Understanding Community Sense of Place and Social Sustainability Through Instagram

The establishment of Rågsved nature reserve and the demolition of Snösätra Graffiti Wall of Fame

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Abstract

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This thesis investigates digital sense of place and social and cultural sustainability issues in the establishment of Rågsved nature reserve and the subsequent demolition of (parts of) Snösättra Graffiti Wall of Fame. Drawing on theories of the more or less digital world, the non-representational, the more-than human, and the idea of geolocative social media as participatory public space (in the making), the thesis aim was to investigate how covert netnography/digital ethnography and discourse analysis can help us understand sense of place, and to identify sustainability issues through geotagged user generated data on Instagram. The empirical findings reveal conflicting community sense of place, assembled through complex entanglements between algorithms, physical structures/landscape, language, and sensory embodiments, which were simultaneously digital and non-digital. There were indications that the flows of posts geotagged on Instagram functioned as ‘claimed’ participatory public space, where stakeholder communities discussed place outside of dominant political imaginations. In addition, the posts indicated social and cultural sustainability issues. The main conclusion is that this type of discourse analysis of social media has the potential for functioning as a ‘passive’ participation strategy, and for creating deliberative discussions with stakeholder communities based on an understanding of place as they experience it.
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I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all those Instagram users whose public engagement with geotags related to Kräppladalen, Snösätra, and Rågsved nature reserve allowed me to learn so much about these areas. Sharing of personal information online can be a sensitive issue, and not knowing who is watching in those online sites, or for what purpose, may feel scary or uncomfortable. I am amazed by the engagement I encountered and how close these people let me, a stranger, view and read about their everyday lives, opinions, hobbies, creative projects, and passions.

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Aviva Blomquist, June 7th, 2021
Summary

Technological advancements such as the development of the digital camera, personal mobile devices, and social media sites have challenged traditional knowledge production hierarchies and increased our mundane everyday interaction with the digital so that it no longer is “separate from other experiences in the world” (Pink et al. 2017: 379). Digital geographies that recognize these developments is an exciting field that deserves more attention by geographers and spatial planners.

In this thesis I investigate digital community sense of place and social and cultural sustainability issues through the research example of the establishment of Rågsved nature reserve and the subsequent controversial demolition of Snösättra Graffiti Wall of Fame. The controversy gained a lot of media attention, and I personally followed the situation as it unfolded ‘passively’ through social media discussions and protests. Recognizing other ‘passive’ citizens discussing place through everyday performances of life as they experience place, this thesis aims to investigate how covert netnography/digital ethnography and discourse analysis can help us understand digital sense of place and help to identify sustainability issues through geotagged user generated data on Instagram.

The thesis’ theoretical framework draws on theories of the more or less digital world, the non-representational, the more-than human, and the idea of geolocative social media as participatory public space (in the making). In such public spaces on Instagram, qualitative geotagged data assemble flows of photographs, texts, and embodied practices related to community sense of place. In addition, the thesis’ theoretical framework draws on literature about social and cultural sustainability, as well as previous research on socio-spatial and participatory planning, the difficulties that such planning activities may entail, and the possibilities that geolocative social media data presents in relation to planning.

The empirical findings reveal conflicting community sense of place in the empirical research example, assembled through complex entanglements between algorithms, physical structures/landscape, sensory embodiments, and language that were simultaneously digital and non-digital. There were indications that the flows of posts geotagged on Instagram functioned as ‘claimed’ participatory public space, where stakeholder communities discussed place outside of dominant political imaginations. For example, by arguing for an alternative idea of an integrated culture-nature reserve. In addition, the posts indicated social and cultural sustainability issues that should be addressed by planners and decision makers.

The main conclusion in this thesis is that this type of discourse analysis of social media has the potential for functioning as a ‘passive’ participation strategy, and for creating deliberative discussions with stakeholder communities based on an understanding of place as they experience it. Potential that, hopefully, can change the regretful fate of places like Snösättra Graffiti Wall of Fame in the future, and ensure that social and cultural sustainability are identified and addressed.
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1. Introduction

Digital geography is an exciting field; it focuses on how the digital is becoming increasingly intertwined with non-digital geographies, and through our everyday lives. As Pink et al. (2017: 379) have argued, “the digital is not separate from other forms of experience in the world, but it is relational, our ways of engaging with it are multisensory, and it accompanies us through the everyday world”. For many, including myself, visiting social media sites and apps such as Instagram may be one of the first things completed when waking up in the morning. These sites and apps contain an enormous quantity of data, and for me, like for others, my mornings scrolls on social media are an important part of how I digest news and make sense of the world.

One reason for why the digital world has been so successful in keeping our attention and nestling itself into our everyday lives is the way it aggregates user generated content into flows of information. Another reason is technical advancements, where technology like the personal digital camera and the mobile device have been especially significant for how we stay connected and communicate with not only our friends and family, but also strangers and community members. Alongside these developments, (photo)blogging and citizen witnessing have emerged and begun to challenge traditional hierarchies in terms of professional/unprofessional content and power relations in traditional processes of knowledge production (Murray 2013; Allan 2013). In other words, these developments have resulted in new and resourceful data and knowledge about the world, in the digital world, for everyday citizens and researchers alike to utilize. As Lindgren (2017) has argued, we are already living in what can be considered a ‘post-digital’ society, studying how we make sense of space and place in a ‘more or less digital’ (Merrill et al. 2020) world is thus an increasingly important societal contribution.

At the same time, another ‘development’ in the world is the increased engagement with the concept sustainability, which encompass ecological, social, economic, and cultural dimensions. In this thesis, the concept gets its relevance through links to socio-spatial planning, in which both social sustainability and sense of place approaches have been used to (Erdiaw-Kwasie and Basson 2017), for example, investigate how spatial planning processes can engage local communities (through participation) to ensure equity, empowerment, and environmentally sensitive economic development (Erdiaw-Kwasie and Basson 2017; Owens 1994). In this thesis, I therefore decided to approach the controversial spatial transformation related to the establishment of a nature reserve in Rågsved, Stockholm (see Section 1.1) by both investigating how its sense of place manifest digitally and was indicative of social and cultural sustainability too.

1.1 Background

Kräppladalen (Kräppla valley) is an urban green area also known as Rågsveds friområde (see Map 1 in the Appendix). The area separates the neighbourhood Rågsved from other suburbs in Stockholm and has been recognized by Stockholm’s Naturskyddsförening (Stockholm’s nature association) amongst others as having high nature values and biodiversity (Hylén 2012; Mildén 2015). The area consists of different biotopes, including wetland and forest, and within Kräppladalen there is a popular nature and culture trail, some urban allotment gardens, and (during the summer) different animals
that graze the land. However, like urban green areas often are, Kräppladalen has been under pressure for exploitation by a growing city facing a housing crisis (Hylén 2012). Apart from Stockholm’s Naturskyddsförening, a local association called Kräpplagruppen (Kräppla group) has formed and has since the 1990s worked towards conserving the area (Mildén 2015; Kräpplagruppen 2021). According to their blog (Kräpplagruppen 2021), their main political goal has been, and continues to be, for Kräppladalen to be classified as a nature reserve and thus get formal protection from exploitation plans.

After many years of political discussion, changes of government, and struggle by Kräpplagruppen to reach this goal, Rågsved nature reserve was established in 2018 (Jennische 2018), including a large part of Kräppladalen within its borders (see Map 1 in the Appendix). The newly established nature reserve also included the southern parts of Kräppladalen's industrial area called Snösätra. Now part of a nature reserve, it was decided that these post-industrial parts were to be demolished as part of remediation work, including the cleaning of toxic chemicals and pollutants in the ground. From an ecological sustainability point of view, it would appear that this remediation was a great decision. Yet, the decision was controversial. Since 2014, Snösätra had organically developed into a legal graffiti zone called Snösätra Wall of Fame. This popular cultural block even had a yearly street/graffiti art festival called Spring Beast Festival. According to the website of a local cultural association called Kulturkvarters Snösätra (Kulturkvarters Snösätra 2021), Snösätra was/is Europe’s largest outdoor gallery and lures elite artists from the urban art scene. In one news article from 2020, the area was even compared to the National Museum (of art) in Sweden (Yussuf 2020).

I do not remember when I first heard rumours about Stockholm city’s plan to demolish parts of Snösätra. However, the situation was eventually brought to my full attention in 2020 by a series articles in local media, and by a classmate who brought the case up for discussion about urban art and representations in urban landscapes. The case stuck in my mind as it finally became clear to me that the rumours were about to become reality. The final decision to start the demolition in late August 2020 shocked me. While I had been watching the situation unfold from afar behind my smartphone screen, not really engaged actively in any protest or so, I knew from my own experience of visiting Snösätra that it was a very special place, likely to be irretrievably changed by the extent of the demolition (or at least I feared so). Although I have focused my master’s studies on environmental social sciences, I was puzzled that the city would jeopardize the cultural qualities of a place, which the city itself had endorsed by giving the organizers of Spring Beast Festival a cultural award (Lodding 2019), in the name of sustainability (Jennische 2018). Had social and cultural sustainability dimensions not been considered? Had stakeholder communities not been invited to participate in the spatial planning process? Or had participatory efforts failed to identify and recognize the significance of Snösätra to stakeholder communities? Perhaps too many people had acted like me, passively waiting for the city to change its decision? In this thesis, I did not aim to answer these questions, rather I address how they functioned to frame my research aims and rationale, which will be discussed in the next section.
1.2 Aims and rationale

To me, this research example of the establishment Rågsved nature reserve and demolition of Snösättra is interesting for two main reasons. First is that the example points to issues relevant to socio-spatial planning processes because the graffiti area had developed only four years prior to the decision to establish the nature reserve, meaning that (some of) the social and cultural values in the area appeared to have developed relatively late in the planning process, at least compared to the ecological ones (that had been discussed since the 1990s). Such changes require flexible planning processes where a community’s needs and opinions can be included as they are required to be. Second, and in relation to my own position within the research: while I cared about the situation, it simply was not convenient for me to engage actively in protests apart from maybe signing an online petition. Especially during a global pandemic, when my opposition was limited by both my engagement with others and my movement in the city.

Socio-spatial planning literatures that apply sense of place and/or sustainability approaches frequently identify the need for increased democratic, inclusive, empowering, and participatory planning (Erdiaw-Kwasie and Basson, 2018). However, open dialogue forums between planners and local communities run the risk of attracting only certain groups of community members or excluding some, asking community member the ‘wrong’ questions, becoming the political battlefield between strong interest groups that do not necessarily represent community interests, disappointing those who participate without seeing/understanding the results, or becoming outdated in a long planning process. In other words, there is a need to explore new and/or complementary creative ways for identifying conflicting and possibly changing community sense of place, as well as relevant sustainability issues. As I was scrolling through flows of posts on Instagram related the spatial conflict in Rågsved, I recognized other ‘passive’ citizens, whose engagement appeared to be limited to perhaps signing a petition or talking about it on social media (without actively participating in consultation meetings), and wondered, how can we understand social media as public participatory space where people discuss place from their point of view as they experience it in their everyday life?

The aim of the thesis is thus to answer the following research questions:

**RQ1**: How can a discursive analysis of qualitative geotagged data posted to Instagram assemble flows of photographs, texts, and embodied practices related to community sense of place?

**RQ2**: In the context of planning activities, how can such digital analyses help to better understand key social and cultural sustainability issues?

Online sites and apps, such as Instagram, are generally accessible to a large share of community members in Sweden and allow for the sharing of data that is produced through everyday practices of sharing photographs and text, which is also place-based with/in the public (Arrigoni and Galani, 2019). Whether consciously or not, such data may contribute to discourse about place over time and on a community level when a geotag or hashtag is added, or when placenames are explicitly written/emphasised in a post. In the example of the establishment of Rågsved nature reserve, such open-sourced data offered opportunities for examining (conflicting) community sense of place over time, starting with the year before the final decision to demolish southern Snösättra (July 2019), to the moments when the graffiti walls were knocked down (Autumn 2020), and
the time following this event, from the position of today (April 2021).

1.3 Structure

So far in Chapter One, I have discussed the main thesis focus, introduced the research example, and made clear my thesis aims and rationale. In this section, I will explain the structure of the thesis, starting from the next chapter. In Chapter Two, I construct the thesis’ theoretical framework by discussing previous research and theory related to the thesis focus, thus making clear my theoretical assumptions that I have based different choices of research design, methods, and interpretations of empirical findings on.

In Chapter Three, I discuss the development of research design and questions, including a discussion of constructionist epistemology and qualitative methodology, as well as reflections related to research quality and the position(s) from where I wrote this thesis. I also explain my methods for collecting and analysing data and discuss ethical considerations when using public online data from social media.

In Chapter Four and Five, I discuss my empirical findings in relation to theory with the aim of answering my two research questions separately. Chapter Four focuses on (digital) sense of place by investigating place identity, place dependency, and place attachment in three categories of flows of posts geotagged to Rågsved nature reserve, and the general areas of Kräppladalen and Snösättra. Chapter Five focus on social and cultural sustainability issues within the same categories.

Finally, in Chapter Six, I will present and discuss my conclusions for the thesis, as well as the thesis implications, contributions, and limitations.
2. Theoretical framework and literature review

In this chapter, I will introduce literature related to this thesis’ key concepts, (digital) sense of place, and social and cultural sustainability. In addition, I will discuss the theoretical assumptions I make regarding people’s engagement with the digital world and geotags within social media in terms of public space and spaces for participation. The purpose of this chapter is to clarify the definitional and theoretical lenses through which I will filter my interpretations of data and representation of knowledge generated in the results and discussion sections of the thesis. With this chapter, I also aim to give insight to literature that has helped frame the particular kind of research example of this thesis through the lens of social justice, participation for spatial transformations, and (environmental) gentrification in a way that has informed my choice and conceptualisation of key concepts.

2.1 Sense of place: concepts, relevance, and the digital

Sense of place is a construct explored in different social science disciplines to examine people-place relations and is related to other concepts such as place attachment, sense of community, and place identity (Grenni et al. 2019). While some conceptualisations of sense of place describe it as the unique and inherent essence of a place, in this thesis I have approached sense of place in accordance with the strand of literature that uses the concept to “emphasise the way people experience, use, and understand place” (Grenni et al. 2019: 415). Di Masso et al. (2017) have argued that language is not the only meaning-making practice that shapes realisations of a sense of place. Rather, and drawing on a Foucauldian theorization of discourse and meaning-making, they have argued for the need to include analyses of meaning-making through “geographical arrangements, territorial behaviour, embodied practices, and affective patterns” (Di Masso, et al. 2017: 101).

Included in my definition of sense of place in this thesis is a multidimensional concept made up of three main and interrelated components: place identity, place dependency, and place attachment. Place identity refers to the way a place is understood as one specific place in relation to other places, through discourses surrounding what physical features, nature, culture, and people that are attributed to a place (Peng et al. 2020). Place dependency is defined as the quality of attributes in one place compared to the quality of the same attributes in other places, understood through the lens of people’s needs (Erdiaw-Kwasie and Basson 2018). In other words, place dependency also concerns whether the filling of people’s needs is dependent on that specific place, or if those needs can be filled elsewhere. Finally, place attachment is defined as the emotional bond between people and place (Erdiaw-Kwasie and Basson 2018). This bond may both be affectionate and of positive sentiment (Erdiaw-Kwasie and Basson 2018), or negative too (Manzo 2003). Place attachment is commonly used in the environmental psychology literature to examine emotional bonds towards the environment within a cognitivist approach to representations in language. However, Manzo (2003) has pointed out that people also may have negative emotional experiences of places and have thus questioned the assumption made in much of the literature on place attachment and sense of place that people’s bonds to ‘home’ environments necessarily are positive.
In this section, I have introduced the concept sense of place as well as its definition for this thesis. In the next section, I will discuss previous literature which frames the way I have understood sense of place as relevant to the research example of Rågsved nature reserve and Snösätra.

**Why studying sense of place matter (related to the research example)**

While it is possible to understand these three main components of a sense of place as interactions between the cognitive, affective, and conative on an individual level, taking a discursive approach means that determinations of a sense of place are highly context dependent and deeply subjective. Due to different subject positions and individual place-based interactions, even people living the same communities can narrate different sense of place. Sense of place discourse at the community level, for example, is often mired in micro-politics and conflicting narratives (Di Masso et al. 2017; Di Masso and Dixon 2015). Often, these micro-politics and conflicting narratives relate to processes of landscape change. For example, landscape change can disrupt established conceptions of sense of place and place attachment such that certain community members or ‘outsiders’ claim territory (Di Masso et al. 2017; Di Masso and Dixon 2015). As such, scholarship on a sense of place, place attachment and place identity has also encompassed aspects of environmental stewardship and engagement with ecological sustainability issues (Chapin and Knapp 2015). In addition, Łaszkiewicz et al. (2018) have showed that a strong sense of place has been associated with community health, and its development for individuals in urban areas has been associated with access to green spaces and parks. They have therefore proposed that a structural exclusion of socio-economically weak communities from neighbourhoods with green spaces should be considered an environmental injustice.

From this perspective, the establishment of Rågsved nature reserve could be considered a positive development, which could strengthen sense of place and community health. On the other hand, several studies have showed that ‘improving’ green areas can also lead to processes of ecological or environmental gentrification and the ‘taking over’ of spaces by ‘outsiders’. For example, Harris et al. (2020) have showed that new green spaces and their design have played a part in the gentrification process of a neighbourhood in Chicago by examining citizen-policing by white ‘newcomers’, for example through reporting youths’ activities in the area or graffiti. In Harris et al.’s (2020) study, older residents and youths of colour became physically estranged from parts of their neighbourhood as they started to avoid the neighbourhood’s green area. However, Pánek et al. (2020) have also shown that long-time residents have been symbolically and emotionally displaced as a result of gentrification, even though they remained in their neighbourhood. Pánek et al. (2020) came to this conclusion by exploring the emotional geographies of gentrifying neighbourhoods by using participatory methods to map difference in and changing sense of place.

One way of approaching spatial planning to avoid such consequences and to ensure sustainable landscape change, is to draw on Kasemets et al.’s (2019) understanding of community sense of place as either social or ecological, distinctions that are inspired by Butz and Eyles’ (1997) core components of community (the social, ideological, and ecological). These articulations, Kasemets et al. (2019) have argued, are relevant for spatial planners to examine because ecological sense of place articulations have been
based on historical narratives, ecological knowledge, and local place memories. Examining sense of place in communities that articulate ecological sense of place can thus provide important information so to ensure sustainable development projects:

without damaging the vernacular way of life in a local community. When a community's identity is linked with an agency in respect to environmental needs, rather than toward a conscious lifestyle and strict community procedures, it can create environmental solutions instead of limitations, and a more tolerant acceptance of multiple identities within the whole community (Kasemets et al. 2019: 46).

