

**Social and political aspects of urban ecology:
possibilities and constraints for civic actors to
influence urban green area planning at Årstafältet,
Stockholm**

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Abstract

Answers to fundamental questions about pattern and process in the ecological and human world often comes from within the boundaries of one discipline or another, neglecting the relationships between the ecological and social systems. One manifestation of these relationships, which also forms the focus of this study, is conflicts over how to use urban green areas. Various scholars imply that civil society organisations and individual citizens can play an important role in articulating the ecological and social values that exist in much disputed green areas, and can therefore create a “protective story” to prevent exploitation. Following these implications and using a social network or social capital perspective, this study investigates a current conflict concerning Årstafältet, or the Årsta field, in Stockholm, which is suggested for exploitation, and focuses on the civic actors’ ability to participate in influencing the future of this green area. Although the conflict is still ongoing, the actors in the case study have at the present stage not been successful in protecting their green area. The results from interviews and participatory observations show the importance of accessing useful artefacts to incorporate into a protective story, and being able to present the artefacts in appropriate social arenas something that has been a limitation for the actors of Årstafältet. The actor groups’ ability to balance bridging and bonding social capital is also a factor that can have affected their success. The study further reveals a lack of democracy in the decision making process and suggest that public actors impede the participation of civic actors in contributing in the planning of urban green areas rather than facilitate their participation. In addition to highlighting some of the social and political factors that affect the emergence of green spatial structures in urban landscapes this study also establishes that the ecological perspective has been neglected in the case of Årstafältet. Following the results of the study a contemporary approach of studying urban ecology which includes attention on the mixture of social, political and ecological perspectives is encouraged for future research.

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Abbreviations

Acronym	Swedish name	English translation
NIMBY		Not In My Backyard
NUP	Nationalstadsparken	the National Urban Park
NÅ	Nätverket Årstafältet	the Network Årstafältet
PBL	Plan- och Bygglagen	Swedish law on planning and building
RTK	Regionsplane- och trafikkontoret	Office of Regional Planning and Urban Transportation
SBK	Stadsbyggnadskontoret	the City Planning Administration
SNF	Naturskyddsföreningen	the Swedish Association of Nature Protection
SvD	Svenska Dagbladet	one of Sweden's major daily newspapers
USK	Stockholm Stads Utrednings- och statistikkontor	Stockholm Office of Research and Statistics

1. Introduction

1.1. *Urbanisation and urban ecology: the mixing of social and ecological processes*

According to the UN, more than half of the world's population will live in urban areas by the end of 2010. In 1950 around 30% lived in urban areas, only 100 years later the relation between urban and rural populations is believed to have switched to the opposite, 70% of the world's population is expected to live in urban areas in 2050 (UN, 2008). This rapid urbanisation changes social, economic, environmental and demographic patterns (Azócar et al., 2007; Camagni et al., 2002; El Araby, 2002; Güneralp & Seto, 2008; Orenstein & Hamburg, 2009). Many researchers have pursued answers to fundamental questions about pattern and process in the ecological and human world from within the boundaries of one discipline or another, neglecting the relationships between the ecological and social systems. For social scientists the environment is the social conditions created by humans and for ecologists human participation in an ecosystem is often viewed as a disturbance (Redman, 1999). Through engaging in a contested urban green area in Stockholm, this study aims to increase understanding on how the social processes in focus of the study are influencing ecological processes locally and at the city-scale. This effort will contribute to the interdisciplinary discussion concerning the nature of urban social-ecological processes and how they relate to the generation of ecosystem services in urban landscapes (Pickett et al., 2001 and 2008, Andersson et al., 2007; Barthel, 2008; Ernstson, 2008).

From an ecological perspective, urban development affects patch structure by altering the size, shape, interconnectivity and composition of green areas (Alberti, 2005). Fragmentation is one of the better known impacts of human activities on green areas, and one of the main threats to the conservation of biodiversity (Krebs, 2001). The many components of fragmentation have varying effects on population dynamics, with consequences such as direct loss of habitat or reduced habitat quality (Kline et al., 2001; Levenson, 1981). To avoid these negative consequences, Alberti (2005) highlights the meaning of connectivity between urban green areas as preventing species extinction in enabling recolonisation of species from neighbouring patches (see also Krebs, 2001). This way of viewing green areas makes it possible to identify areas of importance for restoration, i.e. areas that could, if restored, link areas that have previously been cut off from each other (Bodin et al., 2006).

A key for biodiversity conservation in Stockholm are the so called "green wedges" that follow the urban fringe. The green wedges are remnants of former connected biotopes from previous land-use practices, partly fragmented by urban expansion (Colding, 2006). The importance of the green wedges comes from the fact that they connect the green areas in the city centre with larger green areas with rich biodiversity outside the urban core. This enables even small green patches in the central urban built up environment to thrive without being dependent on management. They can uphold an abundant biodiversity due to the dispersal of animal- and plant species throughout the city. If the connections between the green wedges are not interrupted and broken, the urban ecosystems will continue to generate ecosystem services (Bolund & Hunhammar, 1999) that will increase the quality of life for the urban citizens (MA, 2005).

Ecosystem services have been defined as "the conditions and processes through which natural ecosystems, and the species that make them up, sustain and fulfil human life" by Daily (1997, page 3) and in a study by Costanza et al. (1997) 17 many major categories of these services were identified. Bolund and Hunhammar (1999) consider six of these to be of significant importance in urban areas, especially in Stockholm. These are air filtering, micro climate regulation, noise reduction (disturbance regulation), rainwater drainage (water regulation), sewage treatment (waste treatment) and recreational/cultural values.

Social and ecological processes are deeply intertwined, especially in urban areas, and studies are needed that explore their many connections. One manifestation of this interconnectedness, which also forms the focus of this study, is conflicts over how to use urban green areas. In conflicts over urban green areas, the way which social and political processes come to determine the future of green areas can be studied. Such studies could have very little to do with the scientific field of ecology – the study

of the interactions between species and matter – but since these social and political processes nevertheless influence the spatial patterns of green areas, they come to influence at local and greater scales the ecology of the city and its capacity to generate ecosystem services. Such conflicts are taking place in different cities and at different levels (Carpenter et al, 2004; Dunlap & McCright, 2008; Hoyos, 2009; Zérah, 2007) and this study is a response to the call to engage in the study of social and political processes within urban ecology for a broader understanding (Ernstson, 2008; Ernstson & Sörlin, 2009; Redman et al., 2004).

This study focuses on a current conflict concerning Årstafältet, or the Årsta field, which lies in the southern parts of Stockholm (Fig. 1). This is one of the few larger green fields lying close to the city centre that is now being affected by the city's expansion. To account for the social processes that interact and shape urban ecological processes this study uses a qualitative case study relating to Årstafältet. Local groups are busy mobilizing to fulfil a once-promised public investment to create a “landscape park” at the field, but whose realization seems to have gone astray. In spite that Stockholm local council, based on a local participatory democratic process with residents in the area around Årstafältet, decided in 2000 to invest and create the landscape park, authorities have later changed their plans. The first change came in May 2007 when the City Planning Committee decided to investigate the possibilities of creating a new residential area by Årstafältet¹ (SBK, 2007). In the Regional Development Plan for Stockholm (called “RUF 2010”) – an ongoing planning process aimed to guide and steer urban development from 2010 – the area of Årstafältet is now being defined as a “city development area” (RTK, 2008). This is in contrast to how it is currently defined as a green area in the last regional plan of 1999 (SBK, 2007). Following these decisions, authorities in 2008 announced and arranged a highly prestigious international architect competition to develop what they framed as “The New Årsta Field” (Sw. “Nya Årstafältet”). Through the classic dramatic plot of launching the competition, putting together a committee of experts, through to announcing the winning architect bureau in February 2009 (SBK, 2009), the competition has rendered considerable media coverage in Stockholm's leading newspapers. The once promised “landscape park” has turned into highly popularized plans for a “city park” with some 4000-8000 added new residents in the area. The citizens and civic organizations that will be followed most closely in this study express a deep feeling of having been cheated on their landscape park, although there are also, as we will learn, local citizens that are not completely against the new housing plans.

A crucial focus for the study is to explore and bring understanding on the ability or disability for local groups to influence land-use decisions and form part of governance processes. This is taken as a point of departure for discussing urban ecological processes and their inherent social and political character (Ernstson 2008), and furthermore what possibilities and limitations there are of collaborative natural resource management processes in contested urban environments.

1.2. Theoretical framework: value articulation, social movements and social networks

The rapid pace by which the world's population is moving into cities drives increasing demands for residential buildings and other urban built up land. A structural conflict arises between interest groups viewing green areas as unexploited space appropriate for physical infrastructure, and groups considering green areas of value in their existing form. This adds a political dimension to green areas that engages different groups to take a stand in emergent conflicts and studies show that these conflicting groups are often brought together through the labour of civic actors who mobilize the side of the conflict that they support (Ernstson & Sörlin, 2009; Ivey et al., 2004; Lazdinis et al., 2007). In order to analyze space-specific struggles over green space this study draws on social movement literature, which helps to articulate the role that civil society plays in changing the spatial patterns of urban green areas, which in turn influence ecological processes and the generation of ecosystem services.

The involvement of civil society in protecting nature is on the rise. Ernstson and Sörlin (2009) imply that civil society organisations and individual citizens can play an important role in articulating the

¹ N.B. The decision was to investigate construction by Årstafältet, as in *close to* the field, not construction *on* Årstafältet, as this decision was later used to promote.

ecological and social values that exist in much disputed green areas. Based on their study of the National Urban Park (NUP) in Stockholm they argue that in order to activate support from groups in civil society, but also within authorities, individuals and groups in civil society need to articulate what is of value in the particular green area in question, or, as Ernstson and Sörlin put it, to engage in “weaving a protective story” around the green area. The authors suggest three constraining and facilitating factors for popular participation in protecting green areas: the number and capabilities of activists, the access to social arenas on which values can be articulated and spread, and the number and type of artefacts associated to the particular green area. The latter could for instance mean scientific records of biodiversity in the area, or records of cultural-historical importance. Inspired by Latour (2005) they view value creating processes as a political programme that can gain power as activists “pick up” artefacts produced by other actors (often artists, scientists, consultants and similar) and translate them to fit the programme. As such, useful artefacts, for instance a study by a university biologist showing the presence of red-listed species in the area, become “weights” that activists can “hang” in the political programme to make it “heavier” and more difficult to stop. Of course, those actors interested in building in the green area use a similar practice, but work to articulate different and opposing values. A fourth factor mentioned by Ernstson and Sörlin (2009), but less in focus in this study, is the social network position of mobilizing activists, where core activists that sits at the centre of informal social networks tend to regulate which values are to resonate more strongly in the protective story (and which values are to be left out). In their study they describe how these four factors come together, how core organisations worked intensely to articulate what they considered as of value in the park by using both their contacts to politicians, civil servants and experts, as well as finding and using artefacts that could aid in articulating values, from conservation biology artefacts (e.g. maps over species dispersal corridors produced by scientists and municipal ecologists) to cultural historical artefacts (e.g. maps of planned English parks from the 18th century), and how they managed to bring these artefacts into social arenas such as newspapers, lecture rooms, scientific meetings, public exhibitions, or in public debate forum to direct a large audience. The processes made possible by these factors enabled activists to translate the values they felt this particular green area had so that decision-makers and the greater public could understand them, which (if successful), results in expanding the network of supporters, and most desirably, protecting the green area in question.

