

Redefining the City: Globalisation, Structural Change and Urban Effects

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Introduction

For those who lead and manage cities, the transition to an internationalised world has not been easy. Nor is it likely to become easier.
(Hambleton *et al.*, 2002a: 1)

On a cloudy and dreary day in November 2001 a small group of people gathered close to the waterfront in a Swedish city (VLT, 2001-11-12). A band played and a ceremony commenced. A high ranking politician spoke before the crowd. The chairman of the building committee and a representative for a private construction company climbed up on a pile of gravel, took a shovel and cut the first sod for a new construction project. The ceremony marked the beginning of the redevelopment of an obsolete and decaying industrial harbour with environmental problems. The run down docks were to be transformed into blocks of fashionable tenant-owned flats overlooking a lake. At the same time the moment marked the conclusion of a political process that had been going on since the late 1980s.

While it had been a relative consensus that *something* had to be done about the East Harbour it had also been great disagreement on *what* should be done and *how*. For some the moment was the successful endpoint of hard and enduring work. For others it was the concrete proof that their efforts had not paid off. The process bared many of the trademarks of urban political processes, at the same time it was unique.

The main aim of this study is to answer the question why this event occurred. For every policy choice there is an abundance of potential choices. This warrants the question why the city embarked upon one path and not on another? A “nearsighted” study of the final phases of the planning process and the actors included in it will not suffice in helping us in answering the question. To answer the question we also need to turn our attention to the wider picture (cf. Sellers, 2002). In this study we use a historical approach in order to find the events leading up to the political process studied and through this uncover how and why it developed the way it did. This entails an inclusion of the wider city context and city politics, the inclusion of the development at the national level and to take into account the international and global processes that have potential effects on national and city politics.

The relationship between the historic development and urban politics and its processes can be conceptualised as an actor-structure perspective where urban actors act within structures that both enables and precludes action (cf. Archer *et al.*, 1998). Structures exist on all levels of society and are incrementally constructed as history unfolds. Action takes place within the frameworks of structures. City politics takes place in an environment configured both by formal and informal structures. Contemporary city politics in Sweden is also directly influenced by the fact that it is created in a context defined by city redevelopment, decreasing public finances, a perception of increased differentiation and competition between cities, and other broad social, economic and ecological challenges.

The study presented in this paper is an in-depth study of a Swedish city and the data material consists of about 20 interviews, documents, articles and secondary sources. The include politicians, public officials, private entrepreneurs, stakeholders and representatives for interest organisations. The study was conducted during 1999-2003. Phenomena discussed in the paper include political processes, history, different aspects of globalisation such as economy and structural change, city identity, competition between cities, urban governance and power.

The political process and the theoretical approach

In this study the political process is a central concept. The political process can be seen as a complex phenomenon consisting of collaborating, competing and sometimes overlapping patterns of interaction between actors in different positions of decision-making and from different levels and spheres of society (cf. Garceau, 1951: 71). The aim of the political process is to formulate the content of politics (policy) and to develop strategies to solve what is defined and formulated as social problems (cf. Bachrach & Baratz, 1963; Hill & Hupe, 2002). A policy is defined both by what it includes and what it excludes (Hecl, 1972: 85). This observation points toward the importance of the *political agenda*. Political issues can reach the political agenda and be successfully implemented. They can be discussed on the political agenda but disqualified (Dahl, 1961: 102, 126). An issue can also be excluded from the agenda by non-decisions entailing in-action from the actors in control of setting the urban political agenda (cf. Bachrach & Baratz, 1963: 640).

Different issues are connected to different *interests* in society. Interests, in turn, are connected to social structures and can therefore endure over time (Poulantzas, 1986: 148). Interests can also be fluid and easily changed in the interaction between actors in the political process (Stone, 1989: 257). Interests are often divided into general and particular interest (Lewin, 1991). The latter is seen as connected to individuals or narrow groups in society and the former is conceived as an aggregate of citizens' interests and is often given considerable weight in political processes.

In the political process the concept of *representation* also plays an important part (Pitkin, 1972). Representation in modern western democracies is primarily associated with representative democracy and its popularly elected politicians (Mansbridge, 2000). The right to represent the citizens is often perceived as an integral part of role of the politician (Deutsch, 1970: 14; Phillips, 1995: 1-2). Representation in the political process can also, however, be carried out by citizens representing other citizens through organised interests or actors representing private enterprises and so forth (Hirst, 1994).