This far, I have discussed my reasoning for choosing sense of place as my key concept for investigating the research example of this thesis. Next, I will move on to discuss sense of place in a digital world.

**Digital sense of place, in the making**

In the first two sections, I discussed sense of place literature and literature that frames sense of place as relevant for the thesis’ research example, as introduced in Chapter One and as the focus of this thesis. In this section, I further discuss sense of place, but turn my focus towards a digital sense of place, in the making, before moving on to the next section where I discuss research in the digital world.

One of my main theoretical assumptions in this thesis was based on Arrigoni and Galani’s (2019) idea of understanding social media’s geolocated content as memory work constantly in the making. They based their idea on the logics of social media algorithms as being fluid and dynamic in nature in terms of information circulation. As individual users continuously share and unshare public information, the combination of posts in different geotags’ flows change. While Arrigoni and Galani (2019) focused on addressing memory formulations in these spaces, I argue that this theoretical position could also be used to investigate constructions of community sense of place at moments in time. The key point of this idea is to acknowledge that studying such data flows only provides snippets from moments in time, meaning that because users can unshare a post at any time, sense of place may be constructed differently even if the same time-period is studied again later. This instability beyond snippets in time further acknowledge individual users’ agency in constructing sense of place.

I draw on Di Masso and Dixon’s (2015) discursive approach to people-place relations, because it enables the concept place-assemblage to be incorporated as an analytical tool. People-place relations and interactions then reveal as dynamic entanglements of spatial arrangements, embodied practices, and discursive constructions that are both ever-shifting and temporarily stabilised. The main advantage of this framework, is that it not only allows for analysis of material, embodied and more than-representational, and language meaning-making separately, but also for how these dimensions interact to create meaning at specific moments in time and place. For example, using this framework, Di Masso and Dixon (2015) have been able to analyse the meaning of complex entanglements between the symbolic graffiti on a certain wall or planting of a certain kind of tree in a certain place, the embodied experience of gathering at a certain place to demonstrate or tearing down a wall with one’s bare hands, and the choice of
words to write on signs and speak at certain moments. Together, these entanglements represent episodes in time and place that implicate discourses about the relationship between a community and a place, as well as political conflict or social struggle over that place. Di Masso and Dixon (2015) have mentioned that the framework could contribute to literature and research that focus on the concept place attachment, or similar. In this thesis, I conceptualise digital sense of place as in the making and represented through complex entanglements by drawing on Di Masso and Dixon’s (2015) place-assemblage idea together with Arrigoni and Galani’s (2019) conceptualisation of digital memory.

2.2 Research in the digital world

In the previous section, I have discussed sense of place, why sense of place is a relevant concept to investigate for the research example of this thesis, as well as my conceptualization of digital sense of place as in the making. Now, I will discuss research in the digital world, as well as why and how I have decided to situate the focus of this thesis within the digital world.

In the editorial for the ‘new’ journal Digital Geography and Society published in 2020, Kinsley et al. (2020) motion that:

*the digital means that new areas of empirical research, new conceptual tools, new methods and new ways of being scholar are all being developed. The digital can expand geographical thinking and that geographical thinking can, in turn, enrich the emerging and ongoing theorisation of ‘the digital’* (Digital Geographies Working Group 2017: n.p).

Sense of place in the digital world has previously been studied by for example, von Seggern et al. (2010). In their research, they recognized the capability of user generated content on digital memory bank websites to promote sense of place. The increased intertwining of such user generated content through social media, has lead Pink et al. (2017: 379) to argue that “the digital is not separate from other forms of experience in the world, but it is relational, our ways of engaging with it are multisensory, and it accompanies us through the everyday world”. A revisit to the topic of sense of place in the digital world has therefore afforded me opportunities to investigate how the digital not only promotes sense of place, but how it may also be understood increasingly as an intrinsic part of how sense of place is socially, materially, emotionally, and digitally constructed.

In this thesis I decided to apply the idea of digital sense of place to investigate the establishment of a new nature reserve at (what may be interpreted as) the expense of an organically developed graffiti area in a stigmatized suburb in Stockholm, despite protests and claims of community exclusion from the planning process. I therefore expand on the idea of digital sense of place, and as will be discussed in later sections, ideas of more or less digital public space (Merrill et al. 2020) and social media as participatory public space to questions of spatial “justice, democracy and participation (that) are at the forefront of exciting digital scholarship” (Kinsley et al. 2020: 2).
More or less digital public space

Merrill et al. (2020) have proposed the idea of more or less digital to describe the constitution of public space as simultaneously and inseparably digital and non-digital. This position takes root in the fact that smartphones and social media have become an inseparable part of everyday life, increasingly mediating urban life (Kitchin and Dodge 2011). A key part of Merrill et al.’s (2020) logic of more or less digital also relates to the conceptualization of space, place, media content, and social context distinctions (Adams 2011) across digital and non-digital platforms and materialities. Merrill et al. (2020: 550) have argued that such digital and non-digital distinctions have become more and more difficult to make because:

> the digital mediation of material spaces, activities and objects but involves a more mutually constitutive flow through which materialities acquire digitality and digital logics are given material forms.

A further part of this discussion relates to the complexity of eroding ‘private’ and ‘public’ distinctions (Chun 2016) through social media sites, where “people, technology, and practice” (Boyd 2014: 8) assemble to construct so called ‘networked publics’. Using hashtags (see Section 2.3 below), may represent “intentional attempt[s] to communicate with an imagined community participating in a specific event or discussion” (Merrill et al. 2020: 549; Bruns and Burgess 2015). For example, Bruns and Burgess (2015) have showed that hashtags that emerge on Twitter are used to organize networked and imagined publics around specific topics, and that debate around what hashtag name is appropriate can lead to the emerging of different hashtags that may create competing publics. In this type of digital public space, individual’s performances create what Matheson (2018: 4) has called an “ebb and flow of publicness”. In other words, it is through individual performances of, for example selecting a hashtag, that the public is created in the form of a ‘flow’ according to the algorithms of the social media site. This flow changes according to the intensity of such performance in time.

In Merrill et al.’s (2020: 550) conceptualisation, the public is more or less digital, meaning that the public (including public space) is “created, melded with one another, experienced and made sense of across different spaces, activities and objects that (they) conceive as […] simultaneously digitally and non-digitally constituted to some degree”. In supporting their proposition of the more-or-less digital, they have argued that we should direct less attention towards figuring out where the line between the more or less digital lies, and more time acknowledging the complexity of elements that constitute public space in what (increasingly) may be understood as a post-digital society (Lindgren 2017; Merrill et al 2020). In this thesis project, I adopt a more or less digital position in my investigation of how community sense of place is constructed through online social media posts geotagged to specific public places. This framework has allowed me to consider discursive constructions that include complex interactions between language, the physical materiality, and the embodied and emotional from a perspective where both the digital and non-digital are included and interlinked.
According to Hayward (1998: 2), freedom “is not only the right to participate effectively in a given space, but the right to define and to shape that space”. The difference between levels/types of participation is thus sometimes conceptualized as closed space, invited space, and claimed/created space (Gaventa 2006). While there certainly may be great nuances within these categories, in this thesis I will assume the idea of social media as public spaces that can be ‘claimed’ by citizens to reject or challenge hegemonic and institutionalized ideas. I do so by drawing on Arrigoni and Galani’s (2019: 164) discussion of social media allowing for memory creation outside of institutional frameworks, and I take stock their concluding remarks about moving “beyond distinctions between private and public memories […]. In this framework, personal instances of social interaction may acquire documentary, historical, or heritage relevance”. In this sense, social media sites may be understood as sites where people can construct realities in their own words, and based on their own experiences and imaginaries, as will be discussed in later sections. On the other hand, as Cornwall (2004) has reminded us, such spaces will always be affected by power dynamics. In the case of social media, understood as more or less digital sites of flows of publicness, such power dynamics may be expressed in several ways. For example, through authorities’ physical or symbolic changing of landscape, authorities’ presence on social media through user accounts, or through other users’ internalizing of hegemonic discourses.

As Bucher (2018) have argued, another important power dynamic is that between social media users, who generate content, and the algorithms which order the flow of content. This position relates to an understanding of more-than human performances, meaning that humanness is performed through entanglements with the non-human (Lupton and Watson 2020; Bucher 2018). For example, as people encounter and interact with social media algorithms in their everyday life. In 2021, Instagram’s geotags order posts according to date of publishing (starting from the last published post), except for twelve ‘top’ posts at the very start of the flow which appear to have been ordered to this category based on user interaction with the post. Apart from these ‘top’ posts, the current algorithms on Instagram theoretically thus allow the same freedom and access to shape the flow to any user independently of who owns/controls the account and follows Instagram’s community guidelines. In this thesis, I therefore assumed (at least) a potential for citizens to gain control over the flow of content, and ‘claim’ the space through their own everyday experiences and discussions about place.

2.3 Digital data: photography, networked images and tagging as data

The scholarship I have reviewed on the sharing of photographs on social media and using voluntary geographical information on social media as data has shown a shift in control over public discourse enabled by rapid access to digital photographic tools and online media. In this section of the literature review on social media and digital photography as data, I discuss this power shift in relation to the use of photographs to generate place-based information, the networked image, citizen witnessing, and the use tags to aggregate data posted online. Social media culture on sites such as Flickr and Instagram have blurred the lines between professional and amateur photographers, as well as private and public (institutionalized) repositories for place memories. This
spatial shift from private to public, and material to digital too, has meant that the data from social media sites has become an effective research resource for understanding how history and memories play out in real time, and how people’s embodied, mundane, and everyday experiences are captured by them, often serendipitously, in place.

In the last two decades, significant technological advancement in digital photography have shifted how researchers use and engage with digital and visual materials, both as part of research projects and as the subject of research themselves (Lister, 2013). Technological developments manifest in the incorporation of mobile cameras in the everyday life of many people and the mundane capturing of a framed moment in time (Murray 2013). These apparently mundane moments are often shared, digitally, and with people we know and do not know, on social media sites. Where once a collection of photographs was a private record kept materially by individuals, photo-sharing not only casts these images into public space (by the taker’s choice, mostly), but it also beckons us to move beyond the ‘private-public’ divide in regards the data created and stored by digital photography. In this regard, Arrigoni and Galani (2019) have called for more research on photo-sharing sites as social processes that capture ‘memory in the making’ and the associated contexts, meanings, and traces through complex place-making processes.

Conducting qualitative photo-analyses enables researchers to gain insight into the user’s relationship with/to place. Such analyses are rapid and relatively low-cost, and as I have shown in this thesis, they can remain feasible field techniques when direct access to the field is restricted (such as with the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic). However, easy access to digital technologies means that researchers can also access geographic information in the form of place names from digital media. For example, Lock and Pettit (2020) have conceptualized the analysis of social media data with voluntary geographical information (VGI) in planning projects as ‘passive’ civic participation. Passive participation did not require any (extra) effort or time from the participants, neither did it require the researchers to be physically located with the participants. Rather, the researchers drew on data that the participants were already voluntarily sharing on Twitter. This research example demonstrates the capacity for the analyses of social media content to be viewed as digital data sources.

Another important change imparted by technological advancements in digital photography, has been the emergence of the ‘networked image’, which involves the metadata associated with a visual image assimilated into a (global) flow of data and information based on algorithms. This networked image has meant the need to pause and (re)visit the ontology of photography in, and as, a research project. Part of this (re)visiting has been conceptualisation of the network image within actor network theory, and as a ‘socio-technical object’ itself a product of networks of agencies (Lister 2013). In this approach, photography has been understood as a hybrid and relational outcome of aligned factors, stabilizing meanings at moments in time, and “involving the creative presence of organic beings, technological devices and discursive codes, as well as people, in the fabrics of everyday living” (Larsen 2008: 144; Lister 2013). While photography’s link to ideas of the preservation of the past has remained intact, the emergence of networked images has meant that the everyday incorporation of mobile cameras now requires new understandings of changed relationships between the photographer, camera, spectator and the image. In this vein, Allan (2013) has also
argued that in the context of photojournalism by discussing concepts such as citizen witnessing and citizen journalism, the digital age has contributed to the blurring between professional photographers.

Citizen witnessing has encompassed citizens’ using personal recording technologies to generate “first-hand, embodied forms of visual reportage”, which they then share through social (digital) networks (Allan 2013: 183). Yet, according to Allan (2013), citizens’ recordings typically still require uptake and selection by established media because most citizens witnessing involves recording events as they happen, at a certain time and place, as proof of an event and/or their presence at said event. The embodied experience of getting ‘proof’ has been used almost as ‘unfiltered’ evidence of an event, at least in terms of the capacity of that type of evidence to be viewed independently of a mediatised account of the same event.

While citizen witnessing is one outcome of the increased embeddedness of digital photography in our everyday lives – thanks to its incorporation into our mobile phones – another outcome of the networked capacity of these images to record everyday life is on social media. Social media such as Flickr and Instagram have, as Murray (2013) has argued, is a preferred aesthetic of the everyday and mundane. This preference blurs the lines between professional photographer and amateur and as such also distorts hierarchal relationships between content creators (although there are norms and values regarding the photographs themselves). For example, photobloggers may find it difficult to separate their blogging from their photography, through which they aim to capture life as they experience it, compared to traditional types of ‘special event’ photography.

**Spatialising the networked image: tags, geotags and hashtags**

On social media sites that are centred around user created content, the users who share photographs, videos, and texts may use ‘tags’ to their posts. These tags function as a way of adding information and of organizing posts according to their algorithmic flow of content, usually either by a hashtag (topic based) or geotag (geolocative) of varying precision. In this thesis, my analysis will depart from the flow of content posted to different geotags. Compared to hashtags, geotags are always linked to a physical location represented in a map. According to Arrigoni and Galani (2019: 153), this link can provide some “stability in the ordering or aggregating principle for photo-sharing content”, which makes it appropriate for analysis related to place-making processes. That is not to say that such representations necessarily capture the complexity of place borders or names. However, geotags tell us something unique about place from the point of view of people who identify with, and use such tags, as they experience place and engage in different activities there. I thus draw on Bruns and Burgess’s (2015) idea of tags and imagined publics, which I discussed previously (Section 2.2), and assume that the geotag adds a layer of data that ties such an imagined public to an (imagined) physical place.

The type of data that can be found on Instagram is user generated, and as previously mentioned draws focus on the mundane and everyday life. In contrast to data that has been generated or elicited through different prompts by a researcher, user generated data has been generated without the guidance of research questions based pre-existing ideas by a researcher. In addition, user generated data on social media sites are generated
through and in the context of everyday life, as people experience it. In this thesis project, I therefore assume that the user generated and geotagged data on Instagram can tell us something unique about place from the point of view of people who live out their everyday life there.

The geotag has an inherent stability in its ordering and aggregating of content that makes it highly relevant in relation to memory practice and place-making processes (Arrigoni and Galani, 2019). People use geotagged data at social demonstrations to note their (physical) presence and participation. For example, Arrigoni and Galani (2019: 149) have examined geotagged user generated content on social media where a variety of voices may “reflect and remediate institutional narratives”, to investigate non-institutional place memories on Flickr. In their study, they have used a commercial Geostreaming aggregator tool to mine publicly shared photographs and images from Flickr together with textual metadata (title, tags, comments, geolocation, and dates) and investigated place memory in Loreto Square, Milan, Italy. Based on a qualitative interpretative approach, Arrigoni and Galani (2019: 156) focused on a combination of the tags and style of some pictures as seeming to “demand an intrinsically public and documentary reading”; for instance, two users had shared identical photographs of graffiti representing and symbolising the historical past of the square that have been forgotten/hidden in official formation of the physical landscape. Since the graffiti had a clear political message (disapproval of ex-Prime Minister Berlusconi by comparing him to Mussolini through spatial links), they have also interpreted the act of sharing these photographs as “mundane political commentaries and processes of identity building and identity performance” (Arrigoni and Galani 2019: 157).

Geotagged posts can also give new collective meanings to places of cultural and historical significance and show how place is continuously mediated temporally. As a form of accelerated historicisation and heritagisation, geotagging and by extension layering new information about place to place, this process of accelerated historicization can be independent of, or seen as a by-product of, the intentions of the content sharing users. For example, Arrigoni and Galani (2019) have also noted that as history unfolds, users in (for example) citizen protests use geotagging to demonstrate their physical presence in the protest.

Hashtags, on the other hand, can be used to direct research attention towards the use of photographs and selfies on social media as dialogical gestures and performances of (polemical) representations of political identity (Aziz, 2017). The study of non-image-centric visual data, that is the data aggregated with the tag, can be understood as “communicative objects that circulate and generate social interactions and consequently are context-dependent while holding multiple meanings” (Gómez and San Cornelio 2018: 52). The use of hashtags when sharing images has been studied in the context of political struggle in the case of the #VibraMexico rally on Instagram, in which participators aimed to reclaim the right of Mexicans to present images of and define who they are in resistance to President Trump’s populist and hateful comments about Mexicans (Gómez Cruz and San Cornelio 2018). Based on the idea of ‘logic of aggregation’, Gómez and San Cornelio (2018) have used remote ethnography to participate in the rally but remotely through the use of tags, and then focused on the content of tags related to the rally as a proxy for participation in citizen protest. Data was collected systematically using the Instagram’s official Application Programming
Interface to mine data and create an archive of visual protest material, which was then analysed with the qualitative data analysis software called NVivo. Once this analysis was completed, some of the most active participants in the rally were detected and contacted for engagement in online interviews and ethnographical observations of their social media practices.

In another research focused on selfies posted under #azadimarch (Freedom March in Pakistan in 2014) on Instagram, Aziz (2017) has found that the usually banal and mundane acts of posting selfies shifted to performances that documented media coverage, citizen participation, and citizens performance. For example, strong linkages to discussions of spatiality and remoteness emerged as Pakistani teens (mostly girls) challenged social structures, through which their parents control their movement in public space, by using photographs and selfies in indoor environments to show their support and participate in the Freedom March despite being unable to do so in situ.

Whether one understands such social media sites like Instagram as digital places built with certain infrastructure that enable communication, archives of globalized communication, or both, what is patently clear is that the emergence of social media has created new horizons for spatial and planning disciplines. Researchers have already found that using social media data may be beneficial at various stages of a planning process (Zajadacz and Minkwitz 2020; Fletcher 2005). For example, in the preliminary stages of tourism planning when consultations with local communities and the collection of secondary data is included, Zajadacz and Minkwitz (2020) have recognized that social media can be understood as a secondary data bank.