The literature on social movements and social network theory debates the theoretical importance of social capital, or the ties that movement activists establish inside and outside their social movement organizations (Shemtov, 2003). Social networks are here viewed as mutual relations of trust between individuals and/or organizations, which are often manifested through collaboration in specific projects or events, or in exchanging information on a regular basis (cf. Diani 2003). Not all social networks are created equal; a “balance” between what has been referred to as bridging and bonding links can increase the capacity for actors tied to each other through informal relations to generate creative innovations to enhance their capacity of collective action in face of different and novel situations and challenges (Newman & Dale, 2005). Bonding ties can be relations between family members, friends and neighbours in closed, tightly connected networks (Granovetter, 1973). The relationships and trust formed by bonding social capital may not lead to action in addressing a collective problem. In fact, a network’s ability of bonding social capital can occur to such a great extent that it is no longer beneficial for the network. As this form of social capital increases, stronger homogeneous groups form and the likelihood of connecting to other groups through bridging social capital is reduced. The strengthening of close ties can lead to a variety of negative effects such as exclusion of outsiders, restrictions on individual freedoms and excess claims on group members (Portes, 1998). The same strong ties that bring benefits to members of a group commonly also hinder others from accessing it and the desire to keep a good atmosphere in the group end up limiting the connections to other groups (Beaudoin, 2009).

Bonding social capital is however a necessary precursor for the development of bridging social capital (Ferguson & Dickens 1999; Warren et al., 2001). Bridging social capital is defined as the efforts of members of a group or a network to extend contact beyond the members of that group and connect to members of other groups, which gives access to resources and opportunities that exist in other networks (Granovetter, 1973). One product of bridging social capital is collective action on a greater scale since it makes possible coordination across closed groups, and the relationship between social connections and collective civic action has been investigated by various scholars (McAdam, 2003;

Larsen et al., 2004). Some have suggested that a neighbourhood's ability to act collectively to address common problems can be viewed as an aggregated indicator of its well-being (Ferguson & Dickens, 1999). This means that a more effective bridging of social capital leads to better ability to collectively face a greater range of novel situations, which could help to sustain a greater well-being in the neighbourhood.

1.3 Aim of the study

This paper investigates the protective stories that have formed around Årstafältet and analyses the actors from civil society that have been active in developing these stories. Furthermore, the paper investigates the existence of, or the lack of, social networks between these actors. Additionally, a social network or social capital perspective will be added to further interpret the findings. By building on secondary data I will also be able to discuss potential ecological effects in this specific case and through that link how the social processes in focus of the study are influenced by and are influencing ecological processes locally and on the city-scale. Through the case study I will be able to add understanding to the interdisciplinary discussion concerning the nature of urban social-ecological processes and how they relate to the generation of ecosystem services in urban landscapes. The study includes the following research questions:

- How are the ecological values of Årstafältet framed by authorities and experts? Which are the ecosystem services that Årstafältet provide for the residents of Stockholm?
- What values do civic actors frame in Årstafältet and what arguments do they use in their struggle to avoid housing development while realizing the landscape park of Årstafältet?
- Which social practices have civic actors used in their work to bring forth what local groups value on Årstafältet? How have certain actors linked actors, artefacts and social arenas to articulate protective stories?
- What types of social networks, i.e. mutual relations of trust between individuals and organizations, have been important for the civic actors?

This report goes through the background of the study area and the conflict in question with a quick look at the different legally binding local plans that the area has been subject to in the last decade. The research questions are answered followed by a discussion of what this case can inform us of concerning urban ecology and the processes that modifies and shapes larger scale urban green patterns. To increase the understanding of the processes analyzed in depth at Årstafältet, which to certain extent demonstrates the inability of civic actors to influence decision-making processes, the discussion section provides a comparison with a similar case in central Stockholm where civic actors have instead been successful in protecting a green area from new construction plans.

2. Method

2.1 Procedure

I conducted a pre-study, in the form of a telephone interview with a well informed resident of Årsta, to get an overview of the situation and to start the selection of interviewees for further interviews. The selection was carried out through a snow-ball method in which each interviewee names other persons that could be valuable to interview (Bryman, 2002). The requirement was that the interviewees needed to be people on grassroots level who are engaged actively to preserve Årstafältet as the green area that it is today and/or to develop the landscape park. I performed three semi-structured interviews with civic actors of the Årstafältet, where the respondents were allowed to speak relatively free around a number of themes that I decided in the form of an interview sheet (Bryman, 2002, p. 308-310). Two interviews were performed face to face, these were recorded, transcribed and analysed from a qualitative perspective, the third interview was carried out over the phone, notes were taken and

analysed. I also attended a number of meetings organised by different local groups in the area, where I took notes that were later analysed. I performed a complementing phone-interview with a person whose relevance for the study came to my attention at a later stage. A complementing face to face interview was performed with an individual who has been active in protecting another contested green area in Stockholm, Kampementsbacken, from construction plans. The results of this interview are used in the discussion section of this report, in an attempt to shed some light over the situation at Årstafältet by comparing it to a similar case, where the actors have succeeded in their struggle.

As a result of the high coverage in the press during the performance of this study, I have been following the debate of both Årstafältet and Kampementsbacken in the media; both in the daily newspapers, on the local news channels and on the radio, and these records have also guided my analysis.

The time limitation did not allow me to generate ecological data myself, but since I felt the great importance to include the ecological dimension I have gathered secondary data that have been used in my analysis. Ecologists that have performed studies of Årstafältet and its ecological connectivity to other areas have allowed me access to their reports. Through a literature study of the ecosystems that are considered to be of significant importance in urban areas, especially in Stockholm, I describe the possibilities of these ecosystem services being generated on Årstafältet. This data has been used both as a source of information when writing the report but also when formulating questions for the sociological study. If I had focused this study solely on a sociological analysis my interpretation would not represent the whole picture. Since the social processes I am studying determine the future of a green area it is important to add an ecological dimension to understand just how the outcome of the social processes might affect the shape and habitats of the area in question and consequently the ecology. I have done what was possible to get a broader picture by including secondary ecological data. One can argue that in order to have a balanced report of the interactions between the ecological and social dimensions it would have been preferable to have paid equal attention of the empirical part of the study to each subject, but due to time limitations I have only had time to assess the validity of the ecological data through regular visits on the field.

2.2 Case study area

Årsta is a borough situated in the southern outskirts of central Stockholm. The name Årsta originates from the Årsta Estate (Sw. Årsta Gård), where “Lady Årsta” (Sw. Årstafrun), Märta Helena Reenstierna, lived during the 18th century and kept a detailed diary of her everyday life. The diary has been well kept and is still available to the public. It has increased the understanding of 18th century life in Stockholm, and it helped making Årsta better known as a suburb of Stockholm (Rönn, 1998). In the end of the 1940’s the development of Årsta started in an outspoken attempt to break the pattern of “commuter towns” in the suburbs of Stockholm. With inspiration from mainly British urban planning, Årsta was built around a community centre, which contained comprehensive commercial and societal services in order to promote a community-based lifestyle among the inhabitants (Stahre, 1999). These ideas in urban planning were groundbreaking at the time, which renders Årsta an important place in Swedish history of urban planning. In the sixties, as part of the Million Housing Program (Sw. Miljonprogrammet), a national project to build one million apartments in Sweden as a response to the urgent housing shortage (Arnstberg, 2000), the housing constructions in Årsta spread even further south to establish the borough Östberga. In between Årsta and Östberga, we find Årstafältet (Fig. 1), the largest field in the southern suburban part of Stockholm Municipality (SBK, 2000). The field covers about 50 ha and it is located around 5 km from the city centre of Stockholm (SBK, 2008b). Except for being surrounded with these different examples of urban planning, the field bears witness of Stockholm’s historical agricultural landscape and remnants of the medieval country road, Göta Landsväg, that stretches across the field, which once was the most important road connecting Stockholm with the rest of southern Sweden (Stahre, 1999).

Although representing one of the largest green areas in southern Stockholm, a general opinion has grown that Årstafältet has been difficult to reach due to the busy traffic routes that were surrounding the field (SBK, 2000). This has resulted in what ethnographer Stahre (1999) describes as a desolate

and dishevelled landscape, and the word “windswept” has been commonly reoccurring in descriptions of the field, both by academic scholars (Stahre, 1999), and more recently and frequently in the daily press (Andersson, 2008; Berglund, 2006; Lagerwall, 2008; Nordin & Alvendal, 2009). Despite the fact that the busiest traffic route Årstälänken was abandoned in 2004 (through the building of Södra Länken and a tunnel under Årsta), Årstafältet is still mentioned as being situated in between traffic routes (Nordin & Alvendal, 2009).



Fig. 1. Stockholm City centre, with Årstafältet pointed out.

In 2001, a legally binding detailed building plan referred to in technical language of urban planning as a local plan (Sw. detaljplan), was accepted by the City Council in order to push forward and develop an ecological and cultural historical landscape park on the field (Table 1). One central idea of the landscape park, which was clearly expressed in the plans of the park, was to function as a link between surrounding neighbourhoods and repair what was thought to be a malfunctioning urban environment. As articulated in the plan, the park was designed to make room for different outdoor activities but it would also offer space for tranquillity and serenity and become a preferred public gathering point for children, parents, youth and elderly living in the southern parts of Stockholm. New features on the field would include allotment gardens, facilities for biological purification of surface run-off water, an urban farm to be used by for instance by nearby schools, and an amphitheatre for public events (SBK, 2000). These ideas date back to the 1970s when Årsta and Östberga Concerned Citizens Committees (Sw. byalag) were protesting the planning of a motorway called Södra Länken (Table 1) on Årstafältet (Stahre, 1999). In 1975 the City Planning Administration presented four suggestions of how Årstafältet may be developed. These suggestions contained mainly industrial land, something Årsta and Östberga Concerned Citizens Committees did not accept. There are similarities with the alternative proposal that the Concerned Citizens Committees presented in 1975 and the local plan of 2001.

The legally binding local plan of the landscape park was decided at the City Council in 2001 and all political parties supported the plan. According to the Swedish law on planning and building (Sw. Plan- och Bygglagen, PBL), it is difficult to annul an accepted local plan before the end of the specified

execution period for the development project, a period of between five and fifteen years. The only exception is if novel circumstances considered to be of utmost importance have arisen and that these circumstances could not have been predicted during the planning process (PBL, 1987). The execution period for Årstafältet landscape park is 15 years (SBK, 2000), which according to the law ought to mean that Årstafältet should proceed to be developed as a landscape park until 2016.

In spite of the valid local plan aiming towards realizing the landscape park from 2001, Stockholm City, in the spring of 2008 and through the City Planning Administration (Sw. Stadsbyggnadskontoret, [SBK]) and the City Development Administration (Sw. Exploateringskontoret) invited international architects to participate in the competition to create what was framed as ‘The New Årstafältet’ (Sw. Nya Årstafältet [Table 1]) (SBK, 2008a). The aim of the architect competition was to present a suggestion for a sustainable and densely built urban neighbourhood with clear connections to surrounding residential and industrial areas (SBK, 2009). The winning architects would be commissioned, together with the City Development and City Planning Administrations, to investigate and develop the scheme further towards a continued exploitation of Årstafältet (SBK, 2008b). The competition was settled in February 2009 and the jury’s assessment of the winning entry, Arkipelag (Fig. 2), includes the following statements (SBK, 2009, page 11-12):

‘Arkipelag builds on a convincing and pragmatic analysis of the nature of the site and forms a concrete urban development scheme of high architectural class and with original features inspiring further planning work. [...] Arkipelag develops a block pattern in a sophisticated manner so as to build up great variety and potential in various axes and piazzas. The salient feature of this scheme is a new urban front north of Årstafältet which, through density of development, communicates the transition between Årsta and a relatively large recreational park. [...] The park is more sketchily presented, with a fairly unstructured and regular distribution of activities over the site. The park and its functions will need to be analysed and designed more distinctly as work proceeds.’