The political process is defined by actors taking part and in a way by actors not taking part in the process, this point towards the concepts of the *actor* and *participation*. Actors can carry interests, they can represent other actors and citizens or interests, particular or general, and they act in different ways in order to influence the political agenda and its output. It is the actors that give social structures, the political processes and its institutions their political effects (cf. Hall & Taylor, 1996). The actors participate in the political process to reach objectives and some succeed while others fail, in this way the political process creates both winners and losers. The actors can be placed in a number of categories and among the usual are politicians, citizens, public officials, business representatives and representatives for organised interests. These actors act within the framework of structures built up by historical processes such as globalisation and the development of the welfare state.

The Welfare State in Flux

As stated above city politics are not set on a stationary scene. Conditions and circumstances changes and are reinterpreted as the historical development unfolds. If one continues the discussion with reference to the theatre one could say that the both the scene and the direction changes in relation to development in the surrounding environment. Below we will look a little bit closer on how the Swedish welfare state has changed and how these changes, in part, can be contributed to occurrences on global and international levels of society and how this have impacts on city politics.

The Swedish welfare state - expansion

After the Second World War a strong economic development recovery was seen all over Western Europe. Swedish industrial capacity was fully functional after the war and this capacity was used in the reconstruction of a war-torn Europe (Schön, 2000). This gave the Swedish post-war economy a considerable boost. In the years between 1950 and 1975 Sweden experienced an outstanding economic development and living conditions improved rapidly and the welfare state grew stronger (Schön, 2000). The period was also characterised of relative political stability (Inglehart, 1979: 14). In Sweden one trademark of the political stability was the remarkable success story of the social democratic party. The party takes part, single handed or as the dominant part of a coalition, in all national governments between 1932 and 1976 (Therborn, 1989). Of importance was also the agreement between industry and workers from 1938, the so called Saltsjöbads-agreement (Korpi, 1981: 23-29; Schön, 2000: 347). The basis for the agreement was in part the understanding among trade unionist and social democrats that a strong industry and economical growth was beneficial for the reformation of society and for the development of an advanced welfare state. The agreement stands out as a good example of an inherently corporatist approach to politics that characterized the expanding welfare state (Rothstein, 1996).

Swedish cities expanded rapidly and politics and planning at city level was mainly about handling this expansion (Khakee, 1989). Public expenditures increased with a staggering 620 percent between 1950 and 1984 (Henrekson, 1992: 90). As public expenditure amplified the primary expansion took place at the local level and gradually a 'local welfare state' developed with great responsibility for welfare functions and service production (Kjellberg, 1988: 39; Montin & Amnå, 2000).¹ The growing demands on the municipal level brought with it an increased need for reformation and this eventually led to the municipal amalgamation reform that took place between the years of 1952 and 1974 (Gustafsson, 1996). The reform decreased the number of municipalities from 2500 to 279 and expanded their average size considerably.² The reform has been perceived as a concrete expression of the social democratic ambition to upgrade the municipal level in order to enable it to contribute in reaching the nationally formulated welfare objectives (Dahlkvist, 1999). One effect of this development was that the municipalities evolved into complex multi-organisations with considerable resources and great responsibility for the implementation of national welfare policies (Montin, 2002).

During the 1970s a number of events took place with considerable consequences for both the welfare state and Swedish municipalities. The oil crises with the Arabic oil embargo in 1973 led to crises in the world economy (Clark, 2002: 71). The collapse of the Bretton Woods system meant that the rules for the transnational economy began to disintegrate (Mishra, 1999: 5). Industrial growth in Western Europe also culminated and started to stagnate during this decade (Schön, 2000: 419-427). This had tangible effects in Sweden. The economic growth slowed down and unemployment figures increased (Hadenius *et al.*, 1993: 226). New social patterns developed and elites in society was increasingly questioned and criticised and new social movements developed voicing discontent with the social, political and economical systems (Inglehart, 1977; Möller, 2000). The Swedish welfare state faced the first premonition of the

¹ Swedish local authorities are divided upon two tiers, county councils (Landsting) is at the regional level and is mainly responsible for health care and municipalities (kommun) that are mainly responsible for education (not higher education which is a state concern), child care, social care and care for the elderly. At city level the municipalities are the main public actor. In the municipality the municipal council (kommunfullmäktige) is the main political assembly and the municipal executive committee is the committee responsible for the municipality's finances.

