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## Between Growth and Sustainability

### Exploring the Construction of Sustainable Mobility in Swedish Transport Policy

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PO Box 117  
221 00 Lund  
+46 46-222 00 00

# Between Growth and Sustainability

## Exploring the Construction of Sustainable Mobility in Swedish Transport Policy

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ELIAS ISAKSSON

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE | FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE | LUND UNIVERSITY



This thesis critically investigates how the notion of sustainable mobility is constructed in contemporary Swedish transport policy. Through a case study of the Urban Environment Agreement, a Swedish national transport policy that seeks to promote sustainability, the thesis provides insights into the evolving sustainable mobility discourse of the Western European transport field.

The thesis advances a novel discourse-analytical framework suitable for exploring underlying norms, assumptions, and tensions in transport policy discourse. It finds contrasting representations of growth in the construction of sustainable mobility. These representations build on the assumption that the continuous increase of mobility is a naturally occurring phenomenon. The thesis identifies resulting implications for the societal challenge of a transition towards sustainable mobility.

**ELIAS ISAKSSON** is a Swedish political scientist. His research interests concern the intersection of environmental, transport, and urban policies, and discursive and other critical methodologies.

Between Growth and Sustainability



# Between Growth and Sustainability

## Exploring the Construction of Sustainable Mobility in Swedish Transport Policy

Elias Isaksson



**LUND**  
UNIVERSITY

### DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Doctoral dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) at the Faculty of Social Science at Lund University to be publicly defended on 18 of August at 10.00 in Eden's auditorium, Department of Political Science, Paradisgatan 5H, 223 50 Lund.

*Faculty opponent*

Professor Timothy Kevin Richardson,  
Norwegian University of Life Sciences

**Organization:** LUND UNIVERSITY  
Department of Political Science  
Box 52  
SE-221 00 LUND  
Sweden

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**Abstract:**

Transport policies in Western Europe are increasingly framed in terms of sustainable mobility. This is a response to an urgent need to tackle adverse consequences of the transport system and implies changes in discourses related to transport. Exploring sustainable mobility is a fruitful way of studying discursive development in a policy field historically connected to priorities radically different from sustainability. More precisely, what reasons are provided in favour of sustainable mobility in contemporary transport policies? What underlying norms and assumptions does the notion of sustainable mobility rely upon? And what subjects are emphasised in the discourse?

The thesis argues that these questions can be answered by studying the social construction of sustainable mobility in the transport policy field. The thesis contributes to the emerging field of critical transport studies by empirically investigating a concrete sustainable mobility discourse. This is done through an in-depth case study of a Swedish national sustainable transport policy, the Urban Environment Agreement. The case allows for a study of how power and conflicts permeate planning and policy for sustainability.

The thesis advances a discourse-analytical perspective that is hitherto lacking in transport research and develops a novel framework building on critical discourse analysis and critical realism. This framework is subsequently deployed to empirically map discursive patterns of statements related to sustainable mobility, to determine how these patterns interrelate, and to interpret the broader implications of the findings.

The central claim of the thesis is that sustainable mobility needs to be understood as a product of naturalised representations of growth. Arguably, societal norms and assumptions about forms of growth govern how sustainable mobility is conceived and acted upon through policies. This constructs the continuous increase of mobility as a naturally occurring phenomenon and excludes alternatives to high-mobility society.

Two dominant constructions of sustainable mobility are identified in the discourse: 'sustainable mobility as a necessity', building on ideas of managing growth, and 'sustainable mobility as progress', connected to ideas of promoting growth. The author proposes that a third way of constructing sustainable mobility, 'as restriction', in the sense of limiting growth, is silenced in the discourse. Although there are differences among these constructions, the discourse contains several naturalised representations that characterise the discourse overall. While growth is constructed as inevitable, sustainability is constructed as an imperative. As a result, a transition to sustainable mobility is constructed as a salvation, justified by several logics of sustainable mobility. These logics discursively link contradictory notions of growth and sustainability. The thesis develops a wheel of growth metaphor to capture such key elements and linkages of the discourse.

Finally, the discourse in focus is contrasted against central features of the more 'traditional' transport policy discourse. This shows that the sustainable mobility discourse of the Urban Environment Agreement policy partly challenges the traditional focus on automobility. At the same time, the present discourse reproduces assumptions of 'predict and provide', travel time minimisation, and the emphasis on economic growth.

The conclusions of the thesis contribute to the ongoing discussion among policy makers, academics, and social movements about how to respond to the societal challenge of a transition towards a more sustainable and just transport system.

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# Between Growth and Sustainability

Exploring the Construction of Sustainable Mobility in  
Swedish Transport Policy

Elias Isaksson



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About the cover: The road without motor traffic equals the most sustainable road? A photograph of the E22 motorway going through Lund Municipality when the tramway construction forced a two-week closure.