Despite that the city planners give the impression that they take into consideration the natural environment of the area and ordered the competitors to include a park of 35-50% of Årstafältet’s current size (SKB, 2008a), many local citizens oppose all physical planning development of the area, including the architect competition. These citizens instead feel they have the right to demand that the current local plan, which was reached through a transparent democratic process, should be pursued so as to develop the promised landscape park, instead of realizing the plan of “the New Årsta field” which was reached through a less transparent mobilization by certain public actors.



Fig. 2. Picture from the winning entry, Arkipelag, in the architect competition Nya Årstafältet

Table 1. Short explanation of building plans mentioned in this report, see figure 3 for their location.

BUILDING PLAN	COMMENTS	STATUS
Södra länken	A six kilometre long motorway of which nearly five kilometres are below ground. The tunnels stretch under Årsta and enable the then heavy traffic of Årstälänken to pass under ground. Årstälänken was shut down after the inauguration of Södra Länken.	The planning began in 1967, the construction began in 1997 and the completed motorway was inaugurated in 2004.
Landscape park Dp 93045	The local plan includes both Årstafältet and the abandoned Årstälänken and states that the area will be developed into a landscape park.	The local plan was accepted 2001-04-26. Until 2004 around half of the landscape park had been realised but the development has stopped and the local plan is now at risk of becoming annulled.
Årstastråket Dnr 2002-08519-53	Plan to add new residential houses, 2000 apartments, stretching from Globen to Årstafältet.	The City Planning committee decided in to initiate the planning process in 2002-11-28. The construction work was however interrupted due to unpredicted problems with the condition of the ground.
Årstälänken Dp 2004-20997-54	Local plan to build residential houses on the abandoned highway Årstälänken, even though the highway is included in the local plan for the landscape park.	The City Planning committee decided to initiate the planning process in 2005-04-07. The realisation of the local plan for Årstälänken was calculated to go on during 2007-2011, but no work has yet been done.
The New Årstafältet Dnr 2007-08046-53	Suggestion of a new residential area to be built on Årstafältet and Årstälänken, both areas included in the valid local plan for the landscape park.	No legal decisions have been made. An international architect competition was settled in February 2009. The program consultation is expected to take place in the autumn of 2009 and the plan consultation is expected for the summer of 2010.

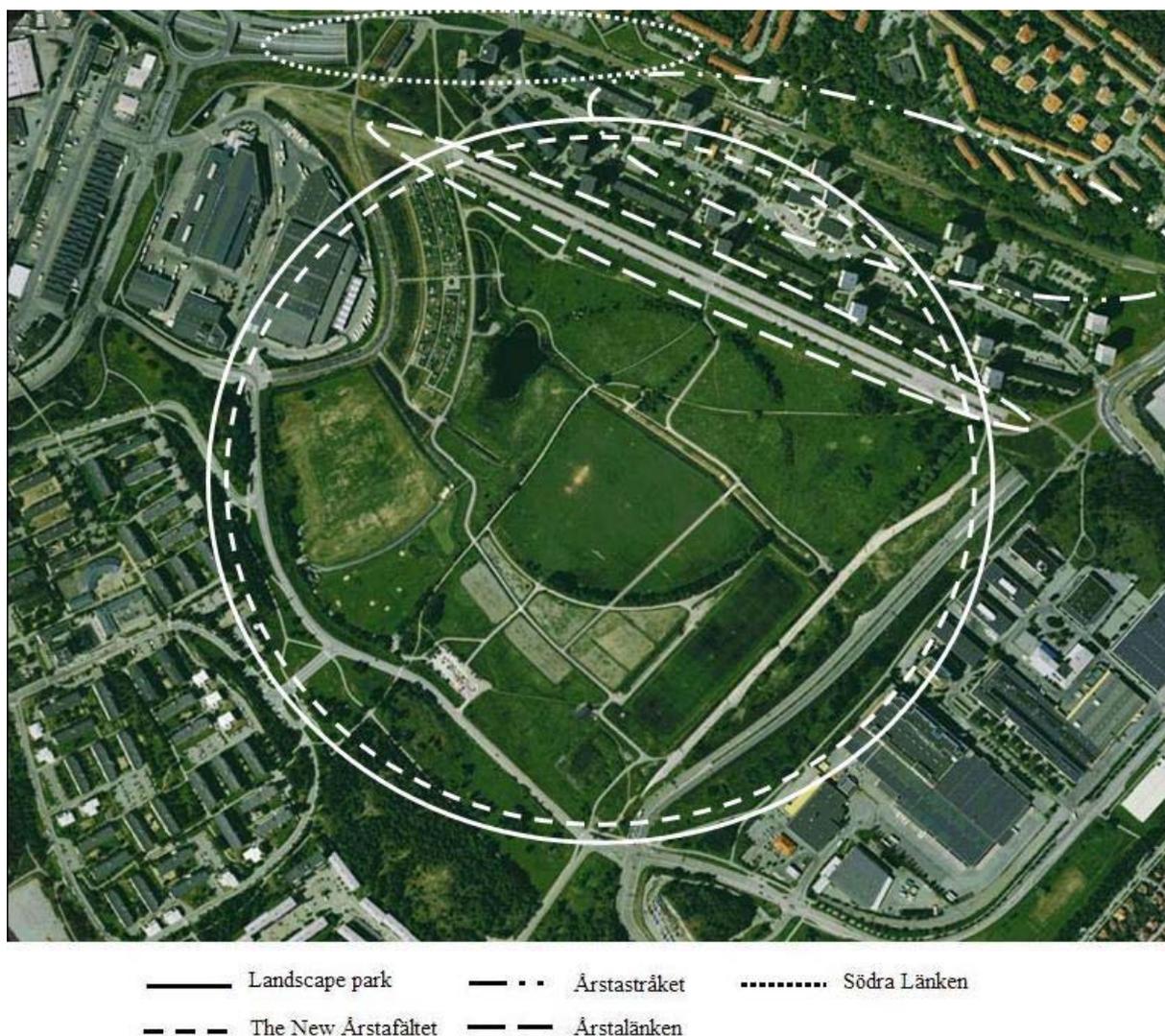


Fig. 3. Approximate depiction of the areas that each local plan involve

2.3 Limitations

During the time of this study Årstafältet became a hot political topic in Stockholm, through intense news coverage of the emergent conflict and through the coverage of the architect competition, and it will most probably continue to be so until any firm decisions concerning the future of the field have been made. Unfortunately this study is performed under a strict time-limit, which forces me to terminate the generation of data while the conflict is still intense. This affects the outcome of my results and discussion in the way that it might seem lacking the most up to date facts about the progress in the conflict. It will however be complete in the coverage of the history of the conflict and the events that have taken place up until the summer of 2009. However, doing the study at a time when the conflict accelerated gave me a unique opportunity to observe heightened activities among civic and public actors and to follow when new linkages among actors were made. In that sense the acceleration of the conflict also accelerated the generation of data and probably has given me a deeper insight to some of the dynamics of the way by which urban ecology becomes entangled and intermixed with social and political processes.

3. Results

3.1 Reconstruction of the history of conflicts around Årstafältet

The struggle to keep Årstafältet green started long before the architect competition was announced. According to my interviewees (interviews 2&3) the struggle to develop Årstafältet into a landscape park has been going on for as long as 10 years. Already when the plans for allotment gardens began in 1999 the citizens felt they had to fight to express their need of the park, including the allotment gardens (interview 4). Even after the decision was made to build the allotment gardens and to put in motion the project of creating the landscape park in 2000, there has been a persistent fear of what future might await the allotment gardens. The understanding of my interviewees was that local citizens did not trust the politicians since they did not see the landscape park plans being carried out. From the time that the planning of the allotment gardens started and for another five years to follow, the citizens that were most active in relation to realize the landscape park were the members of the allotment association (interview 3). My interviewees point out that during this time the rest of the people in Årsta and Östberga did not show great interest in the field.

It was not until 2004 that the greater public discovered the risk of losing Årstafältet as a green area. This was the year when the busy traffic route Årstälänken was abolished and the heavy traffic that had surrounded Årstafältet was redirected into a newly built tunnel (fig. 3). With much less disturbance from the traffic, the idea that the landscape park would finally come about grew among local citizens. However, already on the day of the inauguration of the tunnel, the citizens could hear about plans of building houses on Årstälänken, which is an area included in the local plan for the landscape park (interview 2). One can speculate that the City calculated that by investing in a tunnel – and getting rid of noise and pollution – it would be possible to build more residential houses in the area, which could partly make up for the costs of the tunnel. The proposal to build on Årstälänken was met by resistance from many of the residents in the area, and one of the big reasons was that they did not want any buildings to cover their view across the field (interview 2). However, through the sometimes longsome process of the Swedish participatory planning process with obligatory public program consultations (Sw. programsamråd) and planning consultations (Sw. plansamråd), the number of people who protested the construction plans decreased and according to my interviewees (interview 1&2), in the end there were only two.

These two individuals have been residents in Årsta for 10 respectively 40 years but had no previous knowledge of each other. They came in contact after one of the persons contacted the other over the phone, they started meeting to discuss the situation and are now two of the leading figures in the currently largest local resistance association called Nätverket Årstafältet (Eng. The Årstafältet Network). However, it would take another few years until Nätverket Årstafältet took on its present configuration. Another important individual moved to the area in 2006 and through her interest in old cultural landscapes, she became enchanted by Årstafältet which she then believed was going to be developed as a landscape park. After receiving the information that there was a plan to exploit Årstafältet she wrote a letter to the editor of a local newspaper that one of the previously described individuals responded to, which led to a meeting between the two. These two women soon called for an open meeting and gathered citizens who all shared the desire to develop Årstafältet as a landscape park, and this group would meet under the name Nätverket Årstafältet from 2007 and onwards. Nätverket Årstafältet will be central in my account and will be referred to as NÅ.

The current prime objective of NÅ is to promote the continued development of the landscape park, which also means that they are against all construction on the field and on Årstälänken (Table 1), as expressed on their homepage and in the interviews I held with leading figures of NÅ, including the three individuals described above. One interviewee (interview 2) told me:

‘Nätverket Årstafältet has a clear objective; the goal is that Årstafältet should be a landscape park, and nothing else!’

They are however not opposed to construction in Årsta in general, which makes it less obvious to simplistically denote NÅ as a NIMBY-group, or ‘Not In My Backyard’ group, referring to when local

residents obstruct any development in their proximity to push development to somebody else's backyard (Hermansson, 2007; Shemtov, 2003). NÅ instead has a positive position towards the construction projects in the area of Årstastråket, a location which lies even closer to some of the members' apartments than what Årstafältet does (interview 3):

'Construction on Årstastråket can bind areas and people together; it includes all of [the road] Johanneshovsvägen, which stretches from Gullmarsplan to Årstafältet [...] This could become a boulevard, 'the Johanneshov Boulevard', for the pedestrian city that Kristina Alvendal [vice mayor, City Planning Division] is talking so much about. Then you could walk from [inner city] Skanstull to Gullmarsplan and continue along this boulevard and go shopping or have a rest at a café. And then you would reach Årstafältet where you could take the Tvärbanan railway home or walk back through the Årsta forest.'

NÅ is open to those who agree with the objectives set by the organisation. However, as an organization they cooperate with other action groups that do not have as clear objectives as NÅ. This means that all people who are active with NÅ do not share all the same opinions. The core group of NÅ and the majority of their members firmly oppose all plans of building houses on Årstafältet. However, other members have a slightly more positive view on the construction plans on the field and some of these attend the NÅ meetings just to receive more information about the construction plans (interview 2, participatory observation [part. obs.] 1). Some see that there lies a greater value in creating and sustaining a dialogue between decision-makers and residents, than to oppose all building plans to the point where all communication is lost. Others mistrust city planners and politicians for fear of losing the whole field (interview 1, part. obs. 1).

