LEADER and leadership

Democratic aspects of rural development planning in the municipality of Karlshamn

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Abstract

The rural regions have, and are facing, challenges on how to keep population, services and businesses. As of this, rural development focus has shifted towards the place-specific qualities by integrating local actors. This thesis focuses on analyzing the LEADER-methods approach to rural development in the municipality of Karlshamn, by interviewing local population to achieve an understanding of the place-specific attractivity features of the rural areas in Karlshamns municipality.

The purpose is to analyze a local rural development project, called 'Ett steg längre' by uniting a theoretical framework with empirical findings and to be providing constructive critique regarding this rural development process.

The conducted interviews give some clarity in regard to place-specific attractivity features as well as democratic aspects to consider in this process. The development approach most desired is a preservationist one; the nature-related qualities are seen with utmost importance for the local attractivity. The LEADER-method is also found to be a functioning democratic approach in rural development planning, if following its core principles, and could be enhanced through functioning internet-connectivity with the local actors.

The thesis will allow for both a deeper theoretical understanding of the LEADER-method's approach to rural development but also empirically, through the interviews regarding the rural areas in Karlshamns municipality.

Key words: *Rural development, LEADER, Democracy, Planning, Karlshamn*

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1.   Introduction

Political ambitions, and the power of knowledge, are united in the planning process. To act upon ambitions demand resources, and knowledge is one key to achieving power in the political process that is planning. This thesis is linked to a rural development project in Karlshamns municipality, called "Ett steg längre". It follows the so called LEADER-method for rural development that, for instance, focuses on a bottom-up approach, knowledge-creation and capacity-building for the involved actors in the planning process.

The project states that a study on the rural area ought to be conducted and that it could function as a knowledge source for a new rural development program that is to be created.[1]

Hence, research related to LEADER has been reviewed and interviews have been conducted with local population, who possess an understanding of the rural areas, as a way to create an initial knowledge base for the planning process. But what knowledge can be found, what does 'development' imply, and what aspects of this specific methods needs to be highlighted? Thus, this particular study also focuses on the rural development process itself, its democratic aspects and its notions on development as an attempt to constructively analyze these aspects.

1. 1 – Relevance for rural studies

In a global market where rural areas suffer from comparative disadvantages, rural development today is aimed at overcoming these; to ensure fair competition and to reach social and economical cohesion between regions.[2] Rural areas are indeed regarded as in need of development, which could be interpreted as either positive or negative.[3] This is an underlying reason for writing this thesis. Rural areas are under pressure from agricultural changes such as intensification, modernization, land enlargement or abandonment, environmental degradation and changes in demands for rural goods and services. Traditional rural occupations have thus lost some dominance in these areas. Furthermore, rural areas face weak economic growth, out-migration, aging, low education levels, low labor productivity and low levels of services. However, rural areas are not synonymous with weak growth or decline but development plans aim toward counter-acting these negative trends. One way has been to form a place-specific ideology that requires new methods and knowledge.[4]

A new rural paradigm has emerged exceeding the traditional economy and from a will to not just stand by and be affected by these negative trends.[5] This is a move from raw-material specialization to multi-functionality where material and immaterial capital are put into focus for rural development as it has become more important for the new rural economical basis. A commodification of the rural culture functions as capital and a basis for these new activities.

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[1] (Karlshamns kommun, 2010)
[2] (Nemes, 2005, p. 12pp)
[3] (Overbeek, 2009, p. 1)
[4] (Olsson, Waldenström, & Westholm, 2006, p. 12pp); (Tillväxtanalys, 2009); (OECD Rural Policy Reviews, 2006, p. 12); (Oremark, 2006, p. 45pp)
[5] (SOU, 2006)

The EU has supported this trend through structural policies, stimulating entrepreneurship, innovation, cooperation, marketing and image-making.[6]

One effect of this has been a diffusion of the traditional rurality as urbanization of the rural parts has increased and when more functions are competing for its place there, both traditional enterprises but also ones following an urban lifestyle. This competition where many diverse interests become apparent, i.e. the increase of functions on a limited space, is a core challenge in rural planning. There is a need for a method that can cope with all the interest and actors.[7]

Here, in this context, the EU LEADER-method is central as it follows this trend by using interdisciplinary methods, both statistics and hermeneutic studies to understand, define and analyze the rural.[8] The LEADER-method has acquired a mainstream position in ideas, knowledge-creation and concrete action for rural development.[9] So the need for rural development is operationalized in a new rural plan, not only formulated by Karlshamns municipality, but also by EU mandate.

1. 2 – Purpose and aim

There is a legitimate need for more in-depth rural studies as to create a better knowledge basis for decision-makers to act upon.[10] As of this, my thesis could contribute to Swedish rural research through its local focus in relation to the wider trends of rural changes.[11] This study is thus based in a view of the rural areas as in need of change, the diffusion of the traditional rurality and the need for rural studies, as described above.

Related to this, a purpose stemming from academia is that social sciences has three main focuses; firstly to be analytical using theories, semantics and insights. Secondly, to be critical and problematize, discuss, highlight values and social interactions. And thirdly it should focus on being constructive, to initiate and aid in solutions. The research questions thus are formulated through a process of identifying a problem, to motivate this focus of study, to specify the issue and then to operationalize the question.[12]

It is through the theoretical and methodological framework that the thesis' claims can be verified or refuted. The thesis has, hopefully, a pragmatic validity as it may contribute to actual rural development planning in Karlshamns municipality. And if the study potentially could come to have policy implications then it might be worth distributing it to planners, community groups or the press, and thereby spreading the knowledge for further development.[13] So the aim of this study goes beyond an academic purpose of deepening an understanding of a local rural development process through an investigative study.

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[6] (Andersson, Eklund, & Lehtola, 2009, p. 29pp)
[7] (Tress & Tress, 2003, p. 161p)
[8] (Panelli, 2006, p. 82p)
[9] (Olsson, Waldenström, & Westholm, 2006, p. 21pp)
[10] (Olsson, Waldenström, & Westholm, 2006, p. 7); (Olsson, Waldenström, & Westholm, 2006, p. 26pp)
[11] (OECD Rural Policy Reviews, 2006); (Waldenström & Westholm, 2006, p. 9)
[12] (Grönmo, 2006, p. 20)
[13] (Flowerdew & Martin, 2005, p. 333)

1. 3 – Research questions

- *What type of development is sought after by the involved actors?*
- *What key aspects of rural attractiveness can one identify in Karlshamn municipality?*
- *In what aspects is the LEADER-method a functioning democratic approach for indentifying and including local actors in the planning process and achieving rural development?*
- *How well does the local policies and the theoretical framework correlate with the empirical findings regarding rural development?*
- *What future opportunities does the relation between the local policies, the theoretical framework and the empirical findings show in respect to rural development in Karlshamns municipality?*

1. 4 – Disposition

The thesis will first introduce the municipality of Karlshamn, the policy framework and the specific local rural development project. A literature review follows as to set the project in its theoretical context. Since the development plan is to be created by using the LEADER-method the literature research could be written ex ante the actual empirical research, functioning as a basis for the empirical gathering process. The empirical part is two-headed, one part based in second-hand sources, that is research regarding the theoretical parts and the LEADER-method. The second part consists of own collected empirical findings where the method of choice was to utilize semi-structured interviews, conducted amongst local rural population, to gain a possible understanding of the rural areas. The thesis then follows with an attempt to merge the literature part with the empirical material in the discussion chapter. Lastly the thesis is finished with concluding remarks and the answers found to the research questions as well as suggestions for further research.

2. The rural development project

2. 1 – Karlshamn

The area of focus needs to be presented to give an understanding of why the municipality of Karlshamn is focusing on rural development. Karlshamn is no exception of the general problems the rural areas face, suffering from modern demographic challenges, out-commuting and a higher tax rate than the national average. Despite this the municipality has had a stable population over the last ten years.[14] However, demographical changes are unevenly divided and the rural regions, especially the northern parts, are suffering the most in both population and service aspects.[15] The comprehensive plan states that no major changes are expected in the rural parts in the coming 15-20 years, yet municipal plans are to be continuously revised.[16]

Karlshamns municipality, with roughly 30 000 inhabitants, is located in west parts of the Blekinge region, with a port to Baltic Sea and good communications with the growing Copenhagen-Malmö region. The major urban areas are Karlshamn (12 000 inhabitants), Asarum (6 200), Mörrum (3 400) and Svängsta (1 700). The municipality is roughly divided in three geographically different areas; the inland coniferous forest, the deciduous woodlands and plains of the middle and lastly the coastal area with the archipelago. Previously dominated by industries and trade it is now in transition towards more knowledge intense production due to structural changes, with increased commuting as mobility has increased.[17]

Figure 1 – *Karlshamn in its geographical setting seen from north to south, Karlshamn placed mid-picture. Taken from (Karlshamns kommun, 2007)*

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[14] (Blücher, Emmelin, & Nilsson, 2002, p. 10p); (Karlshamns kommun, 2010, p. 3); ; (SCB, 2010)
[15] (Länsstyrelsen Blekinge län, 2009, p. 6pp)
[16] (Karlshamns kommun, 2007, p. 59); (Karlshamns Kommun, 2006, p. 1pp); (Karlshamns kommun, 2009)
[17] (Karlshamns kommun, 2007, p. 18pp)

The business environment in both urban and rural areas was found to be mediocre save for some improvements over the last 10 years.[18] Strengths of Karlshamns municipality have been found to be the contact networks, the local engagement from citizens and the closeness of the urban-rural relation. Weaknesses were a low education level, youth failing this local interest and weakness in (or lack of) rural development programs. As of this; opportunities were to enhance the IT-sector and infrastructure, increase local participation, and create deeper urban-rural relations as it is a small region with short distances. Threats for development were if failing to supply services and continued worsened demographics.[19]

A citizen survey focusing on the living environment of Karlshamns municipality, firstly regarding municipal services, secondly possibility of citizens' influence and thirdly participation rates, found the first category at a 64 (of 100) with potential improvements of house-related issues. The second category received a 54 and improvement should be made for infrastructure, elderly care, and support for marginalized people and upper secondary school. The third category scored a 38 and the biggest impact of improvement would come if trust and influence levels increased.[20] Regarding satisfaction of citizen participation, the rural parts received worse scores. The problems regarded the participation rates, information diffusion on possibilities of influence on governmental activity and on the quality of this information.[21] Also, there is a need to increase voting in the local elections.[22]

The municipality's comprehensive plan states that the whole Karlshamn municipality is no longer "itself" but the vision to achieve "The good Karlshamn" ("Det goda Karlshamn") is seen as difficult yet possible.[23] An economically difficult time may lie ahead as the tax base is shrinking and unemployment rises. Therefore, the municipality prioritizes well founded local knowledge-creation as they see possibilities within the municipality to be successful.[24] The next segment relates to how this is to be done, the rural development agenda in its policy setting, aiming at highlighting the specific projects political underpinnings.

2. 2 – Plans and policies

Both plans and policies are important tools for municipalities. First of all, Sweden's national political program for the rural areas 2007-13, as well as the regional plan, follows the four goals and subcategories from EU, found in LEADER, such as investments in job-creation, competence, innovation enhancement, territorial communities and partnerships.[25]

The regional program focuses on how to unify strategic dimensions of rural development programs, aiming at a holistic planning, and to give actors more responsibility through dialogues. Further development in the rural areas there needs to be improved through horizontal and vertical actor collaboration and coordination. In the comprehensive plan of Karlshamns municipality it is stated, on citizen participation, that all who resides in the

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[18] (Svenskt Näringsliv, 2010)
[19] (Länsstyrelsen Blekinge län, 2010, p. 10pp)
[20] (SCB, 2008, p. 1pp)
[21] (SCB, 2008, p. appendix)
[22] (Karlshamns kommun, 2010, p. 11)
[23] (Karlshamns kommun, 2007, p. 13pp)
[24] (Karlshamns kommun, 2010, p. 17)
[25] (Landsbygdsdepartementet, 2010) ; (Länsstyrelsen Blekinge län, 2010, p. 12pp); (Länsstyrelsen Blekinge län, 2009, p. 5)

municipality should have the possibility of influencing development planning process. It is a matter of rights for each individual to have accessibility to certain services, and for the community it is a matter of stability and development. The planning should be done with transparency and dialogues, to inspire active citizenship. This will create a better knowledge base as well as wider representativity in the planning process. So, an influence is indeed present from the EU to national governments, down to the regional and municipal development programs regarding the strategy for development.[26]

All public power comes from the people, it is stated in the Swedish constitution, regarding the sovereignty of the people. This is also the basis of the municipality's democracy view. Here it is also stated that there is room for citizen participation complementary to the representative democracy, something the municipality acknowledges as needed and attractive. Local democracy can be improved through dialogues, local group activity, transparency, municipal support, accessibility, open formal meetings and education on how municipalities function.[27] Increased trust from citizens to the officials could improve continuity, communications, understanding, closeness, place-marketing and an increased focus on the importance of the civil sector. To invest in communications, striving towards more involvement from the civil sector was also found to be successful in strengthening local democracy.[28]

2. 3 – The project

Following the rural problems and the policy framework described, the context of the specific project related to this thesis is clarified. The project, initiated in January of 2009 and ending in April of 2012, is called "Ett steg längre" ("One step further"). This project is a part of the new rural development program which will focus on supporting and guiding local actors regarding rural development and sustainability, local democracy using dialogues and collaboration with a focus on service, business and population.[29]

The municipality of Karlshamn has initiated this project in close relations with rural actors, aiming at finding the unique factors that are attractive of the rural parts, and with possibility of marketing these on the local, regional and national levels. The municipality has goals to create attractivity, with good conditions for living and businesses, to reach increased population and new establishments, enhanced local entrepreneurship and to stimulate the tourism business, all to create a living rural society coping with the above stated challenges.[30]

The project uses the LEADER-method where the creation of a local action group (LAG) is integral. Here the municipal officials, the private sector and the voluntary, third sector, are to be given voice and power over rural development by stimulating local actors to participate in the planning process. The project acknowledges and directs its attention towards the local population and in-migrants, local organizations, new establishments and existing businesses, visitors and the youth. The project is financed by the EU, the municipality, the regional office,

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[26] (Karlshamns kommun, 2007, p. 15); (Länsstyrelsen Blekinge län, 2009, p. 5); (Region Blekinge, 2006, p. 2)
[27] (Karlshamns kommun, 2003)
[28] (Karlshamns kommun, 2010)
[29] (Karlshamns kommun, 2007)
[30] (Karlshamns kommun, 2010)

the unemployment office and the municipalities real estate company as well as by the local actors 'Landsbygderådet i Karlshamn' (formerly known as LUKA), LRF (Lantbrukarnas riksförbund), Mörrums företagarförening, Åryds företagarförening and Svängsta samhällsförening. A goal is to set up an organizational structure for further rural development processes with network solutions, collaboration, bottom-up approach and innovative ideas.[31]

The organization that aided in finding interviewees for the thesis was 'Landsbygderådet i Karlshamn', and is a part of this LAG. This third sector group was formed 2002, financed by EU subsidies together with the local municipality and Länsstyrelsen, by roughly 20 locally active rural groups. The ambition is to become an umbrella organisation, gathering local rural actors and representing these in the LAG. Its own development plan focuses on bottom-up democratic solutions, with the municipalities "Democracy program" as inspiration. It aims to improve living and business conditions in the rural areas of Karlshamns municipality, support local culture, services (e.g. infrastructure, elderly care, supplies, trash collection and school) and local democracy. These rural development goals are to be reached through dialogue meetings with other local actors and to link its strategy to the economic planning of the municipality.[32]

With an introduction of the specific program at hand, of the municipality and of the related policy documents; what theoretical framework is this related to? The next chapter of the thesis will highlight some theories integral to the project; planning and policies, democracy, actor networks and place-marketing and social economy.

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[31] (Karlshamns kommun, 2010)
[32] (Kanalen - Karlshamns kommun, 2003); (Karlshamns kommun, 2007, p. 5pp); (Leader Blekinge, 2008, p. 12)

3.   Theoretical framework

The influences from the EU down to Karlshamns municipality regard the notion of development, shaping the policies' and projects goals. A general theoretical framework, where this project becomes more visibly part of a wider context, is needed to be presented. That is the purpose of this chapter, to set up an understanding for the trend of which this thesis is a part. Many theories are based on empirical findings so parts of this chapter will feature some empirical results. Theories in social sciences are after all formulated after one has codified that which we have learned.[33] But it is the later chapter called "Empirical findings" that is designated for the previous research on these theories in their LEADER-context. This chapter – 'Empirical findings' – also features the conducted interviews, all of which could possibly help in the theory-building process.