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*For Valter and Alvar*

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# Abstract

Transport policies in Western Europe are increasingly framed in terms of sustainable mobility. This is a response to an urgent need to tackle adverse consequences of the transport system and implies changes in discourses related to transport. Exploring sustainable mobility is a fruitful way of studying discursive development in a policy field historically connected to priorities radically different from sustainability. More precisely, what reasons are provided in favour of sustainable mobility in contemporary transport policies? What underlying norms and assumptions does the notion of sustainable mobility rely upon? And what subjects are emphasised in the discourse?

The thesis argues that these questions can be answered by studying the social construction of sustainable mobility in the transport policy field. The thesis contributes to the emerging field of critical transport studies by empirically investigating a concrete sustainable mobility discourse. This is done through an in-depth case study of a Swedish national sustainable transport policy, the Urban Environment Agreement. The case allows for a study of how power and conflict permeate planning and policy for sustainability.

The thesis advances a discourse-analytical perspective that is hitherto lacking in transport research and develops a novel framework building on critical discourse analysis and critical realism. This framework is subsequently deployed to empirically map discursive patterns of statements related to sustainable mobility, to determine how these patterns interrelate, and to interpret the broader implications of the findings.

The central claim of the thesis is that sustainable mobility needs to be understood as a product of naturalised representations of growth. Arguably, societal norms and assumptions about forms of growth govern how sustainable mobility is conceived and acted upon through policies. This constructs the continuous increase of mobility as a naturally occurring phenomenon and excludes alternatives to a high-mobility society.

Two dominant constructions of sustainable mobility are identified in the discourse: 'sustainable mobility as a necessity', building on ideas of managing growth, and 'sustainable mobility as progress', connected to ideas of promoting growth. The author proposes that a third way of constructing sustainable mobility, 'as restriction', in the sense of limiting growth, is silenced in the discourse. Although there are differences among these constructions, the discourse contains several naturalised representations that characterise the discourse overall. While growth is constructed as inevitable, sustainability is constructed as an imperative. As a result, a transition to sustainable

mobility is constructed as a salvation, justified by several logics of sustainable mobility. These logics discursively link contradictory notions of growth and sustainability. The thesis develops a wheel of growth metaphor to capture such key elements and linkages of the discourse.

Finally, the discourse in focus is contrasted against central features of the more 'traditional' transport policy discourse. This shows that the sustainable mobility discourse of the Urban Environment Agreement policy partly challenges the traditional focus on automobility. At the same time, the present discourse reproduces assumptions of 'predict and provide', travel time minimisation, and the emphasis on economic growth.

The conclusions of the thesis contribute to the ongoing discussion among policy makers, academics, and social movements about how to respond to the societal challenge of a transition towards a more sustainable and just transport system.



# Sammanfattning

Det var en gång så att en vagn kom.  
Den sade till en bonde:  
döda hästen som går framför mig.  
Han besvärar mig.  
Sedan får du åka fort.  
Så skedde.

I Vagnen är vi sedan den dagen.  
- Harry Martinson<sup>1</sup>

Ovanstående dikt av Harry Martinson utgavs 1960 och alltjämt är vi 'i Vagnen'. Samtidigt som bilen är själva grunden för det sätt vi förflyttar oss i samhället, utgör bilismen den främsta orsaken till transportsektorns negativa miljö- och hälsoeffekter. Denna avhandling handlar om politiska försök att gå bortom bilen, mot en mer hållbar form av mobilitet.

*Hållbar mobilitet* eller hållbara transporter, som är den mer använda termen i Sverige, har de senaste decennierna kommit att bli en central utgångspunkt inom transportsektorn. Inte sällan har det framställs som lösningen för att ta samhället bortom 'mobilitetens dilemma', det vill säga, att förena det moderna samhällets omätliga behov av transporter med jordens ekologiska gränser.

När nya sätt att framställa, förstå och samtala kring centrala samhällsfenomen får fäste och börjar dominera politiska sammanhang, tenderar alternativa representationer att tystas ner. Denna avhandling behandlar 'hållbar mobilitet' som en dominerande politisk 'diskurs', vilket kan förstås som ett system av regler och tendenser för hur ett ämne talas och skrivs om i ett bestämt sammanhang<sup>2</sup>. I avhandlingen avgränsas detta 'bestämda sammanhang' till transportpolitiken och närmare bestämt *Stadsmiljöavtalet*, en politiskt viktig svensk transportsatsning med syfte att skapa 'hållbara stadsmiljöer' genom statlig medfinansiering av kollektivtrafikåtgärder.