2.4 Sustainability and participatory planning

So far in this chapter, I have discussed my theoretical framework regarding sense of place, the digital world, and the use of digital and social media data. The concepts of sustainability and participatory space and planning have been mentioned in the discussions about sustainable landscape transformation (Section 2.1), social media as (claimed) participatory public space (Section 2.2), and ‘passive’ participatory planning through geolocative social media (Section 2.3). In this section, I will shift gears and discuss these concepts more thoroughly. The reason for this is that the concepts of sustainable development, social and cultural sustainability, and socio-spatial and participatory planning relate to the thesis’ second research aim, which is based on the type of research example that I investigate in this thesis and my (personal) reasons for wanting to investigate it (see Section 1.2).

Sustainable development (social and cultural dimensions)

The idea of sustainable development gained currency after 1987, when the World Commission in Environment and Development (WCED) published Our Common Future, also known as the Bruntland report. This report introduced a definition of sustainable development as meeting “the needs of the present without comprising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987: 16).

For many years, sustainability scholarship focused on investigating issues related to the
ecological dimensions of sustainability, but more recently, attention has increasingly focused on the historically neglected social dimension. Apart from the definition of sustainability introduced by the Bruntland report, commonly accepted definitions of sustainable development have been few and far between. In the spatial sciences, discussions of social sustainability have outlined a chaotic concept that lacks a coherent and utilisable definition (Cobbinah et al. 2015; Eizenberg and Jabareen 2017; Erdiaw-Kwasi and Basson 2018; Åhman 2013). Compared to social sustainability, the concept of cultural sustainability may be even more complex.

In 2014, Soini and Birkeland (2014) have argued that cultural sustainability should be considered a transdisciplinary concept in an early phase of development. Having conducted a concept analysis of cultural sustainability, they have identified no less than seven distinct theoretical approaches or ‘story lines’ of various contexts. These story lines included cultural heritage, cultural vitality, economic viability, cultural diversity, locality, eco-cultural resilience, and eco-cultural civilizations, in which some understands culture as a fourth pillar in sustainable development, some understands culture as an instrument to achieve economic, ecological, and social sustainability, and a final story line puts emphasis on culture not only as an instrument, but as a necessary foundation for sustainable development (in the sense of a new paradigm of sustainable thinking). According to Soini and Birkeland (2014), cultural sustainability emerged predominantly in the policy field and as part of the cultural turn in the academia. However, despite clear connections to spatial concerns and local geographical scales, a literature search in this year (2021) revealed only scant engagement with cultural sustainability in the field of spatial science. In general, studies of the concept related to spatial issues have focused on heritage and been trans-disciplinary or within the field of landscape studies.

Applications of synthesis between ideas about social and cultural sustainability have been used to operationalise these concepts in ‘measurable’ capacities and with quantitative data at municipality level in Sweden (Axelsson et al. 2003). The use of identifying and applying indicators of social and cultural sustainability attempts to better include both social and cultural values in planning. For example, maps that visualize sustainability status based on such assessments have helped stakeholders in the process of defining target levels for what sustainability. Yet, Bouwen and Taillieu’s (2004) have cautioned that both improved knowledge and a collaborative learning process are necessary among stakeholders (and at the municipal level) so that social and cultural values can be appropriately contextualised and understood before being included in (natural resource) planning (Axelsson et al. 2013). This apt caution relates to the fact that while some overlap between definitions of social sustainability exists, in policy praxis the term social relates more to an individual sphere/scale (e.g. individuals or family), while the term cultural encompass higher societal levels such as properties of communities or systems (White 1975). For example, Mason and Turner’s (2020: 88) research approach to cultural sustainability has focused on the “value of cultural expression, its role in the vitality of communities and individuals, the challenges and importance of interventions, and the principles that undergird these actions”. In this approach, understandings of culture are positioned as ever-changing and without necessarily focusing on neither preservation nor conservation.
Social and cultural sustainability (definitions for this thesis)

In thesis, I have decided to define social and cultural sustainability separately, although I recognize that the two concepts partly overlap and are interlinked. The point of including these concepts was not to identify sustainability issues and pinpoint whether they belong to the social or cultural category, nor was my intention to measure them. Rather, my mission was to investigate how issues related to any of these two sustainability dimensions may be identified (for the purpose of further discussion and deliberation), why I will refer to them both separately and together when there is an overlap. Social sustainability is thus broadly defined as a sustainability dimension that encompass elements of wellbeing such as equity, social inclusion and interactions, safety, sense of community and health, as well as longitudinal aspects such as resilience, adaptability, and sustaining wellbeing over time (Erdiaw-Kwasie and Basson 2018). Cultural sustainability is equally broadly defined as an additional sustainability dimension that encompass wellbeing, participation, cultural capital, and the sustaining of cultural values over time (Soini and Birkeland 2014). In this concept, culture is not understood as static, and the aim is not necessarily cultural conservation or preservation (Mason and Turner 2020). Instead, key aspects that should be considered in terms of cultural sustainability are the depth of relationships, knowledge generation and exchange, diversity/interdependence, material and non-material wellbeing, and equity.

While there are different approaches to understanding how social and cultural sustainability are connected and interlinked, I find that discussions that include cultural aspects/dimensions when related to conflicts over and planning actions for place transformation to be important because they identify the element of cultural expressions as valuable in themselves. In addition, the emphasis on ‘culture’ in a concept like sustainability where one dimension so clearly points to ‘nature’, may be important for reflections on understandings of the ‘nature-culture’ divide, and reflections on the nature of ‘culture’ as constantly in the making and evolving.

Socio-spatial planning and participatory planning

Socio-spatial planning is a field in, and/or approach to spatial planning that attempts to move beyond the traditional physical deterministic boundaries of the spatial planning discipline by acknowledging the sociocultural contexts of planning practices (Erdiaw-Kwasie and Basson 2018). As such, the focus is on revealing the social meanings of spatial patterns to better understand social approaches to space (Erdiaw-Kwasie and Basson 2018; Natarajan 2017). Examples of these focus points include exploring why people’s attitudes towards spatial changes differ depending on different factors, how they engage in planning activities for, or to initiate spatial change, and how people and communities may be encouraged or supported to engage more actively in transforming space (Erdiaw-Kwasie and Basson 2018).

Socio-spatial planning, understood as a transformation process, concerns future impacts both on and of certain localities (Erdiaw-Kwasie and Basson 2018). Considering such similarity in concerns (and ideals) between socio-spatial planning and sustainable development, applications of socio-spatial planning have employed different
sustainability approaches that preference social aspects of sustainability. For example, Bassett (2013) has examined how approaching urban regeneration from a spatial justice perspective may help reverse uneven urban development in the Netherlands and the United States. On the other hand, much of the socio-spatial planning scholarship draws on sense of place and place attachment to investigate relationships to civic engagement (Erdiaw-Kwasie and Basson 2018; Lewicka 2005; Puren et al. 2008). In their research, Erdiaw-Kwasie and Basson (2018) draws on sense of place and social sustainability combined, highlighting the need for more inclusive participatory planning approaches.

Participation is a concept and/or approach that has been used as a strategy in planning activities to democratize the process, decrease top-down planning and implementation, and to support more active engagement by stakeholder communities in place-transforming actions (Gaventa 2006; Otero et al. 2018; Palermo and Hernandez 2020; Reilly et al. 2016). Theoretically underpinning this approach is the position that participation increases the legitimacy of policies and plans, may ease their implementation, empowers stakeholders, leads to more just processes and outcomes, and more long-term (sustainable) solutions (Eshkol and Eshkol 2017). Strategies that planners might use to increase participation and achieve these above-mentioned benefits include: the use of surveys to gather opinions of local communities, citizen dialogs, problem-oriented workshops, and consultation forums. In Sweden, for example, municipalities have an obligation by law (PBL 5 kap. 11–15 §§; PBL 5 kap. 17 §) during the spatial planning process to invite citizens and stakeholders to a consultation forum, during which a proposal is to be presented, explained, and motivated, while allowing for critique and suggestions for improvements (Boverket 2020).

Before this type of consultation forum, municipalities may also apply other types of participatory measures so that the proposal will have a steadier base in the interests of affected citizens and anticipate critique. In recent years, technical advancements and increase in citizen access to information communication technologies, such as smartphones and personal computers, have allowed for instant communication between authorities, citizens, and planners in creative ways, which have provided opportunities for new types of citizen participation. For example, municipalities may create participatory mapping dialog sites online using GIS technology to collect spatially arranged opinions and suggestions by the public. However, applying participatory strategies in any project aimed at development and spatial or social transformation may in practice be quite difficult. In any space that people are allowed to participate in planning activities, power dynamics will be shaped by those the ‘inviting’ actors (Gaventa 2006). For example, drawing on Kohn (2000), Cornwall (2004: 24) have reflected on issues of power and difference in participation by suggesting that invited spaces are “discursively constituted in ways that permit only particular voices and versions to enter into debate”, a critique that highlight how such spaces can create “entrenched biases that result in persistent exclusion”. In research on local participation in cultural landscape management, Stenseke’s (2009) has found several challenges other than power relations, including the participants themselves, institutional framework, organisation, communication, knowledge building, monitoring and the contextual factors. Meetings may be dominated by a very loud group of citizens with non-representative interests and opinions, and there are risks that the length, timing, and place of the meeting/workshop may exclude certain groups. Democratic considerations are therefore key to successful participatory planning (Stenseke 2009).
Drawing on Foucauldian theorization on power and governmentality, Cornwall (2004: 81) reminds us that spaces in which citizens are invited to participate, […] are never neutral. Infused with existing relations of power, interactions within them may come to reproduce rather than challenge hierarchies and inequalities”. Strategies to participatory planning such as of surveys, citizen dialogs, problem-oriented workshops, consultation forums, and digital mapping dialogues all have in common that the process, limitations, and rules for engagement by citizens is controlled by an authority.

In other words, citizens are in some way always asked ‘questions’ that have been formulated from a top-down position. These questions may be both explicit or implied, but a key aspect is that they run the risk of asking the ‘wrong’ questions based on wrongful assumptions, ignorance, or ideology, leading to non-relevant answers or the limiting of stakeholders’ political imagination. For example, asking citizens to participate in workshops about how to transform recycling facilities to increase their use limits the political imagination of possible policies aimed at decreasing the need for recycling instead through limited consumption (Maniates 2001). In addition, this control constitutes a risk that authorities ask questions that guides a selected group of participants to simply support the ideas that the authorities already had, and therefore expropriating and exploiting the participants (Schilling-Vacaflor and Eichler 2017). On the other hand, as was discussed in Section 2.3, technological advancements and voluntary geolocative social media data have presented possibilities for new participatory approaches. For example, ‘passive’ participation strategies where everyday communication of stakeholders on social media is analysed without the need to ask the ‘participants’ any direct questions (Lock and Pettit 2020).

In this thesis, I have thus investigated how we can include community voices about place by starting in this other end: by not asking community members questions, but instead asking ourselves what we can learn from discussions that communities already are having through user generated content on social media.
3. Research design

In this third chapter I will explain the design of the thesis, starting with the process of developing research aims and questions. I will then make clear my epistemological stance and the methodological approach that has informed the chosen research methods and guided the final research questions and reflect on my own position in relation to the research process. After explaining the methods used for collection of data and analysis, I will end the chapter by addressing ethical considerations related to the thesis design and methods.

3.1 Design

Development of research design and questions

The design of this thesis developed from a mixture of theoretical input from reviewing literature, my previous knowledges as a student at Stockholm University and experiences as an intern at a municipality in the Stockholm region, my positionality and situated knowledge, as well as the circumstances surrounding the SARS-CoV-2 (covid-19) pandemic. The research questions were initially kept broad and open but were refined down along the research process. I have therefore approached this thesis project as research in the making, where “research is a process, not just a product” (England 1994: 82).

My initial interest in the establishment of Rågsved nature reserve stemmed from personal experiences of being active in both a local cultural association and an environmental association. It was also motivated by my concerns for both a shrinking space for cultural expressions and environmental conservation in Stockholm. Reading about the situation in traditional and established media channels, my first impression was that it was a situation in which these socio-cultural and environmental values stood in contrast to each other. A quick scroll on social media using different geo- and hashtags, however, showed a lot of civic engagement in the conflict and affection towards the graffiti walls. The social media posts and photographs functioned as a public dialog that constructed an image of place in physical reality.

The idea of investigating this type of conflict over public space through the lens of sense of place also stemmed from previous engagement with this concept, as well as a literature review that I did as part of a methods course in late 2020. Initially, I had wanted to combine a discursive approach with more-than-representational aspects of place by using the concept of place assemblage as an analytical tool similarly to what Di Masso and Dixon (2015) had suggested. My idea was to either apply sensory methods through walking interviews together with a go-pro, or to conduct online interviews during which participators’ own photographs and sensory materials could be used as elicitation tools. However, the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic made the planning of such types of approaches difficult and unreliable with risks becoming unfeasible in the middle of the study if local recommendations or restrictions by the government were to change suddenly.

Instead, I circled back to what had sparked my interest in the research example, photo-sharing on social media sites and online public discussion about place and desirable
transformations. Still inspired by Di Masso and Dixon’s (2015) discursive constructive approach and use of place assemblage as an analytical tool, I was introduced to Arrigoni and Galani’s (2019) study about examining place memory and mining secondary data and photographs from the social media site Flickr. In addition, a literature review focused on place-based issues and socio-political conflicts using social media data found that voluntary geographical information in social media data may be considered a type of ‘passive’ participation strategy in planning processes or be useful for improving the effectiveness of initial steps of such processes. Combined with my own previous experiences of participatory mapping processes for Forest Rights of Indigenous people in India, as well as conversations about difficulties in citizen dialogs as participation in planning at municipality level in Sweden, it led me to the development of my research design and, eventually, final research questions:

RQ1: How can a discursive analysis of qualitative geotagged data posted to Instagram assemble flows of photographs, texts, and embodied practices related to community sense of place?

RQ2: In the context of planning activities, how can such digital analyses help to better understand key social and cultural sustainability issues?

Epistemology and methodology

The methodological approach I chose for this thesis project is qualitative and based on constructionist epistemology. The idea was to approach the sharing of photographs on Instagram together with geolocative information (geotags) as part of contemporary everyday and embodied practices of constructing and discussing sense of place outside of institutional frameworks. In this methodological framework, people who share photographs publicly on social media sites consciously or unconsciously coexist in the sense that when users use a geotag, their post is added to a flow of other posts by other users, where their co-presence of narratives, material representations and emotions contribute to the construction of public community constructions about place. The framework was inspired by Arrigoni and Galani’s (2019) methodological approach when researching place memory and place-making related to European heritage. They proposed that the sharing of photographs to social media is a form of civic performance of active citizenship at mundane sites, which allows for a non-hierarchical coexistence of different meanings and experiences that are always in the making. This process of meaning-making reveals an approach that moves beyond the ‘private-public’ divide, where individual civil social interactions may acquire meanings to the community larger than was intended.

In terms of gathering data, I used digital ethnography (Pink et al. 2016), also known as netnography (Kozinets 2019). The difference between the two concepts varies depending on how they are defined separately. According to Kozinets (2019: 16), “all netnographies involve collecting, participating, and interpreting online traces”, while some digital ethnographers only focus on human behaviour in relation to digital life. However, in this thesis, I used digital ethnography similarly to ethnographers that use it to investigate expansive digital and social environments (such as Instagram), where there is mutual permeation of the digital and non-digital. In such cases of using digital ethnography, the two concepts do not differ greatly. Although some might argue that
digital ethnography is a type of method rather than methodology, I understood ethnography as a methodological approach that describes knowledge production as a complex iterative-inductive process through which theory, a subjective researcher, and other humans who are part objects part subjects interact (O’Reilly 2005; Pink et al. 2016). In other words, the role of the researcher is understood as affecting and being part of any knowledge production, so that reflexivity throughout the research process is both part of the process itself and of high importance to research execution and analysis too. Key to such research is sustained contact between the researcher and the researched within the context of their everyday lives, often through (participatory) observation or other qualitative data gathering techniques with the purpose of producing more than simply a “richly written account that respects the irreducibility of human experience” (O’Reilly 2005: 3). For digital ethnography, applying such a research approach demands defining the digital equivalent of such techniques, which I will do in Section 3.2 called ‘Research Methods’.

**Ensuring Quality of Qualitative Research**

To ensure research quality, qualitative researchers can either adopt and conform to definitions for validity and reliability that works in qualitative studies, or by developing alternative criteria for eventuating research quality (Bryman 2016). Following the latter strategy, Yardley (2000) has proposed four criteria: sensitivity to context, commitment and rigor, transparency and coherence, and impact and importance. According to these criteria, evidence of substantial engagement with the subject matter, paying attention to relevant theoretical positions and ethical issues, as well as a clear description of the methods used, clear articulation of arguments (especially links between theory and empirics), and reflexivity is of great importance for ensuring the quality of a study. However, in arguing for these criteria, Yardley (2000) also contended that the quality of a study is dependent on its ability to positively impact or be significant for theory development, practitioners, and/or community that is studied.

My intention in this thesis’ design was influenced by these latter criteria: I wanted to contribute to scholarship on sense of place and examine a potential usefulness in approaching the concept through a constructionist stance that also paid attention to representational and more-than representational aspects. This potential usefulness refers to how such conceptualizations of sense of place could be applicable in a relatively low-cost way to identify social and cultural sustainability issues in local communities in initial stages of socio-spatial planning processes. In addition, the choice of research example to investigate was made partly based on my own political ambition to contribute to a nuanced image of Rågsved, a suburban neighbourhood in Stockholm, which has suffered from different types of social stigmatization and negative discourse in traditional media (Ålund and Léon-Rosales 2017).

**Situated knowledge and reflexivity**

Constructionist and ethnographic research seek to recognise the central position and role of the researcher in knowledge production. This idea stems from a crisis in representation in social sciences (Bryman 2016) and feminist, post-colonial, post-
Marxist and critical scholarship (Rose 1997), and from the standpoint that no knowledge is produced or represented in a vacuum. Accordingly, knowledge is always produced in context: from somewhere at some moment in time and by someone in a powerful position, privileged enough to have their production regarded as knowledge. This is especially obvious in this thesis, in which I have aimed to extend that privilege by examining, from afar, user generated content and knowledge on Instagram that have been produced by users from a great variety of physical positions. In other words, we are always “writing from ‘somewhere’” (Panelli 2004: 23). Researchers are thus encouraged to continuously and openly reflect on their own position. Such reflexivity should refract through every step of the research process, from initial interest in a topic or case, choice of literature to review, theories and concepts that are understood as relevant, epistemological and methodological approach, the researcher’s choice and experience of methods, as well as interpretation.