² Today (2004) the number is 290.

oncoming economic crisis but the public sector continued to expand for another couple of years until the expansion came to a halt in the early 1980s (Henrekson, 1992: 113, 131). Taken together these and other events indicated that a new era for the Swedish welfare state was about to commence.

The welfare state – stagnation

After losing the election in 1976 the social democratic party was struggling and at the same time the stability of the political system decreased (Hadenius *et al.*, 1993). Dark clouds were forming in the sky over the Swedish welfare state and in the early 1980s the Swedish national treasury reported a deficit for the first time since the Second World War (Olsson, 1990: 223). Optimism, expansion and reformation were turned into concerns for declining growth and for the increasing difficulties to finance the production of welfare services (Pierre & Rothstein, 2003: 17). Measures were taken but the problems did not go away.

In the mid 1980s, about 10 years after the discussion commenced elsewhere in Western Europe, the crises of the welfare state reached became a topic on the political agenda in Sweden (Olsson, 1990: chapter 5). The crisis was perceived to have two general dimensions (Rothstein, 1994: 28-37). Firstly, public undertakings were seen as inherently inefficient and it was argued that the state should leave the welfare production to market actors. Secondly, the welfare state was perceived as an authoritarian and bureaucratic apparatus that violated the citizens' right to decide by themselves over issues concerning their own social well-being.

The economical situation deteriorated further during the 1990s in connection with an unparalleled speculation against the Swedish currency, the krona (Pierre & Rothstein, 2003: 17-18). In defence of the currency the Swedish central bank raised interest-rates to a staggering 500 percent in 1992 but to no avail. The bank still had to let the krona float freely. In addition to this the pressure on municipal social services increased as the number of unemployed soared at the same time as the country saw an increased influx of refugees, the latter as a consequence of the violent development in the Balkans (Pierre & Rothstein, 2003: 18). The national government introduced a series of crisis-packages and these packages together with high interest-rates led to the final breakthrough in people's minds, both elites and citizens, for the crisis of the Swedish economy and of the Swedish welfare state (Hadenius *et al.*, 1993: 324- 325). The economic downturn continued and added together the devaluation of the Swedish krona, the deregulation of the credit-market and the delayed tax reform created an inflationary economical climate that further deepened the Swedish fiscal crisis (Schön, 2000: 496).

This development had of course consequences for Swedish municipalities. In addition to the general downturn in economic growth came the increased needs for welfare services paired with unchanged or decreased state grants (Elander & Montin, 1990). The tendency of general decentralisation of functions and responsibilities to the municipalities can be seen as an integrated part of central-state ambitions to spread the responsibility for the economical crisis downwards (Danermark *et al.*, 1986). Among the effects of the scarcity was a tendency towards centralisation of control and power over economical resources to the municipal executive committee and increased efforts of political coordination of local resources in order to stimulate local development (Salonen, 1997). In connection to this the cooperation between actors from different spheres of society in the solving of social problems and in facing social challenges picked up momentum and one example of this was the increased use of different types of partnerships in Swedish local politics (cf. Carlsson, 1993; Elander, 1999).

The development in Eastern Europe during the late 1980s also had consequences for the centrally controlled and comprehensively planned welfare state (Mishra, 1999: 1-3; Grahl & Teague, 2000: 215-216). The defeat of the socialist system was not only a blow to the social democrats it was also a blow to central planning and to the reformist welfare politics that had

dominated the development of the Swedish welfare state (Hermansson, 2003: 10). The collapse of socialism (Soviet-version) forced the retreat of the social democratic parliamentary model that had been so successful in Sweden. This opened the door for classic capitalism with "...its ideal of a free market economy and the drive towards deregulation and privatization" (Mishra, 1999: 2-3).

The social democratic welfare state model was fundamentally shaken and forced on the defensive (Rothstein, 1994: 29-37). The Swedish party-political debate was shaped very much as a debate for or against the welfare state (Dahlkvist, 1999: 11-12). In this climate new forms of organising public steering and control got a foothold at all levels of Swedish government (Johansson, 2003). The internationally spread steering philosophy labelled New Public Management (NPM) was widely implemented in Swedish municipalities (Ferlie, 1996; Amnå & Montin, 2000). Efficiency rather than democracy was the focus of the bulk of reforms during 1990s and NPM is a prominent example of this (Rose, 1997).