The new rural paradigm, mentioned earlier, focuses on competitiveness, valorization of local resources and exploitation of these resources through investments, not subsidies. Following this there is also a new rural development paradigm in planning where LEADER is the method most often used. All sectors of the rural economies, as well as all levels of the government's institutions, are to be included. As this thesis has a relation to development planning it inclines us to discuss the claim that planning acts for social reform, raised through a bottom-up approach, where communication is central between the planners and for those whom the plan is created for, or together with. It is a humanist approach seeking changes to any social status quo, which is continuously affecting people's lives.[34]

As any system of political power, and thus planning, must be analyzed on its claim of legitimacy, this theoretical part aims to give a background to the project's democratic framework of the LEADER-approach to development planning. Therefore one must go into the theoretical foundations of this rural paradigm; rurality, development, planning and policies, governance and deliberative democracy, actors, place-marketing and social economy. Firstly an understanding of the arena, the rural setting, is needed.

3. 1 – Definitions

3. 1. 1 - The urban and the rural

Studies of what is 'rural' often become intertwined with regional and urban research.[35] The discussion arises as the urban and rural become more similar in a socio-economic sense, but still separated by unique characteristics. Through macro-level trends, mainly higher mobility and making accessibility related problems less dependent of the physical space, an urbanization of the rural has been noticed. Or possibly the reversed correlation, that the urban becoming part of a ruralization trend. As of this blurring effect we must ask question; what makes 'rural' rural?[36] One should therefore try and understand the complexity of semantic categories.

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[33] (Frederickson, 2008, s. 34)
[34] (Murray, Greera, Houstona, McKay, & Murtagh, 2009, p. 445); (OECD Rural Policy Reviews, 2006, p. 12pp)
[35] (Olsson, Waldenström, & Westholm, 2006, p. 11)
[36] (Cloke, 2006, p. 18pp); (Olsson, Waldenström, & Westholm, 2006, p. 8p); (Waldenström & Westholm, 2006, p. 8)

The rural and the urban are highly, or completely, integrated, in all from economics, political and socio-cultural aspects yet often defined in a classical binary dichotomy. This dichotomy is internationally existent and historically frequent despite this undeniable dependence between the two. These artificially created boundaries can become difficult to handle as dichotomies could actually function counter-productively in planning.[37] Empirical studies of defining the rural is often flawed with vague assumptions, arbitrarily chosen spatial boundaries of data and indicators' underpinning what is rurality.[38] The EU even has a continuously updated document due to the difficulties of semantics, boundaries and interpretation implications.[39] As of the diversity, and semantic problems, the most common practice is to use the definition that suits the work at hand.[40] This leaves the question of definitions, and its power, for the writer and reader to discuss.

One could claim three theoretical ruralities; functional, political-economical and social-constructionist views. 'Functional' is defined by land uses, settlements and the way of life while the 'political-economical' view regards the outside factors affecting an area. A 'social-constructionist' approach views rurality as from its social, cultural and moral values of an ideal type rurality, more virtual than real. Also, 'spaces' are based in a cartographical, static, sense of the world and the rural is a mosaic of locations, but also of 'places'. These are instead understood by socially created interpretations, a process where a space becomes a 'place', filled with meaning and values. Hence, the rural has both an ontological, epistemological and a metaphysical dimension, where different theories are used to make sense of this place. Rurality is thus a contextual creation of an imagined place, sometimes defined as opposing the urban norm, and hence not understood on its own terms. To deconstruct concepts is important as to understand how, who and why the concepts are used as they are. This requires an understanding of how social, economical and cultural aspects manifest geographically.[41]

As one interprets social reality through ideal types of the places' characteristics, in a heuristic process, the extremely complex reality is simplified. By exaggerating one side of reality or by selecting multiple sides of reality, unifying them into one construct, rurality becomes easier understood. In this process one can find stakeholder positions and as such, planning process could benefit from using narratives of reality.[42] Therefore, one should focus in what process rurality is created; focusing on asking what makes 'rural' being rural.[43]

The relation between the urban and the rural is central, and could be defined firstly as between two specific areas, secondly between actors manifesting the differences of rural and urban interests and, thirdly, between people who live and work in the rural as opposing people who live there but work in urban areas.[44] Here, one could define the rural as becoming less and less urban with the rural urban, "rurban", as a concept related to the blurring of the boundaries. This area is linked to both rural and urban development but seen as putting rural areas under urban pressure. Too much pressure could hollow out the traditional rural goods

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[37] (Forsberg G. , 2006, p. 49pp); (Marini & Mooney, 2006, p. 91); (Qviström, 2007, p. 271)
[38] (Cloke, 2006, p. 18pp)
[39] (Eurostat, 2010)
[40] (SOU, 2008, p. 35)
[41] (Cloke, 2006, p. 18pp); (Ek & Hultman, 2007, p. 14pp); (Waldenström & Westholm, 2006, p. 9p)
[42] (Soliva, 2007, p. 63pp)
[43] (Forsberg G. , 2006, p. 56)
[44] (Overbeek, 2009, p. 3)

and service producers and thus be negative to rural development. This fringe-area becomes a battlefield of semantics in a transformative process, as a possible graveyard of the rural or a cradle for the urban, between-area of rural and urban.[45]

In Sweden the rural became defined in a negative terms, all that is not an urban area is rural. The urban definition was set low (200 inhabitants) a thus created a higher degree of urban areas, undervaluing the size of how rural Sweden actually is. Sweden therefore had the world's smallest urban areas and most dispersed rural areas.[46] In an international context half of Sweden's population could actually live in rural areas.[47]

One definition of the rural parts in the municipality of Karlshamn, previously used, is that the rural part is where the area is dominated by agrarian business, outside the fine street network. The towns Karlshamn, Mörrum, Asarum, Hällaryd, Åryd and Svängsta has therefore not been part of the rural and the archipelago it has its own program but is part of the rural. In this definition 6000 people live in the rural parts, 20% of the municipality's population. But the view is also that the rural and the urban is, and must be, integrated for the whole municipality to be sustainable.[48]
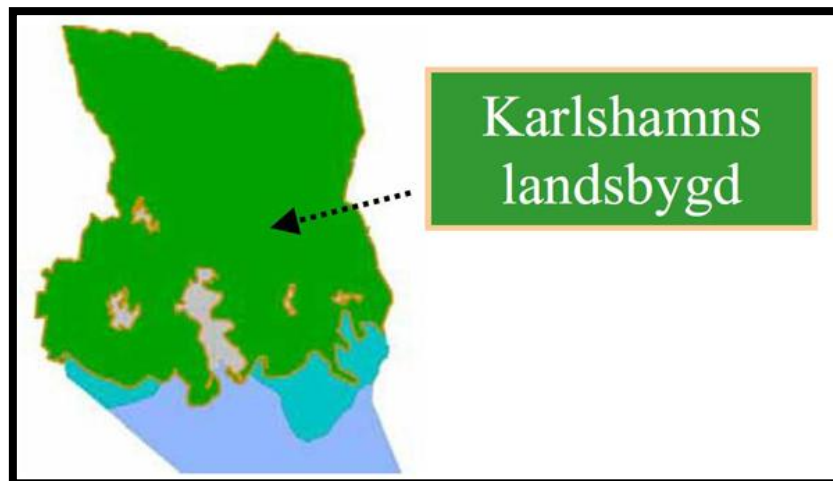
Figure 2 – *Karlshamns rural area, as by the above stated definition, with the urban areas are shown in grey. Taken from (Karlshamns kommun, 2007)*

This problem defining the rural and urban could have consequences for the relations between these two as it changes from a classic dichotomy into a more complex system.[49] But by using definitions and maps, a planner has a tool for creating measurable, distinct, spaces utilized to keep a desired order. Disturbances to this order are not desired as it serves the agenda or ideology of the planner. So any landscape classifications that are sensitive to local specific values are more likely to contribute an equally sensitive local development plan.[50] The urban and the rural should here be regarded as complements to each other as this would stress their mutual dependence and how they both are important for the whole of society. As many rural areas are highly urban rural development plans must understand these dependency relations.[51] In this respect, negotiating rurality(ies) between actors will be central in rural development.[52]

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[45] (Andersson, Eklund, & Lehtola, 2009, p. 30); (Marini & Mooney, 2006, p. 92p); (Qviström, 2007, p. 269p)
[46] (Forsberg G. , 2006, p. 50pp)
[47] (Klaesson & Pettersson, 2006, p. 75p)
[48] (Karlshamns kommun, 2007, p. 3pp)
[49] (Overbeek, 2009, p. 2)
[50] (Pinto-Correia, Gustavsson, & Pirnat, 2006, p. 333); (Qviström, 2007, p. 270)
[51] (Olsson, Waldenström, & Westholm, 2006, p. 23pp); (Pichler, 2006, p. 69p)
[52] (Shucksmith, 2009, p. 12)

3. 1. 2 - Development

In this thesis 'rural development' will be further investigated in the empirical part. So by starting with the notion of development, in general, it is a comprehensive concept. What particular (rural) development is desired in Karlshamns municipality should be formulated by the local actors involved, as through the LEADER method. However, there are some common understandings of what development, or more correctly, sustainable development, (SD), is. But SD is formulated on a global discourse so its understanding on the local level becomes more problematic. The unification of these two, the 'glocal', is problematical but SD still needs to be understood by the local actors, where reality meets ideals.[53] Nevertheless, all government agencies follow the notion of SD in its official politics. Following the EU, the municipalities of Karlshamns definition in the project is a mainstream, thus vague, definition of what sustainable development is.[54] Just like the concept of 'rural' one can basically choose what definition to use as there are so many definitions.[55] Classifications regarding the level of sustainability depend on what definition one uses and what principles are prioritized.[56]

However, sustainable development is based in four ethical principles – human-biosphere interdependence, human-human interdependence, inter-generational equity and participatory decision making. Wide actor citizenry participation is seen as a vital part of sustainability as to reach agreements on the definition and value of SD.[57] The sustainability in rural areas, following ecological, economical and social sustainability, can be specified as that the ecological aspect relates to preserving eco-systems, biological diversity, a healthy environment, maintaining the local carrying-capacity and preserving cultural heritage. The economic side follows the thoughts of economic growth, productivity and development while social sustainability includes equality, democracy, and healthiness, access to services, cultural identity and social securities.[58]

The importance of understanding this concept, or the urban/rural relation, comes with that knowledge is based in interpretation, and power from knowledge comes of having ones interpretation, and thus knowledge, acknowledged as the correct one.[59] The actor who sets the indicators used for defining SD set the framework of the political agenda and has thus achieved significant political power.[60] One must therefore discuss what interpretation has, or is, to prevail since SD is so widely defined with the ecological, social, economical, and the intergenerational aspects. So the concepts vagueness has both a strength, allowing dialogues, but also a weakness as this vagueness hinders effective implementation. By studying how 'development' is used and measured one can understand institutional arrangements, power relations, and their effects.[61]

Furthermore, SD is often based on that social learning will be required; opening for new interpretations through a democratic, transparent, process with participatory methods is needed to revitalize democracy. Cross-sectoral planning can ease the challenges of meeting

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[53] (Olsson J. , 2005, p. 38)
[54] (Karlshamns kommun, 2010)
[55] (Lundberg, 2005, p. 137)
[56] (Olsson J. , 2005, p. 182p)
[57] (Olsson J. , 2005, p. 14pp)
[58] (Franzén, Gullstrand, Johansson, & Svensson, 2005, p. 6)
[59] (Mineur, 2007, p. 50pp)
[60] (Mineur, 2007, p. 253)
[61] (Mineur, 2007, p. 65pp)

sustainability goals but it demands minimizing self-interests and an increase of participation, the ideal process is one of high degree of participation with diverse actors. Empowerment of actors over decision-making and interpretation of sustainability and development is central.[62] The democratic aspect of SD has been prioritized in Sweden, attempting in achieving an active informed and well-educated population with high voting numbers.[63] The need to activate local actors to preserve specific landscapes and social relations is needed but how this is achieved is still uncertain.[64] The LEADER-method is one answer to this, and since it is the one utilized by Karlshamns municipality further theoretical underpinnings is central to be highlighted, which is the aim of the coming next parts.

3. 2 – Planning, democracy, actors and rural places

The project "Ett steg längre" is, as we have seen, to a large extent influenced by the EU in using the LEADER-method and thus, LEADER sets a basic scene for my thesis. Hence, the planning process, the theoretical concepts and later, the empirical part, requires an introduction to LEADER. The following chapters are then, in turn, related to the aspects of this particular method. Central questions of planning, in general, includes what justifies planning, what are the rules of planning, what values and ethical dilemmas are present, what are the constraints of planning and what do planners do, and in what style? This need to be answered to some degree and LEADER is one, central to this thesis.[65] As stated above, the empirical results of previous research and the conducted interviews are presented in chapter five, segments 5.1 and 5.2 respectively.

3. 2. 1 - Planning and policies

Planning

As we have seen, modern planning is characterized by citizen dialogue, collaboration, partnerships, networks and regionalization.[66] One could argue we are moving from a weberian state to a post-modern i.e. from government to governance, hierarchy to network, centralized power to decentralizes, elitism to pluralism, and one sole public service provider to a heterogeneous service culture.[67] Planning focus is shifting towards a decentralized, local level, to revive democracy, as it is closer to its affected people and aiming at being normative, innovative and empowering with a basis from social learning.[68] The decentralization process in Swedish planning has increased as public resources has lessened, forcing the government into partnerships as to meet their goals with new planning organizational forms with resource allocation as a consequence. Here, the EU has had high degree of influence through the LEADER-method of territorial rural development planning and ideals, as the assumption is

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[62] (Mineur, 2007, p. 60pp); (Thabrewa, Wiek, & Ries, 2009, p. 67p)
[63] (Mineur, 2007, p. 230)
[64] (Pinto-Correia, Gustavsson, & Pirnat, 2006, p. 334)
[65] (Campbell & Fainstein, 2003, p. 5pp)
[66] (Montin, 2007, p. 14p)
[67] (Hill, 2007, p. 20)
[68] (Friedmann, 2003)

that subsidiarity is good and effective.[69] The political and ideological trend towards governance can thus be traced to macro-level influences.[70]

As municipalities have lost exclusive influence in the planning process, they can regain authority and democratic legitimacy through governance.[71] Such planning can, ideally, solve conflicts by unify interests and collaborating with local actors.[72] Still, planning in any form can be controversial if it is regarded as an intrusion of individual interests, which are in conflict with a notion of a public good.[73]

Planning is often based in a utopian optimism of solving problems, but has evolved through a process of changing needs, desires and goals. And as described above planners seeks to establish ideal orderly, even static, spaces as to achieve control. This is, more concretely, carried out in plans and policies, these being central tools used to understand the present and shape the future.[74]

There are many different, idealized, planning types. Planning procedures is often a merge of ideal planning types; incrementalism, advocacy and negotiation planning but also communicative and strategic planning. This is true for LEADER, which also is based in generative planning as it aims to lessen the gap between municipal officials and laymen.[75] The mix of planning methods is beneficial as it is during the planning process that tasks are assigned, preferences and values are identified, conflicts surface, relations and partnerships are formed or reformed and strategies unified. This process is often not visible in the final product, the plan or policy, so the power of influence over this process becomes highly important.[76] One example is how there is often a struggle between the shortsightedly possible and the long-term desirable.[77]

Today, planning is mostly assumed a level of legitimacy.[78] One legitimacy claim for planning is of the uncertainty of the future. For a determinist, planning can be based upon the laws found in history, and used in prognoses. As for a voluntarist approach, planning becomes a tool to set goals and create the conditions needed to reach these goals, thus making a vision normative.[79] Thus, planning has several dimensions; firstly a normative dimension regarding of goal creation, power relations, democratic support and discretion ability. Secondly, a methodological dimension regards knowledge-creation and integration of different actors and, thirdly, an organisatory dimension regards what planning culture is prevailing and how resources are distributed.[80]

This new planning paradigm described above relies on active, revitalized, citizenry concerned with public interest by collaborating with public officials. Citizens are to engage in the communities concerns focusing on inclusion and knowledge creation. Public officials are then to help citizens articulate their interest and find collectively shared notions, not to control or steer into new directions. Using a boat metaphor, those who steer have more power than

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[69] (Müller, 2006, p. 218); (European court of auditors, 2010, p. 10p); (Prager & Freese, 2009, p. 1154p)
[70] (Olsson, Waldenström, & Westholm, 2006, p. 21pp); (Shucksmith, 2009, p. 3p)
[71] (Montin, 2007, p. 49)
[72] (Overbeek, 2009, p. 2); (Hill, 2007, p. 242p)
[73] (Müller, 2006, p. 215)
[74] (Klausen & Sweeting, 2004); (Lapping, 2006, p. 104); (Qviström, 2007, p. 270)
[75] (Khakee, 2007, p. 26pp)
[76] (Khakee, 2007, p. 39p)
[77] (Blücher, Emmelin, & Nilsson, 2002, p. 93)
[78] (Klosterman, 2003)
[79] (Blücher, Emmelin, & Nilsson, 2002, p. 9pp)
[80] (Khakee, 2007, p. 41pp)

those who row, but it is the citizens who own the boat. This type of governance network is more likely to succeed if it is based in leadership of shared power.[81]