In this thesis, I have decided to include such reflection throughout the different sections whenever I find reason to believe that my position has influenced or been part of my motivation for different choices or interpretations. Overall, I also believe it to be important to clarify that I have had no personal involvement in neither the participatory planning actions nor civil movements involved in the establishment of Rågsved nature reserve, although I am currently an active member of Naturskyddsföreningen, one of the environmental associations that were involved in its establishment. I am not from the neighbourhood Rågsved, nor have I ever lived there, but I have visited the neighbourhood youth centre as well as the site of the graffiti walls in Snösättra to produce dance videos together with a cultural association. I grew up not very far away from Rågsved in another suburb in Stockholm that also has suffered from some degree of stigmatization due to previously being included in the local polices’ list of vulnerable neighbourhoods (Halldén 2019; Lindstam 2019). The difference between general perceptions of my own neighbourhood and my personal sense of place is something that I started to reflect on very early in my life when friends I met in inner-city schools expressed unease about visiting my neighbourhood, but also later during my academic studies in human geography. Throughout time, I believe that I have developed some degree of sensitivity that can help me recognize possible different interpretations of discursive representations of suburban landscape and neighbourhoods.

I also would like to clarify, however, that such reflections are also indicative of my power and position as a researcher in this thesis. Although I wish to empower the local community, the conclusions drawn from the data will ultimately be constructed by me and should not be understood as more than one possible truth out of many, nor as the truth of any individual photo-sharing Instagram user. This position will be discussed further in Section 3.3 called ‘Ethical considerations’.

I have now introduced and discussed my research design, including the development of design and aims, my epistemological position and methodological framework, research quality, as well as reflections on my own positionality in relation to the research process. In the next section, I will explain the methods that I chose for collecting and analysing data.
3.2 Research methods

In this thesis, I have gathered qualitative secondary (visual) data from Instagram and then analysed it using discourse analysis methods. I decided to use Instagram as the site of my investigations because it is a rather mundane site, made for mobile use, where photographs are an important part in social interaction and where geotagging is not unexceptional (Kozinets 2019). Since 2012, Instagram is owned by Facebook, and is perhaps the largest and most commonly used social media site of its kind (Kozinets 2019). According to Kozinets (2019), Instagram was used by 35% of all American adults in 2018. Because I decided to limit my investigation to posts shared between July 2019 and April 2021 (when I conducted this study), I therefore assumed that Instagram would be the best option for producing data of people’s everyday life in situ. While this thesis will make no claims of producing neither generalizable nor representative data, I believed that by using the most popular and mobile photo-sharing site, I would be able to gather more nuanced data of a wider range within the limited time frame.

In terms of methods, I used a covert visual approach to netnography (or digital ethnography) inspired by Pink (2007; 2015; 2021) and Kozinets (2019). Netnography may be understood as a tool for studying online traces that people leave when posting and interacting on social media sites (Kozinets 2019). Because the focus in netnography is on collecting and analysing online traces, the types of engagement between the researcher and the researched is altered compared to regular ethnography. Von Benzon (2019) has argued that an advantage of netnography is the distance between the researcher and researched, as it allows for the production and gathering of organic socio-cultural data with minimal interference or influence on the data by the researcher. Like many other researchers using netnography, I therefore decided to take the position of a ‘lurking’ observant at the social media sites, predominately engaging with participants on an intellectual level (Kozinets 2019). My experience with using this method was that I felt much closer to the ‘participants’ than I had expected. By observing their lives as they unfolded through the mundane act of sharing content on Instagram, I was able to get answers that I may not have been able come up with the questions for, had I used other methods. However, as has been shown by for example Liu (2021) and Lupton (2021) online data does not (necessarily) represents people in a more real way. Instead, I approached the data as the results of people’s everyday (reflexive) performance of their experiences (Liu 2021; von Benzon et al. 2021). These performances are both more and less than human at the same time (Lupton 2021) and shaped by (digital) cultures and social norms related to communicating and consuming social media (Liu 2021).

Method for gathering data

I followed a systematic approach for data generation from different geotags. The first step to gather data from was to search for geotags with place names referring to physical sites within the geographical area of my research example that I already knew about. For example, ‘Rågsveds Naturreservat’ or ‘Snösätragränd’. All posts that appear in the flows of geotags on Instagram are public, but I actively screened out photographs that appeared to depict children and posts by users that appeared to be below the age of legal consent to make sure no children were included in the data set. For each post that I did include in my data set, I
screenshotted and saved the photograph(s) by naming them according to numbers
documented a website link to the post in a separate document
imported and categorized the photograph(s) in NVivo according to geotag
added other data in the post such as photo-caption (text), hashtags, and publishing date
if possible to distinguish such, I added a general demographic description of the user (age group and gender)
noted the general type of content posted to the user account.

In this last step, I could identify more, alternative, and similar place names with corresponding geotags of relevance. Thus, new geotags were found through a type of snowballing technique.

I was able to find and gather a total of 280 posts (some including up to 10 photographs) from eight different geotags that had been posted within the examined time-period (July 2019-April 2021). I grouped these geotags into three categories related to physical place (see Table 1 below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category and geotags</th>
<th>Number of posts included in the data set</th>
<th>Number of photographs included in the data set</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Kräppladalen</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kräpplaspåret</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rågsveds friområde</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kräppladiket</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Snösättragränd</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snösättra Graffiti Wall of Fame</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kulturkvarters Snösättra</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Rågsved Naturreservat</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first category was posts geotagged to the general area of Kräppladalen. Kräppladalen (the Kräppla valley), also known as Rågsveds friområde, refers to the general area in which Rågsved nature reserve was established in 2018 (see Map 1 in the Appendix). To this section, I decided to include all posts geotagged to Kräppladalen, Rågsveds friområde, Kräppladiket, and Kräpplaspåret.

The second category was posts geotagged to Snösättra. Snösättra refers to the old industrial area that has developed into a cultural block where the industrial walls have become canvases for legal and organised graffiti art. Snösättra is placed in the middle of Kräppladalen (see Map 1 in the Appendix), and its southern parts was included within the boundaries of Rågsved nature reserve, leading to a final political decision to have the southern graffiti walls demolished in autumn 2020. To this section, I decided to include posts geotagged to Snösättragränd, Snösättra Graffiti Wall of Fame, and Kulturkvarters Snösättra - Wall of Fame (culture block Snösättra, a name that also refers to a local cultural association that organize cultural activities in Snösättra). It was neither possible
nor fruitful to gather all posts geotagged to this category due to time limitations of this thesis project and the repetitiveness of content posted. Although it is not possible to find out the total number of posts geotagged using a certain geotag on Instagram, the (over) 33,000 posts hashtagged to #Snösätra may hint of the amount of data in some of the flows of posts. Therefore, I decided to predominantly gather ‘exemplifying data’, and data that differed from what I had already gathered along the process. Most photographs and posts were gathered using the geotag Snösätragränd, with the other two serving as complementary data sources.

The last category was posts geotagged to Rågsved nature reserve (see Map 1 in the Appendix). Rågsved nature reserve was established in Kräppladalen in 2018, controversially including the southern parts of Snösätra within its borders, but the reserve did not get its own geotag until the beginning of 2021. To get a clearer understanding of the discursive construction of community sense of place there, I also decided to include posts that mention the nature reserve from the other geotags to the analysis of this category.

The gathered data was compiled and coded in NVivo, a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) that has the capacity of working with a wide range of qualitative data (Pink 2021). As mentioned before, however, photographs from relevant posts were screenhotted. This step was only done for the purpose of conducting visual analysis in NVivo. The screen shots were saved on a password protected external hard drive, and links to the original photographs online were saved in a separate document. In this thesis, I will predominantly refer to photographs through links to the original posts. The reasoning for this follows a discussion on research ethics in covert netnography, which will be discussed in Section 3.3 (Arrigoni and Galani 2019; von Benzon 2019). In addition, this approach deals with legal difficulties in reproducing images from different social media sites (Kozinets 2019), and the idea of social media sites as digital and public archive places were history and place are constantly in the making (and un-making) as single users chose to share and unshare posts through an everyday performance of experience and identity (Arrigoni and Galani 2019; von Benzon et al. 2021).

**Method for data analysis**

Explaining and defining the step-by-step method of doing discourse analysis is difficult, partly because very few researchers have done so. As Berg (2009) has observed, this lack of attention may have been inherited from Foucault’s distaste for outlining and explaining his methods, as well as post-positivist ideas that a simple list of methods could be enough for applying discourse analysis. Instead, it has been argued that discourse analysis should be considered a craft skill, which like riding a bike, you learn by doing but is difficult to render into codes and steps that can be described in words (Wetherell and Potter 1992).

To omit a description of method would be obfuscate the research’s transparency and arguably risk scientific quality of the research too (Bryman 2016). While I have some experience with doing discourse analysis from my previous academic studies, I decided to conduct my analysis according to discourse analysis as defined by Rose (2001), who focused on visual discourse analysis, and developed by Waitt (2005), who expanded on
Rose’s thoughts so to include other aspects of discourse analysis as well. These components include suspending pre-existing categories, absorbing oneself in the texts, coding themes, identifying regimes of truth, identifying inconsistencies, identifying absent presences, and identifying social contexts (Berg 2009). Some of these components could be understood as a step-by-step process to develop codes, other components required continuous (re-)engagement with the data so that initial codes were revised and expanded on as I absorbed myself further in the material. In NVivo, I ordered my codes into different categories according to research aims and geotag categories. The identifying of themes in my material was further aided by NVivo’s ‘Matrix Coding Query’ through which I could explore different codes in relation to each other.

So far in this chapter, I have discussed my research design and methods, including step-by-step methods for gathering and analysing data. In the next section, I will finish the chapter by discussing ethical considerations in relation to my design and methods, as well as my decisions regarding how I will present my data.

3.3 Ethical considerations

Assuming a ‘lurking position’ through this thesis has necessitated that I pay careful consideration to issues of consent gap to ensure ethical standards and make sure that I comply with copyright regulations (Kozinets 2019). All data that I have collected is public; its publicness relates to the fact that the Instagram user who posted the data chose to display it publicly and are (most likely) fully aware that the post can be seen, read, and interpreted beyond their control once the post was made public. This assumption may arguably be strengthened in the cases where the users also actively chosen to include geotags, which are meant to spread and organize the flow of posts for the public eye. Getting clear and informed consent may be difficult from many social media users (who may or not be active on that account anymore), and would require making my presence known, which would disrupt the covert stance of my observations. However, when deciding what posts to include or exclude from the data set, I remained cognisant that all posts must be examined on an individual basis so to make sure that no photographs of children or other people who may not be able to consent were included. I also examined the user profile to screen out under aged users.

In terms of gathering data, I decided to reproduce the posts through screenshotting techniques and by saving them to an external password protected hard drive. As part of this process, I also collected hyperlinks to the posts separately, so that I could trace the original source, if necessary, later in the process. For example, to double-check if the user had decided to take the post down, indicating that she/he no longer wants the post to be public, or to ask the user for permission to reproduce it in the final thesis. Once the thesis project is completed, all data collected and used for analysis will be deleted from the hard drive and destroyed to protect the individual user’s rights to their own material.

In terms of presenting data in the thesis, I have decided to follow Arrigon and Galani’s (2019) solution of predominantly only describing photographs and providing a link to the site of its online publication, unless I have received consent to reproducing a photograph. In doing so, I also follow von Benzon’s (2019) suggestion that researchers should understand civil people’s online publications from a less paternalistic position,
instead recognizing their contribution to public discourse as significant and conscious of its potential consequences. My choice of providing links to the sites of online publications has one further function: it allows for consent by users to have their content viewed and interpreted by the public eye to be withdrawn at any time, even after this thesis has been completed. Of course, this allowing of consent to be withdrawn means that the evidence on which I base my interpretations may diminish over time as Instagram users choose to unshare posts or make their accounts private. In this thesis, however, such a diminishing of evidence over time should be understood in terms of the natural instability in the meanings of networked content, which is always in the making and un-making (Arrigoni and Galani 2019; Lister 2013). To aid the reader of this thesis, however, I have on a few occasions decided to reproduce the photographs that I refer to. Ideally, I would have liked to include a few more, but these were the only Instagram users that I was able to get permission from relatively late in the writing process.

In this chapter, I have discussed the development of my research design, aims and questions. I have also explained my research methods and discussed ethical considerations. In the next two chapters, I will discuss my empirical findings in relation to my two research aims separately.
4. Understanding (conflicting) community sense of place on Instagram

In this chapter I will discuss my empirical findings of the constructions of community sense of place in the flows of posts geotagged to specific real-life locations on Instagram. The aim is to answer the first research question:

*How can a discursive analysis of qualitative geotagged data posted to Instagram assemble flows of photographs, texts, and embodied practices related to community sense of place?*

To do so, I divide this section into four parts, where findings related to place identity, place dependency, and place attachment are discussed separately, before sense of place is discussed and summarized in the last part.

4.1 Place identity

Place identity, which may be understood as the discourse surrounding characteristics that are attributed to a place (compared to other places) (Peng et al. 2020), is constructed in a variety of different ways in the flows of posts geotagged Kräppladalen, Snösättra, and Rågsved nature reserve. Starting with Kräppladalen, assemblages related to community place identity is heavily reliant on photographs and the context in which those photographs appear to have been taken. For example, one of Kräppladalen’s popular characteristics appeared to be its capacity to facilitate everyday visitors to have sensory and embodied experiences of (discovering) change in the landscape. Kräppladalen was connected to positive everyday moments that people experience when going for a routine stroll, jog, walk with their dogs, bike to work, or when people explore their neighbourhood surroundings. In this construction, the indication of such embodied activities and sensory aspects relied on the assemblage of representations in photographs and text in Instagram posts, as well as the users’ embodied performances of taking photographs, sharing them on Instagram, and communicating about their experiences in place, which I interpreted to be a further element in the construction of everydayness (Di Masso and Dixon 2015). These complex entanglements between photographs, text, and the embodied experience that simultaneously were digital and nondigital, supported the idea of understanding place-assemblages as more or less digital (Merrill et al. 2020).

Some posts geotagged to Kräppladalen included a combination of scenery and words that indicated appreciation or construction of a special season, holiday, day of the week, or time of the day. For example, one user exclaimed that autumn is her/his favourite season by illustrating a moment of walking towards a forest-looking area filled with trees of shifting colours (https://www.instagram.com/p/B3lrWqppuOu/). In another post (https://www.instagram.com/p/B3lrWqppuOu/), a scenic photograph of a wooden bridge, partly sunken into dark water that mirrors a sunset, was combined with text that indicates strong appreciation for the combination of negative degrees and sun (late autumn or winter). This combination denoted that such appreciation was dependent on the mood, or sensory and embodied feelings that could be felt standing in front that wooden bridge at such a moment in time. Another example was a photograph of a
The experience of spring seemed to be the most emphasised season in Kräppladalen. Some posts referred to the season through the symbolism of wood anemone flowers or dandelions, flowers that typically emerge in springtime. By combining them with text that indicated that they were the first of their kind to bloom (that the Instagram user has discovered) in that particular year. One post illustrated a woman sitting on a fallen tree surrounded by a sea of wood anemone flowers (https://www.instagram.com/p/B-94KazANBR/), which in this context I interpreted as a nice moment of enjoying the climax of Spring when all wood anemone flowers bloom, captured, shared, and kept online as a memory of everyday life. Another post, however, very clearly broke the pattern of combining references to spring with ‘natural’ elements such as plants, flowers, trees, and water. That post combined a few sunny photographs of a dog which appeared to be enjoying/discovering/smelling/inspecting and posing in front of graffiti in the area of Snösätra with text that read to the “fantastic spring weather” (https://www.instagram.com/p/B-CLRj7lUSo/). This break in pattern was an exception that further confirmed my interpretation of discourse surrounding the type of dependent relation between people and the sense of time/season in Kräppladalen. The type of physical landscape there allowed for moments that may have triggered embodied emotions of attachments that made people want to capture it on camera. The outdoor and sensory aspect of discovering or experiencing something ‘new’ was recorded in these posts and embedded in the context either of physical seasonal change in the landscape (trees changing colour, the sun coming down, flowers starting to bloom) or by putting oneself in a position where one seeks out (a) change of landscape yourself through the act of discovery.

While the examples above have mainly focused on seasons, and ‘natural’ changes in the landscape, this constructed relationship between time and Kräppladalen was exemplified in terms of “morning” and “evening” as well, and in photographs depicting sudden changes/abnormalities in the built infrastructure. For example, one post’s text related the moment captured to the “evening light” and indicated sound as playing a big part of the user’s embodied emotions by referring to a “concert” provided by some blackbirds (who sing in the evening during certain times of year) (https://www.instagram.com/p/B-VCSw7posr/). In addition, a final example that contributed to this constructed relationship was a post that captured suddenly abnormal behaviour by a line of streetlights omitting extremely strong luminescence (https://www.instagram.com/p/CG5UsM2ptWZ/). This experience/discovery of change was combined with that text signalling that it was a moment beyond the normal and thus related to the (soon) holiday Halloween by including the user in one of the photographs as a dark selfie in front of the lights and calling the own presence a “ghost”.

Apart from the connections between everydayness and sense of time, as discussed above, photographs focusing on small and big discoveries during everyday activities in
the landscape were a pattern the majority posts geotagged to the general area of Kräppladalen. While most photographs were dominated by what one might consider to be ‘natural’ elements in the landscape, apart from the very scenic photographs portraying pretty views (often including wetlands and water), many of these photographs focused on the discovery of ‘things’ in the landscape. For example, photographs of specific flowers, mushrooms, trees that have been chewed on by beavers, birds’ eggs, small huts built out of tree branches, graffiti, and different remains of old building foundations or signs of historical human influence upon the landscape. As some of these examples also are discoveries that are temporary in the landscape, their meanings for place identity are reliant on the performance of documentation through personal mobile cameras, and/or exploring Instagram users’ agency in wanting to communicate about them publicly. Thus, I interpreted their temporariness in the non-digital, yet relative permanency in the digital, and the user’s position within both as a further argument for the usefulness in approaching social media as more or less digital public space where community members, through their everyday lives, have agency in discussing place as the experience it (Merrill et al. 2020).

In terms of visitors’ ability to orientate themselves in the landscape, Kräppladalen is constructed as an ‘unknown’ place. The clearest example of this point was the photographs that focused on physical signs, but the signage put up in the landscape by city officials. One such sign read "KRÄPPLASPÅRET CULTURE / NATURE TRAIL" (https://www.instagram.com/p/CCBjEXSpVE6/), indicating a safe and convenient way for the public to orientate themselves in the landscape (to find their way and not get lost). In addition, this sign suggested what type of path it was, a path of ‘cultural’ connections (showing marks of historic usage and/or contemporary cultural elements) in a 'natural' setting. In other words, it was a sign that indicated the identity of what places could be found if one were to follow its directions.