In 1994 a referendum on the future Swedish membership in the European Union (EU) was held. The referendum resulted in a win for the EU-positive side. In 1995 Sweden, together with Finland and Austria, joined the EU and this added formally a supra-national level to the tiers of government in Sweden. The supra-national level entailed a transfer of power and decision-making from the national level to the EU-level. Accordingly the EU became an actor with considerable decision-making power with relevance for both national as well as sub-national political actors (Jerneck & Gidlund, 2001: 51). The nation-states importance as the primary form of political organising and community was challenged and its physical borders became less significant in the wake of the EU-membership. The dependence of Swedish municipal actors on actors and phenomena in the world surrounding them had deepened but the development also entailed a potential for municipal actors to seek resources elsewhere (Montin, 2002: 46). The structural funds of the EU are one example of how potential pools of resources became available for the municipalities (Montin, 2002: 35-36). They could by-pass the state in search for resources and support. Many municipalities took part in the creation of offices in Brussels (Jerneck & Gidlund, 2001: 59). The objective of these offices was to gather information and to try to exercise influence over EU-policies.

Other supra-national phenomena have had totally different connotations and Local Agenda 21 (LA 21) is one obvious example of this. The work with LA 21 aimed at widening participation in the development of society by including the people at grass-root level in issues concerning their future (Lafferty, 2001: 1-2). Supposedly the widened participation would be instrumental in the development of new ways of realising societal objectives (Eckerberg, 2001: 15). The overarching purpose with LA 21 was to create a society that was ecologically, economically and socially sustainable and Sweden spearheaded the work in LA 21.

Where LA 21 entails a mobilisation of the sub-national level the membership in the EU entails an opening towards the supranational level and this means both new possibilities and new challenges for the municipalities (Olsson, 1999). The work with LA 21 and the EU membership illustrates how policy increasingly is formulated at multiple levels simultaneously and how this creates a situation characterised by complex multi-level governance (Hooghe & Marks, 2001; Jessop, 2002).

The welfare state in flux: conclusion

In conclusion, deteriorating public finances, the deregulation of the economy (nationally and globally), the changed status of the welfare state, the neo-liberal wave all taken together forms a formidable challenge and a radical questioning of the values, principles and forms of the Swedish welfare state. This is something that has had a profound influence on municipal actors and city politics during the last decade of the 20th century.

The far-reaching change in the social structure that has swept the world during after the war included, among other things, changes in global economic and industrial structures. These processes of change has been conceptualised in the concept of globalisation, a phenomenon with potentially extensive consequences for politics on all levels of society and not the least for city politics (cf. Clark & Hoffman-Martinot, 1998; Hambleton *et al.*, 2002b). The interdependence between global phenomena and its local effects, and the awareness of these connections, has increased during the post-war era (cf. Goetz & Clarke, 1993; Lauria, 1997). We will now direct our interest towards the development in the specific city during the period from the end of the Second World War up to the end of the 1990s.

The city: the urban political context is formed

The city figuring in this study has a long history. It got its city rights in the year of 990 (Svekom, 2002). It has had an important role throughout history because of its strategic position on the lake (Settervik, 1947: 11). The city has been a regional centre since the 13th century and it was very important as a centre for mining and as a shipping port with connections to the Baltic Sea (Settervik, 1947: 12). The city was a centre for production already in the pre-industrial phase and from the 18th century and onwards it has been a city of industry (Bergstrand, 1888: 101; Annuswer *et al.*, 1990: 148). On the 15th of December 1890 the General Swedish Electrical Company (ASEA) held its constituent general meeting and subsequently established in the city (Glete, 1984: 13). This was an event that would be of great importance for the city and its development up to contemporary times.

ASEA expanded rapidly during the first 70 years of the 20th century and the company became the primary engine of industrial expansion in the city (Västerås, 1985a: 50). Local industry depended extensively on ASEA and the local industrial trade cycle developed in absolute connection to the development of the growing industrial company (Västerås, 1985a: 12; 1985b: 2). ASEA was also important outside the city borders and became the national hub of the developing electricity production technology (Lidskog, 1998: 23). The company also worked closely together with the state in the development of Swedish hydroelectric-power (Schön, 2000: 387).