Swedish planning has a tradition of preserving the rural areas in regards to services and demographical aspects. But the rural development politics has been less prioritized due to societal, externally influenced, macro-changes and focusing on certain regions with high growth potential.[82] And to ease planning for rural development it has been proposed that priorities ought to be making capital more accessible, investing in infrastructure and to simplify the regulatory framework. This as rural hindrance for business development often relate to taxes and fees, rules and regulations and access to capital.[83]

Policies

Municipalities work through various planning tools; legal, administrative and financial, that they use to support or hinder development trends.[84] A vision is, as noted above, a decisive tool as one set an agenda, creates policies, for the future development in a process, where power and accountability becomes central.[85] In planning for rural development, policy-making is still often defined centrally, seen as ideally for effective top-down policy implementation, with clarity in the structure with as few links as possible. But this control over which actors are participating hinders involvement for new, and more, actors becoming integrated into the policy process.[86]

A gap between centrally defined policies and local decisions is visible, firstly due to any static top-down views on rural values and of local characteristics. Secondly, this lack of policy integration could occur as officials are more prone to use their own definitions and specialized knowledge which differs from laymen understanding. Thirdly, new users and landowners, such as tourists or 'outsiders', define the area differently from their set of contextual 'knowledges' leading to a hindrance for new perspectives being used.[87] So, as one approach rural development planning it should be accepted that there are different sets of 'knowledges' and that these need to be transferred between actors. Flexibility in solutions is needed due to the specific places contextual 'knowledges'. Open attitudes are also desired when working towards multi-scaled actor integration, cross-sectoral thinking and an authentic consideration for the soft values of a place, such as identities, relations, responsibilities and a sense of belonging.[88]

Policymakers could fall into stereotypically creating the target groups of whom the policy is about, making them appear increasingly negative or positive. Re-allocation of resources and power would then be based in these constructions, potentially creating more problems than solving leading to a less democratic, and more unequal and unjust society. Thus, policy-design has both social and political consequences.[89]

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[81] (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2008, s. 63pp); (Roberts, 2008, p. 23)
[82] (Olsson, Waldenström, & Westholm, 2006, p. 21p)
[83] (Tillväxtanalys, 2009, p. 98pp)
[84] (Blücher, Emmelin, & Nilsson, 2002, p. 83)
[85] (Hill, 2007, p. 30p); (Hill, 2007, p. 144)
[86] (Hill, 2007, p. 185); (Pinto-Correia, Gustavsson, & Pirnat, 2006, p. 334)
[87] (Pinto-Correia, Gustavsson, & Pirnat, 2006, p. 337pp)
[88] (Pinto-Correia, Gustavsson, & Pirnat, 2006, p. 343p)
[89] (Ingram, Schneider, & DeLeon, 2007, p. 93pp)

In a governance system of planning those involved are also affected by the policies and thus the policy process needs to be highly actor-integrative.[90] The ambition is to create policies in networks where the formal institutions are not longer the single actor. This decentralized, horizontal, approach features a dispersed power structure as of the number of actors, their complexity, and degree of self-referential. Consequently a network could be characterized by its degree of integration, actors' specific capabilities, preferences and if the power structure is shared or concentrated. In this type of policy network, collaboration leads to stability and coordination of mutual interests. However, high integration costs will potentially lead to fewer engaged actors.[91] A common knowledge base is also needed to share a goal, but it is naïve to think all interests, goals and knowledge bases can be unified.[92]

Too share values and relations, and exchange resources through a leader that acts regulatory, by dividing power relatively evenly amongst involved actors, is central for this type of policy process to be successful.[93] Here the state can become this leader, with shifted focus on co-ordination in this network of actors. As the policy process, as in LEADER and IRD, becomes more complex due to its integrative stance the state can thus function to support the capacity and relations of involved actors.[94]

As the policy-makers and the policy-implementers are mutually dependent the process needs to allow real influence if the policy is to be successful.[95] Because a policy found odd by the recipient it is often bound to fail. Such a policy process needs to be properly grounded, where actors are willing to voice their opinions and gaining influence with an increased trust and confidence. Collaboration, dispersion of power and knowledge diffusion can thus lessen the confidence gap between the policymakers and the policy producers.[96] Yet, this is difficult as the policy process also has time-complications; involved actors could all have different interests and preferences which are also constantly changing.[97]

A network approach to policy creation is a tool-box for policy-creation, acknowledging the different interdependent actors and their rationales for acting. However, policy outcomes are shaped by both the internal dynamics and the exogenous powers.[98] Certain relations can affect what role, power and function any given actor has. Actors rationale may be understood as influenced from incentives and motivations caused within the institutional settings in where actors operate. Hence, the context for actors' behavior comes into focus, influenced by exogenous and endogenous factors, that meaning both horizontal and vertical relations.[99] Policy networks exist at all levels, from transnational to local, all related to each other by sharing democratic institutional organizations as well as practices, thus shaping the policy process and its outcomes.[100]

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[90] (Klausen & Sweeting, 2004, p. 220)
[91] (Adam & Kriesi, 2007, p. 129pp)
[92] (Montin, 2007, p. 110pp)
[93] (Hill, 2007, p. 83p)
[94] (High & Nemes, 2007, p. 104)
[95] (Prager & Freese, 2009, p. 1162p)
[96] (DeLeon, 2008, p. 205pp)
[97] (Sabatier, 2007, s. 3)
[98] (Adam & Kriesi, 2007, p. 146pp); (Berry & Berry, 2007, p. 224)
[99] (Haus, Heinfelt, & Stewart, Urban governance and democracy – leadership and community involvement, 2005, p. 3p)
[100] (Adam & Kriesi, 2007, p. 137pp)

3. 2. 2 - The democratic aspects of governance

As planning and policies are highly related to power one must understand the legitimacy claims to this power in a democratic system. Government failures in planning may be explained with the representative institution lacking sufficient legitimacy, efficiency and failing to handle the complexity of modern society. If government fails on these accounts then legitimacy and efficiency needs to be acquired, and complexity understood, in new methods. LEADER attempts to solve these problems through governance and policy networks where societal actors and a weaker state operate and focus on problem-solving and dialogues.[101]

Representative democracy could be seen as politics that is not an expression of a general will but driven by rationality of maximizing own benefit. Actors do this on the political market, attempting to improve their own position. The more control over power-related sources, e.g. votes, one has the more successful one is. A participatory approach can challenge this system by getting and allowing more actors into the political market. Reluctance is to be expected by power-holders as this call for re-allocation of their power and resources.[102] The deliberative democratic form, as in LEADER, is still only to be seen as a complement to the representative system where non-official political actors still are minor ones and apart from representative democracy.[103]

However citizens have right to engage in decisions affecting their lives and citizenship participation is indeed a fundament of democracy although a more direct participation is seen ambivalently. Direct citizenship participation (DCP) is a key in deliberative democracy, defined as when actors of the society share power in the decision-making process with those who do hold governmental positions.[104] This citizen participation is also hoped of leading to social change.[105]

Here, in regards to this discussion on a system of planning and policies, the complex notions of politics and power become central. As for politics it can be defined as institutional-tautological concept where politics is what politicians do and the public sector is the political sphere. Or one can use a functional approach with politics as strategically aiming for, or influence over, power. Politics can also be related to definitions and authoritative understanding of values, problems, needs and challenges to be face in a process, resulting in a legitimate resource allocation where politicians have less power and other related actor networks have more. Lastly it can be process-oriented, dealing with manifested or latent conflicts in society and interests create politics and politicians. Technocratic solutions and alternatives are sought after, not only in governmental institutions.[106]

From here, the notion of power is central, classically defined as when A has power over B to the extent to which A can make B do what he would not otherwise have done. Power thus exists in relations of influences, authority, dominance and with a "mobilizing of bias" i.e. to be directing another's energies. In these relations and structures, in politics, power can be visible or hidden.[107] Hence, in a policy creation process responsibility and accountability is

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[101] (Haus & Heinelt, How to Achieve Governability at the Local Level?, 2004, p. 13pp)
[102] (Prager & Freese, 2009, p. 1157)
[103] (Montin, 2007, p. 29)
[104] (Roberts, 2008, p. 3pp)
[105] (Roberts, 2008, p. 119p)
[106] (Montin, 2007, p. 102pp)
[107] (Hill, 2007, p. 40pp)

part of a greater system of power.[108] The LEADER-method aims at one form of power relations, as described above, where also more responsibility ought to lead to more resources, but that is not always the case as municipalities may fall into an imbalance between goals to be reached and the funds/resources given to them to acquire this. Participation without redistribution of power is empty and frustrating for the ones without power.[109]

Power can be decentralized or centralized and it can be even or uneven, spanning from representative politics with concentrated and evenly divided power to a more chaotic system with uneven and diffused power. But decentralized power with even power is the ideal sought after in LEADER.[110] There are no perfect solutions of a democratic system and how institutions are to function as all variations of democratic institution form have both advantages and disadvantages. Governance is one method where integration of complementary actors can be regarded as central in shaping a good governance process. This as, if practiced in the whole planning process, actor-integration can effectively lead to leadership with a wide planning legitimacy.[111]

But there are also purposes beyond democratic aspects of including citizens in decision-making. Firstly in the discovery phase, citizens can aid in search of definitions, criteria and alternatives and secondly, as part of educating the public of the issue and alternatives and thirdly as a measurement of public opinions on the available options. This can be useful if persuasion towards a favored alternative is desired.[112] Involvement is desired as it is the consent from the governed, but it is often only seen as beneficial if it functions as instrumental for goal-achievement. However, participation could also lead to more responsive authorities, highlighting accountability positions, increases legitimacy by taking various preferences into account and it acts informatively for actors.[113]

Additional advantageous features of governance are that it provides a model for dealing with complexity without neglecting externalities, it develop dynamic learning, creating forms of dealing with different interests covering spatial and temporal issues and lastly, helping establish a shared world-view. Negative sides comes from as dealing with these benefits; many actors and interest can lead to a high level of noise in the process.[114] Also, there can be a tension between legitimacy of participation and efficiency. This conflict may be more prominent on local level where politics comes closest to voters and citizens.[115] But high level of participating does not necessarily lead to governance inefficiency as participation can create more accurate expected political outcomes and better policy implementation since it is based in the actual actors' interest and preferences.[116]

Governance has a basis in mutual dependence and trust. For partnerships to function there is still a need for governmental structure, juridical and economical, that can acknowledge that partnerships are needed, provide clear and realistic goals, discuss commitment and ownership rights, create and maintain trust and sustainable partnerships conditions and aid in an intra-organizational learning process. Also, one should aim at

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[108] (Hill, 2007, p. 269pp)
[109] (Mineur, 2007, p. 64pp)
[110] (Hill, 2007, p. 36)
[111] (Haus & Heinelt, How to Achieve Governability at the Local Level?, 2004, p. 16pp)
[112] (Walters, Ayedelotte, & Miller, 2008, p. 462p)
[113] (Klausen & Sweeting, 2004, p. 215pp)
[114] (Haus & Heinelt, How to Achieve Governability at the Local Level?, 2004, p. 21)
[115] (Mineur, 2007, p. 2)
[116] (Haus & Heinelt, How to Achieve Governability at the Local Level?, 2004, p. 24)

cohesion between public, private, voluntary actors. Still governance neither covers all actors and interests, nor reaches equal power in the process, leading occasionally to more fragmentation than integration.[117] As trust is a key aspect, and highly beneficial for rural development, one must remember that distrust has equally high costs.[118]

Also, there are vertical governance problematics, dealing with cooperation, coordination and collaboration between local to national level dealing with citizens needs. Furthermore, horizontal problems are present, regarding cross-sectoral issues and diversity of actors involved.[119] This is highly problematic as the core of participation and deliberative democracy is whether or not power has been redistributed and actors involved.[120]

Deliberative democracy can also be criticized for being an inefficient and naïve method as governing is better done by knowledgeable elites. Direct citizen participation is often found at local and regional level but at all levels there is tension found between citizens and experts. As the latter have special education, resources and technology it can create disparities between these two groups as citizens feel unequal and lessen their participation as it demands too much resources and skill, allowing for expert domination. Also it may act disruptive of the social stability as conflict arises when interests are highlighted. This could be problematic if some could have non-democratic and authoritarian attitudes, valuing stability over uncertainty.[121] More concrete problems relate to the size of organization, exclusion or oppression of groups, risk-taking, time-resources aspects and how to deal with any common good or crises.[122]

Other negative factors are a possible lack of transparency in the policy process, biased outcomes to only those who were able to participate, stalemate from failure in reaching consensus and the potential of increased power to central actors, such as public officials. Furthermore, to empower groups at the local level might be problematic if the legitimacy and representativeness of these groups is not well developed.[123]

However, the state can serve a function to stimulate the deliberative democratic agenda. And by using its authority to promote deliberate democratic processes and mobilize actors, it regains some of its power as a central player in the power relations. The state can thus empower actors and change relations in the role of a capacity-builder.[124] So, an increase in participation of the civil society does not per definition mean less governmental power, but rather a changed role.[125]

From this we have seen, that one can criticize the idealistic faith in deliberative democracy as proposed in EU policies. These policies are removed from a realistic understanding the unequal power structures existing and that governance could present a risk of losing political equality, side-stepping the political representational system. Governance

[117] (Stewart, 2004, p. 149); (Hill, 2007, p. 240p); (Haus & Heinelt, How to Achieve Governability at the Local Level?, 2004, p. 24p)
[118] (Svendsen, 2006, p. 66)
[119] (Murray, Greera, Houstona, McKay, & Murtagh, 2009, p. 442)
[120] (Mineur, 2007, p. 241p)
[121] (Roberts, 2008, p. 12p)
[122] (Montin, 2007, p. 150p); (Roberts, 2008, p. 13p); (Roberts, 2008, p. 119p)
[123] (Haus & Heinelt, How to Achieve Governability at the Local Level?, 2004, p. 47p); (Müller, 2006, p. 218); (Nardone, Sisto, & Lopolito, 2010, p. 64)
[124] (Shucksmith, 2009, p. 12)
[125] (Murray, Greera, Houstona, McKay, & Murtagh, 2009, p. 443p)

would then instead have emerged from lower voting statistics, as a way to try to increase trust and lessen disinterest in political aspects.[126]

As deliberative democracy and governance proposes that the state should not have exclusive power, or exclusive responsibility, it thus becomes important to understand who has power and responsibility. But any organizational system is based not only in a will to participate, but also the capacity to do so. Therefore it is now time to focus on who these actors are and their capacity to act.

3. 2. 3 - Actors and capacity-building

Actors

Following basic aspects of LEADER – planning, policies, power aspects and deliberative democracy – it is now time to focus to the participants in this rural development process. Citizen participation is argued to lead to people achieving their highest potential, capabilities and that it fosters a publically-oriented, active, moral character as one aspires to live up to the rights and duties in a democracy, sharing power and responsibility.[127] Still LEADER is only one method amongst others, so one should still motivate the methods organizational structure, especially if it is within a development context.[128] All types of participatory methods used in rural planning will have to evolve and improve through adaptation and testing as to give, hopefully, better positive impacts.[129] Yet, as we have seen, Sweden has become highly influenced by deliberative democracy.[130]

One could identify over 50 stakeholder definitions to use as found suitable, opening up for a discussion of semantics related to strategies, policy conclusions and ethics. The term is so broadly used that any organization could be argued to be able to include all possible actors, insiders and outsiders, current and future, choosing between normative definitions, legitimacy, or purely strategic selection for the organizations purposes. An actor could be an individual or a group, who is affected by, or affecting, the effects of any organizations goals. Following this, organizations are re-structured as actors become involved in the process which exists to manage their interest and needs.[131]

Actor definitions become a question of legitimacy through participating and power, an issue of how many, and how much, actors can be involved i.e. an issue of "weight" in the process.[132] And weight in a process can come from different claims. Willingness and legitimacy of any actor participating could be related to ownership rights and thus self-interest and rationality. For instance, property rights are one central category that allows for legitimate participation in a rural development process.[133] But legitimacy of an actor is often based in notions of democratic rights, political equality, rights to self-determination and other civic rights. More concretely it is based on the actors' spatial location, knowledge, material or spiritual interests and a status from representing interests or shared ownerships.[134]

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126 (Klausen & Sweeting, 2004, p. 214pp); (Shucksmith, 2009, p. 6)
127 (Roberts, 2008, p. 6pp)
128 (Schlager, 2007, p. 312)
129 (Prager & Freese, 2009, p. 1155)
130 (Montin, 2007, p. 150p)
131 (Friedman & Miles, 2006, p. 1pp)
132 (Klausen & Sweeting, 2004, p. 228p)
133 (Valentinov, 2008, p. 1161pp)
134 (Klausen & Sweeting, 2004, p. 223pp)

The question of who is a relevant actor in a rural development process is not an easy one, calling for an understanding of power relations. The selection process is always controversial and can take various forms but always must face this issue, preferably dealt with in an informed manner to ensure as few conflicts as possible. Somewhere a line has to be drawn for who is a relevant actor and given opportunity to participate.[135] Actors with power in decision-making, controlling resources, must be willing to share this accumulated power, and there is a value in doing this. The quality of any planning process could be understood by level of sharing power and responsibility.[136] A vital part of 'Ett steg längre' is also to inspire participation for local actors as increased cooperation can create higher status and legitimacy of the development process, as well as deeper understanding of all actors involved.[137]

There are several degrees of participating, from only receiving information to a full power of decision-making influence. Any such power transferring process often has to evolve through a change in the planning practices.[138] So, the more the municipality re-allocates planning power in the whole process – the initiation, the decision making and in the implementation – the less of a power struggle. This as any actor reacts to changes which affect them and the more power allocated to them, the less tension.[139] Close relations between an ideal theoretical approach of power and the actual reality increases the legitimacy of the system.[140] So the level of capacity to act is as central as the chance to participate.