Other official signs that popped up in the flows of photographs geotagged to the general area of Kräppladalen included those describing that their surroundings were included in a nature reserve. Apart from containing directions and orientating information, either simply through the word "Nature reserve" on a wooden pole or through elaborate maps, the latter sign with a map also included information about what can be found in the reserve in terms of wildlife and biological diversity, as well as vegetation and landmarks (https://www.instagram.com/p/CDW6vDsHXxd/). Together with photographs of everyday ‘discoveries’ in the landscape of Kräppladalen, these signs constructed understandings of Kräppladalen as a place that encouraged everyday adventures, where one might get lost, stay on a safe path, or discover and experience places and things out of the ordinary surrounding landscapes in the city. This construction was layered further by a photograph of what appeared to be the backside of one of those larger signs with a map of the nature reserve (see Photograph 1; https://www.instagram.com/p/CKbUXRTHGPz/). In this photograph, someone had written “Congratulations, you found your way out” and painted a heart in white pen/spray paint.

To summarize, many of the changes and discoveries discussed above related to Kräppladalen’s ‘natural’ elements/landscape. However, there were also examples of cases in which graffiti art or malfunctioning streetlights allowed for such experiences too. While the assemblage of photographs of certain flowers with symbolic meanings
may be enough to construct a community place identity that connected to change of season to ecological qualities, the explicit mention of holidays and seasons in relation to completely different physical elements created a logical disruption to such a construct. Instead, this logical disruption caused by a few posts changed the overall construction of Kräppladalen to a place where the community can discover a variety of things, not limited to ‘natural’ elements. Many of the discoveries of such elements displayed creativity or ‘culture’ in Kräppladalen and could be understood through its physical relation to Snösätra.

In the flows of posts geotagged to Snösätra on Instagram, mixed assemblages of rhetoric, emotions, politics, and photographs of both permanent physical elements and temporary moments helped to construct community place identity in Snösätra as a free and significant cultural area. This place identity is heavily reliant on the construction of place dependency and will be discussed later. What is interesting in both the case of Kräppladalen and Snösätra, however, is that these constructions were dependent on the assemblage of posts into flows according to geotagging logics (algorithms) and citizens’ performance when casually sharing of everyday fleeting moments and experiences (Bucher 2018; Matheson 2018). For example, the photograph portraying a posing tree that is eating cheese (https://www.instagram.com/p/B_5cIW2ptfy/), photographs related
to different creative projects using Snösätra’s art as background scenery or inspiration (e.g. https://www.instagram.com/p/CJ-1t2nHBR-/) or even photographs of temporary but yearly reoccurring elements such as certain flowers and graffiti festivals (e.g. https://www.instagram.com/p/CDW6vDsHXxd/ and https://www.instagram.com/p/CEJyG5DHDTf/). These are the type of temporary elements, which in this case that aided the construction of place identity that would be more difficult to capture through other methods.

Another interesting similarity in the flows of posts geotagged both to Kräppladalen and Snösätra manifest in the construction of place identity in relation to Rågsved and Stockholm. Both constructions of place identity rejected dominant (stigmatizing) discourses about Rågsved, indicating that the geotags’ flows on Instagram could be ‘claimed’ by stakeholder/local communities to discuss place (Gaventa 2006). Despite Snösätra’s position within and direct connection with Kräppladalen’s through its position in the middle of the green valley, and the construction of Snösätra as a significant free cultural zone, posts geotagged to Kräppladalen strongly emphasized ‘natural’ elements and qualities as an extension of Rågsved and the suburban in Stockholm. The majority of photographs geotagged to the general area of Kräppladalen on Instagram since July 2019 were dominated by ‘natural’ elements in the landscape. Some of these photographs were combined with text and hashtags that referred to Rågsved in different ways. For example, posts by a “nature school” indicated that Rågsved was a place where school kids could have access to education about biological diversity directly in their neighbourhood (e.g https://www.instagram.com/p/B1qq2YCAHoZ/). This construction was further supported through the mirroring or direct language of city officials, which appeared in the flows of posts. For example, in a post by the local government, information about the lambs that graze certain areas of Kräppladalen was combined with a reference to the area as “Rågsveds friluftsområde” (https://www.instagram.com/p/B1WAnXoiHZx/), a phrase that roughly translates to “Rågsved’s area for outdoor life” and was thus indicative of high recreational values related to ‘nature’ experiences in Rågsved. Apart from these two references to Rågsved and the geotagging of a few photographs to “Rågsveds friområde” (an alternative name to Kräppladalen and a less commonly used geotag), all other references to Rågsved were made in the context of the nature reserve. Considering that the nature reserve was not established until 2018, I interpreted this pattern of combining photographs dominated by ‘natural’ elements in Kräppladalen with references to “Rågsved nature reserve” as a discursive construct of Rågsved as a green and significant neighbourhood for people who enjoy outdoor life.

This interpretation and construct were supported by another pattern, evident in the assemblage of photographs of ‘natural’ elements being geotagged to the general area of Kräppladalen and constructed to photograph “förorten” (https://www.instagram.com/p/CKtgdpcnmCo/), translated to “the suburb” or “#stockholmsuburb” (https://www.instagram.com/p/CD7HvOZjsUY/). In Sweden, “suburb” is a word often surrounded by negative associations and references to crime, social marginalization, and segregation. Thus, the usage of this word in combination with photographs of ‘natural’ elements assembles a place identity that challenges (other) dominant discourses of Rågsved as a place associated with stigmatization. Similarly, one post was hashtagged “#orten”, translated to “the place” (https://www.instagram.com/p/B-TvuwRpKfx/), a suburban slang phrase that I
interpreted as a rejection of the construction of suburban places in terms of their physical relations to the inner-city areas. In addition, another post titled a photograph of sunshine mirrored in a small flood surrounded by greens with the words “Söderort’s Everglades” (https://www.instagram.com/p/CECoYyAJrUo/). “Söderort” in this context translated to “southern suburbs of Stockholm” and was used in an endearing fashion that hinted at devoted feelings towards these specific suburbs. The reference to Everglades, a famous national park in the USA, further support the construction of Kräppladalen as dominated by ‘nature’ of high value.

I located an inconsistency in this construction in two specific posts. The first included a photograph that appeared to belong to a series of artistic photographs on the theme “(a) part of nature” (https://www.instagram.com/p/B-TvuwRpKfx/). The photograph portrayed human manipulation of the landscape in a way that made it look dystopic/destructive and was combined with hashtags that portrayed a “[blastedmountain]” in a Stockholm suburb that had caused “#woundsinnature”. The other post included a mixture of photographs from “Rågsved’s nature reserve” that were similar to the photographs used to construct a positive image of Kräppladalen and Rågsved (as discussed above) (https://www.instagram.com/p/CDW6vDshXxd/).

However, this post included a caption reading “Otherwise, Rågsved still lives up to its reputation - lots of graffiti and garbage in the reserve, at the parking lot there was a man consuming illegal substances in his car and on the other side of the lot were two people fighting” (the negative word “klotter” was used for “graffiti”). This caption revealed a conflict between what the photographs showed and the user’s summed up experience of the area. Compared to the posts with more positive sentiments, these two users appeared to be capturing and writing about Kräppladalen from the position of temporary visitors, not as people who engage regularly with the place. One user was looking at the landscape from the position of what appeared to be a professional photographer with an agenda to capture human traces in ‘nature’ for an art project. The other user’s account created a flow of posts that were populated with political messages aimed at criticizing the Swedish government’s handling of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic and organized crime, as well as denying climate change. A flow that was occasionally interrupted by photographs from the user’s visits to different nature reserves around the Stockholm region. The post referring “Rågsved’s reputation” and “graffiti” in a negative manner, however, supported my interpretation of the construction of place identity by emphasizing ‘natural’ elements as either/both resistance of other dominant discourses surrounding Rågsved or internalization of city officials’ political imagination of what Rågsved is/should be.

If the dominant discourse about Rågsved highlights the area as unsafe and filled with criminal activities, where graffiti is considered to belong to the latter category, it is interesting that in the flows of posts geotagged to Snösättra, an assemblage of photographs, captions, and embodied practices highlighted graffiti in a positive light. While the graffiti in Snösättra, of course, was legal, I found evidence that the assemblages constructed graffiti’s being and non-being beyond political imaginations of graffiti in as either legal or not (Maniates 2001). Rather than something negative, the graffiti in Snösättra and Rågsved was referred to as “one of Stockholm’s cultural treasures” (https://www.instagram.com/p/CJll60NM8iX/) and “art” comparable to that in the national museum (https://www.instagram.com/p/CFh7n2ysqO/)V). Similarly to posts geotagged to Kräppladalen, words like “suburb” and “the place” were also used in
posts that assembled flows of posts geotagged to Snösätra. For example, one post combined a photograph of a graffiti flower with the hashtag “#förortsblommnning” (https://www.instagram.com/p/CEyrMf-H_PI/), meaning (the type of) “blooming (found) in suburbs”. Another post joined a photograph of one of the more popular murals portraying climate activist Greta Thunberg as Pippi Longstocking with a caption that may be translated to “The plaaace, man!” (https://www.instagram.com/p/B_P_EY9B09L/), which I in this context interpreted as a way of praising the suburb for its graffiti. In both these examples, there seemed to be some intersection between ‘natural’ elements (which were heavily connected to the discourse about Kräppladalen related to the suburban) and ‘cultural’ elements. However, in relation to Stockholm, the ‘cultural’ elements’ significance was constructed as dominant through the exemplifying discussions above and great efforts to construct the graffiti in Snösätra as “art” to raise its status. This construct of graffiti may thus be understood as a assemblage related to place identity in Snösätra that contrary to the construct of place identity in posts geotagged to Kräppladalen, highlighted ‘cultural’ elements that were present in the physical landscape and that rejected/challenged assertions of them as negative. However, the rhetorical function of using the word “graffiti” interchangeably with words like “art” and “street art” may also be interpreted as part of internalized power structures since it could imply that the value of graffiti and its right to exist in the city is related to/dependent on its status as “art”.

As has been discussed earlier, although ‘natural’ elements were dominant in the majority of photographs geotagged to the general area of Kräppladalen, many of them also contained traces of ‘culture’. Not only in the form of discrete, built infrastructure such as wooden bridges, streetlights, and signs, as well as nature conservation actions by the city, but also in the form of spontaneous creativity and organized activities outside the everyday sphere of taking a casual walk. A prominent theme was that this creativity appeared to be related to blurred lines between ‘nature’ and ‘culture’. One account’s posts geotagged to Kräppladalen focused heavily on close-up photographs of different insects and living creatures that could be found in the general area of Kräppladalen (https://www.instagram.com/p/B2J9lprJ2yb/). The account’s biography, however, hinted that production of these photographs had been made in the process of developing a smartphone “game” with the theme “biological diversity” and “nature conservation”, in which gamers could contribute to the collection of data for research. On the other hand, one photograph posted by another account that at first glance seemed to simply be portraying a graffiti wall, was actually a graffiti mural of a sad looking Bamse (a children’s character famous for getting super strength when eating honey) and a speech bubble reading “Without blooming no honey” (see Photograph 2; https://www.instagram.com/p/CBJEV-9nNwR/). Titling this photograph with a flower icon, this post also drew on cultural practices, expression, and activities in Kräppladalen to construct a pro-biological diversity/environmental sentiment. In addition, the photography discussed previously titled “A part of nature 161” arguably contributed to a construction of Kräppladalen as a place where blurred lines between ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ inspires creativity (https://www.instagram.com/p/B-TvuwRpKfx/), organized activities (as opposed to more everyday activities), and such pro-environmental sentiment.
Another example of blurred lines between ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ was identified in two photographs that depicted trees that in different ways have been given (human?) faces. In one photograph, someone has sprayed or painted a face in graffiti style (https://www.instagram.com/p/B6njkrBpJAq/). In the other case, the effect had been achieved by putting what looked like “cheese” into a crack in the tree trunk and then positioning the tree in the photograph frame so that two holes in the trunk became eyes and two branches became arms (https://www.instagram.com/p/B_5ciW2ptfy/). Some posts appeared to blur the distinctions between animals’ (‘natural’) and humans’ (‘cultural’) behaviours in creative ‘nature’ photography and the humanizing of dogs through Instagram accounts dedicated to individual dogs in which the content was constructed as if it was the dog itself speaking through the account. For example, one professional wildlife/’nature’ photographer had titled a photo of a sheep “Boss of the flock” (https://www.instagram.com/p/CBKejgyn1B7/), and two posts made by the accounts of two dogs that appeared to friends, posts that included photographs of the dogs together with graffiti and the caption(s) “Today, we have admired the art in Snösätra” (https://www.instagram.com/p/B-CLRj7IUSo/ and https://www.instagram.com/p/B-CK9kngEMG/). Together, the examples discussed above assembled a pattern that questions a clear-cut ‘nature-culture’ divide through
signs of human creativity in Kräppladalen that move beyond such a divide and that imagined other living species (both trees and animals) as having human characteristics and capabilities. In other words, there were signs of more or less digital assemblages of the embodied, photographs, and texts that constructed more-than-human geographies in the intersection between Kräppladalen and Snösättra (Bucher 2018; Lupton and Watson 2020).

As has been mentioned in previous chapters, it was formally decided that the southern parts of Snösättra would be included within Rågsved nature reserve’s borders when the reserve was established in 2018. However, when commenting on the threat of, decision of, proceeding of, and result of demolition in Instagram posts geotagged to Snösättra, there was evidence of great ambivalence in terms of whether these southern areas had become a nature reserve already in 2018 or if they (were to) become so through the process of demolition. The local government supported this confusion, writing on a sign informing about the demolition in 2020 that the area “is becoming” a nature reserve (https://www.instagram.com/p/CD6e_IMJPlZ/). Considering the relative permanency of this sign in the landscape (it taking up space), and the messenger, I interpreted this sign as an indication that the dominant political imagination did not allow for even the idea that ‘culture’ values such as graffiti could exist within a nature reserve even temporarily. On the other hand, one post combined a photograph of a nature reserve sign amongst flowers and in front of a graffiti sprayed mountain/rock with the text “Art” (https://www.instagram.com/p/CEgfs5Ln3a0/), indicating that the ambivalence between ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ itself is an art project, and that Instagram was a public space where such alternative imaginations could be expressed (Maniates 2001). This post was an assemblage of meaning in the performance of photography, text, the materiality in a sign, and the visuals in both the physical landscape and the photograph, constructing a place identity where neither culture and nature nor the digital and non-digital could be separated (Di Masso and Dixon 2015; Merrill et al. 2020).

While earlier discussions in this chapter mostly have focused on ‘cultural’ elements and expressions in Snösättra, some posts also testified to both conflicts, and the rejection of conflict, between ‘cultural’ and ‘natural’ elements. Apart from the posts indicating a relationship between the demolition process and becoming a part of the nature reserve, one user’s account that appeared to belong to a landscape architecture firm explicitly articulated that there was a conflict: “The conflict between natural values and the operations in Snösättra is manifested in this almost Mad Max-like landscape” (https://www.instagram.com/p/B-h5BlvpfLZ/). Once again, a nature reserve sign was portrayed in a photograph, this time with a bunch of graffiti sprayed scrap cars in the background. On the other hand, much of the graffiti art and murals in Snösättra reflect the ‘natural’ elements that directly surround large parts of the area, not only the socio-cultural history of Rågsved as indicated in discussions above. For example, many of the larger murals portray wildflowers, houseplants, mushrooms, both wild and domestic animals, and forest landscapes. One photograph posted and geotagged to Snösättra also showed a flower made through crocheting that someone has stuck to a tree (https://www.instagram.com/p/CEUqJ-SJIHi/).

In the flows of posts geotagged to Snösättra, one post linked a photograph of a mural portraying a forest on a wall in which a door had been opened to hint an old car, together with the caption “[…] you never know what one might find behind a forest”
This post was interesting in the context of Snöösätra’s location next to a forest. Another post called Snöösätra an “#oasis in the middle of #nature”, which I interpreted as the sudden ‘discovery’ of something equally amazing to a water spring in a desert. In addition, in what I interpreted to be a comment on the threat of demolition of southern Snöösätra, one user posted a photograph of a mural portraying Alice standing next to a door reading “CLOSED Wonderland BY REALITY”. The user captioned this photograph “Alice out. No more rabbitholes. (Peace icon)out”. Supported by other posts in which Snöösätra was described as a “magical” place, this post suggested that Snöösätra was a magical wonderland found within a rabbit hole found in its surrounding forest.

Can/should a magical wonderland or sudden oasis of creativity not exist within a nature reserve? One user who reflected on what she/he understood as a meeting between nature and culture without a clear answer: “Shall this place no longer be one of Europe’s largest graffiti areas? At the same time, the spray bottles are not that good for the nature”. On the other hand, one post indicated there to be “Environmentally friendly” graffiti, and several murals contain pro-environmental messages. For example, a mural of a polar bear saying sarcastically (?) “SAVE THE PLANET KILL YOU KIDS”, a mural of climate activist Greta Thunberg portrayed as Pippi Longstocking with the text “WE NEED TO GET ANGRY AND TRANSFORM THAT ANGER INTO ACTION”, and a mural of an orca with the message “ALL LIVES MATTER”.

Although one post sarcastically rejected the argument for establishing a nature reserve that more nature is needed in Snöösätra, another user wrote that “we (the citizens) want to be part of the designing of the nature reserve” together with information about a physical protest against the demolition. In other words, the combination of these texts and photographs of murals constructed a rejection of the notion that the ‘cultural’ elements in Snöösätra necessarily needed to be understood as existing in opposition to ‘natural’ elements.

Even though one user expressed that there are “plenty of nature areas” but “a shortage of legal graffiti walls”, that user also expressed that they “can for sure be combined and become a nice excursion area for all. Think again politicians, invest in nature and culture!” Another user claimed that Stockholm’s politics “have the opportunity to create an INTEGRATED nature and culture reserve that is unique to the world” in Snöösätra. Together, these posts assembled an alternative idea that ‘cultural’ and ‘natural’ elements and values were not necessarily competing and harmful to each other in relation to place identity. Rather, with careful investment in and balancing of both, unique and greater values may be achieved. For example, these ‘cultural’ and ‘natural’ elements may become dependent on and positively reinforce each other.