Although the allotment association has been very active in fighting for their allotments, they have not commented on other questions than the ones that directly affect their land. This is due to the fact that they are dependent on the city to keep their land. Because of the fear of losing their allotments, it has not been seen as appropriate for the board of the allotment association to take a stand in the question of the entire field. This has caused some opposition among the members, since some feel they have to please the politicians, and others want to freely express their opinions. Many members have turned to other ways of expressing their opinions, some have joined NÅ, and some have turned to their local political associations and parties. For example, some members of the Social Democratic Party in Östberga have initiated a study circle open for anyone interested in discussing regional development. Others are active through their housing co-operative (Sw. bostadsrättsförening [BRF]) or resident's association (Sw. hyresgästförening). In Östberga the resident's association is engaged in the issue after requests from members of the association with the argument that the association should work to provide a good living environment, which includes access to green areas (interview 4)

The most active housing co-operative according to my study is Mysslingen. On the initiative of one of the board members, Mysslingen organises recurring meetings for the members of the co-operative and these meetings are also open for anyone interested in the future of Årstafältet. During my study, this group did not have a clear objective; the answer from the chairman to one of the members request to decide on a collective aim for the group was simply "Yes, we will do that", but that was the end of that discussion (part. obs. 1). The chairman of the group claims that the opinions on whether to build on Årstafältet or not is equally divided in the co-operative, and that the co-operative has chosen another strategy than NÅ. Instead of opposing the construction on the field, they instead are trying to inform themselves better with what is being planned in order to inform the rest of the residents. My impression is nonetheless that most of the members are sceptic to any construction on the field and share the opinion that one member expressed in one of the meetings (part. obs. 1):

'If we let them in to build on even a small part of the field, we will not have anything left of the field in a few years'

It became evident in my study that most of the individuals that are interested in protecting Årstafältet are taking part in the activities and meetings of at least two of all the civil society groups that are active in this conflict. However, and according to my field work, Nätverket Årstafältet is the most

active and most organised group, which led to a greater focus on that group in this study. The other civic actors – from the allotment association on the field, to the housing co-operatives and residents associations and the Social Democratic Party in Östberga – do play an important role in how the Årstafältet-conflict is played out and should be included in future studies with more resources. There is no reason to overlook these actors as a consequence of my paper's main focus on Nätverket Årstafältet.

3.2 Ecological values of Årstafältet as framed by authorities and experts

In spite of being southern Stockholm's largest open green field, there are not many scientific studies made to establish the ecological status of Årstafältet. However, based on secondary data, there are indications that it could be enhancing important ecological connectivity and that it participates in generating several ecosystem services.

The reason for the disinterest of scientific studies could, according to an ecologist at the City Planning Administration I interviewed, lie in that there is a general lack of national interest in the type of vegetation that Årstafältet hosts (interview 5), which mainly comprises large expanses of grassland with single trees (SBK, 2009). In regards to the three terrestrial biomes that are regarded as most ecologically important in Stockholm – older broad-leaved deciduous forest, older temperate coniferous forest, and wetlands – the consultant's general opinion was that Årstafältet cannot be considered strongly connected to any of these (interview 5). However, according to the same consultant, another reason to be considered an important area in ecological terms is if the area in question connects to the green wedges leading into Stockholm. She indicated that there actually are connections between Årstafältet and the Hanveden wedge.

The Hanveden green wedge, in the South of Stockholm, stretches along the lake Magelungen until it reaches the traffic route Örbyleden. According to the municipal ecologist, Årstafältet seems to have at least weaker ecological connections to Magelungen through the southeast corner of the field. This implies that Årstafältet could be shown to be connected to the Hanveden wedge. This was also confirmed by an investigation made by the consultancy firm Ekologigruppen in 2004. Their report claims that forest living species can move from the Hanveden wedge all the way to the Årsta forest, located north of Årstafältet, which means that these species would have to use Årstafältet as a dispersal route. There are however no details on how the species would need Årstafältet for their dispersal through the area. The consultants at Ekologigruppen write that the connection is diffuse and contains many barriers, and that no red listed species are yet to be found in this part of the dispersal route. This means that the distribution of species from the Hanveden wedge is considered to be of importance mainly for the common biodiversity and not for red listed species. Ekologigruppen have also verified that there are possible connections between Årstafältet and the Årsta forest (Ekologigruppen, 2007). Furthermore they suggest that the dispersal routes for species living in grassland should be analysed in the area around Årstafältet due to possible connections to the Tyresta wedge, another of the green wedges of Stockholm. For smaller species the distance between Årsta and the Tyresta wedge is too far while larger species and more effective flyers such as brimstones (*Gonepteryx*) and the Peacock butterfly (*Inachis io*) have no obstacles coping with the distance. For these larger butterflies, taking measures to improve the dispersal connections – for instance by investing in ecological designs at Årstafältet – could prove productive in sustaining urban biodiversity (Ekologigruppen, 2004).

A scholar at KTH Royal Institute of Technology has made an analysis of the role of Årstafältet in the context of ecological dispersal corridors and has come to the conclusion that it has potential to constitute an important linkage to re-constitute some ecological network structures in the southern parts of Stockholm (Söderort). At present this part of Stockholm is highly fragmented in ecological terms. One suggestion is to include a proper pine forest at Årstafältet as one important ecological component (A. Zetterberg, personal communication, February 11, 2009).

Despite indications of dispersal connections, more detailed descriptions of the actual connections are difficult to find. In the cases where a "connection" is mentioned, there are very few examples of what

this connection actually consists of. A clear result for this study is that there is a lack of useful artefacts that can aid in articulating the ecological values of Årstafältet, which, as we will see, seems to have influenced the actions taken by civic actors.

When it comes to ecosystem services, all six categories that Bolund and Hunhammar (1999) considered of significant importance in urban areas are either already generated on Årstafältet today, or could be developed through the landscape park. The ecosystem services are: a) air filtering, b) micro climate regulation, c) noise reduction (disturbance regulation), d) rainwater drainage (water regulation), e) sewage treatment (waste treatment) and d) recreational/cultural values.

(a) The reduction of air pollution from vegetation is primarily caused by the vegetation filtering the air. With more leaf area the filtering capacity increases and since coniferous trees has a larger total surface area the filtering capacity is higher for coniferous trees than trees with deciduous leaves, bushes or grassland (Stolt, 1982). The vegetation of Årstafältet consists mainly of grassland and bushes, the trees that exist are deciduous. This could mean that Årstafältet contributes to air filtering locally and on higher scales, but that it is not optimal. However, if the field would be developed into a residential area, there is a risk that its air filtering capacity would decrease, while the development of a landscape park could increase air filtering if this included planting of more trees, preferably pines or other coniferous trees.

(b) There can be significant changes in climate between the city and surrounding countryside, a phenomenon known as the urban heat island effect (Camilloni & Barros, 1997). The heat island phenomenon is caused by microclimate changes brought about by man-made alterations of the urban surface (Kolokotroni et al., 2006). All natural ecosystems in urban areas help reducing these differences (Bolund & Hunhammar, 1999). The urban heat island in Stockholm already has a marked impact on the air and road surface temperatures (Gustavsson et al., 2001), but the micro-climate is regulated to a great extent by the large bodies of water in the city. The vegetated areas in the city will also help mitigate the urban heat island effect; the trees for instance consume heat energy when transpiring water (Bolund & Hunhammar, 1999). In times of global warming, Årstafältet, if kept as a green area, could be an area that helps mitigating the urban heat island effect due to its vegetation and water areas.

(c) Årstafältet has been said to be a noisy green area due to its location close to traffic routes. Today the noise level is not as high as before Årstälänken was closed down, but some heavy traffic is still affecting the noise level of the area. The maximum acceptable outside noise levels is established to 55 dB(A) by Naturvårdsverket (1996). One key factor of regulating the noise levels is the character of the ground. A soft lawn, rather than a concrete pavement, decreases the level by 3 dB(A), dense shrubbery or a wide plantation can lower noise levels by 2-6 dB(A) (Bolund & Hunhammar, 1999). Årstafältet can be used to regulate the noise disturbance around the field. The planned exploitation of Årstafältet with dense housing and an increase of hard vertical and horizontal surfaces is likely to increase noise disturbance from traffic in the part of the field that will be left; developing the landscape park could instead mean less disturbance from noise through the protection of soft ground and vegetation and the planting of more dense shrubbery (cf. *ibid.*).

(d and e) Built up land with concrete covering the ground alters water flows compared to an equivalent rural catchment because a higher proportion of water from rainfall becomes surface water run-off. This results in more peak flood discharges of water with degraded quality because it picks up street pollutants. The solid surfaces and high extraction of water can cause the groundwater level to decrease (Bolund & Hunhammar, 1999). Vegetated areas, such as Årstafältet can help solving this problem. The soft ground allows water to seep through and the vegetation takes up water and releases it into the air through evapotranspiration. Natural systems, mainly wetlands, can be used to treat sewage water; the wetland plants and animals can assimilate large amounts of the nutrients and slow down the flow of the sewage water, so that particles can settle on the bottom (Krebs, 2001). The project of the landscape park included the restoration of a wetland on Årstafältet, which was finished already in 2001 (Dannelid, 2004). The river Valla å was restored and a pond for surface runoff water was constructed. Surface runoff from Östberga is led to an area of grass and moss close to the pond; when the water is strained through this area metals and oils are separated from the water. The water

continues to the pond where the plants purify nutrients such as phosphor and nitrogen. After the pond the water travels through an area built of crushed limestone that binds even more metals and phosphor and runs out in the Årsta bay (Sw. Årstaviken) (SBK, 2002).

(f) According to a survey from 2008 of the residential usage of Årstafältet by the Stockholm Office of Research and Statistics (Sw. Stockholm Stads Utrednings- och statistikkontor; USK), recreation is the most important benefit that Årstafältet as a green field can offer (USK, 2008). 750 residents in the area were randomly chosen to receive the survey by post and 70% of the chosen residents responded. The respondents use the field for activities such as sports and exercise, meeting friends or simply for finding silence and space to be alone. The “feeling of peace and quiet”, as expressed in the survey, is an important quality of the field and many respondents answer that most valuable is that Årstafältet is a green oasis to them with emphasis on the importance of the size of the field and the fact that it is untouched and still gives its visitors a sense of being in the unspoiled countryside. 72% of the respondents answer that Årstafältet to a great extent offers possibilities of recreation. 44% say that Årstafältet creates a feeling of peace and serenity to a great extent and another 45% agrees to some extent. A rich biodiversity is not considered to be as important for the residents. They do not consider the field to actually hold many different animal and plant species nor do they express a great need of finding a rich biodiversity on Årstafältet.

The residents are correct in their belief that there is not a rich biodiversity to be found on Årstafältet, according to a study made in 2004 (Dannelid, 2004). After the pond was constructed there were hopes of having amphibians re-colonizing the area, but at the time of the study there were no signs of amphibians. This can be due to the long period that Årstafältet has been ecologically isolated from other aquatic areas, being the main dispersal routes of amphibians. Concerning small animal species Dannelid concluded that the species that are easily dispersed are quite well established and the aquatic species have flourished after the improving measures of the wetland. Two species that were found are of special interest to authorities, since they are species that are classified as less common. The winter damselfly (*Sympecma fusca*) is nationally red listed as “Nearly Threatened” while the saucer bug (*Ilyocoris cimicoides*) is not red listed. The interest of the presence of *Ilyocoris cimicoides* on the field lies in the fact that it is assumed to lack flying ability and therefore must have been dispersed to Årstafältet on the ground, which indicates that there are functioning dispersal routes for small insects. Despite that Dannelid suspected that the composition of species would be different only a few years from when his/her study was conducted; a follow up on this study has still not been made, which might be another manifestation of the lack of general interest by experts and authorities of the ecological values of Årstafältet.