In the period from 1945 up to the end of the 1960s the city's population more that doubled and by 1970 120 000 inhabitants lived in the city (Annuswer *et al.*, 1990: 161). This rapid development can be contributed to three things. Firstly, the ASEA-driven industrialisation attracted people and industry both from other parts of Sweden and from abroad. Secondly, both the municipality and the county council concentrated public services to the city (Henning, 1996: 81). Finally, in 1967 during the amalgamation-reform the city incorporated a number of smaller municipalities.

At this stage optimism for the future was high but when the expansion was at its peak it suddenly came to a halt (Västerås, 1984b: 93, 95). In the wake of the oil-crisis 1973/74 (with its rationing of electricity and increasing energy-prises), the international economical crisis and the general industrial down-turn the positive trend that ASEA had had during the whole 20th century was broken (Glete, 1983: 223, 225). Industrial production went down, unemployment increased and the number of empty flats and areas of obsolete industrial land gradually increased. The local authority was not prepared for this and in a retrospective municipal report the situation was described with the words "It was like turning the page in a book. The momentum of the expansion was gone" (Västerås, 1984a: 57).

City politics and planning in the city had been geared towards expansion and lacked appropriate tools for handling this new situation (Khakee, 1981: 22-47). The municipality attempted to

coordinate the public efforts to combat the recession and centralised much of its decision-power to the municipal executive committee. The centralisation widened the gap between the administrative officers and the politicians. In particular the lay-men politicians ended up outside the decision-making loop. City politics and planning became increasingly characterised by uncertainty and by a growing pessimism about the possibilities to influence future development. This pessimism was reinforced by the fact that the economic down-turn had been such a surprise for both politicians and planners.

ASEA, however, had another ace up its sleeves. From the 1950s and onwards the company had developed what was considered to be the energy-technology of the future, nuclear power (Leijonhufvud, 1994). ASEA was the primary developer and producer for the Swedish national nuclear-programme and the primary driving force in the efforts to put Sweden in the front line of global energy-technology development (Schön, 2000: 388). The national government invested extensively in this development and the bond between ASEA and the state grew increasingly stronger (Lidskog, 1998: 19, 29). On the 28th of March in 1979 an accident occurred at the Three Mile Island nuclear-plant in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, that changed the preconditions for Swedish nuclear-energy politics in one decisive blow (Hadenius *et al.*, 1993: 277). The Harrisburg accident overturned the opinion both among citizens and among the elite in favour of the nuclear-opposition.³ In the spring of 1979 a temporary stop for the start-up of any new nuclear-reactors was passed in the national parliament (Lidskog, 1998: 39). In 1980 a referendum was held that resulted in the decision to discontinue with nuclear-power by 2010 and this was an important set-back for ASEA and the company's plans for the future (Barnevik, 1983: 136).

At the same time as ASEA faced new challenges the municipal actors pondered on the role the company would play for the city in the times to come (Västerås, 1989; Leijonhufvud, 1994). In 1987 ASEA merged with the Swiss company BBC Brown Boveri and formed the multinational corporation ABB. This further widened the gap to the municipal actors. In the interviews some respondents state that the creation of ABB meant the initiation of a new, more anxious, perception of the city's future potential to handle the competition with other cities, nationally and internationally. The chairman of the municipal executive committee came to the conclusion that the new company with its head-office in Switzerland meant that the corporations' important decisions-making had left both the city and the nation (Västerås, 1989: 5). Accordingly, one effect of the events was that the local industry was internationalised and that the local economy increasingly became controlled from outside Sweden (Henning, 1996: 35). This needed to be taken into account in the analysis of the city's future prospects.

The political and administrative leadership in the municipality came to the conclusion that the city was in jeopardy to end up in the backwaters of the periphery. Something had to be done to counteract this development (Henning, 1996: 38). When the city celebrated its 1000 year as a city a new vision was presented. Behind the vision lay the perception that the city no longer could depend on ASEA/ABB to attract companies and people to the city. Instead the municipal actors had to take things into their own hands and create a vision for the city that alerted the outside world to the city's existence and potential (Västerås, 1991: 8). The result of these ideas was the vision of "The City on the Lake" (Västerås, 1996: 13). Included in the new comprehensive plan of 1992 were both the vision and the East harbour (Västerås, 1992: 23-24). What had been the backyard of the city should now be turned into its front yard; the city should meet the future facing the lake (Västerås, 1999: 4).