Before 2021, in posts that explicitly mentioned the nature reserve, there was one post in which the user displayed strong sentiments towards the type of surroundings that
constructed the identity of the reserve through its geotag (https://www.instagram.com/p/B-VCSw7post/). It was a post by a woman who combined a scenic view of a sunset reflected in water with text about how she/he “[…] enjoyed the evening light while listening to the blackbirds’ concert”. In this post, the user also noted that she/he is planning on visiting again/more often, why the user may be interpreted as starting to form attachment to her/his experience in Rågsved nature reserve. In addition, it may be interpreted as if the user was planning on making that specific experience a more important part of her/his everyday life, indicating that she/he will become more dependent on that specific place. Other posts that included photographs of similar kind and of ‘natural’ elements but did not seem to express strong sentiments towards the reserve, indicated through their ‘everyday life’ contexts that they were to some degree dependent on such ‘natural’ qualities of the reserve for their everyday life.

On the other hand, there are also posts that question the city’s decision to create more of those ‘natural’ qualities and elements in the reserve, at least if their creation was the expense of the ‘cultural’ qualities found in Snösättra. One user wrote that there was “plenty of nature reserve” even without the demolition (https://www.instagram.com/p/CF4Sl8zHcKt/). These posts argued for the great significance of Snösättra to, for example, Stockholm’s “cultural mix”. The ‘natural’ elements on the other hand, were only constructed as ‘significant’ on a larger scale through the sharing of photographs of such elements in Rågsved nature reserve by a user account that was dedicated to national parks and nature reserves, thus relating Rågsved nature reserves to national parks. In other words, the ‘natural’ elements of Rågsved nature reserve were only seen as relevant on a larger scale through the city’s recognition of the area as a “nature reserve”.

As has been discussed above, there is great ambivalence in the construction of the ‘nature-culture’ divide in posts geotagged to the area of Kräppladalen, and especially Snösättra, on Instagram. This ambivalence was also prominent when examining the assemblage of posts, which explicitly referred to the nature reserve specifically (geotagged to both the general area of Snösättra and Kräppladalen). However, in the (yet) very short flow of posts geotagged to Rågsved nature reserve specifically since the beginning of 2021 quite little of this divide or conflict has been evident. The photographs have focused almost entirely on what one may interpret as ‘natural’ elements, such as water, water birds, trees, and forest landscape. As mentioned before, this geotag was created some time in the beginning of 2021 and the sample of posts was much smaller for this geotag.

Most posts and photographs were of ‘everyday life’ character and portrayed ‘natural’ elements in the landscape, such as scenic views of water, different types of water birds, a nature reserve sign with information about birds in the wetlands, the ground filled with blue anemones, a dog posing on a rock, and forest landscapes. Place identity here, was constructed mainly through a dependency of such ‘natural’ elements in the context of everyday activities, such as casual walks and exploring one’s neighbourhood surroundings. Apart from two close-up photographs of common mallard ducks captured by a professional wildlife photographer (https://www.instagram.com/p/CK4Ficsg9OL/ and https://www.instagram.com/p/CK3x4tAA16i/), only two posts stand out from this assemblage of everyday photographs portraying ‘natural’ elements, which dominates the
flow of posts. Both posts’ assemblages of photographs and text constructed meanings that appeared to be especially unstable in this flow of posts, which still is comparably short and ‘thin’, showcasing the need to approach an interpretation of photographs on social media through the theory of the networked image (Larsen 2008; Lister 2013).

The first one was a post that linked a photograph of a graffiti mural portraying what I have interpreted as a green monster/troll/ogre together with the text “INNOCENT” (https://www.instagram.com/p/CMpnMm3Bllo/). It is posted at a date when the southern parts of Snösättra already had been demolished. This post’s uncommented inconsistency with the rest of photographs in the same flow of posts makes it look out of place. In addition to the lack of comments about the demolition and about the ‘debate’ of whether graffiti can be regarded as being part of a nature reserve or not, the out-of-place-looking graffiti solidify an understanding of Rågsved nature reserve as dominated by ‘natural’ elements. On the other hand, if one interprets the green monster as an ogre, the mural may be understood in relation to the wetlands in Rågsved nature reserve. The ogre may be interpreted as an analogy for prejudices against graffiti. In such a case, the word “INNOCENT” may itself be a comment on the demolition, insinuating that it was a decision based on prejudices.

The second post is one that joined a photograph of an abandoned rough looking football with the caption “A match missed […] #exploring #naturerreserve #sweden #journalism #ball” (https://www.instagram.com/p/CNSc-TnJwA6/). This photograph did not question the construct of Rågsved nature reserve as a place for everyday walks and activities surrounded by ‘natural’ landscapes and elements. While the ball itself obviously was not something that has organically grown there, its abandoned condition hinted at a landscape commensurate with organized activities that were “missed” or missing. In other words, although the common purpose of the object portrayed does not follow the dominating pattern of photographs in the flow of posts geotagged to Rågsved Nature reserve, the assemblage of the state of the physical object, how it was captured, and commented on through a photo-caption, supported the construction of Rågsved nature reserve as a ‘natural’ landscape dominated by everyday activities rather than more organized ones.

Of course, the small sample of posts in the flow of posts geotagged to Rågsved nature reserve makes it difficult to judge how solid the current assemblages that construct place identity will be over time. After all, it may only take one post to create logical inconsistencies in or to challenge current constructions. However, it is interesting that a geotag for Rågsved nature reserve was not created until the beginning of 2021, when southern Snösättra had already been demolished. Whether the delay was coincidental, or not, is not evident from the flow of posts themselves, and neither is knowing the reasons for the existence of the independent geotag necessarily important. However, seeing as the geotag is so new and emerged at a time when the demolition of southern Snösättra was so recent, it is interesting that this geotag place-assemblages focused so consistently on a place identity based on ‘natural’ qualities and elements only.

Compared to the geotags Kräppladalen, Kräpplaspåret, and Rågsveds friområde (tags referring to the general area of Kräppladalen and where the reserve was established) the frequency of uploaded posts geotagged to Rågsved nature reserve has not been dramatically different, although it seems to have been getting slightly more uploads if one looks at this year alone. There is thus some indication that the new geotag is/will be
used instead of/as an alternative to the other tags. It could explain why this new tag to some extent mirrors the type of content that is dominant in the other tags. The awkward looking lone post of a graffiti mural portraying a green monster/troll/ogre may be interpreted as a challenge to the dominant construction of what may exist within a nature reserve (https://www.instagram.com/p/CMpnMm3BLoR/). However, the symbolism that such an interpretation relies on is quite far-fetched. In addition, it requires knowledge about the demolition of southern Snösättra as a consequence of including it within the nature reserves borders. Rather, in this specific flow of posts, it remains uncommented on and looking out of place. As if it had simply been geotagged to the reserve by mistake or as if it had no greater meaning to overall community place identity.

4.2 Place dependency

Place dependency relates to community needs, and to a place’s ability to live up to those needs compared to other places (Erdiaw-Kwasie and Basson 2018). In other words, this concept requires knowledge first about what people ‘need’, then knowledge about a place’s current qualities in relation to those need. Finally, knowledge is also required about whether people would suffer negative impacts if those qualities deteriorated due to a lack of access to similar qualities in other places.

In the flows of posts geotagged to Snösättra, there was an assemblage of photographs and rhetoric that constructed place dependency in four separate ways. The first, and perhaps most obvious, was the graffiti artists’ dependence on the existence of Snösättra’s physical walls and their status as legal graffiti walls. Several posts pointed out that Snösättra is one of the largest/the largest (legal) graffiti park in Europe/Scandinavia. Photographs also portrayed a number of very large walls, which I have interpreted as a nice quality of a graffiti park. Because of these qualities, Snösättra has become a place where graffiti artists (and future artists) effectively can access a lot of graffiti in a singular place and become further inspired. It has also made Snösättra into a place fitting of large graffiti festivals. For example, many posts emphasized Spring Beast, a festival which draws graffiti artists from the other countries as well. In addition, it was implied that there has been a contingency of graffiti being part of Rågsved’s physical landscape over time (such as a photograph of “one of the world’s oldest graffiti” in Rågsved), and that Snösättra is a unique place that has developed organically based on local place identity. Together, this rhetoric and photographs assembled place dependency of a community of graffiti artists.

Compared to the photographs portraying everyday activities and life geotagged to the general area of Kräppladalen, it was more difficult to distinguish the relationship between users and place in posts geotagged to Snösättra. Just like in Kräppladalen, there were users who appeared to portray Snösättra as being part of their ‘every’ everyday life, meaning that they live or work close enough to either routinely or spontaneously visit the area as part of common activities such as a morning stroll, lunch jog, or walking of their dog. However, there was also a dominant pattern of users who happened to more actively seek out the area and to a greater extent had to have planned their visit(s) from other parts of Stockholm, Sweden or even other countries. The flows of posts geotagged to Snösättra therefore depicted a demand for the viewer to understand Snösättra in
relation to Rågsved’s history, Stockholm, and Europe. The second construct of place dependency related to Snösätra as a significant free cultural area through such relations. This construct was broad in its remit and related to street art/art and culture in the wider sense that went beyond the specific community of graffiti artists. Instead, it emphasized concepts like democracy, innovation, and the “cultural mix” in Stockholm.

Apart from “Snösätra” repeatedly being mentioned in relation to or interchangeably with “Rågsved” and “#rågsved”, some posts constructed logic between Rågsved and the development of a graffiti and alternative street art block like Snösätra there. For example, one user that appeared to have travelled from another country to create a new mural in Snösätra wrote: “The gallery is in the anarchist / punk historical area of Sweden and takes up a whole abandoned industrial area. It’s a graffiti village” (https://www.instagram.com/p/B2OyIn_hTDa/). There also emerged a historical link to graffiti in particular in Rågsved. One user noted that while visiting Snösätra, she/he “Found out that one of the world’s oldest graffiti is in Rågsved” (https://www.instagram.com/p/B9nGRUFjNeX/). Finally, one user combined photographs of her/his visit to Snösätra with a long reflection about tolerance for alternative culture in Stockholm and street arts’ relation to “creativity and innovation, difference in thoughts, tolerance and understanding of others” (https://www.instagram.com/p/B32GL0GpzHD/). Furthermore, this post positioned Snösätra as a special place in Stockholm that has been allowed “develop organically”, and thus develop based on “its own genuine cultures and identities, built on history rather than consumption. Built by citizens rather than advertising companies”. This indicated that community members actively discussed place and their desires related to place (transformation) on social media in a way that I interpreted as performances of active citizenship, similarly to the teenage Pakistani girls who joined social protests on social media when their participation in other spaces were controlled as have been discussed by Aziz (2017).

This construction of Snösätra as a special or significant place, organically developed in Rågsved, in relation to Stockholm is further supported through three types of assemblages related to place dependency. The first construction relied heavily on language and rhetoric to emphasise the importance of Snösätra for Stockholm’s cultural scene. For example, one user wrote: “Many are protesting this decision (to demolish the area) since the area is totally unique and since it is needed for Stockholm’s cultural mix” (https://www.instagram.com/p/CE4nXmJp5RG/), creating a sense that “many” stand behind such an opinion related to dependency. This construction was supported by several posts of similar sentiment and rhetorical function. For example, another user noted that Snösätra is an “important cultural-historical place” and that for “place specific art one needs to understand that the place and situation is an important part of the (art)work and cultural heritage” (https://www.instagram.com/p/CEesD3mJwUS/).

Another user referred to Snösätra as “one of Stockholm’s cultural treasures” and finally, another wrote that it is “one of the few free creative areas in Stockholm (few in comparison to other cities such as Berlin or London)” (https://www.instagram.com/p/CFF0dxZJS2Y/). In addition, other comments on the planned demolition of southern Snösätra cited claims that “Stockholm is shrinking” (https://www.instagram.com/p/CFE1cCtlYX2/), and invoked (save Snösätra to) “Save Stockholm” (https://www.instagram.com/p/CDroakEny_9/).
The second type of construction that contributed to understandings of Snösätra as an important and special place for Stockholm – in terms of its cultural scene or “mix” - were the variety of visible cultural expressions and activities in the flows of posts geotagged to Snösätra. In terms of more permanent and physical traces in the landscape, graffiti and murals are the most obvious and dominant cultural expression of course. However, street crocheting, urban gardening, embroidery, and pearl plates were also visible cultural expressions of semi-permanent nature. In terms of cultural expressions that were not permanent to the physical landscape but may be viewed in the flows of photographs on Instagram, the variety was huge. These expressions ranged from fashion modelling for companies, dog fashion modelling, modelling of fashion students’ clothing collections, music and dance video recordings, promotion recordings for tattoo artists, commercial recordings, DJ-ing, ads for a store selling spray paint, organized art exhibitions, organized (and pay for) art guides, live music, dance battles, motor sport/hobby meetings and photoshoots, to nature photography, urban/street photography, and a mix of the two. Some of these activities appeared to mostly take place during two different street art festivals that were arranged in Snösätra, “Spring Beast” and “Still Summer”, but most of them appeared sporadically in the flows of posts. Again, these temporary expressions and representation in photographs and landscape created important assemblages in moments in time related to place dependency, which showcased the usefulness of this type of digital data and analysis to recognize stakeholder communities and needs (Di Masso and Dixon 2015). One reason is that the stakeholder communities in themselves may be unstable on an individual level: the same fashion students might not ‘need’ Snösätra again in the future, but other individual fashion students may be inspired by the area too. Another reason is that the assemblages related to the temporary performances and expressions in one place may construct dependency related to stakeholders that move in space. For example, one user wrote that she/he had been so inspired by the art that “it makes me want to pick up my old breakdancing routines” (https://www.instagram.com/p/B0AxVbGgKKJ/). In other words, Snösätra has also been constructed as a place of significance for cultural expressions elsewhere.

The third type of construction that helped establish a narrative of Snösätra as a significant place for Stockholm related to a very specific situation which presented an opportunity in time; the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. While I had expected posts to explicitly comment on the pandemic when looking at geotags of the general area of Kräppladalen and the nature reserve, I surprisingly (only) found such posts geotagged to Snösätra. That is not to say that people have not enjoyed having access to the qualities found in the nature reserve throughout the pandemic. In Snösätra, however, the pandemic provided an opportunity to set Snösätra apart. Several users recommended visiting Snösätra specifically during the pandemic, for example, as part of one’s “home vacation” (https://www.instagram.com/p/CCVjy6ApVXi/), or to enjoy “corona safe” (https://www.instagram.com/p/CJlai9_JLri/) and “corona free” (https://www.instagram.com/p/CEjf-RWpk5d/) art “now that all museums are closed” (https://www.instagram.com/p/CJ_cB0Wn1L3/). Around the same days in August 2020 when signs about demolition work started to pop up in the flows, another user reflected on how the cultural sector had been affected by pandemic restrictions and how a strong/living cultural sector is “a necessity for a democratic society” (https://www.instagram.com/p/CECO-NqppzL/). This reflection ended with reference to a photograph of Snösätra and stating that it is a place where “there is culture that still is
accessible and right now with freshly painted walls”.

The construction of Snösätra graffiti as “art” of high quality was connected to the construction of Snösätra as significant on a national scale too. For example, one post combined a photograph of another popular mural with the text “They are now demolishing the art. Next up the national museum (of art)?” (https://www.instagram.com/p/CFh7n2ysq0V/). In addition, Snösätra was frequently claimed to be one of the larger/the largest and the most famous/a famous (legal) graffiti area/outdoor art exhibition in Europe/Scandinavia. As one might guess from the previous sentence, there is great inconsistency in these claims. The more exaggerated versions of these claims also create a somewhat logical inconsistency together with the claim that Snösätra was “one of the few free creative areas in Stockholm (few in comparison to other cities such as Berlin or London)” (https://www.instagram.com/p/CFF0dxZJS2Y/), which was discussed earlier. However, through its assemblage together with other claims and indications of people both traveling to Snösätra as tourists or as invited artists in the flows of posts geotagged to Snösätra, this inconsistency has functioned to both raise the status of Snösätra’s art, and as fodder for the argument for why Snösätra is important for such type of art in Stockholm.

To summarize the discussion above, the implication of the assemblages of text and photographs tagged to Snösätra is that it is a unique and very accessible place for citizens to take part of culture and art, either as viewers or active participators in putting physical marks on the landscape. Apart from claims that such a quality of ‘access’ is inherently important for democratic societies, several posts sharing photographs portraying street art with different political messages also supported the idea that Snösätra’s street art played a part in fulfilling citizens’ needs to participate in political/democratic conversations, for example, by allowing citizens to imagine and portray a positive image of future Stockholm. In terms of “innovation” and Stockholm’s “cultural mix”, dependency was constructed mostly through posts showing both more permanent and temporary cultural expressions of a great variety. These cultural expressions were mostly related to other types of street art, music, dancing, and fashion. However, there were also signs of cultural expressions that traditionally may not have been associated with graffiti and street art, such as crocheting, embroidery and pearl plates. In addition, there were posts that indicated that Snösätra’s street art was used for field trips/schoolwork as part of at least three different educational programs/courses related to creative arts.

The final type of assemblage related to community place dependence in Snösätra related to ‘everydayness’. In all flows of posts there were signs that the areas were used by local communities on varying scales for casual activities such as walking or training of dogs, jogs, ‘family days’ outside, casual strolls, exploring of the surrounding neighbourhood, and weekend hikes/excursions. How these activities reflected community needs was mostly constructed through place attachment (which will be discussed later in this chapter) by implying affect for specific places/qualities, and in relation to what may be understood as sense of time and season. Similarly to photographs that were captured in the context of everyday life and geotagged to the general area of Kräppladalen, such photographs geotagged to Snösätra had a strong focus on visual surroundings and what people (and dogs) have encountered during everyday activities. In the latter case,
different selections of specific graffiti murals that may have spoken to the user in some way, or scenic overviews of the area, make up the most common characteristic and focus. Some people also shared photographs of themselves posing in front of the graffiti murals, indicating some degree of identification with the murals or that they enjoyed the effect the murals have on the way they presented themselves. One graffiti mural of large realistic looking balloon wings was especially popular with people who liked to pose in front of the murals (https://www.instagram.com/p/CNS8nxIppxl/).

Some users posted, or included to their posts, photographs of other elements in Snösätra and its surrounding landscape, both of ‘natural’ and ‘cultural’ character other than graffiti. The pattern constructed through these flows of posts was that there was a community of people very attached to Snösätra and what the area had come to offer them. For example, one post combined a scenic photograph of trees in the foreground with bright coloured graffiti walls popping up behind them in the background with the caption “The colours always brighten up my day” (see Photograph 3; https://www.instagram.com/p/CGIS84oprhG/). Place attachment will be discussed in the next section, but the reason for why I introduce this discussion here is that only in the flows of posts geotagged to Snösätra were there posts that highlighted such dependency very clearly in relation to this attachment, most expressly by indicating fear of negative consequences to their experience of the area in case southern Snösätra was to be demolished. This fear was, of course, sometimes difficult to separate from fear that the demolition will cause harm to Snösätra’s identity as a free cultural area.

