambiguous promotion of a “self-
governance” approach is, to me, less a sensible attempt at evolving democracy and more an anxious response to the inflated fears of a democracy in “crisis”. When the investigation was confronted with the crossroad of the Swedish political institution, rather than paving its own path it chose to double-down on the neoliberal trajectory which meant that, unsurprisingly, the actual practical and somewhat more sensible approaches it came to argue for failed to gain the same traction as the distinct moral order it assigned to individual responsibility. In planning at least, this paper has tried to show that the investigation has manifested not in the celebration of individual autonomy it originally intended but a reductive public sector based on a neoliberal logic that forces rather than encourages its citizens to independently and autonomously enact democratic politics. The result of this setting is not only that the privileged few are the only ones capable of performing this “duty” but also that those who do might have their faith in the democratic arrangements significantly weakened – further establishing the picture of a democracy in “crisis”.

This paper is not an immodest attempt at solving this vicious cycle but an attempt at highlighting the upcoming investigation’s own potential role in perpetuating it. While its directives share some of the same focus on “the individual’s opportunities” as its earlier counterpart it does not necessarily mean that it has to promote the same moral order. Rather than focusing on the “civilizing” aspects of engaging in politics and what it means to be “the good citizen”, it might also try to acknowledge the pragmatic aspects of the actual engagements in democratic politics taking place all around us by the people trying to articulate, displace, and settle a public issue of concern. Moreover, acknowledging democracy as an actually existing practice does not mean that we must accept it as being devoid of moral and ethical substance. Indeed, an important purpose of this paper has been to highlight that the people engaging in democratic politics carry a strong attachment to ideals, rules, and procedures. And it might be for the investigation to highlight that the authorities also carry a strong responsibility to honor and observe these attachments.
References

Academic Literature


Marres, N. S. (2005). *No issue, no public: democratic deficits after the displacement of politics*. Amsterdam: Department of Philosophy, University of Amsterdam.


**Other Sources**


Appendices

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Appendix 1: List of interviews

Nätverket Nya Enskede (NNE) with assumed names
Helene May 19, 2014 and May 22, 2015
Hanna May 27, 2014
Jonas May 16, 2014 and June 6, 2015
Malin May 19, 2014
Rebecka May 9, 2014 and May 18, 2015
Thomas May 20, 2015

Officials
Project communicator 26 May, 2015 Urban Development Office
Urban planner 27 May, 2015 City Planning Office
Urban planner 27 May, 2015 Urban Development Office

Politicians
Björn Ljung (f) June 24, 2015 City Planning Council
Elin Olsson (mp) June 4, 2015 Urban Development Council
Maria Östberg Svanelind (s) July 2, 2015 Urban Development Council
Ulf Walther (s) June 6, 2015 City District Council, Enskede-Årsta-Vantör
Appendix 2: Questions to members of NNE, 2014

1. How/why did you become engaged in this issue?

2. What are your goals? What are your plans to reach these goals? How are you working right now?

3. Why are you affected by the redevelopment? What makes you and the group concerned parties? From where do you legitimize your involvement in the redevelopment?

4. Who do you think should engage in this issue? Do you cooperative with any other parties?

5. What are your impressions of the planning process as a way to engage in the project? How do you feel about the statutory public consultation meeting?

6. What are your impressions of the city’s approach to the redevelopment and to you as a group? Who have you met, etc.?

7. How has the Facebook page influenced your work?

8. What other methods would you use to achieve your goals? How “far” would you go?

9. Who are the people in the group? How are the differences in opinions etc, addressed?

10. Do you think you have had influence?

11. What would you like to see in terms of changes in the planning processes and procedures?
Appendix 3: Questions to members of NNE, 2015

1. Could you recount your work and what has happened in relation to the project since we last met? What have you been up to?

2. How has the city responded to your activities? How do they approach you?

3. Could you recount your impression of democracy in relation to the planning processes? What makes a process democratic? Has this view been influenced by your activities with the redevelopment?

4. Do you feel that this process has been democratic? In what way? In relation to your own work, has that been democratic?

5. How do you legitimize your activities? In relation to your concerns for your surroundings or others aspects, such as public influence, etc.?

6. How do you differentiate between the officials and the politicians in the redevelopment? What are their roles in this to you?

6. What have been the most important aspects to your activities? How have you approached the YIMBY/NIMBY debate?

7. Specific questions aimed at certain events: i.e., the metro, the consultation meeting, the association, working material, certain meetings with politicians and officials, etc.