Capacity-building

Citizens are idealistically viewed as they ought to be active in political parties, participants in referendums and in networks such as LAGs.[141] But a debate should arise regarding all actors possible freedom, discretion, possibility of actions, and to what extent they have this power.[142] If these aspects are to low the will of participation could suffer. 'Participation-spirit' is a term related to the will of people to engage in local democracy, linked to the concept of social capital.[143] However, this participation-spirit is also related to that the actors must actually have a capacity to act. And to inspire this spirit, to build capacity, is central for the LEADER-method. To achieve this, the LEADER approach aims at enhancing knowledge resources (intellectual capital and local and expert knowledge), relational resources (trust and social capital, built through interactions) and mobilizations capabilities (possibility of acting collectively).[144]

Basically, capacity-building of a region can be done either by increasing reliance on external resources, attracting aid and direct investments or by unlocking internal resources, creating local development. Internal growth, sought after in LEADER, needs a high degree of local knowledge and identity creation and the development is more organic in scale, making the effects of the change smaller.[145]

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[135] (Prager & Freese, 2009, p. 1161pp)
[136] (Murray, Greera, Houstona, McKay, & Murtagh, 2009, p. 460)
[137] (Karlshamns kommun, 2010, p. 10)
[138] (Tress & Tress, 2003, p. 172)
[139] (Blücher, Emmelin, & Nilsson, 2002, p. 80); (Klausen & Sweeting, 2004, p. 230); (Waldenström & Westholm, 2006, p. 16)
[140] (Mineur, 2007, p. 243)
[141] (Montin, 2007, p. 153)
[142] (Hill, 2007, p. 210pp)
[143] (Sandberg, 2009, p. 4p)
[144] (High & Nemes, 2007, p. 109pp); (Murray, Greera, Houstona, McKay, & Murtagh, 2009, p. 446); (Shucksmith, 2009, p. 7)
[145] (Nemes, 2005, p. 34pp)

Therefore one should, and need to, use the local actors on an operational basis for creating development.[146] A participation-spirit and capacity-building is central in such a democratic development process aiming for rural development. Karlshamns municipality features a LAG and hopefully functioning according to the LEADER principles, as a capacity builder in the planning process. As a related ambition, this thesis empirical part is based in interviews with local populations as a way to possibly increase their influence on the new rural development program. They have here been allowed to voice their views on the rural areas and its development. The next part will elaborate on the geographical setting where the rural development takes place; highlighting two concepts that are integral to 'Ett steg längre'. These are 'place-marketing' and 'social capital' and relate to the semantic discussion earlier, as well as to a development discussion and rural attractivity.

3. 2. 4 - Place-marketing

The processes mentioned are space-contextual, or more accurately, place-contextual. A region can be understood through various traits. Firstly through its absolute physical definition, that is 'space'. But also, secondly, as a 'place' being continuously socially constructed from different wants, interest and rationales the definition. Spaces become political places through processes, of for instance commodification, being planned for a purpose. Such a process has multifaceted economic impacts through the fixed environment (with infrastructure), the services provided (quality and needs met), the entertainment and recreation (attractions) and in its character (sense of place).[147] A rural identity is created in an outward oriented process where an urban-rural relation is developed to increase attractivity for development.[148] The place needs to be authentic, and with distinctive characteristics, or else the place can become hollow, robbed of its meaning and its special identity. So this process is at heart of human interaction with the world.[149]

Since the place is seen to have an important effect on development, despite the abstract and hard-to-define characteristics, there are processes of commercialization of the places characteristics. These processes have focus on the economic side but also the material, ethical, cultural, social and ecological aspects. The space is made into this 'place' as a product, potentially having a strategically commercial importance.[150]

Place-shaping is a collective effort of self-consciousness to re-imagining a territory and to then translate this new image into matching the investments, strategies and regulations.[151] This sense of place is continuously created by its local actors, putting the local back into importance in a globalized world of international pressures. Still. the identity of a place is simultaneously created by both internal and external forces, and they may not be corresponding, but are mutually affecting each other and the locals' behavior.[152]

Here rural planning is a central aspect, related to marketing a specific area using this place-creating process. And often it comes to either protecting the area or developing it

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[146] (Montin, 2007, p. 66p)
[147] (Ek & Hultman, 2007, p. 7pp); (Ek & Hultman, 2007, p. 23pp); (Kotler, Asplund, Rein, & Haider, 2000, p. 126pp)
[148] (Overbeek, 2009, p. 3)
[149] (Ek & Hultman, 2007, p. 24pp)
[150] (Ek & Hultman, 2007, p. 13pp); (Lithander, 2005, p. 217pp)
[151] (Shucksmith, 2009, p. 6)
[152] (Lithander, 2005, p. 22pp); (Waldenström & Westholm, 2006, p. 19pp)

through commodification, creating services and facilities for this purpose.[153] To create attractiveness of a place, municipal planning is often concerned with exceeding the basic needs of water, electricity, health care and school. This process is thus not limited to "hard" economical factors such as economic stability, productivity, costs or communication infrastructure to determine attractiveness. Softer social factors, such as values, quality of life, culture, competence, dynamism and entrepreneurship are greatly important. Similar jobs can exist in many regions, so something place-specific must attract the population and investors.[154] This place-marketing process to reach the set goals is featured in LEADER and as a result, the project 'Ett steg längre',

So to create a sense of place concerns attractivity for people and possible investors through highlighting, creating and communicating specific qualities and advantages. But also, place-marketing aims to minimize the negative aspects and their outward exposure. The goal is to develop a strong image for the community, create attractive incentives for current and potential buyers/users and to deliver the services and products efficiently. [155]

To formulate a strategy, that is realistically possible to implement, is central. Generally this suggests community service development as well as economic and strategic market planning.[156] Six generic strategies can often be identified; attracting tourism and visitors, attracting businesses, retaining and expanding existing business, promoting small businesses and fostering new start-ups, expanding exports and attracting outside investments, expanding population base and/or changing the local mix or residents.[157]

This marketing is always aimed towards certain target groups, as we have seen in the policies and the project description. The municipalities create the plans, strategies as to enhance the place's attractiveness for these.[158] Priorities by the municipality for attracting any of these groups must be in line with mind the resources, limits, "hard" and "soft" factors and the migration rationales which are prioritized by these groups.[159] Rural in-migration is often less associated with economic factors and more by a quality of life consideration, seeking an idyllic ideal of the life that rurality is presented as. This is achieved through those marketing strategies and place-creation, for instance by marketing the local people, leaders and celebrities, competent people, entrepreneurs or others who have moved to the area.[160] So the ones involved in this process are all from the planners to politicians, local citizens and businesses and the culturally involved, local enthusiasts or any "ambassadors" of the area.[161]

In world where information of places increases, and becomes more accessible, municipalities need to be attractive and competitive by claiming the exclusivity. So marketing, as to separate one place from another, must be focusing on the place-qualities. But this marketing strategy can be claimed to put competition first, creating individualism and separation by attracting consumption of the particular place. When rural areas, communities and municipalities compete, the businesses are seen to gain the most.[162] Here, the often seen

[153] (Müller, 2006, p. 216)
[154] (Kotler, Asplund, Rein, & Haider, 2000, p. 43); (Thufvesson, 2009, p. 14pp)
[155] (Kotler, Asplund, Rein, & Haider, 2000, p. 25p); (Thufvesson, 2009, p. 15pp)
[156] (Kotler, Asplund, Rein, & Haider, 2000, p. 101pp)
[157] (Kotler, Asplund, Rein, & Haider, 2000, p. 226pp)
[158] (Kotler, Asplund, Rein, & Haider, 2000, p. 33pp); (Thufvesson, 2009, p. 20)
[159] (Tillväxtanalys, 2009, p. 43)
[160] (Kotler, Asplund, Rein, & Haider, 2000, p. 59pp); (Overbeek, 2009, p. 2)
[161] (Thufvesson, 2009, p. 23pp)
[162] (Hultman, 2007, s. 147pp); (Lithander, 2005, p. 24p); (Lyson, 2006, p. 293pp); (Thufvesson, 2009, p. 129pp)

conflict between economy and ecology, developers and conservationists, has been prominent in rural areas, for instance in the forestry industry.[163]

Thus, this outward oriented process of enhancing the local attractivity serves the agenda of the marketing initiators. For local residents, a sense of place is a locally bound capital, a collective good, driven by both altruism and long-term self-interest. Here, similarly to creating networks and comparative advantages, trust is important. Following this, one factor commonly used to explain why one region is more successful than others in the place-creation process is 'social capital'. This regardless of that social capital, and its effects, arguably is based on exaggerated generalizations. But when two seemingly comparable areas are evaluated and one performs better, social economy is often used as an explanation.[164] This concept has become highly associated with rural development and is the topic of the next part.

3. 2. 5 - Social capital

Rural values, a central aspect for rural attractivity, can be regarded as threefold. Firstly as ecological, relating to clean environment, bio-diversity and agri-food industry as well as cultural landscapes. Secondly as cultural values, such as rural culture, arts and crafts and traditional ways of life and lastly as community values related to social capital, networks and trust.[165] But there are problems in defining such a multi-facetted concept such as social capital, but core components could be claimed to be the structural aspects (interactions among individuals, connectivity and linkages), relational aspects (relationships, behaviours of confidence, reciprocity, solidarity and trust) and cognitive factors (shared values, beliefs, norms and compatibility).[166] For social capital the 'community' is central, as romanticized memory of the past, and a possible hope for the future. Rural research has traditionally been based in the notions of 'gemeinschaft', meaning relations from social and family networks and 'gesellschaft' which focuses on business relations and interest based networks. Often the first is regarded as rural and the latter more as urban.[167]

The LEADER approach uses the concept of LAGs to unite the three sectors, public, private and voluntary. LEADER then, as noted earlier, needs a functioning social sphere, participation-spirit and community involvement for the development process. Social capital is seen as sociological superglue and a key to dealing with new modern complex social problems through collaboration, trust, solidarity, shared norms and values. However, there needs to be a link between the social capital and the governmental institutions if one wants to utilize it. Social capital is need of governmental policies that aims at creating trust in both public and private spheres for social capital to function as trust takes long time to create, short time to tear down.[168]

The economical aspects of development are naturally important and prioritized. Social capital has an economic side that could be defined as organizations, based on democratic principles, which are free from the public sector, giving added-value effects to the community

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[163] (Andersson, Eklund, & Lehtola, 2009, p. 34)
[164] (Lithander, 2005, p. 114p)
[165] (Nemes, 2005, p. 17)
[166] (Nardone, Sisto, & Lopolito, 2010, p. 65p)
[167] (Forsberg G. , 2006, p. 53); (Panelli, 2006, p. 68p)
[168] (Montin, 2007, p. 202pp); (Svendsen, 2006, p. 52pp)

and not just economic profit. Usually social economic actors are clubs, cooperatives or foundations and other local actors. These parts of the social economy are thus part of empowering the local actors and the whole community, not only seeking own economic development.[169] Hence, social economy can be defined in three categories; as an economic sector related to the business juridical organization; as regarding the organizations contents and purpose, where democratic issues and goals of a common good for the community is central; or a policy instrument, as in LEADER.[170]

The socially driven economy comes with both positive and negative consequences. Economic integration is not always the same as social integration; non-Swedish born may have a hard time integrating. And this despite being a substantial part of the work force and that increased integration, as of migration, is seen to be giving both socially beneficial effects, such as less exclusion, empowerment, diversity as well as economic development in the rural areas.[171] So it should be understood that social capital, in general, is unequally distributed between differently powerful actors where the positive sides could equal rule enforcement, trust, and solidarity but also that the negative aspects equals isolation and exclusion of actors.[172]

The emergence of social capital as an important role in development, as noted earlier, and could be traced to three general hypothesis. Firstly as it filled the emptiness as the public sectors became smaller, or when private enterprises where failing. Secondly it could be due to mistrust to the government and its officials, and thus a desire to have influence from own interests. Thirdly and related to the discussion above, a deepened interest in the local due to globalization, a will of creating a good sense of place, a desire for local self-respect and self-created identity.[173] But if local rural communities are to regain power over the process of development one could argue that this civic community must focus on democratic problem-solving over profit seeking.[174] The rural communities would, it is argued, best benefit from being self-sufficient, that is, sustainable.[175]

It is still hard to define what constitutes a long-term sustainable business and entrepreneurial environment.[176] But individual factors of local culture and norms are important for business. As a concrete example, a local entrepreneurial environment is more likely to produce more entrepreneurs.[177] The economical side is therefore regarded as a resource and a driving-force for local rural development and thus receiving regional focus.[178]

Now, at the end of the theoretical chapter it is time to summarize what has been dealt with so far. The thesis started with a descriptive part of rural trends, of Karlshamns municipality, the project and related policies. Following this was the chapter where this was set in its theoretical context; a discussion of semantics regarding the urban-rural relation, notions of development, planning and policies with the related democratic aspects and actor-theory with

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[169] (Forsberg A. , 2010, p. 184p): (Lithander, 2005, p. 27pp)
[170] (Lithander, 2005, p. 34)
[171] (SOU, 2008, p. 47); (SOU, 2008, p. 29)
[172] (Svendsen, 2006, p. 42p)
[173] (Lithander, 2005, p. 123pp)
[174] (Lyson, 2006, p. 301)
[175] (SOU, 2006, p. 39)
[176] (Waldenström & Westholm, 2006, p. 19)
[177] (Lithander, 2005, p. 111pp)
[178] (Länsstyrelsen Blekinge län, 2009, p. 14)

capacity-building. After this followed a part concepts related to the actual rural geographical setting; place-marketing and social capital. The theoretical part has been presented as to give an understanding to the rural development project 'Ett steg längre'. But one could also benefit to highlight lesson learnt from previous LEADER initiatives for rural development which is the presented in segment 5.1 in the following empirical part.

Lastly, the theoretical basis of this thesis has served as the underpinnings for the interview-guide created and used for the interviews. Hence, the empirical material was gathered in line with the theoretical framework so that the research questions could be answered in uniting the gathered empirical material, the policies and theoretical framework.

So, after methodological chapter previous research and the interviews will be presented. The municipality of Karlshamn claims that they can offer a living environment that many dream of, but seldom finds.[179] The second hand sources reviews function as a base to give a deeper understanding of the rural development discussion. And the interviews were aimed at giving the locals a chance to voice their specific views on the rural areas in Karlshamns municipality and their opinions on development.

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[179] (Karlshamns kommun, 2002)

4.   Methodological framework

Before we start the empirical section there is a need to present the methodological framework. All research questions, and answers, rely on philosophical underpinnings as of epistemological and ontological claims; it is what defines the scientific method. As a human geographer one studies spatial relation of people and environments, landscapes and localities and thus is part of both social and natural sciences. In general one must aim to be reflexive, consider the first and second hand sources and allow free intellectual space to move within. A qualitative study needs clarity of the selection criteria and transparency in the data collection process to increase the understanding of the data and analysis. All research has a "what" is studied, and a "how" this is studied yet it is impossible to know in advance what method is the most suitable for the research. This, along with that the qualitative empirical method used does not reach statistical significance, opens a discussion for different philosophical perspectives and methods.[180]

Central to this field of study is human agency, as individuals are not isolated but as part of a social reciprocal structure. And the different levels of structures, institutions and actors, are interrelated and interdependent. Here the duality of voluntarism and determinism becomes important. Actions are not random but ordered, and to investigate that order – who or what creates it – is dependent on a theoretical framework, a cosmology.[181] And this thesis has a philosophical base in naturalism, with positivistic or behaviouristic logical reasoning, as its view on human agency, exampled in the link between population-jobs-services-attractivity. Migration is a sort of social physics where people react in gravity models. But humans also act with intentionality, rationality and reflexivity, removing real causal determinism as they are not 'objects', but 'subjects', of study. Attractivity and place-shaping are also subjective processes based in different perceived realities, or ruralities. Hence, the thesis features semantic parts as definitions become central when choosing the form and methods of the planning process.