³ The opposition became much stronger and radical after the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear-plant in April of 1986.

The city: towards the redevelopment of the East Harbour

In 1993 the municipal council adopted a developed outline plan that entailed the redevelopment of the East harbour (Västerås, 1993).⁴ The same year the town planning department was assigned to develop a detailed plan for the area (Västerås, 2001). In this stage of the process a coalition consisting of the municipality, its housing company and five private housing companies emerged as the primary actors (Västerås, 1994). The basis of the coalition was a public-private partnership aiming at arranging housing for the clients of the municipal social committee. The option to build rented housing at the East harbour was used as a carrot for the private housing companies. The redevelopment was supposed to commence during the year of 1994.

The problems were many, however, a failing market for rented housing and changed state-subsidies for the construction of rented housing was among the arguments forwarded by the municipal actors as explanations for the delay. As the local newspaper heading “The harbour smells like shit” indicates there were other problems that also had to be handled in order to transform the area into an attractive human habitation (VLT, 1993-09-16). The idea that the East Harbour should be a primary manifestation for the vision contributed to the urgency. Despite these problems the non-socialist majority in the city kept pushing the project forward. Also within the partnership the ambition and willingness to go on was considerable.

In 1994 the incumbent majority lost the election to a leftwing coalition coordinated by the social democrats. As the coalition took city hall in possession the redevelopment of the East harbour was postponed. The area was considered as the old majority’s pet project and the new regime wanted to make their own mark and quickly focused on another area adjacent to the lake where a building project completed at the end of the 1990s.

After a couple of years in the cold the interest for the East harbour reawakened in 1996. Again the local newspaper played a part. Under the article-heading “The forgotten harbour” a number of pictures displayed the decaying harbour and asked the question why nothing was happening in the area (VLT, 1996-09-29). The chairman of the municipal executive committee “turned the ignition key” and restarted the redevelopment of the harbour. The town planning department started to develop a new planning proposal for the East harbour and it was rapidly transformed from the forgotten harbour to the primary city building project at the end of the 1990s.

The control group

In 1997 a control group for the redevelopment and planning of the East harbour were set up. It consisted of a number of municipal administrative officers and representatives for the landowner of the adjacent neighbourhood Sigurd (Västerås, 1999: 1). This way of organising these kinds of endeavours had a long history in the city (Khakee, 1981). Regularly central public administrators were included and more seldom politicians.

Under the control group a project group with operational responsibility was organised. This group consisted of a small number of public officers and representatives for the large construction company. The steering group was coordinated by a project-leader that reported directly to the control group. The work in the project group was devoted to getting the plan finished in time and one of the municipal officers involved stated that it was a genuinely joint-venture between the public and the private officers working towards the common objective.

⁴ The description of the East harbour developments are primarily based on the interviews.

This way of organising the process was considered illegitimate by a number of more periphery actors. It was perceived as a way of moving important decisions away from public scrutiny into seclusion with limited access even for politicians.

Why the large building company?

In the new phase the coalition involved the municipality and the large construction company. A central politician with access to the whole process cannot explain how this change in partners took place. The coalition was put together at the highest political and administrative level, according to the politician. Other respondents can have a clearer picture and one important reason for the choice, according to a central administrative officer, was the perceived need for “muscles” in terms of constructional infrastructure and knowledge. Also economical resources were of central importance. The partners in the old coalition were perceived as weak in these regards. By liaising with a strong actor the municipality avoided the risk of having to spend tax-money on the project. Another argument for the choice was that the large construction company was part of the same company-structure as the land-owner in that adjacent Sigurd-neighbourhood and that the choice meant avoiding potential conflict with a strong stakeholder.

The contracts

The municipality concluded an option-agreement with the construction company that was followed by a development-contract. In December 2000 the development-contract was approved by the municipal executive committee and discussed in the municipal council (Västerås, 2000). The discussion in the council was heated and touched upon the issue of who was responsible for the development and questions were raised concerning who was really in charge of the redevelopment of the East harbour; the municipality or the construction company. Some politicians perceived decision-making behind closed doors as detrimental for democratic accountability. Transparency problems were considered to be negative for the legitimacy of the process and its output. The close cooperation was built on market principles rather than political/democratic principles and this limited the degree of openness, according to an interviewed administrative officer. The municipal council finally decides to accept the development-contract.

