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From social engineering to neoliberal governance, and then what? Mapping a sustainability shift in urban planning in a medium-sized Swedish city

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Introduction: This paper focuses on how a (assumed) entrepreneurial shift in urban planning and development has been implemented in a medium-sized city in northern Sweden, and how sustainability-as in sustainable urban development-can be argued to be a second shift in urban planning and development or represents an alternative form of neoliberal governance.

Method: To explore how and when urban entrepreneurialism and sustainability are interlinked, as well as when they are not, urban policy documents from 1988, 2007 and 2016 focusing on the development of Sundsvall city center has been examined using thematic content analysis.

Results: The result shows that the 1988 document is significantly influenced by social democratic welfare politics, with prioritizing social bonds and the Sundsvall resident being the focus, while the newer documents emphasize visitors, potential residents and architectural design to promote the flow of people, money and goods. In this sustainability is put forward as a mobilizing metaphor, and serves to conceal the potential paradoxes of the priorities of the strategy, which involve the contradictions between economic, environmental and social values.

Discussion: Consequently, it is possible to claim that sustainability, as a concept, has acquired a new function: to disguise the less palatable consequences of growth by evoking sustainability as a guarantee of the strategy's quality.

KEYWORDS

social engineering, neoliberal governance, sustainability, sustainable urban development, Sweden

Introduction

The story of today's urban planning and development is often presented as a transition from urban managerialism to urban entrepreneurialism, with habitual reference to Harvey's 1989 article "From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in Capitalism" (see, e.g., Thörn, 2011; Loit, 2014; Franzén et al., 2016; Holgersen, 2017). In the Swedish context, this shift is described as an ideological shift from social democratic social engineering politics to neoliberal governance following the oil crises in the 1970s (e.g., Loit, 2014; Holgersen, 2017). However, this does not capture the entire story of urban planning and development today.

Researchers such as Wood (1998) and McGuirk (2005), have argued that general descriptions of an ideological shift in urban planning and development that draw on Harvey's (1989) paper are often oversimplified. Peck (2014, p. 399) even goes as far as to call urban entrepreneurialism, as a concept, a "one-size fit all urban transition story". Therefore, to

move away from the meta-narrative presented by Harvey (1989) and others (e.g., Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Jessop, 2002; Purcell, 2009; Perkins, 2013), and understand how global discourses and ideologies of urban regeneration, neoliberalism and sustainability develop in specific places, one must focus on contextually specific strategies and consider historical and local settings (Brenner and Theodore, 2005, p. 102). Thereto, following the release of the Brundtland report in 1987 (Brundtland, 1987), sustainable development was established as both a concept and political vision. In the report, sustainable development was defined as "[…] the kind of development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland, 1987, p. 16). Cities have been ascribed a central role in sustainable development, as they are centers of economic activity; account for high energy use and greenhouse gas emissions and, thus, according to the OECD, offer opportunities for significant synergies between environmental and financial goals (Hammer et al., 2011). Sustainable cities and communities are also emphasized in the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 11, in which safe and inclusive green public spaces are mentioned as factors affecting new opportunities for economic growth, increased social cohesion and more sustainable ecological and environmental development. This has cemented sustainability as a principle within the current planning discourse (Gunder and Hillier, 2009, p. 20).

Following the increased focus on sustainability in urban planning and development, sustainable development has emerged as a relevant but contested field of research within critical urban studies. On one hand, sustainable urban development is pictured as an alternative, or counter-movement, to otherwise growth-oriented neoliberal development by promoting demands for social justice, tolerance and heterogeneity. On the other hand, however, even sustainable development agendas are, as Raco (2005) notes, accused of being increasingly dominated by the principles of market-driven reforms, as well as a drive to enhance the economic competitiveness of cities at the expense of social and ecological sustainability. This branch of the literature focuses on the inherent tension between neoliberal, market-oriented growth and aspects of sustainable equality and justice. In the light of this, I agree with the notion, put forward by RRaco (2005, p. 330), that "the extent to which sustainable development agendas and frameworks take on neoliberal forms [is] an empirical question to be interrogated in and through specific case studies".

Aim(s)

Against the arguments presented above, calling for case studies that consider historical and local settings, and focus on contextually specific strategies, I turn my attention to Sundsvall, a medium sized city in northern Sweden to explore ideological shifts in urban planning and development. The aim of this study is, therefore, two folded: first, it focuses on how the assumed entrepreneurial turn has been implemented in Sundsvall northern Sweden, and second, it explores if sustainability–as in sustainable urban development–can be argued to be a second shift in urban planning and development or if it represents an alternative form of neoliberal governance. Turning my attention to Sundsvall, is a response to the lack of attention that has been paid to peripheral centers in urban research in general, and in studies of the entrepreneurial turn in particular. Hence, the study aspires to contribute to the knowledge about how the entrepreneurial turn and sustainable development is implemented in small or medium-sized cities.

The following sections begin with a presentation of previous research and an outline of the study's analytical framework. This is then followed by an attempt to locate Sundsvall geographically, historically and politically in order to provide context for the study. Thereafter, I will introduce the material underlying the analyses and, finally, present my findings and provide some concluding remarks.

Analytical approach: from social engineering to neoliberal governance, and then what?

Historically, Swedish social and urban planning has been deeply rooted in modernist and positivist thinking, resting on social-democratic social engineering politics (Larsson et al., 2012). These social engineering politics was established in the 1930s and legitimized and exercised through a political culture of consensus. Engineering, in this context, is used as a metaphor for the idea that society–as a system–could be developed and organized by bringing politics together with applied social science to create a social-democratic welfare state (Bradley et al., 2005). As pointed out by Larsson et al. (2012, p. 12), political decision-making during this period was "to be guided by expert knowledge: both in discovering problems to be addressed, articulating solutions, and developing methods to implement the solutions effectively".