Där tidigare forskning ofta uttalat är baserad på en normativ förståelse av hållbar mobilitet, utgår denna avhandling utifrån hur hållbar mobilitet faktiskt tar sig uttryck

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<sup>1</sup> Martinsson (1960, s. 110-111).

<sup>2</sup> Denna definition är hämtad av Kristina Boréus (2010, s. 172). För en lättillgänglig introduktion till diskursanalytisk metod, se Peter Svensson (2019).

i centrala förslag och diskussioner inom den svenska transportpolitiken. Detta induktiva angreppssätt bygger på en utförlig textanalys av Stadsmiljöavtalet och vägleds av ett nyskapande diskursanalytiskt ramverk med vetenskapsteoretisk och metodologisk utgångspunkt i kritisk realism och kritisk diskursanalys.

Avhandlingen bidrar framför allt till den kritiskt inriktade färan av transportstudier och planeringslitteraturen. Inom transportstudier har makt, i synnerhet diskursiv makt, varit frånvarande som analytiskt perspektiv. På samma sätt har transport och transportpolitik sällan genomlysts inom planeringslitteraturen. Avhandlingen motiveras således av att utveckla dessa områden inom respektive fält och utgör på ett övergripande plan ett bidrag till kritiska transportstudier.

Avhandlingens resultat berör främst tre områden. För det första identifieras tre 'konstituerande sätt att resonera'. Dessa representerar övergripande men skilda sätt som hållbar mobilitet beskrivs i Stadsmiljöavtalet. Dels framställs hållbar mobilitet som en nödvändighet. I grunden handlar detta resonemang om att en ökning av transporter tas för givet och att hållbar mobilitet är något som samhället *måste* anamma för att hantera de negativa miljö-, trängsel- och hälsokonsekvenser som kommer av denna transporttillväxt. Dels framställs hållbar mobilitet som en form av framåtskridande. Detta sätt att resonera bygger istället på det eftersträvansvärda med olika former av tillväxt och att dessa antas främjas av hållbar mobilitet. Sammantaget utgör 'hållbar mobilitet som nödvändighet' och 'hållbar mobilitet som framåtskridande' de två helt dominerande framställningarna i diskursen. I kontrast till dessa två, identifieras ett antal 'tystnader' i diskursen. Dessa bildar tillsammans ett tredje sätt att resonera, 'hållbar mobilitet som begränsning' och utgår från att grundantaganden om kontinuerlig tillväxt är problematiska från ett socialt och miljömässigt perspektiv. Detta tredje sätt är frånvarande i diskursen.

För det andra görs en syntes av de generella drag som diskursen uppvisar. Utifrån detta dras teoretiska insikter om den övergripande diskursen om hållbar mobilitet, bortom Stadsmiljöavtalet och det svenska sammanhanget. I diskursen framställs framför allt tre aspekter som naturliga och bortom ifrågasättande. Dessa är 'tillväxtens ofrånkomlighet', 'hållbarhetens nödvändighet' och 'omställningens löfte om räddning'. Den sistnämnda utgörs av tre logiker som på olika syftar till att lösa konflikten mellan tillväxt och hållbarhet: byggandets logik (konflikten kan lösas genom att bygga 'hållbar infrastruktur'), resandets logik (konflikten kan lösas genom att flytta över resande till 'hållbara trafikslag') och teknikskiftets logik (konflikten kan lösas genom att introducera 'hållbar teknik'). I avhandlingen utvecklas metaforen om *tillväxthjulet* som ett sätt att fånga hur dessa centrala delar är relaterade. Metaforen illustrerar hur olika former av tillväxt (bostadstillväxt, befolkningstillväxt, mobilitetstillväxt och ekonomisk tillväxt) samspelar och skapar 'naturalisering' där de ses som naturliga och utanför politisk kontroll. I diskursen om hållbar mobilitet är det mobilitetstillväxt som är i

fokus och som förstärks genom sin relation till de övriga tillväxtformerna. Problemet uppstår när mobilitetstillväxt som tas för givet ska förenas med hållbarhet. Det är i detta diskursiva sammanhang som ovan nämnda logiker fungerar som rättfärdigande.

För det tredje berörs hur diskursen om hållbar mobilitet i Stadsmiljöavtalet förhåller sig till den traditionella transportdiskursen. Fyra centrala normer som genomsyrar den senare lyfts upp: 'prognosstyrd planering', 'restidsminimering', 'bilnormen' och 'ekonomisk tillväxt'. Resultaten visar att endast bilnormen ifrågasätts och enbart delvis. De övriga tre normerna återskapas i hög grad av Stadsmiljöavtalet även om de till viss del formuleras genom alternativa utgångspunkter.