As for the 'geography' part, it matters as we all exist within a spatial context of societal transformation processes. But one must choose a level of study to focus on and avoid level-fallacies in vertical generalizations.[182] This study moves from a general focus down to the specific, from the supra-national state arena to the local, where the political power and will of rural development is to originate from. Thus starting out with a wide lens but looking deeper into the geographical setting, ending up with the individual citizen as part of a system. The study becomes a variant of a case study, on a closed geographical setting where the goal is to make claims of the specific rural area at hand. However, one should be able to study all rural LEADER areas in a similar way.[183] Therefore I would argue that the method of my thesis is possible to repeat within another rural context.

Still, one needs a research problem with originality as nothing is interesting until proven so.[184] I look into a certain reality, the rural parts of Karlshamns municipality, with my method

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[180] (Grönmo, 2006, p. 20); (Graham, 2005, p. 12pp); (Graham, 2005, p. 28pp); (Mineur, 2007, p. 72pp)
[181] (Graham, 2005, p. 15pp)
[182] (Grönmo, 2006, p. 87p)
[183] (Schlager, 2007, p. 316)
[184] (Gatrell & Flowerdew, 2005, p. 43); (Graham, 2005, p. 10pp); (Grönmo, 2006, p. 78pp); (Trost, 2004, p. 155)

and one can "check" this by further studies, looking into the other rural areas with similar starting positions and possibly moving forward in the theory-building.[185] So, to incorporate the citizens' views in this thesis is an extension of the LEADER-method for rural studies seeking a deepened bottom-up approach and allowing for actor participation.

4. 1 – The semi-structured interviews

The choice of methods should be aligned with the theoretical perspectives and the current research questions.[186] This study has utilized the method of semi-structured interviews as gaining information and an understanding of the rural, from the locals' point-of-view. As this essay regards rural development, one should meet the local rural population.[187] To interview the actual rural population is important as the interviewees' definition of the rural situations become real in their consequences when they will act upon these interpretations.[188] So my study is using a qualitative method to understand meaning(s) of a certain group in specific place. Since I couldn't reach statistical representativity, qualitative interviews were the best choice.[189] To investigate the creating of a 'sense of place' is also suitable for a thesis in human geography.[190]

This type of interview is a conversation with a purpose, gaining detail, depth and the insiders' perspective but still with a clear focus, where the informant uses own words from own experiences, reaching a wide thorough understanding of complexities, and allowing the interviewees to ask own questions back. Also, this makes it easier to understand divergent views. This method allows the interviewees to become the expert and giving information, making the material detailed and multi-layered as one is giving he/she time and scope to elaborate on any given subject. The questions are open-ended to avoid leading questions, of a grand tour character. By using follow-up questions one can still maintain the purpose of the interview, going from more the general to specific, and asking for clarification of an answer when needed.[191]

When conducting qualitative interviews one should remember to first thematize and then turn to the actual design and structure. It is important to align the interview-guide with the thesis' purpose and background so they are conducted from the theoretical framework.[192]

Strengths of this method include that it is simple and practical, has high validity as the interviewees discusses in detail and depth, allows complex questions to be thoroughly discussed and clarified. Weaknesses relate to that it can be time-consuming to analyze and transcribe, it has low reliability as one can not exactly repeat an interview, it is difficult to generalize and there are concerns on the methods validity, if the interviewee is rationalizing his or her reasoning while answering questions. However, qualitative interviews are not really

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[185] (Trost, 2004, p. 142)
[186] (Grönmo, 2006, p. 110pp); (Trost, 2004, p. 33)
[187] (Lithander, 2005, p. 28)
[188] (Trost, 2004, p. 57)
[189] (Graham, 2005, p. 30); (Trost, 2004, p. 25pp)
[190] (Thufvesson, 2009, p. 16)
[191] (Grönmo, 2006, p. 161pp); (Leech, 2002, p. 665pp); (Livesey, 2009); (Soliva, 2007, p. 64) (Thurén, 2005, p. 41); (Thurén, 2005, p. 14p); (Trost, 2004, p. 71pp)
[192] (Trost, 2004, p. 50pp)

about validity and reliability, although the material still must reach a sufficient quality, be adequate, relevant and reliable so that one can trust the material.[193]

The resource limitations affected the total numbers of interviews conducted but one could expect a level of material saturation, where the marginal effect of another interview is lowered. This had to be put in relation to the time and resource possibilities. A higher amount is obviously better, but a smaller amount of interviews with good quality could in fact be better than a high number with low quality.[194]

The empirical gathering process

My process consisted of seven interviews that were conducted during the spring of 2011, ranging around 45 to 60 minutes, following a created interview guide (see appendix).[195] This amount was seen as sufficient for gathering an empirical base for the thesis while still coping under the resource limitations.

In my process it was a combination of using gatekeepers and snowballing, a strategic solution, which was used. This means that you get in touch with 'gate-keepers' who can lead you forward, gaining momentum. These persons have certain local knowledge and are helpful in finding interviewees in a strategic, convenience sample method, as I did. The alternative, for instance using a statistic database, was seen as a lesser option.

In my case it was representatives of Karlshamns municipality and 'Landsbygderådet i Karlshamn' who served this role. They aided me by using their contact network in the rural areas to find people that could possibly accept participating. The chosen population, and 'Landsbygderådet i Karlshamn' as gatekeepers, followed a strategic selection since 'Landsbygderådet i Karlshamn' is seen to, in some degree represent the rural population. The interviewees all lived in areas as according to the rural definition on page 14, i.e. outside the finer street networks. Also, these people had lived for differently long times in these rural parts, spanning from a life-long connection to under a year. The interviewees were laymen, female and male, young and old, pensioners and of working age, chosen to give their understanding of the rural. Thus, they can be seen to be representing some divergent views and interest, although not in a statistical sense.

As I was continuously handed these names I contacted them and presented myself, the purpose of the thesis and the interview and my connection to project 'Ett steg längre'. I also ensured them anonymity and allowed them to set a meeting time and place, which ended up either being at their home or at a room at the municipality offices. I also gave them my contact information if any questions would arise.

So the chosen sample fit the theoretical base and needs for my thesis as they were to be seen as key informants, or privileged witnesses, of activities and responsibilities, of relations and of the problems that were to be explored, as these witnesses have gained a local understanding.[196] One can codify qualitative data in various ways. I transcribed my interviews in a summarizing way using digital audio-files, suitable for the resources limitations.[197]

[193] (Grönmo, 2006, p. 131pp); (Grönmo, 2006, p. 217pp); (Livesey, 2009); (Valentine, 2005, p. 111); (Trost, 2004, p. 133)
[194] (Trost, 2004, p. 143p)
[195] (Klasander, 2011)
[196] (CRPSPC, 2009, p. 2); (Valentine, 2005, p. 116p); (Trost, 2004, p. 137pp); (Trost, 2004, p. 82p); (Grönmo, 2006, p. 89pp)
[197] (Grönmo, 2006, p. 244pp)

4. 2 – Ethical dimension

To be ethical is an ambition, not something can be done absolutely (methodologically) correct. However, ethics are especially important when interviews are recorded. One must be clear with how the information is to be used. It is therefore essential to be sensitive to the interviewees' wishes when recording and taking notes in the interview.[198] The ethical discussion regards consent, information exchange, equal terms, being open with purpose and the ambition to be professional following the ethical norms of academia regarding secrecy, anonymity, confidentiality and transparency.[199] I have aimed to follow these norms and I have asked for consent at all interviews and let the interviewees know that their participation is anonymous. The audio files has been stored, and transcribed only for personal usage. No ethical dilemmas arose during the thesis process.

4. 3 – Second hand sources

Concerning academic honesty, one should aim at using sources regarded as genuine, bias-free or independent and to analyze the quality of these sources, easier in theory than in practice.[200] But secondary data is needed to widen, and deepen the study, providing contextual material for the primary research. Previous research is often reliable, has an approved level of quality and there are often many sources available. Weaknesses come with the possible inflexibility of the secondary data for your needs and that one must be careful to use still viable data and theories. Also, one has to balance the level of generalizations between keeping within the limits of the thesis and still being true to the source.[201]

So, any thesis must use second-hand sources, i.e. the research conducted by others as presented in the footnotes. These sources used should follow the concepts seen most vital to be able to answer the research questions. But one also has to limit the study to certain theories and material gathered, attempting to find a focus through conducting systematic search. My theoretical framework followed what I found to be the central aspect of the rural development project in Karlshamns municipality, as initiated through the LEADER-method. This is followed up in chapter 5 as it presents previous research related to these LEADER-aspects.

The literature has, as far as possible, been in English but unavoidably there are Swedish references, just like the focus has been to find literature on the Swedish context, or if not possible, within the EU. The amount of literature on rural development is massive, so a time and resource limit was necessary, to be able to move forward with the thesis. Also, as for a general support on how to actually write a thesis, I have also consulted a manual for writing.[202]

I have tried to be open with my methodological process and gathered source material, attempting to use sources that could be regarded as with quality and present them in the bibliography.

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[198] (Valentine, 2005, p. 123p); (Trost, 2004, p. 75p)
[199] (Trost, 2004, p. 61pp); (Trost, 2004, p. 123pp)
[200] (Thurén, 2005, p. 7pp)
[201] (Clark, 2005, p. 57pp); (Grönmo, 2006, p. 189pp)
[202] (Turabian, 2007)

5.   Empirical findings

After having presented the theoretical and methodological framework of the thesis, it is now time for the actual empirical findings. Development is to come endogenously with the LEADER-method and the project "Ett steg längre" aims to investigate specific rural development factors, as aligned with their goals. This is what I have attempted to do, using both second and first hand sources. The chapter moves from general experiences related to LEADER and the theoretical concepts highlighted, down to the local and more specific level.

5. 1 – LEADER-related research

Before the empirical part where the interviewees are presented there is a need to look into claims of what rural development is. Following the more abstract presentation of development above, here the intention is to focus on what rural development is more concretely. It is only to understand what rural development is that one can hope to reach the goals set by 'Ett steg längre'; creating development and a marketing strategy for the rural areas.[203] Furthermore, the comprehensive plan for Karlshamns municipality also features five broad goals; good living conditions, blooming businesses, good communications, development of the coast and archipelago and to have a living rural area.[204]

Firstly one should understand that there is a catch 22 situation of development; economic activity and services are existent where people live and, but without economic activity or sufficient services provided people will not settle in a region.[205] This development dynamics, in its negative sense, is what was mentioned earlier as the basis for rural development plans and the project 'Ett steg längre'. The previous chapters regarded central aspects of LEADER; local sovereignty, deliberative democracy and power-related issues of governance. So development is not solely increased population, services or goods provided and consumed, but also the empowerment of the local community and policies aimed towards this.[206] One should remember that local development is multi-facetted; one development trend does not necessarily lead to development in other aspects.

5. 1. 1 – LEADER

Rural planning has focused on many different methods and solutions of what have been seen as best. New organizational doctrines emerge trough a social process and the newest often become dominating.[207] Recently LEADER has become mainstream in planning, both internationally and in Sweden.[208]

LEADER is an acronym of "Liens Entre Actions de Dévelopment de l'Économie Rurale" ('links between rural development actions') and was first established in 1991. The European

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[203] (Karlshamns kommun, 2010, p. 6pp)
[204] (Karlshamns kommun, 2007, p. 12)
[205] (SOU, 2006, p. 40)
[206] (Nemes, 2005, p. 3)
[207] (Lapping, 2006); (Montin, 2007, p. 131)
[208] (Pinto-Correia, Gustavsson, & Pirnat, 2006, p. 333p) ; (SOU, 2006, p. 49p); (SOU, 2006, p. 140)

Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) is to become the single funding agency for rural development policies 2007-2013, allocating roughly 1% of the EU budget in the year of 2006 for LEADER projects.[209]

The LEADER-method is to be carried out in all stages of rural development programs; preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.[210] It aims at sustainable development and is based on four axes, the first three being actual goals and the forth is the actual approach:

> *"**Axis 1**: measures with the objective of improving the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry by supporting restructuring, development and innovation.*
> ***Axis 2**: measures with the objective of improving the environment and the countryside by supporting land management.*
> ***Axis 3**: measures with the objective of improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification of economic activity.*
> ***Axis 4**: use of the Leader approach to achieve the objectives of Axes 1–3".*[211]

The ambition is to create local mobilization through governance that gives added-value effects such higher participation rates, deeper local understanding and a more innovative environment.[212] There are some higher risks and resources demanded of the LEADER-method but they are seen to be justified as of these added-value, democracy related, effects.[213] The more one cooperates in a LEADER project, the more is to gain for all.[214]

Integrated rural development

There are some key concepts that identify a LEADER project as of its deliberative democratic stance; a bottom-up approach, partnerships, area-based local development strategies, cooperation, innovation, integration and Local Action Groups (LAGs).[215] This is due to that LEADER follows a framework of Integrated Rural Development (IRD). It is the integrative approach that focuses on governance over government, to be cross-sectoral in interests and actors in the planning process and a blurring the organizational boundaries. The state becomes a co-ordinator, an enabler, rather than a provider and director and is set to create new networks, change hierarchies, include new actors and reform governing to work through the local community. It thus changes the power relations, from 'power over' to 'power to' and from control to social production aiming at capacity-building involved actors.[216] This type of governance is a part of sustainable development today.[217]

IRD is thus defined by an outside, exogenous, actor intervening in local, endogenous, aspirations, aiming at improving these and other values, redistributing resources and reducing

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[209] (Vidal, Rural development within the EU LEADER+ programme: new tools and technologies, 2007, p. 601p); (Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, 2010)

[210] (Prager & Freese, 2009, p. 1154p)

[211] (Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, 2010); (European court of auditors, 2010, p. 9p); (Vidal, Community facilitation of problem structuring and decision making processes: Experiences from the EU LEADER+ programme, 2009, p. 803)

[212] (Shucksmith, 2009, p. 8); (European court of auditors, 2010)

[213] (European court of auditors, 2010)

[214] (Sandberg, 2009, p. 13)

[215] (European court of auditors, 2010, p. 8); (Vidal, Rural development within the EU LEADER+ programme: new tools and technologies, 2007, p. 575pp); (European court of auditors, 2010)

[216] (Shucksmith, 2009, p. 1pp); (Thabrewa, Wiek, & Ries, 2009, p. 68)

[217] (Mineur, 2007, p. 43pp)

comparative disadvantages by utilizing the locally specific traits. Actors of these two sides are to reinforce one another instead of being in a state of opposition.[218] LEADER follows this as being directed top-down (part of and funded by the EU), but bottom-up in regards of planning and decision-making. It aims at finding innovative integrated solutions, with a fixed territorial local level approach, focusing on empowering LAGs and networks, funding through an ex-ante basis with ex-post monitoring and evaluation.[219]

Through LEADER, and IRD, the state is assigned a new role, from a strong and powerful actor into a more passive regulation form. Exactly how the state and its institutions will function in this particular paradigm is yet to be seen.[220] The LEADER approach is an example of an exogenous influence to get local actors into an endogenous development process. So, a trend of moving "upwards", shifting nation-states power to supra-national organizations (such as the EU), is noticed. At the same time there is a "downward" process of subsidiarity and local governance in development planning.[221] So decision-making can be decentralized, by controlling funds to projects, but still centralized through agencies wants to evaluate and measure the decentralized goals and results. This means that endogenous control is still being controlled exogenously, often in the form of audits. But this is problematic, as regarding LEADER-audits can be failing at measuring the aspired added-values effects.[222]

Integrated rural policies faces challenges on how to identify, understand, and measure the success of such policies as these are not only to reach measurable goals, but also 'added-value goals'. This becomes even more complicated as some effects can be seen only after medium or long-term. To understand if these policies work, and in order to allocate resources, new coordination procedures and deeper local knowledge must be found as well as both quantitative and qualitative indicators being used to allow evaluation and comparisons.[223] A solution is to work in projects and, since the project initiators want to prove the projects successful, the evaluation process becomes highly important.[224] Evaluation often comes in a hybrid form of endogenous and exogenous perspectives, aiming at policy improvement by uniting these perspectives and arguably having a better basis of knowledge.[225]

Planning and local action groups
The LEADER initiative extends its focus beyond the traditional rural green businesses when planning for rural development. But these businesses are still highly subsidized, arguably perpetuating an outdated view of the rural areas and thus holding further rural development back. Thus, the EU needs to change its subsidies and policies as the EU has possibly failed to understand the specific local development resources. LEADER, with endogenous innovative planning, is an attempt to reverse this and EUs attempts of centralization and standardization.[226] However, it is argued that the participation focus of LEADER is only sought after to ensure efficient use of local rural resources, waiting to be tapped into. Hence,

[218] (High & Nemes, 2007, p. 105); (Nemes, 2005, p. 24)
[219] (Vidal, Community facilitation of problem structuring and decision making processes: Experiences from the EU LEADER+ programme, 2009, p. 804)
[220] (Bonanno, 2006, s. 317pp)
[221] (Lithander, 2005, p. 24pp)
[222] (High & Nemes, 2007, p. 109pp)
[223] (OECD Rural Policy Reviews, 2006, p. 18p)
[224] (High & Nemes, 2007, p. 130pp)
[225] (High & Nemes, 2007, p. 109pp)
[226] (Lapping, 2006, p. 118p); (Pinto-Correia, Gustavsson, & Pirnat, 2006, p. 333); (SOU, 2008, p. 36)

the long standing goal of economic growth would still be valued higher than ecological aspects.[227] But also, if the local population becomes involved in the process, they tend to focus on the preserving the environment. And life-cycle thinking, with decisions based on less self-interest and more long-term understanding, could lead to a more holistic, cross-sectoral and thus sustainable planning.[228]