Politics during this time focused on economic redistribution through an active, growth-oriented policy combined with socio-political reforms based on collective socialization. The period between the 1930s and the 1970s saw the development and implementation of *Folkhemmet*–the people's home–a social democratic political program, shaping the Swedish welfare state (Grundström and Molina, 2016). In the early twentieth century, Sweden was one of the poorest countries in Europe, with poor housing and living conditions, high levels of unemployment and poverty. However, during the *Folkhem* era, the housing shortage was eliminated, and overall housing and living conditions and standards were raised (Grundström and Molina, 2016, p. 324). Despite the above description of the period between the 1930s and the 1970s giving an impression of hegemony and consensus, the welfare state has always been criticized in Sweden. As pointed out by Larsson et al. (2012, p. 7), the welfare state was criticized in the 1950s by the right for creating inflation and inhibiting growth, and during the 1960s and 1970s, critical voices were raised from both the right and left inequalities arguing that had not been eradicated and an over-bureaucratic apparatus had been created.

Following the oil crisis in 1973, the 1970s came to mark a pivotal turn in the economic politics of the Western World (Franzén et al., 2016; Holgersen, 2017). In Sweden, the oil crisis in 1973–and the more-than-a-decade-long recession that followed–hit the industrial sector hard, wiping out the shipbuilding industry, as well as hitting the textile industry and parts of

the mining and steelwork industry hard. This meant that the industries that had been central to the Swedish model, as well as the Fordist-Keynesian model, moved abroad, leaving many Swedish cities with staggering unemployment numbers and a shrinking tax base (Peck and Tickell, 2002, p. 47). In response to these new conditions, Swedish municipalities began to take a more active role in economic development. This new direction meant that neoliberalism gradually became an established way of governance, with state power being mobilized behind privatization, marketization and deregulation projects (Brenner and Theodore, 2005; also, Larsson et al., 2012, p. 7, 8) and politicians adapting their local communities and cities to this new global framework by taking a more entrepreneurial stance (Harvey, 1989; Franzén et al., 2016; Holgersen, 2017). Therefore, the oil crisis did not simply alter the economic politics of cities and states; rather, it also challenged and transformed the urban planning and development practices the Fordist model implied (Franzén et al., 2016, p. 16; see Khakee, 1989 for an overview of the post-war planning in Sweden until 1987).

When Harvey (1989) defined the shift from urban managerialism to urban entrepreneurialism, he highlighted three characteristic elements of this new paradigm. The first is "a shift from the local provision of welfare and services to more outward-oriented policies designed to foster and encourage local growth and economic development" (Hall and Hubbard, 1998, p. 2). This involves introducing policies and promoting local politics that focus on growing the local economy by, for example, increasing real estate development and major events, as well as building business improvement district (BID) areas. The second is public–private partnerships, which combine public and political power with private and economic power and often have leading roles in urban development and urban renewal programs (Thörn and Larsson, 2012, p. 266). The third is urban development, which is focussed on strengthening cities' competitiveness; using regeneration strategies to develop a positive image of a city and attracting capital, tourists and the creative class.

Nevertheless, as previously mentioned, the concept of urban entrepreneurialism has received criticism for being too general. McGuirk (2005, p. 67) argues that "to cast planning as having been neoliberalized is an over-simplification", thereby calling the "status of neoliberalism as a determinant of the physical and economic realities in cities" into question (Sager, 2015, p. 268). Thus, it is important to not simply illustrate how a city or urban governance is neoliberal but also analyse whether and how it might not be neoliberal, as cities can never be completely neoliberal. This is also argued by Sager (2015) in a study on a waterfront development project in Trondheim, Norway, in which she questions neoliberal hegemony in urban planning by argue that it is an important influence but that it is not the hegemonial planning ideology. She shows that there are at least three ideologies at play in the waterfront project: neoliberalism, participatory democracy and environmentalism (as in the ecological dimension of sustainable development).

According to Sager (2015, p. 274, 275), "there is no lack of political goal formulations concerning sustainable development". However, as mentioned above, it is a contested concept, that includes a range of different and often contradictory interests (Raco, 2005, p. 329). In this paper, I understand sustainable urban development as a process of creating cities and communities that are designed, developed and operated with a focus on environmental, social and economic sustainability. *Environmental sustainability* refers here to cities being designed so as to minimize their impact on the environment and promote the conservation of natural resources. This involves incorporating green spaces, using renewable energy sources, implementing efficient waste management systems and reducing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. *Social sustainability*, or social equity, encompasses creating safe and inclusive public spaces and emphasizes providing a high quality of life for all residents through equal access to resources and opportunities. It also includes affordable housing, accessible transportation, quality healthcare, education and cultural facilities, as well as basic services for underserved populations. *Economic sustainability* promotes economic growth that is balanced, inclusive and resilient. Economically sustainable cities encourage the development of green industries and jobs, support local businesses and promote innovation and entrepreneurship. Overall, sustainable urban development aims to create liveable, resilient, safe and inclusive cities that promote the wellbeing of residents while minimizing their environmental footprint. Having given a description of the analytical approach used in this paper, I will move on to present the empirical context for this study by locating Sundsvall in its local, regional and national contexts.

Locating Sundsvall: a regional center in the peripheral north

This section departs from the statement in the introduction in which I described Sundsvall as a "peripheral center". This statement is based on a relational understanding of socio-spatial relationships that assumes that places are incorporated into social, economic and political structures (Wood and Brook, 2015). From a Marxist perspective (e.g., Amin, 1974; Wallerstein, 1974; Frank, 1979), this is understood as a result of unequal power relations that lead to uneven spatial development and, thus, a concentration of political and economic power in the center, while other places are positioned as powerless peripheries (Kühn, 2015). In other words, drawing on Massey (2005), space and place are always in a process of becoming, as well as being products of materially embedded practices and relationships. Therefore, they must be understood relationally and situationally in time and in terms of a variety of spatial scales: regionally, locally, nationally and globally. Thus, places are relational and "must be seen as arenas of negotiation; 'meeting places', internally complex and always being negotiated and fought over" (Eriksson, 2010, p. 13). More specifically, a place is the result of social and political relationships over time and the space between places, as well as where the past, present and future are conjoined, producing centers and peripheries, or powerful and less powerful places. Centers and peripheries are thus constructed interdependently (Amin, 1974; Frank, 1979). For there to be a place defined as a periphery, it must exist in relation a center.