Transportsektorn beräknas stå för omkring en tredjedel av utsläppen av växthusgaser. Trots detta faktum möts försök att minska denna påverkan ofta av stort motstånd bland företag, organisationer och personer som byggt sin verksamhet och tillvaro på miljöskadlig mobilitet. Denna avhandling belyser hur politiska försök att kringgå denna problematik tenderar att fokusera på ökad tillväxt trots de inneboende ekologiska och sociala risker som tillväxtcenterade lösningar innebär. Avhandlingen utgör således ett teoretiskt bidrag till den brännande diskussion inom akademien, politiken och sociala rörelser som rör konflikten mellan tillväxt och ekologisk hållbarhet.

# Introduction

The uncomfortable conclusion is that, despite decades of impressive local successes and by now close to unanimous consensus about its desirability, the sustainable mobility paradigm might not be delivering, and that we might need to go beyond it, or in any case beyond its most current interpretations. - Luca Bertolini<sup>3</sup>

Past a certain threshold of energy consumption, the transportation industry dictates the configuration of social space. - Ivan Illich<sup>4</sup>

This thesis is an inquiry into the social construction of sustainable mobility; how ways of talking and writing about sustainability and mobility create patterns with distinct political implications. The thesis also provides an empirically grounded investigation into discursive conflicts and tensions often permeating transport planning and policy. The Swedish sustainable transport policy I study, the Urban Environment Agreement, encapsulates several dilemmas that characterise Western European transport policies and, indeed, these societies in general. In essence, these dilemmas are about how to bridge the increasing demands of, on one hand, sustainability and, on the other hand, various forms of growth.

Worldwide, the immense challenge of transitioning to a future within the planet's ecological boundaries is increasingly apparent. Although scientific reports and social movements have brought the dependence on high levels of mobility into light, pre- and post-pandemic trends have shown limited progress in reducing emissions, and transport is currently responsible for 37 per cent of the world's total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from end-use sectors (EEA, 2021; IEA, 2022; SEPA, 2021a)<sup>5</sup>. At heart lies a dilemma of mobility (Bertolini, 2017; Low & O'Connor, 2013). While the current mobility patterns cause severe environmental degradation locally and globally (Banister et al., 2011), modern

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<sup>3</sup> Bertolini (2020, pp. 62-63).

<sup>4</sup> Illich (1973, p. 11).

<sup>5</sup> In Sweden, the sector is responsible for approximately a third of the total emissions and half of the emissions from sectors outside of the EU Emissions Trading System (SEPA, 2022, p. 29).

societies are structurally bound to high levels of mobility (Bertolini, 2020), in both movement patterns and embedded mobility in all the commodities around us (Cresswell, 2010).

Over the past couple of decades, a broader consensus has formed around the severity of climate change and the human responsibility for increasing temperatures (IPCC, 2021). In tandem, sustainability has risen as an agenda impossible to ignore in most parts of the world. In sector after sector, the challenge of sustainability has forced a re-evaluation of existing ideas, theories, and practices. Terms such as sustainable foresting, sustainable agriculture, and sustainable city planning, that rhetorically promise a change of direction, are only a few examples of where this influence can be seen<sup>6</sup>. This thesis is about transport, a sector not isolated from this trend; quite the opposite. Transport constitutes a prime example of a policy field where the discursive impact of sustainability has been evident. In Western European transport policy, sustainable mobility has become the dominant way to talk about society's organised movement (e.g. EC, 1992b, 2001, 2016, 2020).

Sustainable mobility can be viewed as a discourse challenging the dominance of traditional transport planning, emerging as a serious contender for structuring and informing transport policy and planning. Still, sustainable mobility is as much a scientific discourse as a policy discourse, and the two are inherently intertwined and should be seen as two sides of the same coin. Transport research is a field affected by the historical dominance of engineering and economics (Macmillen, 2013). These disciplines are as well-equipped to analyse physical constructions as they are ill-equipped to understand social constructions. Consequently, it is hardly surprising that sustainable mobility is regularly discussed in terms of technology and the aggregated behaviours of transport users. However, there is a growing need to study sustainable mobility as something more than particular modes of transport. Sustainable mobility is a socio-scientific discourse that has gained tremendous influence over the past decades. It is a set of practices that governs many policies and interactions in the transport field. As sustainability is increasingly becoming the dominant discourse in society, its transport-specific articulation has become an area of political struggles and conflicts.

Although sustainable development in general, and sustainable mobility in particular, build on the promise of a win-win situation (Bertolini, 2017; Carter, 2007), deep-rooted conflicts built into capitalist development processes have not disappeared (Campbell, 2016, p. 390). These conflicts have been characterised as a fundamental part of planning and the point of departure for critical planning literature (Campbell, 1996, 2016; Flyvbjerg, 1998; Foglesong, 2016 [1986]; Gunder, 2006; Molotch &

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<sup>6</sup> Even the oxymoron 'sustainable mining' is widely used in Sweden (Boliden, 2023; Isaksson, 2014; The Swedish Government, 2013).