3.3 Articulation of values, creation of artefacts

In contrast to the above focus on ecological values the most important issue for Nätverket Årstafältet is democracy and the lack thereof during the planning process of Nya Årstafältet. They criticize how the process has been carried out and how the citizens have been ignored throughout the years. This is a question that all the different actors that I engaged with in the area agree on, regardless of if they oppose all suggestions of exploitation of the field or if they are willing to accept some construction. The legally binding local plan that envisions a landscape park was decided unanimously by all political parties, i.e. across political divisions. The plan has also been supported over the last 9 years by citizens, civil servants (who have carried out projects on the field to realize the landscape park), and local and national politicians (interview 3, part. obs. 2). The conservative political party (Sw. Moderaterna) that governed Stockholm when the local plan was accepted in 2001 is however the same party that after 2006 designated Årstafältet to become a city development area in 2010 through the Regional Development Plan (RTK, 2009). In fact, the same individuals who enthusiastically signed the detailed plan for a landscape park in 2001 are now, eight years later, fully supporting the suggested exploitation of Årstafältet. This change of opinion has had an immense negative effect on the citizens’ trust for both politicians and civil servants (interviews 1, 2 & 3). One interviewee said (interview 3):

‘... like the civil servant who was working on the [housing development] plan of Årstastråket [in 2003], where it is written how important Årstafältet is for the

massive expansion that Årstastråket involves. That is to say that Årstafältet including Årstälänken, in their full sizes, has to become a park in order for the construction on Årstastråket to even be considered. And then, just a few years later she [the civil servant] says that the park is no longer needed. How trustworthy can she be as a civil servant after this?’

Another interviewee said (interview 2):

‘It is difficult to know which politicians can be trusted in the question of Årstafältet. Some can show interest because they are chasing votes for the next election. We do not get to know the reality until it is put to the test... And then we can ask ourselves why the citizens change party in every election, at least the majority. I think it is a question of trust, if you measure the trust for our politicians then we are talking about pretty low percentages, and we hear about contempt for politicians and such.’

The main tactics of Nätverket Årstafältet in their struggle to avoid exploitation on the field has been to highlight the lack of democracy in the decision-making process. However, the association has started to frame many values of Årstafältet and among its members there is a great deal of detailed knowledge about these values. One cultural-historical value that they point out include Göta landsväg, which was the only road leading into Stockholm from the south of Sweden during medieval times, and it is now only preserved in its original form on a few locations around Stockholm, Årstafältet being one of them. This value is especially protected and articulated by the “Ancient Monument Group” (Sw. Fornminnesgruppen) (interview 3, part. obs. 2).

On my direct questions concerning the ecological values of the field, the interviewees from Nätverket Årstafältet most often state that they have not used the ecological dimension in their campaign since their belief is that there are no strong ecological values on the field (interviews 1&2). They have turned to an expert in the area in order to get information on the ecological status of the field. From a scholar at The Royal institute of Technology (Sw. Kungliga Tekniska Högskolan)², they received the information that Årstafältet in its present form is not important in ecological terms (interviews 1&2). The weak ecological linkage, known by SBK and confirmed by the consultancy group Ekologigruppen mentioned before, seems to have been missed by the civic actors and NÅ. There is however knowledge among some members of NÅ that the rare damselfly (*Sympecma fusca*) has been spotted on the field (part. obs. 1) and that the common kestrels (*Falco tinnunculus*) that nest in central Stockholm’s Riddarholmen church, use Årstafältet as their hunting ground (interview 1). Although no scientific studies have yet been done on the urban population of common kestrels in Stockholm, other studies of the common kestrel have shown that they have a lower hunting success in urban areas (Riegert *et al.*, 2009), which potentially could have prompted NÅ to argue that Årstafältet has a significant ecological value at least for this particular bird. Except for posts on the website about these topics, NÅ has not framed these ecological values and made them useful in their struggle, or produced any other artefacts to stress the ecological importance of Årstafältet or its potential as an ecological restoration site. Mainly this seems to be associated to lack of knowledge and lack of social networks to people that have the appropriate ecological knowledge.

When it comes to the ecosystem service of the citizens’ well-being and recreation, Nätverket Årstafältet puts much focus on the size of Årstafältet, and the fact that it is the largest green area in the southern suburbs of Stockholm (Sw. Söderort), the only area where the citizens can go for open space. To enforce the opinion of the citizens’ need of green areas for their well-being NÅ refers to the document “Green areas for more people” (Sw. Grönområden för fler”) developed by Swedish National Public Institute of Public Health (Sw. Folkhälsoinstitutet) in cooperation with the City of Stockholm and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (Sw. Sveriges Lantbruksuniversitet, [SLU]). This document clearly describes the importance of green areas for the society and how societies should develop the existing green areas so that more people will visit them and benefit from them

² This is the same scholar that I was in contact with for background knowledge on ecological values of the field as framed by experts.

(Stockholms Folkhälsoinstitut, 2009.) NÅ have used this document in meetings with city planners and politicians to make them aware of the fact that the citizens have demands for their well being (part. obs. 1, 2, 3).

3.4 Social arenas

The website of Nätverket Årstafältet (<http://arstafaltet.se/>) seems to be one of their most important social arenas to express their concerns and the values of the field. The website is created by one of the members and is updated daily (interviews 2 & 3). On this website the public can find all documents that NÅ has gathered for their campaign throughout the years. All relevant information about Årstafältet is published on the page, alongside information on Söderort and the importance of green areas in general. In the extensive database of the website one can find events arranged by NÅ but also by other civic actors or public actors such as the City of Stockholm. One can find published articles and letters to the editor, invitations to meetings and protocols from meetings. The website is the great strength of NÅ, and has been acclaimed by both civil servants and politicians (part. obs. 2 & 3). For instance, after a meeting between representatives of NÅ and the City Planning Administration, the latter published a link on the official website of Stockholm City to the website of NÅ, under the headline “Ongoing discussions on Årstafältet” (interview 3).

NÅ arrange member meetings that are always open to the public. At these meetings the members inform each other of the successes or adversities in the struggle as well as plan for how the work should be brought forward. The advertisements for these meetings are on the website and on flyers that are distributed to the inhabitants around Årstafältet, particularly in Årsta and Östberga and on notice boards and libraries. The number of participants can vary and they use all meeting places available. Some meetings have been held outside, on the actual field and NÅ has had access to the premises that belongs to the allotment association. They have also used the meeting-rooms of different housing co-operatives. To as great extent as possible they use spaces they do not need to pay for, as they have no means of funding (interview 3). Only in one occasion did NÅ rent a place for an event. This was when they arranged a big meeting in Årsta Folkets Hus, the community centre in Årsta, with the aim to motivate the continued struggle for the landscape park. They got the permission to arrange the meeting in the community centre without paying up front, but with the agreement to pay later. The leading figures of NÅ had decided not to spend any more of their own money on this project and hoped that they in the future would be able to raise enough money so that they would be able to pay back the rent of the community centre. This shows a great trust for NÅ from the decision makers of the community centre, and it indicates that there seems to be a broad general interest in this issue in the neighbourhood of Årsta. The information about the event was mainly distributed through the website and through poster flyers in the area around Årstafältet. It was a half day event with around 100 visitors, mainly residents in the area (part. obs. 5). The speakers included representatives from NÅ, the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (Sw. Naturskyddsföreningen), the City Traffic Administration (Sw. Trafikkontoret), the Swedish Ornithology Association (Sw. Sveriges Ornitologiska Förening) as well as a scholar in urban ecology from Stockholm University.³

NÅ have been active in arranging public activities on the field with the purpose to mobilise the citizens of the area, and also residents of other areas in Stockholm. These activities can be seen as social arenas where NÅ has the possibility to inform the participants of the objectives that NÅ has, and at the same time, in an entertaining way make more people discover the things that NÅ value on the field. Among others there has been early morning bird watching events (Sw. gökotta), kite flying parties, picnics and haymaking events (Sw. slätteröl) on the field (interview 3). When there is an activity on the field that is arranged by other actors than NÅ, NÅ still makes sure to advertise the event on the website and they try to have a representative from NÅ in all events concerning Årstafältet in order to meet the people that show an interest for the field. The Swedish Ornithology Association

³ The scholar from Stockholm University was the supervisor of this thesis, Dr Henrik Ernstson. Leading figures from NÅ first made contact with him in 2008 after a presentation he held concerning his study of the Ecopark Movement that protected the National Urban Park (Ernstson, 2008; Ernstson, et al. 2008; Ernstson and Sörlin, 2009). At the NÅ meeting, he also presented his work on the National Urban Park. This is a good example of how researchers that might influence the work and thoughts of the actors get mobilized by the actors.

arranged walks on the field for parents with prams, Brännkyrka local geography and history association (Sw. Hembygdsförening) have arranged a guided walk on Göta Landsväg and when the allotment association arranges their annual harvest festival NÅ participates with an information desk. Söderort's branch of the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation chose Årsta as the theme of 2008's edition of the study circle "Think Globally – Act Locally" (or "Globally-locally"; Sw. Globalt-lokalt)(Naturskyddsföreningen, 2008). The study circle is about how the everyday life in Årsta affects the nature and environment. Two of the interviewees believe they had a part in making the study circle include some activities around Årstafältet and the interviewees also promoted the activities by advertising them on their website (interview 3).

3.5 Protective stories

The most prominent component of the protective stories that civic actors are trying to weave around Årstafältet is the story about the landscape park. It is a story of great weight due to the legally binding decision that states that the landscape park will continue to be developed until the year 2016. Nätverket Årstafältet has seen it as an important issue to reach out to civil society with the information that the citizens of Stockholm have the legal right to attain the landscape park, since they believe that the politicians are trying to withhold this fact due to their wish to implement their own building plans. Through the planning documents that were prepared to realize the landscape park, Nätverket Årstafältet have an almost perfect artefact to use for articulating values. Nätverket Årstafältet also has copies of the documents of the local plan for the landscape park, which are no longer available to the public. They use these documents and the official arguments underpinning the realization of the landscape park as artefacts and tools to the best of their ability. They refer to the local plan in the written statements that they make and use it as an oral argument in every opportunity; they have posted the artistic impressions – colourful hand-drawn overview paintings (Fig. 4) (Sw. gestaltungsprogram) – for the landscape park on their website and have brought it in printed form to the public meetings they arrange.



Fig. 4. Pictures from the publication of the local plan for the landscape park.

NÅ has also been able to mobilize other actors to produce artefacts that can support their struggle and facilitate for them to articulate values. NÅ managed to get the Stockholm Office of Research and Statistics (USK) to perform a new investigation of the usage of Årstafältet in 2008 (interview 3). Prior to 2008 the investigation that the City Planning Administration referred to when they claimed that Årstafältet was not used by the inhabitants in the area was performed before the traffic route Årstalänken was closed (USK, 2002). Before 2004, when Årstalänken was closed, it was more or less impossible to get to the field from Årsta "without being hit by a car" as one of the interviewees put it (interview 3). The usage of Årstafältet increased noticeably after Årstalänken was closed off, but the

City Planning Administration, in arguing for the new housing development plans in 2007, still voiced the opinion that Årstafältet was not used very much and referred to the survey made in 2002. (SBK, 2007)

‘In the survey of usage of open space in Årsta and surroundings, which USK carried out in 2002, Årstafältet was the third most popular open space in the area. Even children and youth appreciate the area. However it is not used to a great extent, probably due to barrier effects that existed at the time of the survey and partially still exist [...].’