In a Swedish context, the north—covering about 59% of the country—is, in general, positioned as a periphery, which is understood and described as the opposite of the modern, urban and economically and politically progressive south (Eriksson, 2010; Vallström and Vallström, 2014, p. 8). The north is thus often represented as ineffective and deficitary in political debates and by

the media, while Stockholm (the nation's capital) and other large urban areas in the south are presented as productive and nurturing areas (Hansen, 1998; Svensson, 2006; Eriksson, 2010). Eriksson (2010, p. 23) states the following:

> [t]he representations of Norrland [the north] and the rural may be seen as a part of neoliberal discourses, processes, and phenomena, often referred to as the 'urban turn' within politics and science [. . .] This celebration of urbanity has deepened the rural/urban binary and resulted in representations (in politics and science, but also the media and popular culture) of the urban, in contrast to the rural, as "modern," inhabited by progressive, mobile, and creative people.

Where does Sundsvall fit into all this? Sundsvall is a medium-sized city located along Sweden's northern coast, near the Gulf of Bothnia, with about 59,000 inhabitants in the urban area (SCB, 2021). This positions Sundsvall in the geographical middle of Sweden but also in the politically and economically peripheral north. Even though Sundsvall is peripheral on a national level given its location in northern Sweden, it constitutes a regional and local center, as it is the largest city and municipality in the county of Västernorrland and the third largest city in the northern region. From a political and planning perspective, the dual role that Sundsvall inhabits as a peripheral center raises specific questions and challenges that typical centers, such as Stockholm, as Sweden's capital, or the second and third largest cities in Sweden, Gothenburg, and Malmö, need not face.

What kinds of challenges might these be? As mentioned above, peripheral places are portrayed as the opposite of modern and progressive centers. These places are constructed as lacking the characteristics associated with (sustainable) development and attractiveness, and are instead ascribed and associated with problems such as subsidy-dependency and depopulation (Vallström and Vallström, 2014). Sundsvall do not struggle with depopulation; yet, it has struggled with attracting new residents for a long time. Since the last municipal amalgamation, in 1974, the population in the municipality grew from 93,992 to 94,044 in 2005 and 99,383 in 2021 (SCB, 2021), making it to one of the slowest growing medium-sized cities in Sweden. Sundsvall do, however, face problems with public health issues, low levels of education and a poor business environment. This shows the kind of problems that peripheral centers as Sundsvall face, and that urban planning and development are trying to address.

In general, the north of Sweden is rich in raw natural resources and manufacturing industries. Sundsvall has a long industrial history shaped by the availability of forests, hydropower and ports. The forest industry still holds a strong position within the city and the municipality, with *Svenska Cellulosa Aktiebolaget* (SCA), a Swedish timber, pulp and paper manufacturer having its headquarters in Sundsvall being the largest private employer in Västernorrland. Being rich in natural resources, northern Sweden plays a crucial part in what has been called the *green industrial revolution*, referring to, for example, the expansion of fossil-free energy production and the transition to fossil-free manufacturing of steel and carbon-neutral fuel (Smart city Sweden, 2022). This revolution has come to be viewed as a renaissance for northern Sweden, Sundsvall included. Therefore, it is interesting to explore how and when urban entrepreneurialism and sustainability are interlinked, as well as when they are not, asking whether sustainability–as in sustainable urban development–can be argued to represent a second shift in urban planning and development, or an alternative form of neoliberal governance.

Materials and methods

This paper questions the story about urban entrepreneurialism from the perspective of a medium-sized city in northern Sweden, by asking how the entrepreneurial shift has been implemented in a peripheral center such as Sundsvall. Peck and Theodore (2010, p. 170) have pointed out that "policies rarely travel as complete 'packages;' they move in bits and pieces—as selective discourses, inchoate ideas, and synthesized models—and they, therefore, 'arrive' not as replicas but as policies already-in-transformation". Thus, policies (e.g., urban entrepreneurialism or sustainable development) travel across time and space, changing and adapting to new contexts via a process of policy translation (Stone, 2012, p. 483). In urban planning, paperwork of various kinds plays a crucial role. Pries (2017, p. 57) notes that "politically-approved and legally binding documents like Comprehensive Plans, Development Plans and Building Permits [. . .] are merely the tip of the iceberg. Urban planning works through specific routines of producing series of linked documents, where the approved development plan is only the final product". These linked documents representing how urban space is used are articulated together with visions of a future city. My analysis of the entrepreneurial shift in Sundsvall, as well as how and when urban development is interlinked with sustainable development and when it is not, builds on three documents: *City Centre Plan Sundsvall* from 1988 and *City Vision Sundsvall* from 2007 to 2016. The reason I have limited my analysis to these documents is mainly that they are the only documents that focus on the development of Sundsvall city center in particular. Therefore, Comprehensive Plans (*översiktsplaner*) covering the entire municipality; Area Plans (*deltajplaner*) covering a smaller space, such as one or a few blocks, and building permits (*bygglov*) filed for individual constructions, including houses, garages, fences and signs, have been excluded. Instead, the analysis is focussed on how a future city center in Sundsvall is envisioned, as well as how this has changed from the perspective of urban entrepreneurialism and sustainable development.

Planning of land and water areas and construction in Sweden are regulated through the Planning and Building Act (PBL). It was first introduced in 1987 and updated in 2011. In the 1987 legislation, a requirement was placed on all Swedish municipalities to adopt a municipality-wide comprehensive plan before July 1, 1990. Against that background, Sundsvall's municipality decided to take a broader and more visionary approach to the development of Sundsvall's city center as an extension of the municipal-wide comprehensive plan. This resulted in the 1988 City Centre Plan Sundsvall. This document was the first planning document intended to offer a framework for developing the city center since the original City Plan in 1888.[1]

1 In 1888, Sundsvall was destroyed in what is known as "The Sundsvall Fire". Before the fire, Sundsvall was a wooden town scattered along the

The 1988 document focuses partly on the physical development of Sundsvall regarding construction and preservation and partly on business-oriented aspects of development. It aims to be a 15-year guide for various functions, such as the social environment, school services and the role of the city center within the region. This document is comprised of 69 pages, which are divided in four sections. First, there is an introduction, in which the background and aims of the City Centre Plan are presented. Second, there is a section describing "General points of departure—problems", in which the following departure points are presented: "The different roles of the city center," "The social situation," "Traffic and parking conditions," "The air environment," "Functional transformations and new areas of development," "Preservation of built environments," and "Greenery." This is then followed by the third section on "Development and suggestions of aims", which focuses on historical development, social departure points informing the development and planning of Sundsvall, housing and housing services, employment and workplaces, retail, traffic, parking and the environment and greenery. The fourth section includes planning proposals. This plan has no legal effect but, rather, is intended as a guide for a future detailed development plan amendment, building permits or permit testing.