Logan, 1996). From Habermasian (Fischer, 2015; Saretzki, 2015), Foucauldian (Flyvbjerg, 1998; Richardson, 1999) and Gramscian (Davies, 2013; Jessop, 1997) perspectives, the literature has investigated how planning is infused with power and politics. Paradoxically, just as the transport literature has often overlooked power and politics (Marsden & Reardon, 2017), critical planning scholars seldom engage with transport issues. At the same time, transport constitutes an excellent area to investigate the fundamental conflicts of modern societies (McKenzie, 2003).

In this thesis, I engage with, and aim to contribute to, what can be labelled critical transport studies, a disparate academic field that connects transport research with the critical perspectives found in the planning literature. Critical perspectives on mobility are of increasing relevance for academic and societal debates. However, despite a long history (Adams, 1981; Illich, 1973), the critical transport research field has not resulted in a coherent literature. Instead, much critical research has been conducted within the sustainable transport literature. Still, I argue that the increasing influence of sustainable mobility discourse in policy, planning, and research necessitates critical perspectives and methodologies to analyse it and its norms and assumption. This premise represents the point of departure for this thesis.

## Problems, Questions, and Design

Transport is a policy field where the many conflicts of sustainable planning are particularly evident. Consequently, studying the social construction of sustainable mobility may provide essential insights into planning more generally. Unfortunately, this opportunity has not been taken advantage of since transport commonly plays a minor role in planning studies. Thus, the first purpose of this thesis is to investigate what sustainable mobility discourse reveals about the more general conflicts and tensions of sustainable planning.

New discourses in a policy field are born from the anomalies of their predecessors, and their rationality lies in the claim to better solve the critical issues of their time. Undoubtedly, the environmental effects of the transport system are such a critical issue today, and it has been increasingly evident that traditional solutions are insufficient. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that the sustainable mobility discourse has gained influence over the past decades. However, with increased influence, power struggles over how the discourse evolves and how key representations are constructed may be amplified. From such a perspective, the likelihood for reformists to themselves be

reformed has to be acknowledged<sup>7</sup>. It follows that if sustainable mobility is understood to be more than a static and normative concept, i.e., if it is treated as a developing discourse of growing importance, its *current* merits and demerits must be investigated. Thus, the pivotal problem regards the characteristics of the sustainable mobility discourse in its present form and its potential to solve the environmental problems caused by transport. Consequently, the second purpose of this thesis is to address this problem by exploring sustainable mobility discourse.

To achieve the two purposes of the thesis, I will examine the Swedish sustainable transport policy called the Urban Environment Agreement (UEA)<sup>8</sup>. The UEA is a national-level policy from 2005 that incentivises Swedish municipalities and regions to invest in public transport infrastructure. It has become an important way for local and regional authorities to finance so-called sustainable mobility projects and, likewise, for the Swedish government (via the Swedish Transport Administration) to govern local development. I argue that the UEA is representative of sustainable transport policies in Sweden (and similar countries) and thereby lends itself well to a case study of sustainable mobility discourse, illustrating political tensions recurring throughout the Western European transport field<sup>9</sup>. The following research question and three sub-questions guide the thesis: *How is sustainable mobility constructed in the Swedish Urban Environment Agreement policy?*

- A. What are the discursive patterns of sustainable mobility in the UEA policy?
- B. Which are the dominant constitutive lines of reasoning in the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy, and which ones are silenced?
- C. How does the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy relate to the traditional discourse in the transport policy field?

With regard to overall research design, I develop an eclectic approach to analysing discourse based on two key premises.

First, I use critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a theoretical vantage point. Compared to competing discourse-analytical traditions (e.g., the Foucauldian tradition, discourse theory, or discursive psychology), CDA brings a more pronounced normative critical engagement, especially emphasising discourses' roles in maintaining ideologies

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<sup>7</sup> The prime example of the tendency for the reformers to be reformed is the history of social democratic parties in Europe, formed by radical reformist agendas and ending up in a Third Way ideology (cf. Fairclough, 2000 on New Labour).

<sup>8</sup> The policy is called *Stadsmiljöavtal* in Swedish. In this thesis, *stadsmiljö* is translated into 'urban environment' and *avtal* into 'agreement'. I use definite article and 'the agreement' in singular purposefully since it is *one* policy.

<sup>9</sup> Moreover, as the sustainable mobility agenda, to a large extent, has been developed in European countries, what is true for this context may also be valid for the sustainable mobility discourse outside of Europe.