In the flows of photographs geotagged to Kräppladalen and Rågsved nature reserve there were an assemblage of text and photographs that indicated some community dependency regarding experiencing ‘nature’, both ‘natural’ landscape and biological diversity in everyday life or as part of more organized activities. For example, some posts geotagged to Kräppladalen were made by a user who took photographs of biological diversity as part of her/his developing of a smartphone game (https://www.instagram.com/p/B2J9lprJ2yb/), and other posts indicated that a ‘nature school’ conducted field education there about biological diversity for local school kids (https://www.instagram.com/p/B1qq2YCAHoZ/). In addition, some posts also included photographs by ‘nature’ photographers (e.g. https://www.instagram.com/p/C1KuPxMH8ha/ and https://www.instagram.com/p/B5FjdyqAsqD/), implying some possible dependency by photographers on the biological diversity in the area. However, in the flow of posts geotagged to Rågsved nature reserve, there were no posts that constructed the nature reserve as significant for anything other than everyday activities in everyday life and its biological diversity (that a captured Nature reserve sign informs visitors of). In this specific flow of posts, even the two posts by a professional (wildlife) photographer only portrayed common mallard ducks (https://www.instagram.com/p/CK4Ficsg9OL/ and https://www.instagram.com/p/CK3x4tAA16i/). The construction of community attachment as being related to the nature reserve’s ‘natural’ elements/qualities was therefore strengthened, and community dependence was constructed through such elements’ importance in relation to everyday actions. On the other hand, apart from the possibly implied localness of the ‘nature school’, there was little to no clear construction of these needs as solely being filled by the qualities in Kräppladalen and the nature reserve. Neither were there any indications that these specific needs could not be filled elsewhere apart (Erdiaw-Kwasie and Basson 2018). The only indication of any
community dependency on the area’s biological diversity thus related to the use and reference to the term “nature reserve”, which may have been associated with ideas that there are high ‘natural’ values in a specific place worthy of protection. In other words, there was a relative lack of evidence for community dependency on such values as constructed outside of institutional language. That is not to say that there was no dependency, just that the flow in April 2021 contained little evidence of community need to ‘claim’ space on social media to discuss their needs or dependency on ‘natural’ qualities in the reserve (Gaventa 2006).

This relative lack of constructed dependency on the biological diversity of the area outside of institutional language and framework was interesting when compared to posts geotagged to Snösättra that strongly rejected the need to demolish southern Snösättra to protect ‘natural’ values. While the sentiments in some very obviously politically oriented posts ranged from hope/optimism to anger/disagreement with the decision/decision making process even within the same post, “Fighting spirit (icon) <3 […] #fuckstupidity” (https://www.instagram.com/p/CEy3vl-FVqN/), there was one reoccurring phrase that I interpreted as either, or both, of these. The phrase is “Tänk om, tänk rätt”, which translates to “Think again, think correctly”, and it was seen both in photographs where it is written on the ground, and in captions. For example, someone used the phrase and referred to a ‘letter to the editor’ in Dagens Nyheter that argued for the greatness of Snösättra (https://www.instagram.com/p/CEhB_zXJmH1/; Forsberg 2020). In Swedish, this phrase is a rather (not so) passive-aggressive phrase that is commonly used to indicate that someone has messed up greatly and should start all over from the beginning. In the context of its use here, I interpreted it as constructing a narrative that the politicians have made an unquestionably stupid decision. Around the
same days that this phrase popped up in the flows of posts, one user posted an edited satellite map to further support this idea (https://www.instagram.com/p/CEW2V3MBUwD/). The map was dominated by a large green area, but the user has added a red arrow pointing at a small built area in the north together with the text “We need more nature there” combined with the usual “#preservesnössätra”, thus using sarcasm to support the idea of “stupidity”.

It was also interesting that the phrase “Think again, think correctly” popped up very late in the decision-making process, at a time when construction fences had already been put up, and politicians were about to simply give their last approval that the demolition machines may start their engines. Asking politicians at this point to disregard what they have decided so far and rethink their decision from the beginning suggests great optimism and hope on behalf of protesters. On the other hand, it could also be interpreted as urgency and desperation, which further aids in the construction of Snössätra as a significant place as well as community dependency. The sense of urgency in the engagement on social media and users’ hashtagging to spread awareness when the demolition was just about to start (and even as it was going on), stood out to me and hit me directly in my heart. I interpreted the decision of different users to communicate their desperation as an indication that Instagram geotags’ flows functioned as a ‘claimed’ space (Gaventa 2006). Space that community members desperately could occupy with their feelings and demands, where the networked photographs and hashtags still created an expectation of being listened to (Gómez and San Cornelio 2018; Lister 2013), either by politicians or other users who could join their chanting of “preserve Snössätra”.

4.3 Place attachment

Place attachment involves emotional and affective relationships between people and place, which may be either positive or negative (Erdiaw-Kwasie and Basson 2018; Manzo 2003). In the flows of posts analysed in this thesis, I found that place attachment was often constructed through the use of positive description of (moments) in place, more explicit expressing affection for a place (“I love this place!”), or the use of heart icons. For example, one post referred to a user’s discovery that she/he lives close to “cool Snösätra. And the nice nature reserve in Rågsved” (https://www.instagram.com/p/CEW2V3MBUwD/). Another user wrote that it was a “luxury” to live in the same neighbourhood as Snösätra, recommending other people to visit the area for an “art walk” (https://www.instagram.com/p/CJlia9_JLi/). In addition, some post expressed their attachment very bluntly. For example: “I love this place! <3” (https://www.instagram.com/p/B8B8JnsA1kA/); “Beautiful colourful garden to brighten the day <3” (https://www.instagram.com/p/B0P_xiiCGhs/); and “Graffiti<3” (https://www.instagram.com/p/B8T4ClYpv5F/). In the flow of posts geotagged to Rågsved nature reserve in 2021, there was a non-interrupted connection between expressing strong positive sentiments towards the place/nature reserve. For example, one user account, which is dedicated to a dog, has combined a photograph of said dog posing on a rock together with the text “Morning walks in the spring sun, I love Saturdays” – the post is indicative of love for that specific moment in time and place (https://www.instagram.com/p/CM70KnSBddI/). Another user referred to the reserve as a “‘New’ area for me, not bad at all actually…(duck icons)”
In the flows of posts geotagged to Snösätra, however, place attachment exhibited through and assemblage of posts with political messages, posts indicating participation (and non-participation) in planning processes, and reactions to threat of and reaction to change in the physical landscape. For example, posts using hashtags and specific phrases (that I coded as indicative of participation in and organizing of political discussion), and demonstrations against the demolition of southern Snösätra in both physical and digital space, indicated affection and strong positive sentiment in relation to the area. In addition, many posts included photographs showing hints of protests. Both through embodied presence by protesters who physically expressed their attachment to place (for example through a dance occupation), and through physical signs (“preserve Snösätra” and “occupy Snösätra”). Posts that claimed there have been issues of excluding the stakeholder community from the planning process, on the other hand, constructed attachment differently. By indicating that better processes to involve local communities would help avoid (threats of) negative impacts, and instead become a positive force in the development, these posts implied that there were certain qualities in Snösätra that the posting individuals were attached to and worried about. In other words, Instagram’s geotag flows functioned as participatory public space where people could communicate and discuss issues they had experienced in ‘invited’ spaces or with being systematically excluded from those spaces (Cornwall 2004; Gaventa 2006).

Compared to posts that displayed strong sentiments and were geotagged to Kräppladalen, posts geotagged to Snösätra used language that constructed attachment through anger/sadness/disappointment and hope. Furthermore, the posts were contextualised in the milieu of political organization to resist the changes that would result from the decision made in 2018 to establish Rågsved nature reserve. Between the period July 2019 and late August 2020 (when the final decision to start the demolishing took place), some of this organization appeared to be traditional protests, occupations, and petitions. For example, the hashtag and phrases “(#preservesnösätra” and/or “(#savesnösätra” were frequently added to photographs geotagged to Snösätra, also by users who appeared to be visiting for the first time. They were written together with information about a petition that the user has signed and where others can/should sign it (https://www.instagram.com/p/CEzDNsNJEfW/), and in another post when portraying a dance occupation in Snösätra (https://www.instagram.com/p/CEy4N1nF59A/). They were also used when spreading information about the decision-making processes and physical protests in front of buildings where important decisions will be made. In some cases, the phrases were even written in the images shared.

Users who appeared to have visited Snösätra, without being heavily involved in the actual making of the graffiti or its cultural scene, shared photographs focused on the murals and combined the hashtags with positive messages about their experience there – some urging others to hurry up and visit before it was demolished. In this sense, they contributed to a construction of Snösätra as a significant and unique place, worth making time to visit, before (unfortunately) it was too late. Moreover, it was also possible to interpret the capturing and sharing of photographs as attachment, as these acts could be considered as attempts to capture and preserve moments in time and place because of a
heightened awareness that Snösättra would change. For users who appeared to have especially strong connection to Snösättra, either through direct involvement in its cultural scene and the protests or through repeated visits, the sharing of photographs of the phrase “Preserve Snösättra” painted/being painted on signs that hung in the area were commonplace. In addition, a few of these users directly or indirectly questioned the decision-making process for having catered to politician’s and state officials’ liking while community members have been excluded. For example, one post combined a photograph of a man standing in Snösättra in the dark (looking dark) with the words:

*Local politicians are trying to control, demolish and structure this neighbourhood to their liking. So far, it’s happening without the input of the community. We want to be heard and we want to maintain snösättra! #preservesnösättra* (https://www.instagram.com/p/CFI7RxupMep/).

Another user questioned the “state officials’ work and bad dialog with citizens in and nearby Snösättra” (https://www.instagram.com/p/CEXRqlGFMp8/). “This is yet another example of how politicians and state officials continue their work without asking us citizens what we want and how we would like to be engaged in the development of our society”, the same user continued. Together, these posts, among others, fashioned a pattern that centred on the conflict over place as being one between “citizens” and “politicians”/”state officials”. These users expressed that they wanted to be involved in the planning process as citizens and community members with a special relation to place, or at least have their opinions heard and respected.

It is interesting to consider the difference in place attachment between users who appeared to have be very involved in the cultural scene in Snösättra and those who only had visited occasionally or on a single occasion. What the discussion above showed, through my interpretation, was that the former wanted to actively participate in planning activities while the latter’s engagement with the political cause was more limited in terms of joining physical protests. However, those who only visited occasionally still constructed relatively strong place attachment and sympathy or support for the cause. While I did not speculate the reasons for their ‘lack’ of further engagement beyond hashtagging and endorsements of Snösättra as a place worth to visit, it is possible that a ‘passive’ participation strategy similarly to that in the planning project discussed by Lock and Pettit (2020) could have captured their opinions effectively and conveniently.

Sharing information and posting photographs and text to social media sites has become, and is increasingly becoming, intertwined with people’s everyday life – and indeed evidence of place attachment in the digital world (Murray 2013; Merrill et al. 2020). Sensory and embodied routines or experiences in the material world are difficult to separate from the digital world. Although the intention behind sharing of a particular post on Instagram may vary, the act of keeping that information online in a user account’s flow may indicate some type of documentation aspect and attachment to that documentation. For example, one may feel attachment because it provides reminder of a specific moment in time and place. In such case, I argue that the intentional sharing of such posts to public flows ordered by geotags may be understood as an act of sharing that attachment, where the use of a geotag may indicate an expressed emphasis on place. A large amount of such digital material filling out a geotag’s flow of posts may through such logic itself construct strong attachment. For example, an outsider looking at two different flows of two different geotags may instinctively interpret stronger/more
attachment to the place of the tag that comparatively contains a lot more material.

As was mentioned in Section 4.2, called ‘Research methods’, there are some differences between the geotags included in this thesis project. The geotags related to Snösätra had significantly ‘thicker’ flows, meaning that within the given time-period, they had a lot more posts and user engagement compared to the other geotags. In addition, during the data collection phase I noticed some difference between the geotags in terms of age. Most geotags’ flows contained photographs of children and the presence of underaged users. However, the flow of posts geotagged to Snösätra more often required close scrutiny of user accounts to determine if they could be included in the mandates that I had set for data collection, or not. These geotags related to Snösätra could therefore be understood as having more engagement by teenagers and young adults, implying that this age group assembled greater attachment to Snösätra through their social media interactions on Instagram than they did for the other areas.

4.4 Sense of place summarized

In this chapter, I have discussed the research question:

*How can a discursive analysis of qualitative geotagged data posted to Instagram assemble flows of photographs, texts, and embodied practices related to community sense of place?*

The examples I have discussed show that sense of place was assembled through complex combinations of material and physical aspects, embodied and multi-sensory dimensions, and language. Flows of posts engaged with each other through the logic of algorithms that organized geotagged posts for the public eye according to the progression of time, both independently and dependently of what individual users intend. For example, users demonstrated physical presence in place and used hashtags with the intention of participating or constructing a political conversation. However, some users’ posts may, to an outsider, also be understood in relation to each other based on either similarity or difference in patterns related to material and physical aspects, embodied and multi-sensory dimensions, and language. In other words, community sense of place was constructed in an overdeterministic (and anti-essentialist) manner where I interpreted/extracted meaning from an assemblage of posts, which in combination in specific flows constructed meanings that were greater than the sum of meanings that could be interpreted from the individual posts separately (Glassman 2003; Graham 1992; Rios and Watkins 2015).

Within the context of an empirical research example where a nature reserve was, controversially, established at the expense of what some considered to be a free cultural area, my analysis showed that the different geotags either overlapped or questioned the place boarders and physical structure of Kräppladalen, Snösätra, and Rågsved nature reserve, hence producing a conflicting sense of place. For example, Snösätra is a specific place, but photographs of its typical graffiti walls were at sometimes included as part the general area of Kräppladalen where they mixed with photographs dominated by ‘natural’ elements that are typical for Kräppladalen’s geotags. The same is true for the other way around. Efforts to protect ‘natural’ elements and biological diversity in Kräppladalen by establishing a nature reserve appeared to stand in contrast to
community dependence, attachment, and identity. However, this contrast/conflict was not necessarily a given. The geotags’ flows of posts constructed a complex and conflicting discourse of community place identities and dependencies, in which a divide between creativity, ‘culture’, and ‘nature’ was not always clear. For example, in the flows of posts geotagged to Kräppladalen, ‘culture’ intersected with ‘nature’ through the developing of a smartphone game, old remains of buildings that were being reclaimed by nature, and the creativity in giving trees faces through graffiti and posing. Another example was the flows of posts geotagged to Snösättra in which some of the street art was inspired by ‘natural’ elements and some contained pro-environmental messages. Users that protested the demolition of southern Snösättra, however, emphasized Snösättra’s cultural values rather than these intersections and construct dependent values. On the other hand, they also questioned the need of demolition of Snösättra and “more nature there”, not necessarily its being part of a nature reserve. Several users seemed to imagine an alternative development where both ‘cultural’ and ‘natural’ values could develop in an integrated way, which I interpreted as a sign that they were able to use Instagram as ‘claimed’ public space and discuss place outside of the political imaginations of the city local government (see Section 4.1).

In the flow of posts geotagged to Rågsved nature reserve, this conflict and complexity was not present. One interpretation of this lack of presence may be that the name of the tag itself institutionalizes users’ understanding of what type of posts should belong to such a tag. Seeing as it was a new tag, from early 2021, and thus contained no constructs in times before southern Snösättra had been demolished, the tag may also be interpreted as an opportunity for users to solidify community place identity according to the ‘natural’ values that may be associated with a nature reserve.
5. Understanding key social and cultural sustainability issues

In the last chapter, I answered the first research question and discussed assemblages related to (conflicting) community sense of place. In this chapter, I will discuss my empirical findings related to the identification of social and cultural sustainability issues in the context of the specific type of empirical situation investigated in this thesis project. The aim is to answer my second research question:

*In the context of planning activities, how can such digital analyses (RQ1) help to better understand key social and cultural sustainability issues?*

In spatial planning literature, both sense of place and social sustainability have been used as analytical frameworks and theoretical approaches to investigate how to ensure equity, democratic and inclusive participation, as well as empowerment of local communities (Erdiaw-Kwasie and Basson 2018). Through my analysis of sense of place discussed in the previous chapter, I identified several sustainability issues of relevance to address in the planning process. The first example was place dependency in relation to needs for outdoor life, a quality that is associated with wellbeing, both in terms of health and more general feelings of such (Erdiaw-Kwasie and Basson 2018; Mason and Turner 2020). “Friluftsliv”, translated to outdoor life, may generally be understood as the spending of time and moving outdoors in “natural and cultural landscapes for wellbeing nature experiences without demands for competition” (Naturvårdsverket 2021). While this definition found at Naturvårdsverket includes the word “cultural landscape”, it emphasises “nature experiences” in particular.

In the flows of posts geotagged to the general area of Kräppladalen and Rågsved nature reserve, such experiences in outdoor life connected to wellbeing included simple things like taking a walk to get “fresh air <3” (https://www.instagram.com/p/B0F10H-Lg/), walking along the “CULTURE AND NATURE TRAIL” (https://www.instagram.com/p/CCBjEXSpVE6/), hiking (https://www.instagram.com/p/B86e1BVnbK8/), or parking one’s bicycle by the water and joining a work meeting by distance call from what in the photograph looked like a peaceful setting in the morning sunshine (https://www.instagram.com/p/CEJFoxypjbw/). They also included spending time with one’s children and letting them experience some “scary (birds) who tried to bite the kids’ fingers” (https://www.instagram.com/p/CMeoR2H2Mc/), discovering different flowers, trees, and animals (or traces of such) or being “Fascinated by the #rootsystem trees spread around them to survive storms in life” (https://www.instagram.com/p/CMP07_rJUG0/). While the first set of examples given here focused more on sensory experiences, the latter examples related to biodiversity. One post even indicated that the purpose of a local school class’ visit to Kräppladalen was to study its “biological diversity” (https://www.instagram.com/p/B1qq2YCAHoZ/). In other words, future outdoor life in Kräppladalen and Rågsved nature reserve was positioned as being dependent on ecological sustainability and the resilience of the area’s biological diversity. However, one may also argue that it could be dependent on the sustaining of physical structures that enables people to have sensory and embodied experiences related to wellbeing. For example, a landscape that allows for peaceful mornings, longer hikes, cycling, and the breathing of fresh air. In that line of reasoning, it may be regarded as the cultural/natural landscape of Kräppladalen and the establishing of a nature reserve (Rågsved nature reserve) that limits threats of future exploitation and
that may harm such structures and qualities of the landscape. Interestingly, in the flows of posts geotagged to Snösätra, one user explicitly used the word “Friluftslivet” (the outdoor life) to caption a photograph of two graffiti murals and a tower crane (https://www.instagram.com/p/CJtCil7pshf/). This post stood in stark contrast to the posts discussed above. Rather than a ‘nature’ experience, it portrayed a ‘culture’ experience as the focus of her/his outdoor life.