Organised interest, a pressure group

In the studied city a tenants’ association has been part of the review of municipal planning proposals since the early 1990s. A group has been set up solely for the purpose of reviewing planning documents. The group includes an architect. The primary objective for the group is to analyse the planning proposals with regard to the potential effects on its members. According to representatives of the group they have worked actively with the planning proposal for the East harbour but without been given any real response from the municipality.

As the process has unfolded the distrust among representatives of the association towards the municipal actors and towards the construction company has grown. From the associations point of view the municipality has tried to steer and control the process in a manner that cannot be accepted. This lack of trust manifests itself in terms of accusations that public officials has deliberately manipulated information and planning material.

On the other side the representatives of the construction company view the actors from the association with great suspicion. They are perceived as actors who wrongfully try to slow a fully legitimate process to a slow grind. They are seen as illegitimate actors that does not represent any interests or stakeholders in the process. In articles published in local newspapers the association has quarrelled with municipal politicians and administrators. The public officials

state that the association has tried to undermine their credibility through accusations of manipulation with the aim to stop the process altogether.

The critique from the association has comprehensive and have included the physical appearance of the buildings and the organisation of the process. The association has also mobilised other actors such as the social democratic youth organisation (SSU) and a local social democratic “veteran” organisation against the redevelopment-plan. Finally the association made appeals to revoke the detailed plan first to the county administrative board and then to the national government.

No tax-money to these kinds of projects

The municipality did not choose to run the harbour-redevelopment on their own. Instead they sold the land to a private enterprise and gave up some their control over the planning process. As indicated above the unwillingness to commit resources forced the municipal actors to accept market actors conditions for negotiating and doing business. To further complicate matters changes in state subsidies had seriously undermined the economical basis for rented housing. In the local newspaper three municipal politicians, including the chairman of the municipal executive committee stated that the cost for building rented housing in the harbour was too high and the municipality had a policy against spending tax money on this type of project (Hillman *et al.*, 2000). If rented housing had been chosen the tax payers had been forced to subsidise the whole project in order to keep the rents within reasonable limits. The municipal policy was that tax money primarily should go to education, child-care and the care of the elderly. The representatives for the large construction company where aware of this situation and states that to reach economical feasibility the only way to go was with exclusive tenant-owned flats.

The finishing stretch

In a journal-article in early 2001 two planners from the city planning department stated that the city was now transforming to the city on the lake and that the East harbour was a defining step towards this new identity (Dangermark & Persson, 2001: 4). In the article it was said that the old industrial city was gone as the city both was shedding its skin and changing its substance.

The redevelopment of the East harbour had been postponed and delayed for a number of reasons. During the delay housing was built in other areas with adjacent to the lake. Despite this the municipality stated that the East Harbour was the area where the ideas prominent in the vision “The City on the Lake” were getting their first physical manifestations. Accordingly, the area was of strategic importance in the realisation of the vision.

In January of 2000 the town planning department started to develop a new detailed plan for the harbour and nearby neighbourhoods. The main outline for the plan was the construction company’s ideas for the redevelopment. In this way the construction company had a considerable influence over the formulation and design of the plan and, through this, over the development of the area. During the period June to October 2000 the plan was remitted to difference instances and to the citizens through a public exhibition. In total 57 answers from public authorities, private companies and citizens where delivered. In this late phase the citizen attention amplified at the same time as the possibilities for influencing the process diminished.

At the municipal council meeting in December 2000 the detailed plan was accepted and this meant that the whole phase of the final detailed planning had been completed in less than a year. The short time-frame was pointed out in the town planning departments’ annual report as a positive example of efficient planning.

The detailed plan, or more correctly the process leading up to the plan, was being subject to a complaint to the county administrative board by the tenants’ association. The board decided in

favour for the municipality and the association moved on to complain to the national government. In September 2001 the complaint is dismissed by the government and two months later the construction phase commences. In the winter of 2003 the first residents moved in. They made their homes in what was described by the construction company as exclusive resident-owned apartments close to the city centre and with a view of the lake (NCC, 2001).