(Bergström & Boréus, 2005a, p. 321f). Moreover, some versions of CDA are explicitly connected to the critical realist (CR) tradition (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012, p. 73; Fairclough et al., 2002), in which I position myself. I mainly rely on those scholars that emphasise a constructivist epistemology (i.e., Elder-Vass, 2012b; Fairclough et al., 2002; Sayer, 2012).

However, although I use CDA's theoretical and normative premises, the method I deploy to analyse sustainable mobility discourse departs from the linguistic approach often associated with CDA. Instead, I develop a middle-range approach inspired by policy scholars such as Carol Lee Bacchi (2000, 2009) and Maarten Hajer (1997) to provide a concrete, transparent, and usable framework for analysing discourse in policies. Thus, I want to go beyond the positions that often operate on either a very high or low level of abstraction. I further develop how I understand and use CDA and critical realism in Chapter 3. A central premise is thus that I view some concepts (e.g., reconstruction, discourse, and logics) from a critical realist viewpoint rather than a post-structuralist one.

Second, my usage of theory and theoretical concepts is abductive, i.e., the research process is characterised by a back-and-forth movement between theory and empirical analysis (Krzyżanowski, 2010, p. 84; Wodak, 2001). However, theory plays different roles in various parts of the analysis, which I discuss further in Chapters 3 and 4. Importantly, I have divided the analysis into three steps, each corresponding to one specification (sub-question) of the main research question.

In the first step, discursive patterns are identified and mapped through thematic analysis, providing a detailed and comprehensive investigation of how it appears in a sub-section of the material (the so-called UEA policy agreements between the Swedish Transport Administration and a municipality or region). The thematic analysis forms the foundation of the analytical work with the dual function of mapping (through frequency and centrality) and interpreting the discursive patterns (through naturalisation, silence, and tension). In this step, the theoretical categories I rely on have been developed in an extended dialogue between my material and theories in sustainable transport and discourse literatures.

In the second step, I reconstruct dominant constructions of sustainable mobility, contrasting the initial findings with the broader policy material (i.e., the entire policy material except for the UEA policy agreements). The reconstruction is specifically concerned with the tensions and silences identified in the thematic analysis. These patterns form dominant *constitutive lines of reasoning*<sup>10</sup> and are reconstructed partly through a typology from growth management theory. Again, this process is abductive, as the empirical material led me to this strand of planning theory.

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<sup>10</sup> I define and develop this novel concept in Section 3.1.2.



The third and final analytical step is to situate sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy within the transport policy field. This endeavour is two-fold. First, I explore the fundamental representations and dynamics of the discourse in the UEA policy and how they may be viewed as providing insights into sustainable mobility discourse generally. Second, I compare the UEA policy discourse with central norms of the traditional transport discourse to identify the extent the UEA policy discourse challenge or reproduce these elements. The overall design relies on continuous engagement with several levels of context, which are most pronounced in this third step. In contrast with the first two steps, situating the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy in this manner also allows me to develop new theoretical insights.

## Conceptual Delimitations

In this part, I give an initial brief account of how I understand and delimit certain empirical concepts used in the thesis. I will introduce and define the analytical concepts related to discourse in Chapter 3.

### Policy and Planning

Although it is beyond the scope of this section to provide a detailed investigation of the concepts of policy and planning, some clarifications are useful in order to delimit the scope of my empirical inquiry.

*Policy* is given widely different interpretations and is sometimes so broadly defined in social science research that it becomes analytically empty (Goodwin, 2011)<sup>11</sup>. Nevertheless, Goodwin (2011) claims that certain characteristics unite various usages:

There is general agreement, however, that, in essence, policy is concerned with the principles and practices of pursuit by government of social, political, and economic outcomes (Fawcett, Goodwin, Meagher, & Phillips, 2010). For this reason, policy analysis conventionally focusses on government action. (p. 168)

Referring to Premfors, Pettersson (2014) states that ‘public policy is a set of explicitly expressed guidelines for an activity *and* the measures that are taken to implement the guidelines’ (p. 9). Consequently, policy can be considered a result of politics, broadly

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<sup>11</sup> The discussion is delimited to public policy as policy is sometimes linked to actors other than governmental ones.

understood as decision-making in the governmental arena<sup>12</sup>. The distinction between guidelines and actions is important and mirrors the difference between policy as an uncountable (policy) and countable noun (one policy, many policies) (ibid. , p. 9). As the policy analysed in this thesis falls into the second category, I usually mean government actions (or interventions) when I use the term sustainable transport policies.