So, development of local resources (natural, social, cultural) should be endogenously created. Hence, development becomes territorial, context-bound. The development process is dependent on the capacities of the local actors, the higher capacity to participate and the more responsibility for creating their own socio-economic development, the better the development process.[229] So, any local development plan needs to have its basis from the local setting and key factors, through a bottom-up approach. And by identifying the rural areas dependency relations to the urban one can decrease their vulnerability and invest accordingly.[230]

Another dependency relation is the one between actors. The LEADER-approach for rural development and planning includes goals of partnership and actor capacity-building.[231] Partnerships have been found to help reaching the programs' goals, especially through the networks established. But there were generally too few actors involved, mostly due to the high resources demanded to have high participation degrees. The central institution needs to be more supportive as there is tiredness from the actors involved when clarity of goals and means are lacking. A successful partnership organization for local rural development needs to be part of a wide planning context, making it higher prioritized and not as a separated part of the municipality. Furthermore partnerships need to develop a course of action and an evaluation strategy with a process leader capable of handling the procedures.[232]

Municipalities create local resources by utilizing the citizens' voluntary actions as a complement to state driven planning by allocating resources in return for their participation.[233] Involvement in a development process thus includes participation from individuals, citizen groups and clubs in the voluntary sector but as well as integration of resourceful actors, such as organizations and institutions form the public and private sphere.[234] But these voluntary groups can lose independence if they are too incorporated into the municipality organization, and may limit the transparency of the organization.[235] The local actors need to remain free in their integrity from the public system.[236]

There needs to be a meeting place and balance of technocrats, officials, and the laymen, and/or community activists for these dialogues to be conducted.[237] In LEADER processes it is the concept of LAGs that fills this function, i.e. partnerships between the public, private and the voluntary sector. The LAG is re-supplied with new people as to sit in the LAG board one year at a time. In this way the LEADER approach aims to ease participation, accessibility,

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[227] (Nemes, 2005, p. 4p); (Pepper, 1999, s. 172pp)
[228] (Thabrewa, Wiek, & Ries, 2009)
[229] (Nemes, 2005, p. 1pp)
[230] (Pichler, 2006, p. 73)
[231] (Vidal, Community facilitation of problem structuring and decision making processes: Experiences from the EU LEADER+ programme, 2009, p. 804)
[232] (OpenEye Innovation Management AB, 2008, p. 15pp)
[233] (Montin, 2007, p. 53pp)
[234] (Klausen & Sweeting, 2004, p. 217)
[235] (Montin, 2007, p. 66p)
[236] (SOU, 2006, p. 51)
[237] (Murray, Greera, Houstona, McKay, & Murtagh, 2009, p. 459)

capacity-building and legitimacy of the development plans.[238] The LAGs are to focus on involving diverse socioeconomic sectors of the local community, integrating them in the strategies, to select and fund projects, share information and knowledge, create networks and aim for collaboration. LAGs are seen to give added-value effects as they develop better strategies, indentifies more suitable projects in understanding of local needs as well as increasing citizen participation. From this LAGs can achieve a direct and an indirect impact on the rural areas.[239] Actors participating in the planning process increase their own commitment, relational trust and create more realistic outcomes and expectations as they provide planners access to the community expertise and knowledge, resulting in better plans and policies.[240]

In the LAGs the actors are to be allocated power, resources and discretion. Hence, the LAG can be vital, and fruitful, partners in rural development and for capacity-building.[241] This as the (rural) community, the mix of the public, the private and the voluntary sector, together can potentially generate empowering added-values effects.[242]

In Sweden there are today over 4000 LAGs and growing (one regional example is the "Leader Blekinge" group), receiving planning responsibility and power previously held at higher level.[243] By giving the local context higher importance in the development process the will of participation increases.[244] And the local level is a major democratic asset since it is on this level where people act and where the needs are present. By using dialogues to increase the significance of local actors add their influence on development issues.[245] One conclusion of this is that the legitimacy, responsibility and representativeness of local action group's claim to power in a democratic aspect are still in need of further research.[246]

The LEADER-method raises some questions; which actors have access? what is their legitimacy? and how can one create access and democratic legitimacy? 'Deliberative democracy' is the central idea of LEADER, as the complement to direct party democracy. For rural development, as of LEADERs focus, this comes with the above mentioned key aspects; a bottom-up approach, citizen participation, dialogues, consensus, collaboration and community involvement. Here one focuses on inclusion, participation possibilities, influence in local engagement and financing. Citizens have a democratic right to be active, to be able to influence and participate in a transparent political process. Here power should come by the better argument.[247] So there is a close relation in deliberative democracy between power and rhetoric as one tries to persuade other actors.[248]

LEADER results

The success of LEADER showed mixed results, with weaknesses in the LAGs' efficiency, lack of transparency when giving grants, not being objective to conflict of interests and that

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[238] (European court of auditors, 2010, p. 8); (Leader Blekinge, 2008, p. 8p)
[239] (European court of auditors, 2010, p. 11)
[240] (Tress & Tress, 2003, p. 162)
[241] (Waldenström & Westholm, 2006, p. 11)
[242] (Forsberg A. , 2010, p. 182pp)
[243] (Leader Blekinge, 2011); (Lithander, 2005, p. 25p); (Montin, 2007, p. 84p)
[244] (Lithander, 2005, p. 25p)
[245] (SOU, 2006, p. 50p)
[246] (Olsson, Waldenström, & Westholm, 2006, p. 19)
[247] (Murray, Greera, Houstona, McKay, & Murtagh, 2009, p. 459); (Olsson J. , 2005, p. 190p); (Lundberg, 2005, p. 137pp); (Montin, 2007, p. 150p); (SOU, 2006, p. 49p)
[248] (Lundberg, 2005, p. 145)

the member states did not more properly enforcing the LEADER-method and thereby minimizing any negative effects.[249] LEADER projects, to be successful, should aim at following the mandated criteria with patience.[250] In Sweden LEADER has been found work with good results on measurable goals – businesses, services and population – but also in creating significant and durable effects on the rural areas, for instance a participation-spirit.[251]

LEADER, aiming at rural development in its wider sense, also focuses on enhancing social capital as a capacity-builder of local actors. And there is some evidence that LEADER does in fact achieve this, especially by reallocating funds and power to the local level where groups with high levels of social capital are present.[252]

Nevertheless, the belief in LAGs must not become too idealistic as evidence has been found, in an audit, that few reached all or any of these requirements and ideals.[253] There were problems with the LEADER-method as of uneven results on how they managed to capture local economical, knowledge and human capital, on how the integration of different sectors functioned and if the method managed to build social capital and trust trough networks to achieve wide community involvement in the development process. It is, however, hard to know how transferable the results are since LEADER goals are at times vague. The general conclusion was still positive regarding capacity-building effects.[254]

All actors are in a state of unequal power within territorially-based communities, especially related to the knowledge capabilities. Evaluation of LEADER projects should therefore be set to empirically investigate and understand the level of achieved capacity of local actors.[255] These projects need awareness and sensitivity of social exclusion and to legitimacy of actors in the local development process. If local powerful actors dominate decision-making, other actors face apathy towards participation in the process.[256] And regarding exclusion, or problems to become integrated into a local social economical context, one proposal is to create a governmental, free but certified, agent who works for better and speedier integration. The agent/s could help with contacts in its rural networks for new establishments. Additional proposals to strengthen the integration and the social economy were to initiate Swedish education with focus on the green businesses, export-oriented education, support links between in-migrants and tourism, supply additional internships, allow more advantageous loans and that the Swedish government are to create a "tool box" for municipalities interested in this type of integration.[257]

Suggestions for a successful LEADER is to start on time, use an incrementalist procedure, allocate sufficient resources to reach good participation of local actors, match the needs of these rural actors and plan a well thought definition for the roles and task in the process, with focus on enabling both horizontal and vertical collaboration.[258] Also; LAGs must set measurable goals to ensure transparent accountability. Monitoring should be limited to efficiency and effectiveness of achieving added-values using complementary data and

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[249] (European court of auditors, 2010)
[250] (Sandberg, 2009, p. 2)
[251] (Sandberg, 2009, p. 12pp); (Leader Blekinge, 2008, p. 20pp)
[252] (Nardone, Sisto, & Lopolito, 2010, p. 63pp)
[253] (European court of auditors, 2010, p. 55pp)
[254] (Vidal, Rural development within the EU LEADER+ programme: new tools and technologies, 2007, p. 578p)
[255] (High & Nemes, 2007, p. 109pp); (Murray, Greera, Houstona, McKay, & Murtagh, 2009, p. 446); (Shucksmith, 2009, p. 7)
[256] (Nemes, 2005, p. 4)
[257] (SOU, 2008, p. 37pp)
[258] (Vidal, Rural development within the EU LEADER+ programme: new tools and technologies, 2007, p. 584)

control systems, thus assuring sound financial management.[259] Innovative methods is yet often lacking but one must find methods that work locally in achieving the goal and ideas are best spread in networks.[260] Successful local action groups aim to tackle the rural challenges using their networking skills.[261]

5. 1. 2 – Rural development aspects

The amount of literature regarding rural development is immense, and this part features some results, and thus conclusions, on this subject. Firstly, following the above presented discussion one should understand that it is indeed hard to define what positive development is.[262] But regional enlargement and expansion is one clear goal to be achieved through investments in infrastructure, communications, labor market, education, equality, research, health care, culture, recreational aspects and environmental aspects. These investments are aimed to create a sustainable labor market in the region.[263] The goal of the region is also that no one should have more than 15 minutes traveling time by car to a grocery store, not more than 20 km to the nearest fuel station and to continuously improve rural services.[264]

Mobility, physical and non-physical, open up possibilities for tackling economic and demographic challenges through networking, but could also further increase fragmentation and marginalization of weaker actors and places. The contact with the global could lead to less contact with the local.[265] In general, mobility and accessibility leads to blurrier boundaries of the urban and the rural living and working.[266] But good communications is a key aspect – travel time, trustworthiness, costs and comfort – not only absolute kilometers but relative distances and costs. The dispersed rural population makes it harder for public and commercial service and with accessibility improvements, technical aspects of infrastructure, it becomes easier.[267] And with this comes the importance of functioning infrastructure, for population, services, business and attractivity.[268]

As noted above, the less rural population the lower commercial and public services in those affected areas, leading to a worse business environment in a negative (or positive) spiral, cycles of increasing or decreasing attractiveness, i.e. dynamics of decay or growth.[269] A population base of minimum 3000 is preferable, but 5000 is to be regarded as needed to be able to maintain more important services.[270] These would for instance be an access to fuel, groceries, apothecary and local care centers, emergency services, bank and upper-secondary school.[271] People most often move to a place where one can find jobs or education but also by following a life-style choice to find a desirable environment in general with social and cultural meetings. If this can be provided, de-population can be reversed and service-levels

[259] (European court of auditors, 2010)
[260] (Sandberg, 2009, p. 6p)
[261] (Olsson, Waldenström, & Westholm, 2006, p. 19)
[262] (SOU, 2006, p. 42pp)
[263] (Region Blekinge, 2006, p. 5)
[264] (Länsstyrelsen Blekinge län, 2009, p. 15)
[265] (Olsson, Waldenström, & Westholm, 2006, p. 20)
[266] (Tillväxtanalys, 2009, p. 38p)
[267] (Thufvesson, 2009, p. 73p); (Waldenström & Westholm, 2006, p. 9)
[268] (Tillväxtanalys, 2009, p. 53pp); (Tillväxtanalys, 2009, p. 81pp)
[269] (Kotler, Asplund, Rein, & Haider, 2000, p. 17p)
[270] (Tillväxtanalys, 2009, p. 38pp)
[271] (Tillväxtanalys, 2009, p. 53)

kept intact.[272] The diversity is low in the rural businesses and, as an example, there are few people with migrant-background, despite rural in-migration is highly sought after.[273]

As for the rationales of migrating away from the rural areas they were found to be driven by job related factors, education, social reasons and the general living environment. Which one is most affecting the choice to migrate changes depending on the range of the migration, where short migrations are dominated by living related factors and longer moves by education and work. For young people, aged 18-25, the most important factor is education, while for the ones ranging from 26-37 the clearly highest priority is work-related factors. Unemployed move longer distances for jobs than employed.[274]

To keep the rural population, businesses and services strategic rural investments for development should focus on a more holistic view while still understanding the need for specially focused rural politics. Rural development must exceed the traditional rural businesses, for instance expanding the recreational sector. Development as a living rural area needs to focus on easing business related transitions (generation shifts, competence, financing, education), increase access to capital, and ease the regulatory framework for new small-scale establishments. Also, the linkages between urban and rural should be enhanced, local participation tiredness counter-acted and investments should be made in key logistic needs such as data- and cell phone access. Attractive living, through a positive image of the rural area and services, can lead to in-migration and a positive development circle. Services in the rural may generally be beneficially rallied around one service spot, based from the local needs.[275] The gains are seen to outweigh the costs multiple times if one invests in the rural development, specifically integration and entrepreneurial development.[276]

General hindrances for rural development come with a negative view on the rural in comparison to the urban, based in low levels of actual knowledge of the rural areas. But also the actually infrastructure problems combined with longer distances, relatively small business, fewer service jobs, capital access problems and network limitations.[277]

It is also of upmost importance to understand the local culture in order to create fruitful networks and to find and encourage entrepreneurs. One should abandon out-dated views of singular economical development in the rural areas, appreciate the possibilities of globalization and one must have a wide and longitudinal view of the rural is.[278] However, one should remember that the government is owned by the citizens, not only actors in the economic sector such as entrepreneurs.[279] But entrepreneurs, together with other actors, can help to create a rural place and market it in a positive way.

A truly central aspect for rural development is internet access. Its communication aspects are seen as absolutely vital for the rural areas. It is basically seen as positive for all things when planning for rural development. One benefit of the internet is that it makes the local available everywhere, potentially counter-acting loss of local contact.[280] Because today, more than ever, one can argue there is competition between places and thus place-making,

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[272] (Thufvesson, 2009, p. 14)
[273] (SOU, 2008, p. 9p)
[274] (Tillväxtanalys, 2009, p. 38pp)
[275] (SOU, 2006, p. 138p); (SOU, 2008, p. 52p)
[276] (SOU, 2008, p. 85)
[277] (SOU, 2008, p. 47)
[278] (SOU, 2006, p. 37)
[279] (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2008, s. 68pp)
[280] (Dahlbom, 2006, p. 107pp); (Lithander, 2005, p. 23)

searching for specific local qualities and characteristics as a competitive advantage, becomes central.[281]

Following this, it is understandable that 'Landsbygderådet i Karlshamn' development aspects for the rural parts include investments in Internet and stable telecommunications, road networks, public transport, crisis plans, school and child care, elderly service, safety issues (emergency planning), general accessibility to services, education of the rural cultural heritage, easier regulations to build/rebuild houses or change land uses, to find business proposals to help development, increase diversification and also network creating.[282]

The Swedish committee for rural areas proposes some key points for achieving rural development; local influence and a bottom-up approach is seen as the best in handling diverse or conflictual interests; a local perspective on democracy is highlighted due to its benefits regarding roles and responsibilities. Basically these follow the LEADER key-points.[283]

With these empirical findings it is time to move on to the part of the thesis which will present the results of what has been found in the specific study area at hand; the rural parts of Karlshamns municipality.

5. 2 – The interviews

This chapter will therefore focus more on the local specific, possibly unique, factors that came up. Some of the interviewees had more to say in understanding of local factors, some of rural development, some of participation as the interviewees were quite diverse. The following pages are thus an attempt of a general summary of what has been said in these interviews.

The interview-guide was created with foundation in the policies and theories to see how, or if, one could link these with the material from the interviews. And it is from the interview guide that the subsequent headings have been created. Also, the quotes are by own translation.

5. 2. 1 – Attractiveness factors and development

All interviewees spoke in *general positive imagery of the rural areas* in Karlshamns municipality, being satisfied with most things and happy to live there. Indeed, many things that were said during the interviews were following, confirming, the rural attractivity factors mentioned in the theoretical chapter. This meaning that it is a life-style choice that people make, when settling in rural areas, and Karlshamns rural areas are meeting these certain criterion, with quality. This choice of migration was made despite that the rural areas of Karlshamns municipality are losing population, services and jobs.