After the City Centre Plan of 1988, it was not until 2005 that the municipality began working on a new plan that focused on the city center. This work resulted in *City Vision Sundsvall*. First published in 2007, it extends over 30 years, until 2037, and aims to clarify the political will for developing Sundsvall's city center as an "engine in the Sundsvall region" (Sundsvall kommun, 2007, p. 3). A revised version was released in 2016, with an updated layout and updated presentations, as well as revised text. In terms of structure, the two documents are quite similar, with an introductory section presenting the City Vision as a "tool, lodestar, and inspirer" for the development of Sundsvall city center, which will be realized from three standpoints: the city, the human and the region. This ties into 10 missions that are intended out to "make the vision come to reality" (Sundsvall kommun, 2007, p. 4, 5; Sundsvall kommun, 2016, p. 2, 3). These missions are intended to create a stronger, denser, more sustainable city center that involves a mixture of housing, services and businesses. In the second section, areas within the city (identified by the political leadership) that are crucial to the city's continued development are presented. These areas are located along the old docks and the stream that goes through the city, biking and walking lanes, a commute center and the old stone town. In terms of this section, there are some smaller differences between the two documents. In the document from 2016, some projects have been begun, and some have been finished, for example, the university campus in Sundsvall has been added as an area of importance. The third section differs quite a great deal between the two documents. In the 2006 document, this section focusses on water and energy supply and sustainability. In the 2016 document, this section focuses on how Sundsvall—as a growth engine in the region—can grow and develop in an ecologically, socially and economically sustainable way. Both documents end with a section concerning how the City Vision will live on and continue to guide the development of the city center. In terms of scope, the 2007 document is comprised of 35 pages, and the 2016 document is comprised of 43 pages.

In order to examine how the entrepreneurial shift in urban planning and development has been implemented in Sundsvall and to explore how and when urban entrepreneurialism and sustainability are interlinked, as well as when they are not, the visual documents have been analyzed using thematic content analysis inspired by Braun and Clarke (2006). This is a method that offers flexibility to the researcher, as it is, in itself, independent of theory and epistemology (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 78). It can also provide rich and detailed data and preserve the complexity of empirical material. Thematic analysis aims to identify, analyse and interpret patterns of meaning (themes) within the data before moving on to interpreting the data in relation to the research question. To do this, I have taken inspiration from the step-by-step guide presented by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 87): (1) familiarizing myself with the empirical material, (2) performing the initial coding, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) writing up the analysis.

Throughout the analysis, the aim of the paper—to explore how the entrepreneurial shit has been implemented in Sundsvall and explore how sustainability can be argued to be a second shift in urban planning and development or if it represents an alternative form of neoliberal governance—informed the reading, re-rereading and coding process. During coding, I focused on what issues were addressed and how they were framed, as well as, what solutions were presented in the documents. In this initial stage of the analysis, I analyzed the documents separately in order to, in a later stage, compare the documents (codes/themes) and follow the implementation of entrepreneurial planning and development practices in Sundsvall. This also allowed me to track how sustainability and sustainable urban development have been introduced in the development of Sundsvall city center. During these readings I continuously made notes and minor markings, and underlined sections and words I found interesting in relation to the study's aim. From these marking I made the initial codes, which I then revised and sorted in order to highlight relevant features of the material that appeared to be relevant to the given analysis and organize the material in a graspable and manageable way (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 88). The codes were then paired and sorted into overarching themes that mirrored important aspects of the material in relation to the aim of the study (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 89). The analysis thus provided a detailed analysis that focused in on certain aspects or features of the data rather than a rich description of the overall material. At this stage, with three separately analyzed documents and guided by the aim of the study, I moved on to compare the documents and their themes before narrowing it down to three themes that together represents changes in urban planning and developmental practices in Sundsvall from 1988 to 2016 from an

Selångersån that was mainly inhabited by craftsmen, farmers and workers (Boström, 2014). However, after the fire, the city council decided that only three stone storage houses were allowed to be built in the city center. This transformed the socioeconomic geography of Sundsvall, as the old wooden town was replaced by parks and tree-lined avenues and esplanades, as well as lavish and embellished stone houses in typical nineteenth-century European architectural style.

entrepreneurial and sustainability perspective. These themes were: (1) The introduction of sustainability: from the environment (traffic and air quality) to sustainable development, (2) Geographical focus and target groups: from the municipality to the region and from resident to potential residents (creative class), and (3) Safety and inclusion: from social bonds (communion) to public safety and security.

Findings

In this section, I present the findings from the analysis, starting with a brief overview of the documents. Thereafter, I delve into the first theme identified in the analysis, which centers on the introduction of sustainability and sustainable development in the planning and development of Sundsvall's city center. It is important to note that I will revisit this theme throughout this section as the model for sustainable development cannot be entirely separated from the overall development of the city center, and thus, it intertwines with the other themes. I will then engage with shifts in geographical focus and for whom the city and municipality are to be developed. Lastly, I will discuss differences in how the concepts of safety and inclusion are articulated throughout the documents.