In a meeting with the City Planning Administration, members of NÅ urged them to perform a more up-to-date investigation of the situation since the conditions had changed markedly since the earlier study. They believe that their efforts played a decisive role in pushing the City Planning Administration to perform a new study (interview 3). The new study showed a great increase in the usage of the field (USK, 2002; USK 2008). NÅ are pleased to see that more residential areas around Årstafältet was included in this survey whereas the prior survey only included Årsta, Östberga and Enskede. The most recent survey includes a greater area of boroughs (from Årsta, Östberga, Liseberg, and Örby Slott, to Enskede Gård, Enskedefältet, and parts of Stureby), which shows the importance of Årstafältet to the inhabitants in the whole of Söderort (USK, 2008). Comparing the reports, there is an increase of the percentage of the respondents that visit the field once a week or more often, from 6% in 2002 to 29 % in 2008. Even though NÅ take pride in believing to have affected the civil servants to perform a current survey, the purpose of the survey, as explained in the document, was to form part of the investigation of the conditions to build a new section of the city around Årstafältet. Despite that NÅ is proud of the existence of this document and that it could be used as important artefact in articulating the recreational values of Årstafältet, the members of NÅ do not seem to have developed any ideas as to how they can use it, or who to present it to.

NÅ has tried to weave the old road Göta Landsväg into the protective story of Årstafältet. Although the road now appears more as a walking path, they have striven to highlight the cultural and historical value that this historic remain brings to the field. Conversations have been held with the ‘Historical Remains Group’ (Sw. Fornminnesgruppen), who is responsible for the maintenance of the path, to gain more knowledge about the path to strengthen their argument (interview 3). Since Göta Landsväg is labelled as a cultural remnant by The Swedish National Heritage Board (Sw. Riksantikvarieämbetet) it is protected according to the law of cultural remnants, which means that there are regulations controlling what is allowed to be done with the path and with the area adjacent to the path (Riksantikvarieämbetet, 1989). NÅ has tried to create awareness about this walking-path as a cultural-historical road, by mentioning it on the website and bringing it up when meeting civil servants or politicians (part. obs. 2, 4, 5 & 6)

Following this study’s focus on NÅ, figure 5 displays the different social arenas, actors and artefacts that have been identified in which NÅ comes out as the most active actor creating and upholding all social arenas and using – or “picking up” – all artefacts (Fig. 5). The centrality of bias is of course also a result from the method of focusing on NÅ.

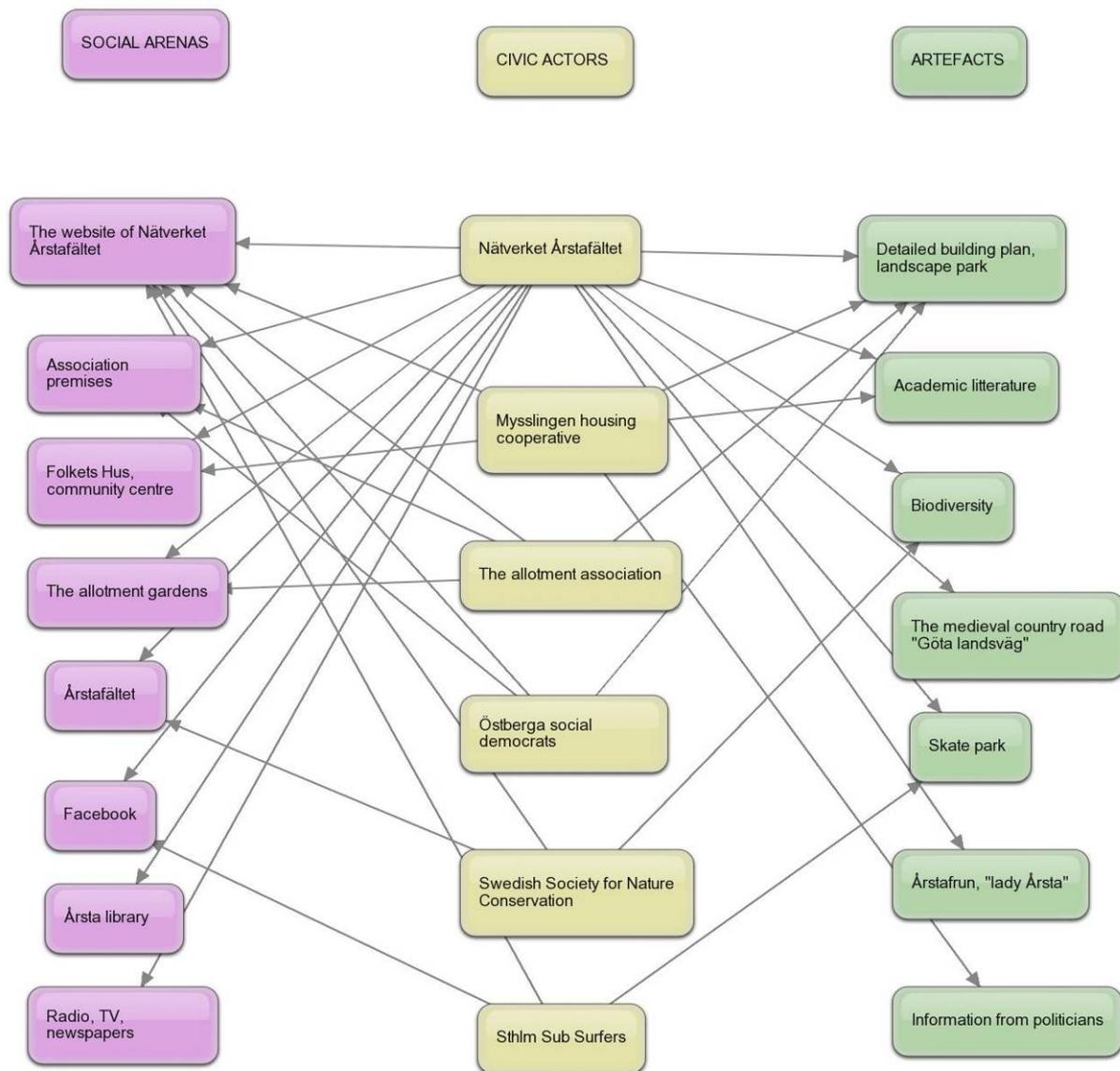


Fig. 5. Connection between civic actors, social arenas and artefacts. The figure displays the many different artefacts and social arenas that are being employed by different actors to articulate values towards realizing the landscape park and opposing the New Årstafältet building plans. Since the focus of the study has been on Nätverket Årstafältet, this actor comes out as the only actor that uses all artefacts. However, the case study work also suggest that NÅ is the most active and central actor in the mobilizations among civic actors.

3.6 Social networks

The most active citizens in the struggle to protect Årstafältet have changed their strategy from a focus to only mobilize local residents, to a strategy that also strives to mobilize actors on a larger scale. According to my interviews, the reason lies both in that they in the beginning felt they did not have the energy to reach out further than to the citizens in the immediate surroundings, but also because they were afraid that if too many knew of Årstafältet, it would be invaded by residents from the inner city or other suburbs of Stockholm. When the construction plans started to get known among the citizens, as told by one interviewee (interview 1), only a small group of people living in the area had discovered the charm of Årstafältet and there existed a mentality within the small group that were taking action that they did not want more people to discover their oasis. This feeling of wanting to keep the field for themselves, made them taking the strategic choice of avoiding media. They did not want to create too

much attention around the question due to fear that this type of attention would function as advertisement for the park. The same interviewee tells me that they were selfish and thought it was good if people were not able to find Årstafältet. This situation and thinking has however changed drastically. Through my interviews, observations and the documents that I have studied, it becomes clear that NÅ can now be viewed as a spider in the web among the actors around Årstafältet.

NÅ has furthermore established good rapport throughout the years with the civil servant at the City Planning Administration who up until 2009 was responsible for the plans relating to the area around Årstafältet. The successor invited NÅ to a private meeting just after taking over office, which highlights the prominence of NÅ in the eyes of authorities. During the meeting NÅ was asked to decide what kind of role they wanted to have in the future connection to the City Planning Administration and the future work on “the New Årstafältet” (part. obs. 2). The city planners have also invited the public to an open meeting in Östberga School, both to inform the public about the plans for Årstafältet, and to take in their opinions (part. obs. 4). Leading members of NÅ have however come to believe that it is rather pointless to be in contact with the civil servants, since the people who make the decisions are the politicians (interview 2). NÅ wants to affect the decision making process and the members of NÅ do not consider the civil servants to be the right people who can help them with that. Correct or not, but their view is based on the history of the conflict and all their previous (disappointing) contacts with civil servants.

The politicians have not been easy to reach for NÅ, which has made them to more frequently turn to media to get the attention of the politicians. The first indirect contact with politicians for NÅ was through an open letter to the mayor of Stockholm, Sten Nordin, published in Svenska Dagbladet (SvD), one of Sweden’s major daily newspapers. Sten Nordin, together with vice mayor at the City Planning Division, Kristina Alvendal (both from the conservative party), replied with a published letter in SvD (Nordin & Alvendal, 2009). The housing co-operative Mysslingen invited a politician known for having opposed the suggestion of construction on Årstafältet (Stadsbyggnadsnämnden, 2008a; Stadsbyggnadsnämnden 2008b) to a meeting (part. obs. 3) and they succeeded in inviting Kristina Alvendal to a public meeting (part. obs. 6). They managed to get Kristina Alvendal to participate in the meeting due to a personal connection to one of the visitors of the housing co-operative’s meetings. This exemplifies how NÅ’s connection to the housing co-operative leads to a connection to politicians and how different local groups can come to complement each other.

Those who are responsible for publishing the public document “Green areas for more people” (Sw. Grönområden för fler) have developed a method for estimating the qualities of a park, to see in what way it should be used or improved (Stockholms Folkhälsoinstitut, 2009). One person from NÅ has been in contact with the publishers who offered to perform an evaluation of the qualities of the Årsta field (interview 2). In this situation NÅ shows their ability to use their social network to acquire resources from outside of their own network and to possibly generate useful and credible artefacts. Unfortunately nothing came out of the offer, due to lack of financial means among the civic actors and the lack of interest from the municipality to financially support this cause (interview 2).

On the initiative of NÅ, the organization Sthlm Sub Surfers, an organisation established in 1984 to promote skateboarding in and around Stockholm, became affiliated with the group of actors that demand a landscape park. The implementation of the landscape park would result in the abolition of the plan to build houses on Årstälänken. This means that the abandoned traffic route could be used for something more recreational and the idea that NÅ came up with was a skate park. As a result of the connection with Sthlm Sub Surfers, NÅ can say that they represent a more heterogeneous part of the population, including youth. The project Årstafältet Skate Park has an own blog-page where the public can follow the planning of the skate park. However, it seems that the project was terminated during 2009 since the blog has not been active since March 2009.

4. Discussion

Given this study’s interpretations of the struggle to protect the green space of Årstafältet it is valuable to compare it with other known cases, especially the cases where the actions of the civil society have

prevailed. Although most struggles on how to use green space are left unrecorded, or appearing just as small articles in local papers, there is one well-documented case (mentioned in the introduction) over the prestigious green areas of the National Urban Park (Djurgården-Haga-Brunnsviken-Ulriksdal) north of the city centre, with its royal heritage, green fields, urban forests, documented high biodiversity and a highly active movement of civil society organizations (Ernstson et al. 2008, Ernstson & Sörlin, 2009). Although officially protected from 1994, exploitation plans have continued to fall within or close to the park's borders, keeping civil society active (Ernstson et al. 2008). One of the latest conflicts concerns Kampementsbacken, a green area connected to the National Urban Park. In an effort to clarify my discussion concerning Årstafältet further, I am comparing my case study to the case of Kampementsbacken using data that I generated through an interview with a person highly involved in the protection of green space around Kampementsbacken (interview 6) and through following the media coverage related to this struggle.

4.1 Collective action through collective identity and bridging and bonding social capital

The emergence of a sense of a common purpose is important for collective action to be effective. However, this depends on interlinkages between personal identity and collective/movement identity. Whereas Dunlap & McCright (2008) stress that it is crucial that individuals have a sense of who they are and what their personal interests are before they can engage and feel belonging to a collective group or a movement, it is the actual identification with a movement, described as seeing oneself as a part of a "force in explicit pursuit of social change" (Dunlap & McCright, 2008, page 1047) that makes the individual take collective action. Melucci (1995; 1996) describes the formation of personal and collective identity as highly interlinked and partly constitutive of each other, i.e. collective identity shapes personal identity to some degree and collective identity is a construction process involving a lot of different persons.