The interviewees were free to discuss their relation to the rural and negative answers came up more as exceptions to the rule that most things are good. *The nature of the rural areas* has in all interviews come up as one of the biggest reason to why people moved there, together with *family connections (and child-hood memories) and/or a desire for rural life-style* (the latter two does not exclude the nature factor as integral in those motivators). These

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[281] (Ek & Hultman, 2007, p. 27)
[282] (Karlshamns kommun, 2007, p. appendix 4)
[283] (SOU, 2006, p. 11p)

are fundamental reasons, it seems from my material, why people establish them-selves in the rural areas of Karlshamns municipality. And the strong (emotional) bonds as is possibly best explained through a quote:

> *"The absolutely most decisive factor for moving back to Karlshamn, it is that my family lives there; my parents, my siblings and their kids are all settled in Karlshamns municipality. And for each time, we were often home for the summers and such, I left it was tougher and tougher to leave, to leave them."*[284]

That Karlshamns municipality has a varied, well kept and attractive nature is what makes it special, used as a contrast to major urban areas or neighbouring regions of Skåne or Småland. The rural was seen as with very *high potential*, which was seen with equal fear of falling under exploitation in the future, leading to a too quick change. The freedom and calmness associated with rurality is highly desired to be preserved.

The rural area is perceived as quite *well connected and having a good physical infrastructure, where the basic services are indeed found close*. As people work in the urban areas one can tend to any errands while in those parts. That one has to use the car to go everywhere was an underlying assumption of rural living as any public transport is minimal or non-existent. The roads were claimed to be well-maintained although the winter maintenance was insufficient at times hindering flexibility for the car dependent rural population. Most services were indeed present in what was seen as a close-enough distance although the closer the better it is, especially if the services are more complex to fit into a daily routing and/or seen as vital for attracting population. Examples of such services were needs for *functioning child-related services such as kindergarten, schools and related transportation systems.*

But the biggest factor, that all mentioned, was the fact that most places had just received *ill-functioning or had no internet connection*. This was seen as a major hindrance in many ways, both for attractivity but also when discussing planning aspects of accessing or sending out information. The fact that the rural Karlshamn areas are lacking internet-connection makes the population harder to be reached, and to reach out, and to cooperate between both individuals but also between interest groups. A quote can help emphasise this importance:

> *"Cause it's an absolute must have. For, what I mean is, that it is almost completely demanded that you have a computer today, from society. If you don't have one, you're out."*[285]

The social aspects of the rural are seen as somewhat paradoxical, where people moved away from the anonymity of the urban areas to seek some degree of chosen rural solitude. However, in the rural areas there is a closer relation to ones neighbours and thus, the privacy one sought and acquired, is counter-acted through this closer relation. But there is a generally much more *pleased view on the rural social relations*, as being friendlier, safer, more opened, empathetic and thought-full. So it was all-in-all not as seen as very problematic. Although there is, within

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[284] *"Den absolut mest avgörande faktorn till att flytta tillbaka till Karlshamn, det är att min familj bor här; mina föräldrar, mina syskon och deras barn är alla bosatta i Karlshamns kommun. Och för varje gång, vi har ofta varit hemma på somrarna och sådär, och för varje gång, varje år, så tyckte jag det blev det tråkigare och tråkigare att lämna, lämna dem."*
[285] *"För det är ett absolut måste alltså. För jag menar, det krävs ju nästan att du har en dator idag, från samhället. Har du inte det så är du ute."*

the mentioned paradox, also a perceived duality between the original local populace and new-comers, especially if they in some way are seen as different, or not following the traditional code-of-conduct.

The social aspects of the rural areas also, at some points, followed the economical sector. Most worked, or had worked, in urban occupations but there was a support for local jobs. These would include small-scale locally bound, ecological/organic business, created by entrepreneurs that could provide rural services and jobs. Also they could promote rural living, thus marketing the area in a positive sense. This reasoning was also mentioned for *recreational opportunities.*

As regarding development of the rural areas there is yet another duality, were many wish to aid *the rural to become more vital, create services and act together for improvements.* But the answers to what these improvements are were almost as varied as the diversity amongst the interviewees. But in general development was to maintain a status quo of the local rurality, to keep the population and services and to be treated equally to the urban population. Most often there was a clear will to *resist new built areas*, especially if they in any way resembled an urban building pattern of houses. Most stated that there are indeed already many houses available in the rural areas, so there would be no need to allow too many new-built areas. That house-prices are low was highlighted as a possible way to market the rural. And those who want in-migrants see marketing as vital, showing what the rural in positive imagery as in active forums, information of local groups on a rural internet portal.

Furthermore there are wishes to firstly aim at *getting all-year residents*, preferably of Swedish origin. No-one really opposed foreign ownership, or season-residents but they are not as active, integrated, participating and stable, thus in general positive not as positive for the rural as Swedish inhabitants. Still, any resident is still better than no resident.

The desire is a balance between the development aspects, as development is indeed seen as a delicate operation. None of the interviewees opposes that other should be able to be enjoying the rural as they do. The *fear is that there will be an over-exploitation* as the municipality follows economically related development. The development conflict follows the need to maintain services and attractivity through a population base, but too much population is seen to be threatening the rural life-style one sought to find when moving to this place. One could interpret this as a conservative view of what the rural is, although none opposed changes sensitive to the locals' desires of improvements in services; it was mostly a population increase they dismissed. It was indeed only seen as beneficial to reverse any negative trends while the problematic part is the exploitation of new rural space. As an example, if development plans are concentrated only to the more attractive areas, notably the archipelago and coastal region as compared to the northern regions, then that was seen as problematic due to these regions different needs and desires. However, there were differences between age-groups and a north-south divide. A new, changing, demography brings new desires of services and ideas of development.

The rural is seen as best to remain rural i.e. without urban development patterns. *The ecological and social sustainable development are put into first place over any type of pure economical interests,* the rural can do without this as the urban areas are so close. Jobs are mentioned as a key to having attracting a younger demography. Initiatives that were seen as positive related to ecologically sustainable tourism and local agricultural production which

could highlight and market the positive sides of rural Karlshamn. But some initiatives has been seen with scepticism from the long-term locals, often described as a 'Not in my back yard-syndrome'. One must then remember that the depending on what development one wants, the attractivity factors and the priorities changes, new demography equals new needs and desires, such as internet connection or child-services.

And regarding the development balance, or preservation, a certain quote can illustrate the feeling most often portrayed by the interviewees. It regards the fear of a general development trend, but mostly of urban building patterns in the rural parts:

> *"Yes, it's a pearl, and don't tell anyone. Think of all the cosy places we see [...]*
> *It's kind of an untouched nature, it's just like you feel that when your enter*
> *Blekinge that the world stops a bit, that's how I feel it.*[286]

5. 2. 2 – The urban and the rural

In the case of Karlshamn municipality the binary dichotomy of urban-rural is not at all suitable. These two are too highly linked; any rural living strongly includes urban functions, especially if one is still in working ages. *The interviewees did indeed all see themselves as living in the rural, but how to define this was either not important or very vague*. The above mentioned factors, of especially the nature, the different social climate and tranquillity were the most common factor mentioned by all interviewees on how they defined the rurality. The aspects that were mentioned were more related to rurality as the opposing living style of urbanity. The relative closeness of what is seen as rural and what is seen as urban is understood as highly beneficial for Karlshamns municipality, that one can enjoy both in a relative convenient manner.

That Karlshamn has *good connections between the rural and the urban* eased (personal) commuting. Most had frequent connections with the urban, but the interviewees defined themselves as rural persons, adhering to a specific life-style and value-system. The most common desire was to maintain or improve the infrastructure so that the urban-rural relation could function even more smoothly. The delicate balance of separating the urban and the rural, while still understanding their deep linkages, is thus both delicate and ambivalently seen upon. These statements highlight the fact that there is a blurring of the urban/rural relation and the *rural is a multitude, a mosaic, of places*.

5. 2. 3 – Planning aspects

Whatever development the interviewees' wanted there was an understanding, or acceptance, of the different needs and desires that other actors have. The municipality is seen as one actor, each individual as one, families, local organizations, businesses and services are all seen as actors with their own ambitions, sometimes conflicting and sometimes collaborating.

As of this multitude of desires and needs the idea of a coordinated, stronger, more unified and dialogue oriented development process was seen as beneficial. The social capital of the

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[286] *"Alltså, det är en pärla, och prata inte om det för någon. Tänk vilka mysiga ställen vi ser [...] Det är liksom en orörd natur, det är precis som när man kommer in i Blekinge så stannar världen lite grann, det känner jag det som."*

rural population could use a coordination strategy and the idea, as with the LEADER-method is to *work more pro-actively, starting from the locals' needs and this was seen as positive and refreshing*. The interviewees all could see the benefits of unifying actors, as with 'Landsbygderådet i Karlshamn', mostly due to it was seen as possible to gain more power, influence and resource efficiency of an umbrella-like organization. Related to the lack of internet-connectivity, *a portal page where all actors could be linked* was seen as a straight-forward, easy and flexible way to utilize the participation spirit of actors their capacity. Most had a will to participate in local development, but lacked the resources and a method, the ability, to participate. Since the LAG is not yet fully operational it was not possible to acquire any more comprehensive information from the interviewees on this topic yet.

Amongst the interviewees there was a will to ease access to receive, and send, information, to apply for grants, to contact the municipality and other actors and to be able to reach out and recruit more members to the local groups. There was a belief in a potential in mobilizing the local actors as, at least, all strive towards a more living, active rural area. If people feel unified there is seen to be better for participation for acting for what is theirs. That there are conflicts of interests between actors, and a generational gap amongst those who participate in the development process, was seen as something that one could overcome. But the potential conflicts were described as minor between the young-old, locals and new-comers, seasonal-all year residents and/or Swedish-foreign population. And due to this multitude there was a *wish for cautious, locally sensitive planning procedures*.

But mostly, the interviewees were *tired of the municipality's neglect*, and not being given the needed resources to these local actors so that desired changes (such as internet access) could happen. If there is a will to participate, then one should try and utilize this, and general information of other actors so it becomes easier to partake. And the municipality should function as an actor that lifts the locals, that aids in endogenous development plans as the policies rhetoric proclaims. But, also, to step in where there are too few resources or too little profitability for private companies and as such aiding in the local development by for instance supporting local business and services.

5. 2. 4 – Summary

As a concluding remark, the interviewees were in general very positive to rural living in Karlshamn. This, despite the fact that services are worse, internet is basically non-existent, the electricity-net is weak at times, travelling time are longer and there is a feeling of neglect from the municipality etc. Many claimed that this is what one has to accept but, as one interviewee exclaimed on what is seen as a normal service level in the rural areas:

> *"[...] it's what one has to accept by living in the rural, but one shouldn't really have to accept that!"*[287]

This thought may indeed summon up the frustration from the interviewees on the negative sides of rural living, in a rural place where most other things are perceived as positive.

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[287] " *[…] det får man ju räkna med när man bor på landet, men det ska man egentligen inte behöva räkna med!"*

And this is an important question, leading us to the next part of the thesis, why should one accept this? Why are the rural areas even suffering from receiving less attention and focus? And what development is thus sought after to best enhance rural living? As presented above, there were some key aspects related to rural living, the positive and the negative sides. This is what the project 'Ett steg längre' is targeting and no matter what future "results" the LEADER-method of the project it is a democratic right to one's own development strategies.

6.   Discussion

Any thesis must critically analyze the theories and empirical material presented, but also to be constructive when attempting to answer the research questions. There is, as we have seen, an acknowledged need for knowledge-creation. The aim of this chapter is then to discuss the previous chapters and to find a satisfactory, constructive, conclusion. An academic thesis can often become quite idealistic whilst reality is seldom closely following theoretical ideals. An understanding and implementation of the ideal onto the actual reality could therefore be beneficial.

First of all, the rhetoric used in the policy documents is quite clear on how to approach rural planning and development, and that is through the LEADER-method. This is the clear link that goes from the EU, to the Swedish state and down to the regional level and local level. And this makes the municipality accountable to act according to certain principles, as highlighted in the theoretical part. This is not all out easy task, but hopefully, this thesis can in some way influence a further discussion and dialogue within the municipality regarding rural development. If that would be the case, then this thesis has contributed to future rural development plans and policies.

Here I should once again point out that is not my intention to claim what is, and what is not, development or an actor. That is for the politicians, the officials, and most importantly the local actors themselves. The slogan "Det goda Karlshamn", must be understood as incorporating the whole municipality, but what good development means is open for interpretation. What has been found to work on one level might not work on another, there are no, or at least few, universal solutions to solve the problems the rural areas face. But this essay has presented some ideas and concepts but the local population most probably can supply even more concrete ideas.

Rural development

The interviewees feel "rural" in their value system and it is following this, their life-style choice, which leads them to settle in these rural areas. This general value-system is part of their life, sometimes it has been so for their whole life, often following that family bonds are a major influence in having this positive relation to the rural parts. But what makes families remain over time, allowing for a return migration, is based on a multitude of factors, highly individual. If childhood memories are part of the rural attraction, then a discussing on how to supply school-services could be the logical step towards keeping such demographically related effects intact.

I would summarize the view on development as focused on preservation, to keep the rural being rural, with nature close, tranquillity, social networks but also with the possibility of enjoying a higher level of services, as the urban population, as far as this is possible. The interviewees could see changes with a possibility of being positive but at the same time also with a fear for overexploitation and degradation of the rural in the form of increased urbanity, leading to a possible diffusion the rural life-style they have chosen to settle in.

'Development' is highly contextual, bound in a space and time. Depending on who the actor is, the term will be understood differently and used for different goals. However, there

are still some unifying links found between the interviewees in my research. The rural Karlshamn has potential, it is seen as attractive. This is good in the sense that there is a possibility to reverse the rural areas negative trends and to market these areas. But also, there is a fear of the attractive areas will become over-exploited.

And the notion of development is indeed a sensitive concept, impossible to separate from politics of power and from all actors' desires. If the municipality actually strives for endogenously created development, as comes with the ideals of LEADER and by following the definition of power, in politics, the municipality needs to approach a development process though the bottom-up and direct citizen participation ideals.

For instance, there are houses available in the rural parts, with relatively low prices, which could be an advantage for the whole municipality. This is basically a capital reserve that can be used to attract people. Too build new houses or to promote those already existent is a discussion that could become sensitive as my interviewees saw the latter alternative as more attractive while other actors might want to build. By following attractivity logic it means that less popular areas are cheaper to invest in, possibly leading to more investments. This is a potential positive circular trend that could apply to business, investments, population and houses in urban neighbourhood. But if an over-exploitation would occur this could lead to a negative impact on the actual rural life-style choice that people seek, as described in the previous chapter. Thus, a variation of a tragedy of commons-concept could occur by excessively building procedures, harming the spacious tranquillity of the rural areas, and thus possibly making the area less attractive. The desire to reverse negative population trends needs to be handled with care to avoid potentially counter-productive effects.

Development dynamics relate to life (style) quality and the specific rural attraction aspects. Therefore one must be considering the balance of exploitation and preservation in a dialogue where which development interpretation prevails becomes apparent. In-migrants, new establishments, are at some rural places sought after, but not in other places. One type of development could enhance the rural aspects while another development strategy could continue the previously mentioned urbanization trend. Development in this regard, of any type, still alters the urban-rural relation. As an example, the larger the investments in better communications, the more blurred the urban-rural relation becomes. The more in-depth effects of this diffusion could be discussed but, as from my interviews, this relation is already blurred as Karlshamn has much of 'rurban' area type. One of the quotes presented was also set to highlight this in what development they seek, or wish to avoid, following their interpretation of the rural.

My interviewees' answers thus show that the view on development might be conflictual. One side of this potential development conflict is how the policies, on all levels, see the rural as problematic and in need of being developed. Here development is defined through in-migrants and new establishments.

So therefore, what if the three first goals of LEADER are contradicted by results using the fourth goal? In my case, the three goals and the empirical material have some things in common, such as desire for increased services and living standards, but not directly the growth related goals. The economic targets of sustainable development are in such a case lowered in priority. The ambivalence towards development should maybe best be understood as that there is a, a common goal of the interviewees, to preserve what is, or to re-construct a

certain level of service, but not to go any further. Although, there was an understanding for the goals of the municipality to reach any growth-related goals, but the interviewees do not want that development close to themselves, a 'Not in my back yard-syndrome'.

And If one wants to preserve the services, jobs and population in the rural areas, or even reverse the negative trends, then marketing of the positive sides becomes central, while still continuously work towards minimizing the negative aspects. The ambition to market the rural, following the policy documents and 'Ett steg längre' may indeed be following an ambition, or an underlying assumption, commodifying the rural. If one wants to market the rural places of Karlshamns municipality then one needs to keep in mind both the ones who create the rural, the local population themselves, but also of who the target group is of this marketing.

Any market strategy of the rural is based in the place-shaping process. And as the rural is a mosaic of places the marketing strategy needs to acknowledge this and an easy access into understanding these places are highly valuable. Following this, to market the rural Karlshamn could be beneficial to start with the 'why' to live in Karlshamns rural regions – highlighting the interviewees answers that it is seen as possible to live following a rural life-style, with quality. After this, one could focus on the 'how' to market rural living, for instance by using the internet-portal idea that was proposed by the interviewees. Lastly one could focus on the 'what' as a marketing strategy, that is the actual services provided.