At first sight, the most prominent difference between the documents are the layout and overall design. Compared to the 1988 document, which mainly consists of text and a few maps, the documents from 2007 to 2016 are far more illustrative and interactive, with colorful pictures and illustrations, as well as brief sections of text that focus on what the local politicians and municipal officials envisions. This illuminates how the documents have been transformed–as the names imply–from a city *plan* to a city *vision*, as well as a shift in the intended audience from public officials, politicians and urban planners to entrepreneurs, developers and other private actors. The aesthetic shift in the design of the documents, from being formatted as internal plans to a more visionary design intended for a larger audience, could also be seen as a first sign of a shift from a social engineering planning and development practice to a more entrepreneurial practice, with an increased focus on collaboration between municipalities and private actors. This can also be noted in the fact that the municipality was the only notable actor in the 1988 City Plan, while in the City Vision documents, the municipality has taken a few steps back, and collaborations between the municipality and entrepreneurs, private property owners and business owners are emphasized. Competition from other cities and regions is notable and relates mainly to a focus on the importance of strengthening Sundsvall's identity and ability to attract new residents, visitors, competence and, hence, capital.

> Both Sundsvall and the outside world are constantly changing. Urbanization—that more and more people in the world are moving into larger cities—has been a clear trend for several years. A large population and density in the city centre provide greater variances in the city centre, which increases attractiveness and can attract people, capital, and skills here. It provides a dynamic that, in itself, is a breeding ground for development and growth. (Sundsvall kommun, 2016, p. 34)

This illustrates the particular neoliberal form of government that is characteristic of entrepreneurial urbanism (Harvey, 1989; Thörn and Larsson, 2012), which involves public–private partnerships and policies that promote local politics focussing on growing the local economy by, for example, developing new waterfront areas that can increase real estate values and establishing venues for major events, which can strengthen Sundsvall's identity and make the city recognizable. The phenomenon of public-private partnerships in the context of Swedish urban planning and development is interesting. At the same time as the planning process is public and under the control of local planning authorities and politicians, and municipalities have a significant degree of autonomy in these matters in relation to the central government,[2] public-private partnerships have come to a hold strong position in urban development and renewal programs throughout Sweden (Thörn and Larsson, 2012, p. 266). So, while it does not imply any formal decentralization of responsibility, it promotes private and capitalistic interests in the planning process at the expense of democracy and building citizenship (Landzelius, 2012, p. 245). In other words, it carries with its new forms of (neoliberal) urban governance.

With outward-oriented policies designed to foster and encourage local growth and economic development and public-private partnerships is being promoted in the City Vision documents, two of the three criteria that Harvey (1989) suggests define the shift from urban managerialism to urban entrepreneurialism can be seen as met. The third criteria, which concerns strengthening a city's competitiveness and is defined as a sign of the shift from urban managerialism to urban entrepreneurialism, also becomes visible in the documents. In all documents, the city of Sundsvall is described as an "engine". However, while in the 1988 document, Sundsvall's city center is described as the engine for the municipality, in the 2006 and 2016 documents, it is described as the engine for the entire "Sundsvall region" [*Sundsvallsregionen*], including Sundsvall and five other municipalities, and is assigned the role of a stronghold against population decline and a center of economic growth. Before I will further engage in this shift in geographical focus, and for whom the city center is to be developed, I will discuss another prominent difference between the documents; namely, the introduction of sustainable development.

2 Sweden has three levels of government: national, regional, and local. The principle local self-government, as enshrined in the Swedish Constitution, underscores the autonomy of Sweden's 21 counties and 290 municipalities, granting them independence from the central government and free determination (e.g., in questions regarding urban planning and land use).

The introduction of sustainability: from traffic, pollution and air quality to sustainable development

Another meaningful difference between the 1988 document and the documents from 2007 to 2016 is that sustainability runs like a red thread throughout the two later documents. This is not to say that aspects of sustainability or, more precisely, the environment, are not mentioned in the City Centre Plan from 1988, where it was limited to car traffic and air quality. The sustainability terminology is introduced later, and the more global trend of sustainable urban planning and development becomes explicitly present for the first time in the City Vision from 2007, where the municipality presents a model for sustainable development based on ecologic, economic, social and cultural sustainability. This model is intended to inform urban developmental projects in Sundsvall kommun (2007, p. 10, 11), and to evaluate and measure how sustainable a given project is, based on 50 indicators of sustainable development, which are grouped into 14 factors (Sundsvall kommun, 2007, p. 10, 30, 31). Ordered as they are presented in the documents, these factors are as follows: possibilities for future development, closeness and accessibility, health, construction and community economics, public safety, risk and security, greenery, local recycling (e.g., water and energy), densification, influence and participation, attractiveness, versatility, child friendliness, and traffic and communications. These factors are all included in the statement below, which summarizes the foundation for the City Vision:

> The input from the people of Sundsvall, from governing documents and from influences and theories in the outside world clearly point in a certain direction. It's about offering people an experiential and human framework to live our lives in. A framework that is tolerant of differences, that provides conditions for meetings between people and that does not threaten our planet. A dense, green city with mixed content, that provides good conditions for meetings between different people. A city with good accessibility and safety that helps all people feel welcome. A city with a good traffic structure that favours public transport and walking and cycling for increased health and security but does not ignore our need for car traffic. [...] A city that benefits the entire region's future. (Sundsvall kommun, 2007, p. 6)

In this quote, the ecological, economic and social/cultural aspects of sustainability are brought forward, together with the sustainability factors identified by the municipality. Even though sustainability is emphasized in the quote and throughout the City Vision documents, there are small differences in how environmental interests are addressed in the City Centre Plan compared to the 1988 City Centre Plan. In the City Centre Plan, these issues are addressed as "the air quality situation" and focus on traffic, air and noise pollution and road safety. In the City Vision documents, ecology, climate and the environment are mentioned just a few times, and when they are mentioned, they are limited to transport and techniques and methods for building "environmentally friendly buildings". Instead, emphasis is mainly put on the economic aspects of sustainable development, as seen in the paragraph below:

> Sustainable growth means that we develop and our assets grow without it happening at the expense of people and nature. To successfully achieve this, we need:
>
> - strengthen the economy's long-term development,
> - reduce the negative impact on the environment,
> - develop positive relationships between people and people (social development) (Sundsvall kommun, 2016, p. 39).