In the case of Årstafältet, there is not a very clear division between the different action groups (Fig 1) since many individuals are active in more than one group and since some of the groups do not have clear objectives and goals. The individuals hold on to their personal opinions and take part in the activities of different groups no matter the exact opinions and aim of the group and in some cases in groups that do not have a clear aim. This fact decreases the sense of movement identity among action groups which can lead to lesser achievements in the collective action that they take. Considering the unclearness of the different groups involved in the conflict at Årstafältet, it is understandable if the citizens in the area are still feeling as individuals in the struggle and not as a part of a movement or even a collective group. This can be a possible explanation to why their collective action has been less effective yet.

As described in the introduction, collective action can be viewed as a product of bridging social capital, and the precursor of bridging social capital is bonding social capital. NÅ seem to have had difficulties of achieving a good balance between their bridging and bonding social capital. In the beginning of their struggle they quite intentionally tried to avoid linkages to people outside the immediate area and did not want to have attention because of fear that 'their' field would become too popular. This consequently constrained the development of bridging social capital and can be interpreted as an effect of too tight bonding. One known effect of too heavy bonding is that group members become suspicious of 'outsiders' and hesitant to let other people into the group. Tight norms on what is of value and how to behave can develop that can limit the opportunities of accessing resources, skills and information from outside the group (Beaudoin, 2009). One relevant parallel is Årsta and Östberga, in the 1960's and -70's, that seemingly went through the same scenario during their work to up-lift the area and stop the building of a motorway, a work similar to that of NÅ. Information and experiences from the struggle by Årsta and Östberga Concerned Citizens Committees are familiar to individuals within NÅ (interview 1). In spite of that, and the quite obvious similarities between the two struggles, there has been no mentioning in my interviews with key-figures of NÅ that they have tried to learn from the experiences of the Concerned Citizens Committees. If they would have identified to learn from these earlier experiences, they might have realized earlier that in order to get access to a variety of resources and to build collective action, it is necessary to form linkages outside the immediate neighbourhood and thus have achieved a better balance between bridging and

bonding social capital. The heavy bonding can have put on a strain on the work of NÅ in the early stages by excluding other citizens, but it is evident that they left these tactics quite early and it is not evident that it affects their work at present. However, their switch of tactics, to loosen the bonding of the group, can also be working against them. Admittedly the advantages of the increased openness as their bridging social capital increased is evident, as they are taking every opportunity to attach to new persons and groups and different groups are cooperating more and coordinating meetings to gather their forces together for the battles to come. At the same time, one could imagine that for the single individual the confusion could increase when more actors and groups are mixed with no clear distinctions.

The civil society mobilization around Kampementsbacken is organised in a very different manner. There is only one active group working on the issue, with a wide and transparent democratic support. All housing co-operatives that are affected by the building plans, as well as the retirement homes in the area have each appointed one representative to join the action group. This group gathers regularly, during the most intense period they had meetings at least once a week with almost total attendance. These meetings are not open to the public, which increases the bonding of the core group. The members of the action group each have a firm connection to the residents in the housing co-operative or retirement home that they are representing, and arrange meetings with them in conjunction with the meetings of the action group. In that way all residents in the area have, in theory, a voice in the action group, through their representatives. The work of the action group is divided between the members and everyone has a clear roll, whether it is being responsible for the communication with civil servants or politicians, printing leaflets or merely keeping a good relation between the group and the residents that they are representing. This way of organising the work enables many bridging opportunities for the action group at the same time as they are keeping the core group intact and by that strengthening bonding social capital.

Larsen et al. (2004) claims that a key predictor of collective action is socioeconomic status, and by contrasting the struggle at Årsta field with that at Kampementsbacken, this suggestion seems to be valid. In my interview with a member of the action group on Kampementsbacken, there was a feeling of confidence in their struggle, which I never felt present in my many interviews and observations with the actors at Årsta field. In contrast, in my engagement with actor groups at Årstafältet, I have experienced a certain feeling of seeing themselves as beaten on beforehand, a sense of being a victim. One of the actors expressed it by saying (interview 1):

‘We are the beetles that no one needs to care about according to Kristina Alvendal’.

A recurring opinion of some of the citizens in Årsta is that if they were living in an upper class area such as Östermalm or Bromma they would not face as much difficulties as they are now. The interviewee from the action group on Kampementsbacken, which is located close to Östermalm, tells me that it is clear that there are class aspects to the issue, but he does not agree that they have had it easy because the area is considered to be of higher class than the areas around Årsta.⁴ Against that logic, one can argue as Larsen et al. (2004), that citizens with higher levels of social status – the combination of education and wealth – are more likely to *believe* in their ability to influence government decisions and are therefore *more likely to take collective action* (Larsen et al., 2004). Although the class mark can be seen as something each person internalises and carries as an individual, this internalization can have effects on a collective level. Consequently, one interpretation is that the feeling of inferiority that some actors within NÅ express answers mainly to how they feel themselves, and not necessarily on how they are actually comprehended by others, but this internalization could lead to weaker collective action. One very tangible way in which the general social status of the residents around Kampementsbacken seems to have benefited their struggle is through their education and experience, which follows the pattern and argument of Ernstson’s study of the wider struggle around the National Urban Park (Ernstson et al. 2008, Ernstson and Sörlin, 2009). Many of the members of the action group at Kampementsbacken are retired architects, lawyers,

⁴ According to my interview, the group on Kampementsbacken has not been confident all the way through their struggle. My interviewee told me that many have been insecure and doubtful (interview 6).

industry leaders and politicians, all people with decades of experience in how to influence decisions (interview 6),:

‘Of course we have had an advantage by having retired industrialists, architects and lawyers in the action group. The degree of authenticity on a ground of class belonging and professionalism is strengthened by this, of course. If we were all working as butchers in the slaughterhouse district while trying to pursue these issues we would naturally have had a much greater challenge to take on in order to acquire the language of the enemy, so to speak. Now, we have been a group of people who are accustomed to using this language, work with these documents and also arriving at the right conclusions.’

The interviewee at Kampementsbacken also has the ability to re-frame their localized struggle from a grander perspective (thus also providing arguments for why their struggle cannot be viewed as a NIMBY-struggle). His view is that the struggles over local green areas in Stockholm is in fact not a question of what people need or want, but it is about financial interests driven by processes on scales larger than even Stockholm. He explained that if one takes into consideration the current view of politicians of how Stockholm should develop, then the area around Kampementsbacken and other green areas close to the city centre are of more economic interest to these politicians than areas around Årstafältet, a less central location. The explanation lies, and here the interviewee makes clear parallels to the current academic and more and more popularized writings on the effects of globalization on urbanization (e.g. Sassen 2006; Stahre 2007), that politicians desire to get multinational corporations to establish offices in Stockholm in order for Stockholm (and Sweden) to compete on a global market. In order to attract multinational corporations the aspiration of Sweden’s two largest political parties, according to the interviewee, is to create a new identity for Stockholm. They want Stockholm to appear as a modern and global city capable of delivering all the services that transnational companies and international capital demand, a vision that they want to realize for instance by altering the skyline of the city by building skyscrapers and to increase the development density in the city (Andersson, 2009) The interviewee on Kampemetsgatan believes that if other action groups, such as NÅ realised this fact then more alliances and larger movements could form where the common interest is to go against the current vision of a new identity for Stockholm. This statement, although just based on one interviewee from Kampementsbacken, signifies a capability of thinking more broadly, conceptually and strategically than what I experienced at Årstafältet.

4.2 Ecology

The civic actors in this case don’t seem to have been able to use the environment and ecology of Årstafältet to articulate the values of the field. One reason for this, as this study has shown, seems to be that there are not many artefacts concerning the ecology accessible to them. However, it is also possible to argue that because of this fact, that civic actors or others have not focused on the ecology, has contributed further to why there are not many ecological values articulated on the field. For certain ecosystem services to come into view and have potential of affecting decision making processes, there is a need for certain actors to perform the social labour to articulate these specific ecosystem services (Ernstson, 2008) and through that create artefacts. If these artefacts are articulated by actors such as researchers or other experts in the area, they generally gain more weight and receive more attention and trust from the public than the civic actors themselves could gain (Ernstson and Sörlin, 2009). But in the cases where sufficient artefacts do not exist, one strategy of mobilizing civic actors could be to mobilize those other actors that could produce these artefacts, such as scientists, civil servants, artists and authors for example. In the case of Årstafältet, the actors that want to protect the field from exploitation could try to attract scientists to perform studies on the field that would highlight the ecological situation. They could also contact the experts responsible for the ecological studies that already exist and ask for clarification on their reports so they could learn more and use them with greater confidence. They could also try to mobilize and recommend universities to let their students perform ecological field studies on Årstafältet, or suggest different research questions to final year biology students for their Masters Degree project. The various themes and innovations in order to

increase the production of useful artefacts to articulate values and ecosystem services for a particular green area could of course be more than what is listed here.

There seems to be an institutional problem affecting the framing of ecological values at Årstafältet through the focus that authorities have on a particular kind of biodiversity (red-listed species), which disregards overall ecosystem functioning in which also “non red-listed” species can be of vital importance to sustain ecosystem functions such as air filtering, noise reduction, sewage treatment etc., as described by Bolund and Hunhammar (1999).

The lack of national interest in the type of vegetation on Årstafältet seems to confirm that certain areas attract more useful artefacts than others as suggested by Ernstson and Sörlin (2009). A strong argument in the case of Kampementsbacken has been that the green area is an important link between southern and northern Djurgården, two parts of the National Urban Park (NUP). According to my interviewee (interview 6) it is the last dispersal path between the two parts of the NUP, a notion that has been reified in scientific investigations and maps (Löfvenhaft & Wikberger, 1996; Löfvenhaft et al., 2002), and which provided useful artefacts for the mobilizations to protect NUP in the early 1990's (Ernstson and Sörlin, 2009). Obviously, the closeness to NUP, which has a nature protection similar to that of nature reserves, serves the interest to protect the green area at Kampementsbacken. There is thus an important structural difference between Årsta field and Kampementsbacken, which nonetheless exist through the many mobilizations of artefacts that actors had access to in the struggle to protect the NUP (Ernstson and Sörlin, 2009). The civic actors protesting the construction on Kampementsbacken have effectively created arguments from the fact that green areas at Kampementsbacken should be included and taken into consideration to protect the values enshrined in the protective legislation of the NUP. The connection to the NUP, enables the civic actors to access many artefacts since the NUP has been a matter at issue for a long time, with many scientist and other experts involved. An interesting parallel at the struggle at Årsta was the plans in 2006 to turn the Årsta forest together with the Årsta islets (Sw. Årsta holmar) into a nature reserve. However, in this case the conservative political party that came into power in Stockholm in 2006 decided to stop all work to appoint any new national parks. Building on the parallel from NUP and Kampementsbacken, if the decision had been passed before the change of government, the civic actors protesting construction on Årstafältet could have had more possibilities to pick up artefacts, and their arguments could have had more weight due to the closeness of a protected area.

4.3 Protective stories

In order to succeed in the process of utilising and picking up artefacts, linking them to other actors through using social arenas and by that succeeding in weaving a protective story as described by Ernstson and Sörlin (2009), all parts of the process need to be functional. My assessment is that the actors at Årstafältet have managed to articulate many values of Årstafältet and brought out documents that strengthen their value. They have created links to many other actors and have used some social arenas. But linking these components together in order to weave a more coherent protective story seems to be one of the greatest deficits in the struggle of Årstafältet. They do not show evidence of knowing how to use the artefacts that exist. It is not enough to have knowledge about the values and to mention them at meetings, but they should create a major concern about them, and know who to target with the information, how to target them and how to present the artefacts.