The aspects that define the rural – nature, services, life-style, hard and soft factors – becomes a basis for marketing, planning and policies, and thus has implications for any development process. And with many different actors it becomes a question of who will be heard, and given power in the LAG. The power-relations determine what interpretation will prevail and how much discretion any actor has in the development process.

On should here remember that it is a civic right to be allowed to define oneself and ones future. That is why it is important that the policies and development plans are stemming from the local actors themselves. The rural must firstly be understood on its own terms, and not through any urban bias of, for instance, directly building new neighbourhoods in rural areas. Also, participant democracy, as in creating one's own development, could be argued to be an attractive feature in itself. A too strong top-down power structure could lead to less meaning and will to participate by the locals.

Since the rural is a mosaic of places, and since there are different views on what development is, locally sensitive planning could allow for a more deliberative democratic development process. A general strategy is already existent for the rural areas but could be complemented using a midlevel solution, between the comprehensive plan and the detailed plans. These semi or meso-level plans would be created from a bottom-up approach, reaching a synthesis of different wills and actors' ambitions. Following such an ambition to understand the rural areas, it is mentioned in the policies and in 'Ett steg längre', that there is needed to gain further knowledge of the unique local characteristics, needed to achieve the goals. The locals are the closest to this knowledge and would therefore also be the main-characters in this kind of a LEADER-driven development process.

Following this reasoning then one cannot really discuss one, 1, rural and create one rural development plan. The diversity of places and actors leads to a need for sensitivity in the planning, policy and development process. This multiplicity might create certain hindrances, to have an overall general goal of the development is one thing, but it could argued that there

really is a need to understand that lumping 'the rural' into one is problematic, both in democratic regard, but also in goal reaching efficiency.

In the previous chapter we found some place-specific attractivity factors of rural living in Karlshamn, related to both hard and soft factors, as in the theoretical chapter. Both these sides make people move to rural areas, despite that this move have certain negative consequences. But those negative aspects, longer and harder commuting, less functioning services etc, are all understood as part of this life-style choice. One has to take the good factors with the bad ones.

But what are the explanatory arguments for the rural not enjoying the same basic services as the urban? Is it only cost-benefit related analysis regarding the business-services-population logic? The link of population-businesses-services is indeed central to keep in mind. But that a service so taken for granted in urban areas, such as internet-connection, has not yet been developed in the rural areas is hindering development possibilities as it is an absolutely necessary form of connectivity to the local actors and the municipality. This is another question that could be discussed in a dialogical LAG-meeting.

The project, planning and democracy

There is an expressed will in the project 'Ett steg längre' to achieve an organizational structure for continuity, stability and base. LEADER is only one proposed, although currently dominating, solution. LEADER is important of its democratic aspects in the rural development planning process. But can it handle the different interpretations of development? Or is it all illusionary power for the local actors over the planning process, an empty rhetoric in policies? The question arises as of what will happen now, regarding the possibility of succeeding in truly following the LEADER-method. Much depends on how strong these policy documents are, if they are being followed or ignored. But the demand of follow the LEADER-ideals is not only directed at the municipality but also on all participants in the LAG. All have to act according to the LEADER standards, especially in applying for grant money to projects, which later are evaluated after these principles.

The deliberative democracy stance of LEADER focuses on dialogues to find solutions to conflicts. But the need for this dialogue based process needs to be built not solely upon ambitions, but also on actual resources of participation of equal terms. The capacity-building goals are thus highly important so that the ambitions can be voiced, and listened to. Influence of the planning process is complicated, and it needs to be analyzed and evaluated realistically, to see the actual power of local actors. The local policy framework becomes central in this discussion as the policies idealistic approach show the aspirations, but also opens up for an accountability discussion. Evaluative processes must also receive focus as to possibly improve any later LEADER-based rural development processes.

Information and knowledge of the process, of how to acquire resources, increases the capacity of any given actor. The municipality comes into the process with resources and power and must therefore act responsibly to reallocate resources, allowing local actors integrative participation. The power diffusion must be determined towards being as symmetrical as possible. Resources allocated to any actor, to have influence over these process, is also seen as a democratic right and the question of which actors to be included relates to local legitimacy and accountability in the democratic process of power over development.

The LEADER-method aims at local initiatives to have a major influence in the planning process. The municipality then still has a major role as a capacity-builder for the rural actors. Consequently, if the municipality suggests citizen participation, and not adhere to it, then it is likely to create mistrust, distancing and harm when recourses are not re-allocated and local initiatives neglected. More reallocated power in all forms – interpretation, discretion, resources, knowledge and competence, communication – could create more meaningful participation, and less frustration, and therefore higher participation rates. So there is a difference in what level, or how real, the influence is. It is important that things actually happen or otherwise frustration or worse, apathy, might take hold.

Resources need to be given, but to use a bottom-up approach takes time and resources, and LEADER is a more costly method. This could be problematic if Karlshamns municipality will come to suffer from worse economic trends, as described in the initial chapter. However, efficiency of LEADER comes from that the plans and policies are created by the locals themselves, ensuring better knowledge-base and implementation. There is also a perceived difference in the social relations in the rural areas, following the social capital as described in the theoretical part. In a network, with some altruistic motives, one could hope for synergetic effects, for instance capacity-building and trust, as people are active residents. But furthermore, altruism, as in the social economy and participation by the voluntary sector, also cost both time and money. So, there are many incentives of why some are not participating but what was confirmed by the interviewees was the lack of time, not of will, as the most pressing issue. Therefore, any participation role in the process should be able to be done as easily as possible to ensure both integrated actors and thus, general efficiency.

This can then become a discussion on how much can one demand of the involved actors and how much power any actor should have, or be given. There could be questions of the actors' competence and ability to perform. The local groups need help to gather individuals, at least as passive support for their cause. And if the local groups are not adequately supported by local membership, the legitimacy of those local groups representing rural interests in the planning process could be debated. Information on what they do would increase their legitimacy both horizontally and vertically, and is seen to increases chances for successfully recruiting members. In a LAG meeting there should be discussions not only what any actor wants to achieve but also why, so that underlying assumptions and possible conflicts can arise and be dealt with accordingly.

The ability to communicate is highly important in deliberative democracy. And to aid in development planning it has been suggested that it would be beneficial to gather all actors, documents and information into one place, a portal webpage. On this rural portal-site, all actors could be linked to and voices more easily shared in a forum. To mobilize the actors the internet is seen a medium that would suit this cause. If this could be carried out, then it opens up new methods for actors to collaborate and to reach set goals. The closer the communication the better it is for finding key aspects for development. But first and fore mostly, the internet portal page demands, proper internet connection for the rural areas.

A problem could arise with conflicts as a result if any actors see the others as not holding the "correct" opinion. That is why an argument-based, tolerant and transparent, dialogue is central in the LEADER-method. The dialogue becomes central as it means that any answers, of what development is and how it should be reached, is created 'through' the debate, not

dialogue as in 'di' meaning 'two'. All actors carry different set of knowledge and act accordingly to their own set of wishes.

The LEADER approaches this through the mentioned Local Action Groups, where the official, the private and the voluntary/third sector all should be present to have these dialogues. In Karlshamn municipality's LAG for rural development, 'Landsbygderådet i Karlshamn' is part of the board, idealistically representing local rural citizens. The individuals, the locals, are idealistically to be involved in a local interest group, acting and discussing the development aspects. This groups then is to be represented by 'Landsbygderådet i Karlshamn' in the LAG. The subsidiarity principle is here a clear link, visible and active, from the EU down to the local scale.

And if one is to create many separate rural development plans the local groups can serve a vital part as they can unite opinions, be locally attached and work stronger and more efficiently in the planning process than any each individual. This is where 'Landsbygderådet i Karlshamn' can be the umbrella organization for these smaller local groups, representing them in the LAG. Then both vertically representative planning as well as a more efficient horizontal planning could be possible. 'Landsbygderådet i Karlshamn' could be one strong coordination actor for the rural or one amongst others/many, but its most probably function would be to serve as an umbrella and trying to unite and build capacity and discretion for other smaller actors. There might then be a need, if 'Landsbygderådet i Karlshamn' grows, to have those members of the LAG receiving some sort of compensated, if solely voluntary hours might not be enough. After all, any limit in the contact network is a limit in the deliberative democratic process.

It is therefore logical to allow all potential actors them enter the process. Regarding who is or could be an actor, it ranges from all individuals to bigger organizations and the EU. But one can put the questions on its head; what actor, or who, should be excluded? And that could function as a base for this discussion. However, according to the definitions that has been described in the theoretical parts, and following the policy framework, all who resides in the rural areas are to some extent a legitimate actor.

Despite possibly sounding idealistic, the concept of a LAG with rural representation is not that improbable as a working system, as an alternative in the municipal planning procedures. Proactive planning, instead of reactive, allows greater freedom for the local actors in rural planning and of defining what rural development is. Karlshamns municipality received low scores of local participation, thus also allowing room for improvement. And the deliberative democratic planning system has also been noted as a functioning alternative to the representative political system. The deliberative democratic form also has negative aspects, but planning processes take place all year around, not only at one single occasion every four years in the elections, and the municipal officials involved are not elected politicians. Hence, political power comes from being allowed to partake in this continuously evolving process for rural development.

7.   Conclusion

This thesis has not been an attempt to answer the questions of what exactly 'rural development' is or how this is best achieved. It has been written to inspire continuous discussions and dialogues in the planning process for rural development in the municipality of Karlshamn. I have presented both strengths and weaknesses, positive and negative aspects, of the concepts used, with an ambition to avoid naïve idealism. Reality is complex and any attempt to understand it must be humble to such a challenge. By using the theoretical framework and policy structure, and by conducting interviews, I have answered my research questions, as well as the reaching the purpose and aim of the thesis.

The notion of development is complex, sensitive and viewed differently upon by all rural actors. I have presented previous research on this topic and found certain aspects, hard and soft, that relate to the rural areas. Rural development is wide ranging; from standard answers of services, job creation and infrastructure but it is also related to a functioning democratic procedure for the locals' ability to participate in the planning process. Through the interviewees answers I have discussed this question in its local context. As shown, the interviewees sought to preserve what they saw as rural from over-exploitation, i.e. an urban development trend. This may be seen as a wish to protect the local environment, ecological sustainability over growth ambitions and economical development goals.

This follows that the most attractive features of the rural places of Karlshamns municipality were related to nature qualities, and the possibility to live according to a perceived rural life-style. Since Karlshamns municipality is seen to have a close urban-rural relation it is also possible to benefit from both, making rural living easier. Although, certain services were missing or inadequately supplied in the rural areas, the most notable one being internet-connectivity, which is seen as central to unite local actors, market the rural places and to ensure an integrative participatory planning process. To continue gathering local knowledge for new rural development plans is of utmost important seeing how all rural areas and their local actors have different views on what development they seek. I.e. setting up a planning framework for more locally sensitive rural development plans would be in line with these views.

The LEADER-method could thus be argued, idealistically, to be able to handle such a democratic planning process. It could be seen as a more costly method, still one must weigh this against that it is argued to give better, more effective, results through better local knowledge and implementation. This method could inspire democratic leadership, handle conflicts of interests, build capacity and social capital and be integrative for local actors in the rural development process. Also, this method could potentially aid in place-marketing as it has a focus on the unique characteristics of any local place, thus highlighting them in an outward-oriented process.

The government officials must act according to certain leadership principles following their own, regional and national policies but also the EU if to be allocated resources from LEADER. These principles include allowing local actors to define 'development' themselves, increase their capacity to participate and host dialogues in the LAG. If the LEADER-method could be properly followed previous experience has shown it to function well for these

purposes. But a conflict may arise if the LEADER-method's goals are opposing those of the local actors, as in exploitation vs. preservation of rural places.

As for the future of the rural development process in Karlshamns municipality there are encouraging indications that should be highlighted. The actual implementation of the LEADER-method's ideals, found in the policy structure, can open for positive effects, as shown by the interviews and the theoretical framework. With the ambition to avoid idealistic hopes regarding the LEADER-method I would still argue that this thesis has found evidence showing that this approach for rural development could be successful. Opportunities present themselves through improved local democracy, increased efficiency of policies and planning, a more living, participating, rural area and clearer identification of positive and negative aspects – such as service-levels – of rural living in Karlshamns municipality. It could also function to create a better understanding the local place-contextual factors which could be used to counteract negative rural development trends.

Furthermore, the rhetoric is quite clear on how to approach the rural development process. Policies show the ambitions for how planning is to be carried out and the presented theoretical framework and the interviews thus give these ambitions support. On these aspects the thesis has aimed to be emphatic while still trying to avoid a naïve world-view and utopian idealism of planning. But if the political rhetoric is to avoid being hollow, which could lead to local apathy, then the power should come through a bottom-up approach. The LEADER-method is to unlock the door for endogenous rural development, using its democratic key-concepts. And the LEADER ideals, visible in the policies, are indeed quite clear on its ambitions which will make a future evaluation of accountability in Karlshamns municipality's rural development process easier.

What has been found in my thesis could then hopefully function as part of the needed knowledge-base in a LEADER-process. It could highlight some local attractivity factors, deconstruct concepts such as 'development' and the urban-rural relation, and emphasize democratic principles of what leadership the LEADER-method calls for.

The question of who is the leader in the LEADER-created LAG is a question of power, and possibility of reallocating it to the actors involved. Democracy is about ambitions, a will, but in a democratic process the ability, the power, to participate in any political process that regards ones local development must be ensured. Here the municipality and its officials will have an important role as a capacity-builder. The LEADER-method is thus to be used in a democratic leadership strategy that enables the local actors' ambitions to be heard and to be acted upon. If this is the case, then one could surely speak of 'The good Karlshamn', as their slogan claims.

7. 1 - Suggestions for further research

As of what has been found in the process of writing this thesis, some ideas for further research could be beneficial to present. These could possibly be conducted in an academic setting or, more pragmatically, in the municipal continued planning process for rural development by both the officials and the local actors:

- Use qualitative and quantitative research for continued investigation of the rural areas, as related to the local actors view on development.
- Conduct an inventory-study regarding the local population demographics, service levels and businesses in the rural areas, suitably done using GIS.
- Follow up the project 'Ett steg längre' in an evaluative study.
- Evaluate the creation-process of Karlshamns new rural development program
- Evaluate any local development projects initiated though the LEADER-method in Karlshamns municipality.
- Investigate how divergent views on, for instance, the concepts of 'sustainable', 'development' and 'rural' have been handled in the rural development process.
- Conduct a more critical study on the rise of LEADER as compared to previous methods for rural development.

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Appendix

Interview guide

Introduktion

- Presentation av; mig, uppsatsen och intervjuns syfte och form, intervjulängden, sekretess och anonymitetsaspekten samt medgivande till att bli inspelad och ta anteckningar.

Bakgrundsfrågor/formaliteter

- Namn (enbart för egen bearbetning)
- Ålder
- Yrke/yrkesort
- Bostadssituation

Landsbygden

- Hur ni ser på Karlshamns landsbygd?
  - *Vilka positiva och negativa aspekter? Ge exempel och förslag? Nöjd?*
- Vilka incitament förelåg er inflyttning/etablering på just Karlshamns landsbygd?
  - *Faktorernas vikt? basbehov? Konkreta/hårda och abstrakta/mjuka aspekter? Hårt och mjukt kapital?*
- Vilka aspekter anser ni centrala för denna landsbygds fortsatta positiva/negativa utveckling?
  - *Attraktivitetsfaktorerna? Prioriteringar för näringslivet/turism/inflyttare? Ge exempel och förslag? Fokus på både det positiva och det negativa.*
- Hur ser ni på ett ord som "utveckling"?
  - *Vad innefattas i termen, socialt/ekologiskt/ekonomiskt etc.?*

Planeringsprocessen

- Vad anser ni om kommunens landsbygdsplanering?
  - *Processens utformning och maktaspekter från kunskap, deltagande, respons och resurser? Makthierarkier och inflytande? Ge exempel? Nöjd?*
- Vad är er relation till kommunen, framförallt rörande då landsbygdsfrågor?
  - *Policy dokument? Tillgång, förståelse och påverkan? Kontaktnivå?*
- Är ni på något sätt delaktig i att arbeta för att utveckla landsbygden?
  - *Relation till landsbygdsföreningarna och/eller privata/offentliga aktörer? Vilja att vara delaktig? Dialog och kommunikationer? Tidigare erfarenhet/kunskap?*
- Hur bör en landsbygdsplanering, rörande dess utveckling, gå till väga anser ni?
  - *Fritt spekulerande om förslag, idéer och tankar, ge exempel rörande metod, utformning, aktörer, makt, tidsaspekter, kunskap etc.*

Övrigt

- Något att tillägga? Frågor? Fler exempel?
  - *Tips om andra att intervjua, länkar till andra personer med viktig kunskap? Har de något att ge till mig?*
- Tacka och avsluta intervjun samt berätta om fortsatta arbetet.