Conclusion

In this paper an attempt has been made to situate an everyday event in a historical context. The objective with this approach is to unveil the connections between the global and local and through this bring new insights to the understanding of city politics.

We can begin with the change in the global division of labour. What I am referring to is how both basic and more advanced industrial production has moved from countries in Western Europe to newly industrialised countries. This has had direct and substantial effects in the studied city. For ASEA it entailed the merger with the Swiss company and the creation of the multi-national corporation ABB. To add further to this development a local accident on another continent, Harrisburg, changed the future prospects for the corporation and for the city. In a complex chain of events it had effects on the relationship between the city and the large industrial corporation, a change that also altered how the local authority perceived the city's future.

The general tendency towards an internationalised environment in terms of deregulated international economy and the opening of national borders through the EU also entailed a growing awareness of the competition among cities on an international and perhaps even a global scale. When the strong city-identity as a successful industrial city deteriorated new measures had to be taken to assert the city in competition with other cities. The weakened city-identity was detrimental to city-competition and therefore a new identity had to be created and the vision enters the stage. It is obvious that the vision had considerable impact on the process of the East harbour and therein lays a link between global events and the East harbour. At the same time the downturn of industrial production in the city created a window of opportunity by opening an area for exploration that enabled the municipality to pursue the vision of the lakeside city.

The oil crises in the 1970s seem to have been the starting shot for a long and difficult economical downturn that slowed or halted the economic growth in many countries. Paired with this development was the deregulation of the international economic system. In Sweden the long-term effects included a slowdown in the expansion of the welfare state and eventually to the breakthrough for the concept of the crisis of the welfare state. In part the decentralisation of function and responsibilities from central-state level to the municipalities can be seen as an attempt to engage city level politics in the retrenchment of the welfare state. Public sector actors on all levels of Swedish society had to face fiscal austerity and increasing economic strains were put on municipal actors. In the end this had effects on the studied city through its prioritising of municipal core-missions and the decision not to spend tax-money on projects like the redevelopment of the East harbour.

The scarcity is also connected to the increased importance put on economical growth in city politics. One perspective on this is that if the municipal actors should be able to stimulate growth they have to ally themselves with actors carrying the needed resources because without growth there is no potential for a positive development of welfare services. Economical growth becomes the primary objective and a unitary interest above and beyond politics and democracy (cf. Stone, 2004). From this perspective problems of transparency and democratic accountability

becomes marginal, at the centre of attention is efficiency in the stimulation of growth. When the efficiency in the process is considered central the involvement of business actors merely becomes a positive contribution to municipal actors' capacity to realize the well-being of all city inhabitants. From another perspective a close and secluded cooperation between public and private actors undermines the trust for the actors in the process and in the extension threatens to destabilize the legitimacy for city politics as a political system. In the end one can conclude that the scarcity of economic resources on behalf of the municipal actors has influenced the organisation of the political process in the way that external actors has been given a considerable influence over politics in exchange for attractive resources. In this way limited municipal resources tend to lead to multi-actor city politics that challenge the traditional ways of policy creation and democracy.

In conclusion this study shows how a specific urban process is influenced by courses of events at other societal levels, events that contribute to the formation of a contextual setting where the concrete actions are staged and played out. One can infer that cities do not exist in a vacuum, on the contrary, cities are integral parts of regional, national and global webs of interdependencies (cf. Sassen, 2000; Hambleton *et al.*, 2002b). City politics is persistently influenced by changes in the material foundations for policy creation such as the ups and downs of the global economy, allocation of resources from the central-state level and decisions of multinational corporations to invest, establish and expand in the city or to take their business elsewhere. Global and international phenomena influence the national level and its politics and this has consequences for the configuration of, for instance, central-local relations and indirectly for the preconditions of urban political processes. National and city politics are also influenced by ideas in flux on how politics and political steering and control should be organised and conducted. Global and international phenomena, for instance the perception of increased competition between cities or the development of new international actors, also have direct effects on cities and city politics. Urban actors are acting within a framework that promotes some actors and action and hinders others. The 'rules' of city politics are in this way partly built up through structures above and beyond actors' control and through the actors interpretation of these structures. Occurrences on supra-urban levels of society trickle down to local levels and influence action. The conclusion in this paper is that global events and structural change, either in-directly via the nation-state or international political levels, or directly has tangible urban effects.

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