Planning can be understood as being both broader and narrower than politics and public policy. On the one hand, it is a wider concept as it includes the administrative parts of the political system and non-governmental actors such as construction companies, etc. On the other hand, it is generally limited to specific policy fields, such as land use, water management etc., or as Gunder (2018) defines it, ‘the instrument of managing change in the built and natural environments’ (p. 2). Therefore, when I refer to ‘transport planning’, I generally mean the practices surrounding the planning and management of built and natural environments. Consequently, policy and planning can be seen to occupy different positions along the process from decision to implementation. As noted by Pettersson (2014):

Policy processes refer to interventions where legislative bodies such as the national government and parliament play a key role – whereas planning processes refer to interventions where administrative and executive bodies play a key role. (p. 10)

Undoubtedly, there are substantial overlaps between policy and planning (cf. Portinson Hylander, 2022, pp. 10-11). However, in simplified terms, as I use the term here, policy concerns principles and actions stemming from governmental decision-making processes and planning involves administrative preparations and implementation of these actions in the built and natural environment.

## Transport and Mobility

The concepts of transport and mobility are often used interchangeably in the transport literature. To some extent, different usages can be traced to different academic disciplines; transport is the more common term in economics and engineering, whereas mobility (and mobilities) is a more frequent term in the social sciences.

*Mobility* can be defined both as an ability (to be able to move) and as an exercise of that ability (moving). The first definition is often used in ordinary language, relating to different forms of mobility, such as the mobility of body parts. The Oxford Dictionary (n.d.), for example, defines mobility as ‘the ability to move or be moved

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<sup>12</sup> See Heywood (2013) for a review of the many ways in which politics has been defined.

freely and easily'. Using mobility in this sense does not necessitate actual movement but simply the ability to do so. In contrast, the second way of using mobility can be found in parts of the academic literature and signifies the total amount of the travel undertaken (Givoni & Banister, 2013a, p. 2). Of course, these two definitions are not mutually exclusive. For example, the notion of a hypermobile society (Adams, 2001) might simultaneously signify a society where many people are able to move extensively and a society with extensive movement patterns. Therefore, I rely on a broad definition of mobility in this thesis, including *actual* and *potential* movement.

In contrast, *transport* can be a verb (to transport) and a noun (a transport). Transport, understood as a noun, is regularly used in the sense of *the transport system*. Often, mobility is used as the broader term, including more elements of social life (e.g., social mobility or migration issues). However, in transport literature, mobility is associated with people's movement, while transport is more encompassing, including freight and institutions and organisations that supply transport (Givoni & Banister, 2013a, p. 2). Thus, I use transport as this broader term, additionally including the movement of freight and the connected institutional and organisational arrangements.

In addition to this empirical distinction between mobility and transport, I use *sustainable mobility* as the overarching theoretical concept of the thesis when, for example, I refer to the discourse that links sustainability and mobility within the transport policy field. Thus, sustainable mobility is an analytical concept that allows me to identify the relevant discursive patterns within the empirical material. This is further developed in Chapter 3 when I use the concept of sustainable mobility to construct theoretical categories (see Section 3.2.2.). In contrast, I use transport (and sustainable transport) as an empirical term. In the Swedish context, transport is commonly the preferred policy term, which also makes it suitable as an empirical term in my analysis. For instance, terms such as 'transport sector', 'transport policy field', 'public transport' and 'modes of transport' are ways in which societal movement is described using the transport term<sup>13</sup>.

## The Urban Environment Agreement: Introducing the Case

In this thesis, I study how sustainable mobility is constructed in the Swedish sustainable transport policy, the Urban Environment Agreement (the UEA policy). The UEA

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<sup>13</sup> Following common practice within the transport field, I also use 'transport' for 'the sustainable transport literature' and 'transport planning'.

policy was launched in 2015 by the Swedish Government to incentivise public transport investments (The Swedish Transport Administration, 2022), allowing municipalities and regions to apply for up to 50 per cent of funding for public transport infrastructure. In return, the municipality or region commits to several ‘services-in-return’, often as additional ‘sustainable transport’ investments or housing construction. (The Swedish Transport Administration, 2016b, 2016c).

The UEA was initiated in a turbulent period for Swedish transport politics. The newly formed social democratic and green government headed by Prime Minister Stefan Löfven had put forward several controversial transport-political proposals (aiming to terminate the Stockholm Bypass motorway construction and to close down Bromma Airport, see Chapter 5). However, these proposals were withdrawn due to heavy opposition (Committee Report, 2014/15:KU20). Thus, as these controversies were principally about attempts to restrict certain forms of mobility, the UEA was introduced by emphasising increasing public transport investments and housing construction, and downplaying the inherent conflicts and tensions that are necessarily a part of any transport policy.

As mentioned earlier, the two overarching purposes of the thesis are to use the UEA policy as a case to investigate general conflicts in sustainable planning and to critically explore the overarching sustainable mobility discourse. In Chapter 4 (Section 4.4.1.), I further develop the rationale for selecting the UEA policy as a case, but it is already worth briefly pointing out in this section why the UEA policy allows me to achieve the thesis’ aims.