Most of the social arenas identified in this study are used to get more support from the public. Using the actual green area as a social arena is a good tactic for influencing public opinion and using the Internet as a tool is another good method in engaging the public. A limitation of the Internet is that the information put online will most likely be visited and utilised by those that are already holding similar views and ignored by others (Marmura, 2008). According to my interview, the action group at Kampementsbacken has not spent their energy and time on creating a website. In fact, they have in general not paid much attention to mobilising the citizens. Other than distributing flyers in the near area and writing some letters to the editors of local papers they have chosen not to focus on trying to mould the public opinion. Their target group has been the politicians. Their links to the politicians have been created through the personal connections of the residents in the area. Many of the residents

are active in political parties and have used their connections to their own political parties to reach the politicians. Their first breakthrough was when they managed to get the district council (Sw. Stadsdelsnämnd) to unanimously oppose the ideas of construction on Kampementsbacken (interview 6). This support has been a great benefit throughout the process and could not have been achieved without the connections to local politicians.

One can argue that there has not been a great need for mobilising the citizens around Kampementsbacken due to the fact that the area they are fighting for is much smaller than Årstafältet. All the residents on Kampementsbacken have had the possibility to stay in close contact with the action group through their representatives, owing to the well established democratic organisation of the action group and the relatively small number of citizens that would be affected by the construction. The situation around Årstafältet is different, since it is a much larger number of citizens that would be affected by the suggested construction. This fact makes it difficult to reach all the citizens and it makes it more important for the civic actors to engage in mobilising the citizens.

For the civic actors around Årstafältet the attempts of shaping public opinion has been very important also since politicians, architects and the media together have managed to create an image for the public that the building plans will be realised and that there are no options but to accept the development. Headlines seen in the daily newspapers include “This is how the new Årsta will look like” (Öjemar & Sundström, 2009) and “The new city of Årsta takes shape” (Andersson, 2009). The landscape park is nowhere to be mentioned neither by politicians nor in the media. The public actors mobilizing to build on the Årsta field have effectively managed to establish a truth, a fact, that the so-called “windswept field” in Årsta will be developed into a contemporary state-of-the-art neighbourhood informed by international architects and filled with all marvels of sustainable technology to solve the housing crisis in Stockholm and to generate a new economic centre of the city. Their success lies in their ability to access and create the artefacts that they benefit from and bring them into influential social arenas, from Sweden’s largest and most distinguished national newspapers, to exhibition halls in the capital. Through this they have reached the majority of the citizens of Stockholm (and to actors beyond Stockholm, both nationally and even internationally). In my study there does not seem to be anyone at the city or national level, including public actors, that has reflected upon and given voice to how undemocratic the City’s course of action has been. This democratic dimension, that a legally binding local plan for a landscape park was decided upon in the local parliament, is central to the story of Årstafältet and distinguishes it from other similar cases, such as Kampementsbacken.

The civic actors at Kampementsbacken on the other hand, have had an official building plan suggestion to protest against. The area had gone so far in the building process that the suggestion from the civil servants was presented in a program consultation and a plan consultation. They have had detailed information of what the politicians want to change in their area, which seems to have simplified the process of finding relevant counter arguments to the construction. According to my interview, the action group has for example used the sketches from the City Planning Administration to calculate how much each house would be affected by the shading from the new houses and came to the conclusion that the new houses had dramatic shading effects on the existing houses. This production of a fact was something that the City Planning Administration took into consideration, which led them to present another building suggestion with lower houses. This shows the importance and possibilities of the participation of civic actors – partly through taking action to produce useful artefacts – in the planning process but it also highlights that the civic actors need to have access to the official plans in order to have a say about them. The building process of Nya Årstafältet has not even gone to the stage of a program consultation, which means that there are no official plans to protest against. Even though it seems that this area has been subject to building plans for decades, the number of plans that have been official and available to appeal against have not been many. The plans have been presented as suggestions and when the civic actors have complained to the civil servants they get told that nothing is yet determined so any appeals can not be accepted before a scheduled program consultation has taken place. The difference however arises on another level when these “suggestions” are presented in media and by politicians; they are not at all framed as a “suggestion”, but as a plan that will be carried out. For citizens that are not actively opposing the construction and who do not know about the local context, will therefore get accustomed to the idea that building will take place. At the same time, those citizens opposing construction have no possibilities to complain or to present an

alternative. In this way the public actors can obstruct the protests from the civic actors while they work on the final plan. By the time the official plan is ready to be presented, it will pass most of the citizens by since they already think that the construction had been decided, but for the citizens that are opposing the plan they do not have either much time or support to oppose the official plan.

5. Conclusion

The preceding discussion has sought to analyse the nature of urban social-ecological processes and how they relate to the formation of urban green areas. The focus of the paper has been on the participation of the civic actors in the decision making processes that shape urban ecological landscapes. Despite that the public actors, such as the politicians and the civil servants, in theory should encourage the citizens to take part in the planning of their own city (Murdoch, 2006) it seems that their actions instead in some cases can be aimed at inhibiting the participation of civic actors, or at least the ones who oppose the plans of the public actors.

The conflict over how to organize green areas can be seen as mobilizations between different sets of actors that produce different artefacts to convince what to do with the green area (Ernstson, 2008). One of the main findings of this report is how public actors can present a story to the public which actually does not have democratic support or a legal decision behind it, and yet get support of this idea because of their ability to reach out to the public due to their position and power. Framed differently, one can see it as a result of their access to actors that can produce convincing artefacts (for instance architects) and their access to prestigious social arenas (such as national newspapers) in which values can effectively be articulated. Using media and the general trust for politicians, the citizens are let to believe that what the politicians present has already been decided on and it is no use questioning the decision. This is the case with the New Årstafältet architect competition in the case study that this report presents. The few people who question the actions of the public actors are considered to be complaining nit-pickers when in fact what they are doing is claiming their democratic right as citizens to take part of the planning process, and demanding that the process is carried out in a democratic manner. Seeing how the stories that the public actors “weave” (in a similar way to that described as weaving of protective stories by the civic actors) are accepted by the public, makes the importance of civic actors and their alternative stories, the protective stories, even more clear. For future research I suggest, that focus is shifted from being solely on the civic actors to also include public actors that were seen to play an important role in this case, and their agenda of how to organize urban space, including green space. As for Stockholm, and in most contemporary cities, many politicians (often supported by local, national and international business) strive to create cities that can compete on a global market (Sassen, 2006). This results in an aspiration to prevent areas available for exploitation from being caught into local plans of remaining as a green area. At the same time politicians are also striving to preserve green areas in the city and compete with other cities on an environmental level. To keep a balance of these two interests the same politicians that argue for building somewhere in the city (at Årstafältet for instance) might argue for protecting or restoring a green area somewhere else (at Kampementsbacken or the National Urban Park). As Ernstson and Sörlin (2009) write, such processes can have the effect that some green areas are sacrificed before others. An interpretation of this is that the strong protection of the National Urban Park has led to that other green areas, such as possibly Årstafältet, are sacrificed. More research is needed to investigate whether strong protection of certain green areas results in the exploitation of other green areas where the resistance is not strong enough.

In the cases where the civic actors are clearly counteracted by public actors, the shaping of public opinion is an important part of the campaigning work. The alternative story that civic actors want to present, the protective story, needs far more work and effort to reach the public than the work of public actors. The work of weaving protective stories is dependent on the activists, the access to social arenas on which values can be articulated and spread, and the artefacts associated to the particular green area. In this case study the lack of useful artefacts was apparent as an obstacle in the weaving of a protective story. A weak movement identity among the civic actors can also be noticed in this study, which supports the idea that a low sense of movement identity among actors can lead to lesser achievements in the collective actions that they take. Since collective action can also be viewed as a product of bridging social capital it can be stated that the actors of Årstafältet has not succeeded in

creating strong bridging social capital, possibly due to the fact that the actors were focusing on bonding social capital in the initiating period of their struggle and actually avoiding quite consciously to create bridging social capital. This finding draws attention to the importance of a balance between bridging and bonding social capital, something civic actors should take into account as they form action groups and connect to other actors.

In the literature of urban ecology there is a move to better include the human or social dimension (Colding et al., 2006; Ernstson, 2008; Ernstson & Sörlin, 2009; Redman et al., 1999; 2004). Following the actors in this case study, the contrary seems to be true since there is a need to better include an ecological perspective. Here the ecological dimension was not in focus of the debate, which since it seems to affect the outcome of the work of the civic actors trying to protect a green area, ultimately affects the future of the urban landscape. The emergence of green spatial structures in urban landscapes is a result of many social and political factors, some of them brought up in this paper, but without knowledge of the ecology the whole picture is lost. Therefore this case is yet another testimony that future research needs to focus on the mixture of social, political and ecological perspectives in order to analyse social ecological systems as a whole.

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Appendix

Table A1. Descriptive data of interviewees and interviews

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Interviewee: Position, Organisational affiliation [sex – age – occupation]
-- Interview: Date, location [duration – procedure]

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1. Co- founder, Nätverket Årstafältet [Female – 40's – graphic designer]
-- 26 Jan 2009, phone interview [1h – pre-study, notes and written report]
2. Co- founder, Nätverket Årstafältet, member of Mysslingen housing co-operative [Male – 80's – retired building contractor]
-- 19 Feb 2009, meeting-room in housing co-operative of interviewee [2h – recorded and transcribed]
3. Co- founder, Nätverket Årstafältet [Female – 40's – graphic designer]⁵
Chairman, Nätverket Årstafältet [Female – 40's - NA]
-- 25 Feb 2009, café in Årsta [2h- recorded and transcribed]
4. Member, Östberga Social Democratic study circle, allotment association, Östberga resident's association and participates in meetings of Mysslingen housing co-operative [Male – 70's – retired caretaker within psychiatric care]
-- 2 Mar 2009, phone interview [1h,15m – notes and written report]
5. Employee, City Planning Administration [Female – NA – ecologist]
-- 2 Mar 2009, phone interview [20min – notes and written report]
6. Chairman, Action group Save the environment around Kampementsgatan (Aktionsgruppen Rädda miljön kring Kampementsgatan) [Male – 60's – high school teacher]
-- 20 July 2009, meeting- room in housing co-operative of interviewee [2h – recorded and transcribed]

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⁵ Same interviewee as in interview 1

Table A2. Participatory observations (part. obs.)

Type of meeting, organiser.
Date, venue
Description
1. Members meeting. Mysslingen housing co-operative.
17 February 2009, meeting room of housing co-operative.
General meeting open for the public.
2. Private meeting. City Planning Administration,
27 February 2009. Tekniska Nämndehuset.
Leading figures of Nätverket Årstafältet were invited to discuss the future of Årstafältet with civil servants of the City Planning Administration.
3. Members meeting with invited politician. Mysslingen housing co-operative.
3 March 2009, meeting room of housing co-operative.
General meeting open for the public, visited by a politician from the Green Party (Sw. Miljöpartiet)
4. Information from civil servants. City Planning Administration.
18 March 2009, Östberga school.
Open meeting where civil servants presented the new plans for construction on Årstafältet, and answered questions from the public
5. Landscape park motivation event. Nätverket Årstafältet.
28 April 2009, Årsta Community Centre (Sw. Årsta Folkets Hus).
Half day event with the aim to motivate residents for future struggles to protect the Landscape Park, different experts were invited as speakers.
6. Information from politicians. Mysslingen housing co-operative.
28 April 2009, Årsta Community Centre (Sw. Årsta Folkets Hus).
Open meeting where Kristina Alvendal, vice mayor at the City Planning Division, presented the new plans for construction on Årstafältet, and answered questions from the public

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