Taking the post discussed above as a starting point, I interpreted other posts geotagged to Snösätra as supporting of this construction of culture experiences as proxy for outdoor life. For example, one user posted a photo-series that started with a photograph of a man in scout fashion and continued with several photographs that focused on graffiti murals. The photo-series incorporated the caption “Legs are hurting but a nice feeling in the body! Ended in snösätra” (https://www.instagram.com/p/B-_OZ21HJ_S/). Cultural experiences are thus understood here as revealing in possibilities for hikes as well. Other similar activities and experiences of outdoor life in Kräppladalen/Rågsved nature reserve posted, included casual walks, substituting the gym for a “walk to Snösätra and (watching) the graffiti instead” (https://www.instagram.com/p/B9ulX_MFupu/), family days where one user had her/his child experience graffiti painting (https://www.instagram.com/p/CGFCkl6HZz7/), and someone who experienced “Nice weather and a lot of fresh air!” (https://www.instagram.com/p/CH01Srin9l/). Just like biodiversity was key to the nature experiences in Kräppladalen/Rågsved nature reserve, in the construction of outdoor life here, the graffiti murals and diversity of art was key. Moreover, just like one post indicated that some people visit Kräppladalen/Rågsved nature reserve to specifically study its biodiversity, two posts indicated that different (higher) educational institutions arranged field trips to Snösätra to study and learn about its “street art” (https://www.instagram.com/p/B9qoL2EF0H7/) and “place specific graphics” (https://www.instagram.com/p/CMwuOVzJ0ch/). Finally, one user repeatedly called Snösätra a “culture reserve”, for example, by combining a photograph of two elder ladies who had gathered to have a picnic and experience the art in Snösätra (https://www.instagram.com/p/CHA6kWzFFFx/). The use of the phrase “culture reserve” had the rhetorical function of constructing similarity to (in this case) Rågsved nature reserve. Contrary to what planners may suspect from Naturvårdsverket’s (2021) definition of outdoor life, this construction indicated that the culture experiences were of similar importance to the nature experiences. My analysis thus indicated that both the art in Snösätra and its landscape should be conserved to protect outdoor life, or at least be addressed as related to non-material wellbeing and health in social and cultural sustainability dimensions.

In the flows of posts geotagged to Kräppladalen and Snösätra, the conflict between nature and culture reserve, was predominately constructed as 1) Snösätra/graffiti being unclean, (allowing for the developing of a “#junkyard”), and the environmental effects of spray paint, 2) rubbish being thrown in the nature reserve, and 3) the destruction/demolition of a ‘cultural’ landscape in favour of ‘nature’ values. In other words, while the “nature reserve” and “culture reserve” both may be understood in the context of outdoor life qualities, the two areas were constructed partly as existing in opposition and creating conservation difficulties for the other. On the other hand, as was discussed in the section about sense of place in Snösätra, ‘cultural’ and ‘natural’ qualities in these related places were, to some degree, also constructed as reinforcing and interdependent. For example, (graffiti/street) artists being inspired by a surrounding
‘natural’ landscape to create art of high quality, and art of high quality promoting ecological sustainability through pro-environmental messages.

My analysis showed that outdoor life in Kräppladalen and Rågsved nature reserve, not too surprisingly, was related to ‘nature’ experiences and the ‘natural’ elements and qualities that exists there. However, my analysis also shows, and perhaps more surprisingly, that posts geotagged to Snösätra constructed outdoor life as being dependent on ‘culture’ experiences as well. In addition, there was evidence that people moved in, and between, these areas as part of their outdoor life activities. In other words, making any type of decision that may hurt community experience of either ‘nature’ or ‘culture’ could have been considered a sustainability issue that needed to be addressed by the local government. Addressing such issues may be especially important to ensure equity in similar situations, where there is evidence that one demographic/social group is more dependent on the experiences in one area, and in which one area is to be protected/developed on at the expense of another.

I identified the conservation of cultural diversity over time, and in relation to democratic participation and social inclusion and interaction, as another example of sustainability issues related to Rågsved and Snösätra (Erdiaw-Kwasie and Basson 2018; Mason and Turner 2020). In the flows of posts geotagged to the general area of Kräppladalen and Rågsved nature reserve, there were occasionally photographs of signs reading Kräpplaspåret (Kräppla trail) with the words “CULTURE/NATURE TRAIL” (https://www.instagram.com/p/B-tmZWpJ7Ei/). Since these signs were surrounded by ‘natural’ looking elements and landscape, I interpreted that the word “CULTURE” in this case referred to a historical cultural landscape shaped by human presence and culture. Compared to the suburban areas of Rågsved, this type of cultural landscape may be understood as a landscape conserved and highlighted by for its cultural diversity and/or the depth of community relationships with place. Apart from these signs, there were no clear indications of deep community relationships to Kräppladalen’s cultural landscape. Not knowing who is responsible for these signs, I interpreted that the depth of this relationship could have been dependent on and reflecting institutional memory as Arrigoni and Galani (2019) have recognized that voices on social media may do. Apart from reproducing this construction of Kräppladalen as a cultural landscape through signs found in the physical landscape, there were no constructions framing Kräppladalen in terms of cultural diversity or conservation of great importance to the community. Although, some street art was represented in the flows of posts geotagged to Kräppladalen, such representations could generally be understood through Kräppladalen’s physical relation to Snösätra, rather than as expressions of place attachment or dependency related cultural diversity in Kräppladalen per se.

On the other hand, in the flows of posts geotagged to Snösätra, there are several constructions of cultural diversity, democratic participation, and social inclusion and interaction (Erdiaw-Kwasie and Basson 2018; Mason and Turner 2020). The most obvious example was the dominant construction of Snösätra as a free cultural area with great significance for Stockholm’s “cultural mix”, constructed in terms of innovation and social inclusion and interaction, and as a place for knowledge generation and exchange between people of varying age groups and between people interested in different types of artistic/cultural expressions. The flows of posts geotagged to Snösätra contained explicit discussion of the sustaining, and even developing, of cultural
diversity. For example, one user wrote that Snösätra is needed for Stockholm’s “culture mix” (https://www.instagram.com/p/CE4nXmJp5RG/). This claim was a rhetorical construction that supported through and assemblage of other posts containing traces of cultural expressions other than graffiti painting, and by posts that constructed Snösätra as significant or special in other ways, as has been discussed in Chapter Four. For example, some posts stressed phrases like “free creative area” (https://www.instagram.com/p/CFF0dxZJS2Y/), “cultural freedom” (https://www.instagram.com/p/CEiyj5Vp61n/), and “allowed to develop organically […] built by citizens rather than advertising firms” (https://www.instagram.com/p/B32GL0GpzHD/) in relation to Snösätra. I interpreted these phrases as indicative of strong/deep community relationships with a place where a central power/institutional force has not limited who can offer certain types of cultural expression. For example, the user who wrote the latter quote also included a reflection about how street art existed to “challenge what is not allowed in the city” and rhetorically asked “How does it contribute to creativity and innovation, differences in thought, tolerance and understanding of others?”. In other words, the entanglements in assemblages of the embodied in physically impacting space and the performance of ‘claiming’ more or less digital public space on social media when arguing for the rights for stakeholders to do so, supported the idea that social and cultural sustainability issues could be identified through discursive analysis on Instagram (Di Masso and Dixon 2015; Gaventa 2006; Merrill et al. 2020).

Posts geotagged to Snösätra included photographs of a variety of art and cultural expressions in Snösätra, including embroidery and crocheting that typically may not be associated with street culture. Photographs of street crocheting made by an elder woman were some of the more popular and most reoccurring type of posts geotagged to Snösätra. Considering this mix, and that several educational institutions and schools for young children were using the area as destination for learning, Snösätra could also be interpreted as a place for innovation and inspiration, knowledge generation and exchange, and a place for social inclusion and interaction between different people (Erdiaw-Kwasie and Basson 2018; Mason and Turner 2020). In addition, Snösätra’s outdoor setting was further emphasized in this construct by highlighting its accessibility, which allowed anyone to visit Snösätra and take part of its cultural qualities at any time and season, even during a global pandemic such as the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic.

Another example of how street art geotagged to Snösätra was used as tools for creating or participating in democratic/political conversations was evident in social groups like children and youths, using the spaces to express themselves and physically impact the landscape without needing permission (instead of waiting for an invitation to participate), even though they may not be able to participate in formal elections. These flows of posts also constructed Snösätra as a place where people were able to ‘claim’ space for political conversations that existed outside of city officials’, politicians’, or dominant political discourses’ political imaginations (Gaventa 2006; Maniates 2001). Examples of such constructs included the idea of an integrated culture and nature reserve, graffiti murals portraying “future Stockholm” as a place where both nature and culture dominated over large buildings (https://www.instagram.com/p/CBVpiIopkaP/), and graffiti murals with rather unimaginable political messages like “SAVE THE PLANET KILL YOUR KIDS” (https://www.instagram.com/p/CEhNgGKH30T/).
If one considers the fearful sentiments expressed in the flows of posts geotagged to Snösättra in relation to threats of demolition, the demolition was constructed as a threat to different values and qualities in Snösättra. As Snösättra was constructed as having developed organically by a community of citizens, and based on historical place identities in Rågsved, I reason that this threat may have been interpreted as related to sentiments of exclusion from the planning process when establishing and planning Rågsved nature reserve. Such an interpretation gains support from the sentiments of posts that explicitly claimed that important stakeholder communities had been excluded from participating in the planning process when it was decided that southern Snösättra would be demolished. Of course, with the research design used in this thesis project, it is not possible gain an understanding of whether they had actually been excluded, to what degree, or not. However, the construct of exclusion brings into question if the planning process had ensured equity and democratic and inclusive participation in a way that empowered the local community. In addition, it supported my assumption in this thesis, based on discussions by Cornwall (2004) and Stenseke (2009), that there was a need for participation strategies in the planning process beyond ‘invited’ spaces.

My analysis of the establishment of Rågsved nature reserve hints at complexities in spatial planning and turning to the “local community”. Who is part of this community and what is local? In the case of posts geotagged to Snösättra, users appear to have been both from the neighbourhood of Rågsved or surrounding areas, and from all over Stockholm, sometimes even the world. As an outsider, it can be difficult to grasp the complexity in 1) how all kinds of community members from all kinds of places and for different purposes experience Snösättra, 2) what their embodied emotions are as they do so, and 3) how they individually form a collective that impacts the more or less digital public place in different ways through assemblages of meanings. However, I argue that by approaching social media as a place where people, through their everyday and embodied performances, can discuss/comment on place through assemblages related to sense of place, we can gain valuable insight to sustainability issues.

In this thesis’ research example, my analysis showed the need to understand Snösättra in terms of outdoor life values and wellbeing. It also showed the need to recognise a possible conflict between different communities at different scales when prioritizing such social (and cultural) sustainability values that one community is dependent on over the needs of another community. Yet, at the same time, the flows of posts geotagged to Snösättra showcased alternative political imaginations where ‘culture’ and ‘nature’ were integrated in a unique reserve. It may be possible to approach these kinds of constructs of sustainability issues as ‘passive’ citizen participation in planning activities. On the other hand, the relative anonymity of the Internet makes it difficult to know for sure what demographic groups are included, or not. Still, my analysis identified key social and cultural sustainability issues that may have been difficult to understand as an outsider, and that may not have gleaned the same type of insight had a researcher simply asked a set of standard questions in a citizen dialog setting, even with successful and careful sampling of citizens. While the analysis did not aim to provide answers to how these sustainability issues should be dealt with, it could provide the basis for formulating questions that can be used to facilitate more deliberative discussion in
citizen dialogs. Similar analysis may also be useful for following up impacts on community sense of place in terms of social and cultural sustainability issues. For example, to detect changing emotional geographies in cases where there is reason to suspect symbolic and emotional displacement in gentrification processes (Atkinson 2015; Pánek et al. 2020).
6. Final discussion

In this final chapter, I will discuss my contributions to the fields of digital geography, socio-spatial planning, and literature on participatory spaces. I will also identify possible conclusions from this thesis, as well as flag the implications of those conclusions. In addition, I will discuss potential new questions that may be relevant for further research and clarify the limitations of the thesis.

6.1 Conclusions and implications

In this thesis I have used the idea of more or less digital public space and showed possibilities of analysing geolocative social media data to understand (conflicting) community sense of place. My analysis showed that Instagram’s geotags partly functioned as ‘claimed’ space, where community members could discuss and construct political narratives, opinions, and ambitions, or organize themselves to challenge political decisions, for example through occupations, demonstrations, and petitions. Some of these constructions appeared to exist outside of dominating political imaginations. Considering the evidence of alternative ideas about and community support for the integration of nature and culture into a unique nature-culture reserve, I am disappointed that the southern parts of Snösätra were not saved.

Many assemblages related to sense of place were reliant on complicated entanglements between physical features in that particular place, embodied and sensory aspects of people moving in space, and digital posting and discussion of experiences in place. This reliance on entanglements supported my theoretical assumption of sense of place as constructed in a more or less digital world. However, my analysis has shown that the flows of posts on Instagram were not completely free from institutional frameworks or language. This influence manifested mostly through official signs in the physical landscape and through geotags’ corresponding to official place naming. On the other hand, the geotags’ flows of posts included different assemblages that constructed different community sense of place simultaneously, for example, making them public spaces that were both ‘claimed’ and influenced by power hierarchies at the same time. This thesis has thus contributed to literature about power dynamics and participatory aspects of more or less digital public space. For example, by showing that institutional control over representations in the physical landscape can influence sense of place in the digital, while the algorithms of some social media flows allow for anyone to simultaneously communicate without being limited to or by institutional frameworks.

My analysis also showed that people may both intentionally and unintentionally contribute to (conflicting) community constructions of sense of place, and that the combination of separate Instagram posts in a flow of geotagged posts may assemble place-meaning that is ‘greater’ than the sum of meanings of the posts separately (overdetermination). Because the knowledge produced cannot be attributed to individual participators, calling this type of analysis a form of passive participation strategy may thus be misleading, why I suggest that the word ‘community’ should be added too. In addition, through my theoretical framework, in which the geotags’ flows of posts were understood as more or less digital public space, it was possible for me to identify how analysis of social media in planning should not necessarily be framed as a ‘passive’
participation strategy, rather than as a way to include performances of active citizenship by community members. As my analysis has also shown, the community of Snösättra was actively discussing place and displaying strong political opinions against its demolition by posting content to an imagined public that openly stated demands and spread awareness of the situation. I argue that these performances are everyday acts in a more or less digital world can be compared to physical protests at town squares in a pre-digital world. I therefore suggest that ‘listening’ in to what is communicated on social media like I have done in this thesis, should be equally self-evident for planners and decisions-makers as listening in to other types of civic protests, such as accepting a petition they are handed or looking out the office window to read the signs held by protestors outside. The digital is increasingly part of our mundane everyday lives, why the production of more or less digital public space should increasingly be considered by both decision makers and in geographic research.

The (more or less) digital world provides a type of anonymity that makes it difficult to know for sure the identity of users. However, my method of examining individual users’ posts and accounts showed that people who engaged with Snösättra, or mentioned the nature reserve, were often from a variation of places. Geotags related to Snösättra had flows that contained engagement from people all over Stockholm, and tourists and artists from other countries. In other words, this type of analysis could be useful for examining sense of place and identifying (social and cultural) sustainability issues in situations where there is conflict over public space, and where stakeholder communities and individual stakeholders are difficult to define or reach through sampling methods based on location. In addition, apart from moving bodies, the analysis was able to include temporary elements and events that may have had an impact on community place identity or place dependency but may not have been visible to individuals who only visit occasionally. This thesis has therefore contributed to socio-spatial planning literature in terms of using digitally based data, implying future possibilities of using similar analysis and methods either as a ‘passive’ participation strategy or as a base for identifying those conflicts, as well as social and cultural sustainability issues, throughout a planning process (or even for following up effects of planning efforts). Possibilities that, hopefully, can change the regretful fate of places like Snösättra Graffiti Wall of Fame in the future.

6.2 Limitations and future research

In this thesis, I have investigated sense of place in a more or less digital world by using social media data and discourse analysis to demonstrate the potential in approaching social media as ‘claimed’ participatory and public space. However, it should be noted that my analysis could only explore constructions of sense of place over the investigated time-period from the position of a limited moment in time, in this thesis, from the position of April 2021 when I gathered my data. As Instagram users (share and) unshare content, it is possible that sense of place would have been and will be constructed differently if investigated form other moments in time, even within the same investigated time-period.

Another limitation of this thesis is, of course, the relative anonymity and (what can be assumed to be) uneven demographic difference of users who generate content on social
media sites. The empirical findings must therefore not be understood as constructions that are representative of the community of stakeholders, but that are indicative of strong sentiments expressed elsewhere in the planning process. Rather, the findings should be understood as constructions that may be interpreted through algorithmic relations between different Instagram user’s posts, that represented everyday life from the point of view of those specific users. Understandings about place can, and should, thus be (partly) credited to those users, even though we cannot necessarily ascribe those understandings as belonging to the same users individually. Approaching such constructions as a type of participation strategy in a planning process may, in other words, be problematic if the aim is to gather opinions by individual citizens, or if different power hierarchies in digital public spaces are not given due attention. Still, I argue that there is (theoretical) potential in using this type of approach and analysis because it reveals complexity and nuance in places and their spatial conflicts from the point of view of those who experience it. Formulating appropriate questions for deliberative discussion with stakeholder communities from this data should be investigated and evaluated in future research.
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Appendix

Map 1.

Map showing the borders of Rågsved nature reserve (red line).

Blue markings: Snösättra industrial/graffiti area that is surrounded by the nature reserve (southern parts are included in the reserve).

Kräppladalen refers to the general green area between the large residential area in the north-west and the residential area in south-east: including the nature reserve, the green areas between the nature reserve borders and the residential/urban areas, as well as the green area in the North.

The map was downloaded from https://parker.stockholm/naturreservat/ragsved/ on June 6th, 2021, and it was reproduced with permission.