8. What would like to change in the planning process?

9. What would you like to add?
Appendix 4: Questions to officials

1. Could you recount your professional role in the office and in planning? What is an important aspect of your work?

2. What has been your role in Slakthusområdet? What are you working on now? What is your impression of the area?

3. Could you recount how the letter of intent was developed? Why was this done instead of the regular practices of land allocation? What is the goal for the redevelopment?

4. What is your role in relation to the politicians in your councils? How do you cooperate with them?

5. What is your impression of the constitutional procedures of the planning process? And the practices? Is there a difference? Who is responsible for their enactment? How does it relate to democracy?

6. What makes a planning process democratic to you? Has this process been democratic? In what way?

7. Who are the concerned parties in the area to you?

8. What is your impression of the NNE? What do you think the conflict between the city and them is about? There goals and strategies? What is your impression of public mobilizations in other places? Are they the same?

9. Their impression of the procedures and practices employed by the city has seemingly made them lose a lot of faith in democratic aspects to planning. What does it mean to you?

10. While early citizen dialogue is often used in Stockholm for bigger redevelopments, it wasn’t here. Why?

11. Specific questions related to specific events: i.e., the metro, the upcoming consultation meeting, the working material, certain meetings that have taken place

12. What would like to improve or change in the planning process?

13. What would you like to add?
Appendix 5: Questions to politicians

1. Tell me about your role in the council, your responsibilities, etc.? Tell me about your personal role and your council’s role in the redevelopment project

2. Could you recount how the letter of intent was developed?

3. What is your view/your party’s view/your council’s view on the plans for Slakthusområdet? What would like to see happen there? How do you see the area in the future?

4. Why hasn’t early citizen dialogue been initiated here? Who would initiate it? What is your impression of them?

5. What is your relationship with the officials to your office? Is there any overlap in responsibilities? How do you work together? And in relation to this project?

6. Could you recount your impression of democracy in relation to the planning processes? What makes a process democratic?

7. What is your impression of the planning procedures and practices? And the constitutional procedures? What are the drawbacks and benefits in terms of democracy?

8. Would you describe the process in Slakthusområdet as democratic? Why and in what way?

9. Who are the concerned parties in the area to you?

10. Could you recount your impressions of NNE? There goals and strategies? What is your impression of public mobilizations in other places? Are they the same?

11. Their impression of the procedures and practices employed by the city has seemingly made them lose a lot of faith in democratic aspects to planning. What does it mean to you?

12. What would like to improve or change in the planning process?

13. Specific questions related to specific events: i.e., the metro, the upcoming consultation meeting, meetings with NNE

14. What would you like to add?
Appendix 6: Example of e-mail to members of NNE, 2014

Dear XX

I work as a research assistant at KTH and I’m currently examining public opinions and impressions regarding the planned redevelopment of Slakthusområdet. Accordingly, I’m currently looking to speak with people engaged in the issue, living around the area, or are affected by the redevelopment in one way or other.

Since you have a strong commitment to the issue, I was hoping to interview representatives from your group. They would only take around 30 minutes talks and could be conducted wherever suits you best, i.e., at home, the workplace, a nearby café, or at KTH. Examples of questions would be:

- In what way are you affected by the redevelopment?
- What is your plan to make your concerns aware?
- How do you see the planning process as a venue to engage in the planning process?

The study will serve as basis and work material to a larger research project on citizen participation and public engagement in the planning process, led by [XX]. If you have any questions about the survey or research project, you are also welcome to contact [XX].

I would be very grateful if you would participate. You can reach me via e-mail or phone.

Sincerely

Sherif Per Zakhour
Appendix 7: Example of e-mail to politician’s and officials in Stockholm

Dear XX

I am a student in Urban Planning at KTH and currently writing my master's thesis on behalf of the 2014 Democracy Investigation. The thesis is about the public influence in the redevelopment of Slakthusområdet, and I therefore hope to conduct interviews with people who in different ways have or have had links to the area. As politicians/officials in the Office/Council, I would hope to interview you in relation to my thesis.

The interview can be short and can be done wherever it suits you.

The thesis’ focus is to understand more about how the formal planning processes are manifested in a time when more and more decision-making and public engagement is being shifted to informal venues. Slakthusområdet in many ways seems to be an example of how such activities have taken place before more formal planning processes have been initiated. This raises important questions about democracy and influence, and your insight into this development would be very helpful in contributing with more knowledge.

I would be very grateful if you would accept. I would be available from next week. You can reach me via e-mail or phone.

Sincerely

Sherif Per Zakhour
Appendix 8: Timeline of the Redevelopment Plans for Slakthusområdet