Sustainable development, as a model, is thus articulated within a neoliberal framework that promotes, or is used for, economic growth. This mirrors the argument put forward by Raco (2005), among other, that sustainable development is a way for municipalities and other actors to continue with growth-oriented and entrepreneurial development practices in name of sustainability. In the following, I will return to the shift in geographical focus, and for whom the city center is to be developed, and further discuss what implications that has for the idea of sustainability and sustainable development.

Geographical focus and target groups: from a municipality and its residents to a region and potential residents

In the 1988 document, the versatile character of Sundsvall's city center is mentioned early on, as the municipality must find a balance between local and regional interests. Regionally, Sundsvall is positioned as a trade and industrial center, a cultural center, a center of public administration, education and transport. From a local perspective, however, the city center is a place for living and working (Sundsvall kommun, 1988, p. 5). These roles are negotiated throughout the document, and it is clarified that the development of Sundsvall—as the leading actor in the regional development of mid-north Sweden—must involve a greater geographical area, not just Sundsvall, as shown in the quote below:

> The need for strong growth centres in different regions has been further accentuated in recent years. From a Norrland perspective, the collaboration between higher education and business in Umeå, Skellefteå, and Luleå has provided significant growth benefits for large parts of Västerbotten and Norrbotten. In the centre planning work for Sundsvall, it is therefore an important goal to provide an opportunity for the development of such regional functions that can provide positive support for development within a wide area of influence. (Sundsvall kommun, 1988, p. 5)

In Sundsvall's role as a regional growth center, the importance of a vibrant city center with high-quality commercial and cultural variance is highlighted as central to the city's development. However, developing the city center is, first and foremost, a matter for Sundsvall residents and focusses on strengthening the city as

a way of improving services and citizens' quality of life. A certain emphasis is placed on pensioners, youth and children, whose different interest and needs are brought forward as important for the municipality to include when planning and developing the city center in order to have a living city with strong social bonds and a sense of community.

Turning to the City Visions, the reader is introduced to the "Sundsvall region": a regional cooperation between the municipalities of Sundsvall, Hudiksvall, Nordanstig, Ånge, Timrå, and Härnösand. This is not the same region as in the 1988 document but, rather, a "cooperation region" founded in 2006. Guided by their joint vision, these municipalities aim to improve the quality of life for citizens regarding housing, work, education, communication, leisure activities and overall experiences, as shown in this quote from the Sundsvall region's homepage: "The Sundsvall region, the largest labor market in the north and with its own university, is the best alternative to the bigger cities" (Sundsvallsregionen, 2021). In addition to positioning the region as the largest labor market in northern Sweden, the above-mentioned statement also points out the large cities in Sweden—Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmö—as the region's main competitors. The prominent position of the Sundsvallregion is also mirrored in the two City Vision documents, in which Sundsvall's city center is to be developed for the greater good of the region, rather than the municipality and its residents, as shown in the quotes below:

> The work with the Sundsvall region is based on the fact that we should not compete with each other but instead cooperate. Together we will can get more residents and we must work together to strengthen our business sector, give it the conditions to recruit and retain qualified employees. People today move to places and regions that they perceive as attractive and it is in these places that they look for work. Because of this it is essential that the municipalities of the Sundsvall region can offer attractive living environments as well as job opportunities. A specialist recruitment can stand or fall with the possibility of finding a horse farm at the right price, sports activities for the children, a boat berth or access to culture and entertainment. We need to create quality houses in the city centre, but even more important is to create an urban environment that provides conditions for interaction and exchange. A dynamic city where new ideas and new knowledge, new goods and services can be developed and stimulate a growing and diverse region. (Sundsvall kommun, 2007, p. 8)

> Sundsvall is the hub in Norrland's largest labour market region. A strong hub with opportunities for meetings and experiences is required for a region to develop in the long term. With strategic choices, we build on this position! (Sundsvall kommun, 2016, p. 4)

Positioning cities as hubs and/or centers within a national or global context is, as previously mentioned, an established strategy for strengthening a city's identity or brand (see, e.g., Rodríguez-Pose, 2008; Davoudi et al., 2021; Serdar, 2021, p. 20–21). This strategy also mirrors the dual role that Sundsvall inhabits as a peripheral center, as it becomes a way to legitimize Sundsvall as an urban center. This is furthered by emphasizing Sundsvall's geographical location as a quality and locating Sundsvall on a national, as well as an international, level:

> In Sundsvall, the highway along the Swedish coast and E14 to Trondheim and the Atlantic coast intersect. Here, the coast railway and the railway to Östersund and then Norway intersect. Even more strategic, this location will be when Botniabanan and Ådalsbanan [two other railways] are finished. Most of the land-based traffic in Norrland [northern Sweden] passes through Sundsvall; this is an important guarantee for the future of the city. (Sundsvall kommun, 2016, p. 35)

Here, Sundsvall is positioned as the natural hub in northern Sweden, with connections to Europe and "the Atlantic coast and the opportunities that open up beyond it". This way of positioning/locating the city echoes Robert Dickinson's term "city-region", which describes the usage of governance reconfiguration as a response to the need for capitalist production and reproduction (Davoudi et al., 2021, p. 113, 114). This strategy is based on the naturalization of the assumption that the urban (i.e., the city) is a prerequisite for development. In other words, it is only an urban environment that can provide the conditions for new ideas, new knowledge and new goods and services to be developed and, thus, stimulate a growing, attractive and diverse region. This is also brought forward in the first City Vision, from 2006:

> Within contemporary economics, it is noted that strong modern economies are clearly connected with cities and urban life. This is due, among other things, to the fact that the service sector is a base in the economy. A large population and a dense city centre give a wider range of services, stores and experiences, which increases the attractiveness [of the city] and can attract people, capital and skills. These exchange opportunities are not only stimulating for the citizens. They also provide a dynamic which in itself is a breeding ground for development and growth. (Sundsvall kommun, 2007, p. 8)

These extracts from the City Visions, and the First quote on page 7 in this paper, can be seen as examples of how the municipality's focus has transitioned from the city, the municipality itself and its residents, to now prioritizing the development of the region and its potential residents. They also demonstrate how the City Vision has been shaped by Florida (2003) concept of the "creative class". Florida's concept revolves around the notion that modern cities' economic growth and prosperity are propelled by the presence and activities of individuals engaged in creative and knowledge-based professions. Implicit in this concept is the belief that a supportive and inclusive city that offers cultural amenities, diversity and a high quality of life, fosters innovation and entrepreneurship that ultimately will lead to increased economic growth and prosperity–in the case of Sundsvall–not only for the city and municipality but for the entire Sundsvallregion. Introducing the idea of a creative class in Sundsvall's City Vision, can also be seen as an example of how global planning trends travels, transforms and adapts to local planning traditions, legislations and governance (cf. Peck and Theodore, 2010; Stone, 2012). Critical researchers, however, has criticized Florida's theory (e.g., Smith, 1979; Peck, 2005; Zukin, 2010) for focussing on how having an influx of the "creative class" might lead

to gentrification, socioeconomic dipartites and the displacement of certain communities.

The City Vision document from 2007 illuminates how the entrepreneurial shift in Sundsvall includes the development of a model for sustainable development in which the framing of sustainable development is linked to objects such as in-migration, density, attractivity, increased educational levels, entrepreneurship and "growth". This illustrates how sustainable development can become dominated by the principles of market-driven reforms at the expense of social and ecological sustainability. As argued by Skrede (2013, p. 10), this can be understood as economic growth not being merely a discourse but, rather, "an embedded societal structure resulting from a peculiar neoliberal form of government", making it embedded in everyday practices as good and necessary. The consequence of intertwining economic development and social sustainability could, thus, be that the socially sustainable "city for all" will not become a reality, despite diversity and inclusion being core values of social sustainability. I will further engage with this in the following section, through the concepts of safety and inclusion.

Safety and inclusion: from social bonds and a common project to safety as a development strategy

Even though I argue for a shift toward more entrepreneurial planning and developmental practices in the latter documents, population and economic growth are still emphasized as important in the 1988 document. The difference between the City Centre Plan and the City Visions, in this regard, lies, instead, in the changes in the purpose of these developments and whom they are for. As mentioned above, the City Visions displays a more entrepreneurial agenda, by the municipality turning its focus away from the local provision of welfare services, to more outward-oriented policies aiming to attract new residents and tourists. Despite this shift, the municipality still emphasizes that "everybody" has the right to the city and to feel safe and welcome. This is, however, addressed and articulated in different ways.

In the 1988 City Centre Plan, it is addressed as "the social situation", while in the City Visions documents, it is framed within social sustainability. In the 1988 document, "the social situation" is explained as follows:

> The city centre has always been the most important meeting point for people. Here you have been able to stroll and make spontaneous contacts. Here you have fun or participate in activities that do not occur elsewhere. If you value proximity to commerce and culture or to the diversity of different offers, the centre has also been the most natural place to live. However, the depletion of functions and the reduction of housing [in the city centre] over several decades have led to the weakening of social networks and the disappearance of various "thresholds of decency". [. . .] Drug abuse, vandalism, and disruptive behaviours develop easily. (Sundsvall kommun, 1988, p. 5)

Losing "thresholds of decency" has made the city center unsafe and, at times "a less suitable environment, especially after business hours and on weekends", as children and youths dwell in the city center. Safety, together with social issues is, in other words, what the "social situation" is about. The municipality states that extensive efforts to curb the unrest have been made, including creating attractive, yet sensible and healthy leisure activities (e.g., theater drug free dances and outdoor events) for the city's youths. However, some necessary measures lie outside of "what can traditionally be achieved with city planning" (Sundsvall kommun, 1988, p. 6). The social situation must be addressed in a comprehensive manner, as shown below:

> [. . .] more meeting points for all generations and also more housing in the centre. The aim is to get more adults to naturally stay in the city for most hours of the day and in doing so, among other things, set standards for normal everyday behaviuor for young people. (Sundsvall kommun, 1988, p. 12)

Echoing the proverb "it takes a village to raise a child", and by making the city center every municipal resident's concern, the social situation in Sundsvall is made into a common project. To do so, the city center should be adapted in accordance with people's everyday lives and adjusted to fit the needs of its residents. In the City Centre Plan is it problematized how Sundsvall's historical role as a "service location for the entire industrial district, and the poor economic development of recent decades has quite unilaterally refined the city's role as a commercial magnet" (Sundsvall kommun, 1988, p. 12). Therefore, the city center needs to be made a common space in which people can meet, live, and get to know one another. Parks and greeneries should be "developed as housing complements that can be used by people of all ages" (Sundsvall kommun, 1988, p. 13), and through active social politics, such as building affordable housing and community halls that can host study circles, board games and/or association-run youth houses [*ungdomens hus*] the social bonds and networks considered to have been lost can be reestablished. This would improve the social situation in Sundsvall and make the city feel safer.

In the 2007 and 2016 City Vision, safety remains a priority for the municipality. However, the social politics and emphasis on social bonds and networks present in the 1988 document have been reframed in the City Vision documents. In these, safety is one of the 14 group indicators of sustainable development[3] and "concerns barriers in the physical environment, improved lighting and adapting public places to elderly and disabled bodies" (i.e., inclusion) (Sundsvall kommun, 2007, p. 11; Sundsvall kommun, 2016, p. 39). In this way, similar to the 1988 document, safety is connected with making the city center pleasant and a place that people want to spend time. But while safety was seen as a symptom of weakened thresholds of decency and social bonds (i.e., a social problem), it is not clear what is causing feelings of unsafety

3 These are: opportunities for future development, proximity and accessibility, health, construction and social economy, safety, risk and safety, greenery, local cycle solutions, densification, influence and participation, attractiveness, versatility, child friendliness, and traffic and communications (see Sundsvall kommun, 2016, p. 39 for more details and definitions).

in Sundsvall's city center in 2007 and 2016 except for a lack of movement and as caused by the design of the physical environment:

> Throughout the blocks, we mix activities that make the city alive around the clock, which also makes the city safe and accessible. A fine-mesh street network provides more places for meetings. (Sundsvall kommun, 2016, p. 5)

> The presence of life and movement invoke feelings of safety and therefore we strive for a living urban environment around the clock. The design of the physical environment must have a safety aspect where barriers, nooks and narrow passages must be removed, as far as possible. (Sundsvall kommun, 2016, p. 13)

The safety measures suggested in these paragraphs, and throughout the document, draws on traditional crime-prevention measures and broken windows theory.[4] By having clean and orderly public space, filled with "exciting meeting places or green oases with space for art, play, performances and social life" (Sundsvall kommun, 2016, p. 20), the city center is to be more "alive" and, therefore, safe. However, the relationship between safety and a living urban environment is not straight forward. It is more akin to a mutually dependent relationship rather than a linear one, reminiscent of the chicken and egg situation; they serve as prerequisites for each other. In other words, movement invokes feelings of safety, at the same time, safety is a necessity for movement and a living urban environment.

In the City Centre Plan, it is problematised how the city center is mainly a "commercial magnet" rather than a "common space" for the Sundsvall residents. In the City Vision, commercial values are put at the forefront of the development of Sundsvall city center as a regional center, and growth engine:

> Strips are what give the city substance and life. Central strips are perhaps the strongest individual driving forces for the region's economic development. With the strips as a starting point in the planning of the city, we are one step ahead in development. Strips in a city are interconnected streets and squares where people move both with and without purpose. [...] A good strip attracts people and where people like to stay for no particular reason. It is full of life, there is always a lot going on, with many people moving around. The strips therefore become a basis for development. (Sundsvall kommun, 2007, p. 12)

Through strips, different areas of the city will be tied together, create meetings and movement and paint a picture of a vibrant and attractive city. In developing and designing these strips, however, it is important to include a safety perspective, as shown in the case of a strip along the stream that runs through the city center:

> "Safety lightning" is installed, i.e. environmental lighting on open grass surfaces and tree tops gives a better effect than an illuminated walkway in dark surroundings. Different forms of light can also be placed on the long brick façade [of a 350-meter-long building along the stream]. A new bridge [for pedestrians] (or two) over the river is proposed. It has several purposes. It includes the water and the opposite shore, makes the park easily accessible from Storgatan, and creates alternative routes, which is a safety factor. (Sundsvall kommun, 2007, p. 25)

In this way, safety is not just a feeling or a (social) situation/issue that needs political reforms and political action. Instead, is turned into a tool and strategy for economic growth and development. This is further done by framing safety within social sustainability (as a group indicator), hence being a means for the overall (sustainable) development of Sundsvall's city center and, by extension, the region.

Social sustainability is traditionally about social equity and inclusion and emphasizes a high quality of life for all residents, and safety, in this context, is usually about peoples' right to lead secure and protected lives, free from harm, threats or significant risks to their wellbeing. One could argue that one way to work with safety in a socially sustainable way is through (situational) crime-prevention measures, by doing so, however, the ambition of adapting and opening up public places to "everybody"–as indicated in the definition of safety as a group indicator–seems to be lost along the way. Hence, by decoupling safety from values of inclusion and equity, safety seems to become yet another measure for "growth" and development.

Conclusion: entrepreneurial sustainability

This article has explored how a presumed shift in urban planning and development has been implemented in Sundsvall and whether sustainability–as in sustainable urban development–can be argued to represent a second shift in urban planning and development or an alternative form of neoliberal governance. The analysis revealed a few striking differences between the City Centre Plan from 1989 and the two City Visions from 2007 to 2016 regarding their designs, tones and intended audiences, as well as a few common traits. For example, all documents emphasize the importance of creating more housing within the city center and increasing the presence of people and activities. Nevertheless, despite these commonalities, there have been changes in the purpose of these developments and whom they are for. This is reminiscent of changes that previous research has highlighted and attributed to the entrepreneurial shifts in urban planning/development (e.g., Loit, 2014; Franzén et al., 2016). Therefore, it is important to stress that this phenomenon is not unique to Sundsvall; it has been addressed by many critical researchers before me (see, e.g., Smith, 1996; Mitchell, 2003; Kern, 2005, 2010; Thörn, 2011; Brandén and Rönnblom, 2019). However, this research shows this shift has been implemented in a city such as Sundsvall (a peripheral

4 Broken windows theory states that visible signs of crime, disorder and anti-social behavior create an environment that encourages further crime and disorder, while an ordered and clean environment, communicates that the area is monitored and that criminal behavior is not tolerated.

center), as well as how this city's role as a regional center is negotiated. This is especially notable in the 2007 and 2016 City Vision, where Sundsvall's role in the region is emphasized and heavily argued for. This may be specific to smaller- and middle-sized cities outside urban regions with strong urban centers (e.g., in the Swedish context: Gothenburg, Stockholm and Malmö), meaning that this role, on Sundsvall's part, must be justified.

While the 1988 City Centre Plan was significantly influenced by social democratic welfare politics, with prioritizing social bonds and the Sundsvall resident being the focus, the latter City Visions shows signs of the kind of outward-oriented policies that Hall and Hubbard (1998) argues is characteristic for municipalities taking on an entrepreneurial agenda. This is, however, not articulated within a framework of urban entrepreneurism. Instead, the development of Sundsvall is articulated within a model for sustainable development. This model is, in turn, formulated within what Peck (2014, p. 740, 741) calls the neoliberal frame of interurban competition, middle-class consumption and place-marketing. In the documents I have analyzed, sustainability is put forward as a mobilizing metaphor. It serves to conceal the potential paradoxes of the priorities within the developmental strategy, or conflicts involving the contradictions between economic, environmental and social values. Through the connection to sustainable urban development, the new developmental strategies become linked to monotopic ideas, that is, ideas indicating that there is no other way for Sundsvall to become an attractive city that offers people an exciting, sustainable and humane framework in which to live their lives (cf. Skrede, 2013).

As a second aim of this article, I posed the question if sustainable urban development can be argued to be a second shift (the first being from social engineering to urban entrepreneurism) in urban planning and development, or if it represents an alternative form of neoliberal governance. My answer to this is that, in the case of Sundsvall, sustainability, as a concept, has acquired a new function: to disguise the less palatable consequences of growth by evoking sustainability as a guarantee of the strategy's quality. In this way, sustainability is put to work as what I call "entrepreneurial sustainability".

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Author contributions

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