First, the UEA policy builds upon a broad view of sustainable mobility, including related aspects such as housing and land-use issues, compared to narrow policies focusing on tax cuts for specific vehicles, etc. Additionally, the political conflicts surrounding its initiation make the case particularly suitable for studying the conflicts and tension which are symptomatic for societal sustainable planning efforts (Campbell, 1996, 2016). Thus, the case allows for a critical investigation of norms, assumptions, and latent conflicts, and the ensuing emphasis on power that is theoretically central in critical planning literature.

Second, the UEA was the first outcome of *Fossil Freedom on the Roads*<sup>14</sup> (SOU, 2013:84), which was a commissioned report on Swedish sustainable transport, essential for the goal to reduce GHG emissions from transport by 70 per cent until the year 2030 (Swedish Government, 2023). Without competition from other major sustainable transport policies, the policy represents a cornerstone of the current transport political agenda. Moreover, Sweden and Swedish cities are often (self-)

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<sup>14</sup> The Swedish title *Fossilfrihet på väg* is equivocal as it means both ‘fossil freedom on the roads’ and ‘fossil freedom on the way’.

portrayed as forerunners concerning sustainability (Hult, 2017; Niskanen et al., 2023) and especially regarding sustainable mobility (Isaksson, 2020). Consequently, sustainable mobility discourse is likely to be well-developed in Sweden, making the country a particularly suitable case study context to investigate.

## Contributions of the Thesis

The thesis makes theoretical and empirical contributions to several literatures, most notably the critical planning literature and the sustainable transport literature.

As will be further developed in Chapter 2, the critical planning literature has generally overlooked transport as a fruitful policy field for advancing knowledge of the conflicts and tensions of sustainable planning. Transport is surprisingly absent in most major works in the research field, given that mobility is a cornerstone of modern society (Fainstein & Campbell, 2016; Gunder et al., 2018). Thus, this thesis' first theoretical contribution is a study of transport policy as a crucial aspect of sustainable planning and an investigation of what sustainable mobility discourse reveals about the inherent conflicts and tensions of planning.

Conversely, transport research often lacks critical analyses of politics and power (Cresswell, 2010; Macmillen, 2013; Marsden & Reardon, 2017). Although sustainable and critical transport studies have, to some extent, begun to tackle this deficit (Essebo, 2013; Givoni & Banister, 2013b; Legacy, 2016; Low, 2013b; Vigar, 2002), the spotlight is rarely directed at the sustainable mobility discourse itself. Consequently, a second theoretical contribution is to develop this burgeoning focus on power and politics within transport research. Additionally, and in contrast to most conventional sustainable transport research, the thesis critically uses perspectives of power and politics to analyse the sustainable mobility discourse itself. By studying the norms and assumptions that dominate the discourse and relating them to, on one hand, the broader social context and, on the other hand, critical social theories, contradictions and conflicts are highlighted. In addition to this theoretical contribution, the thesis also makes empirical contributions to the study of Swedish transport policies. The case of the UEA policy has not been thoroughly studied before despite its significant influence on infrastructural development planning in many Swedish municipalities since 2015. A comprehensive picture is offered in the present thesis by compiling and analysing previously uncharted policy material from national, local and, to some extent, regional levels. Interviews and field notes have also been included, giving novel insights into the policy's background, motifs, and broader tensions that feature prominently in

contemporary Swedish sustainable transport policy. Several of the empirical results are relevant for sustainable mobility discourse generally.

Finally, discourse analysis has not been well used or developed to study transport issues (Hickman & Hannigan, 2023), and central questions of discursive power are omitted in the methodologies that currently dominate transport research. Additionally, discursive methodologies are often abstract and sometimes lack transparency. I argue discourse analysis is crucial to understanding the norms, institutions, regulations, and policies that constitute society's construction of mobility. Therefore, a final theoretical contribution of this thesis, building on the CDA theoretical fundament, is the development of a concrete and transparent analytical approach to the study of discourse in transport policy.

Transport and its adverse effects on the environment are critical societal concerns. Understanding how these issues are addressed in policies and planning is therefore also of utmost societal relevance. I hope that this thesis contributes to providing critical tools for those working for a just future within the planet's ecological boundaries.

## Disposition and the Arguments of the Study

The thesis consists of three main parts. The first part (Chapters 1 to 5) introduces the topic of the thesis, gives a background to the policy context, and reviews the literatures I engage with. It also develops an analytical framework and presents the method and material for the inquiry.

After this introductory chapter, *Chapter Two* reviews the strands of literature relevant to the thesis and identifies research gaps. I present three interrelated literatures, beginning with the sustainable transport literature and its critical analyses of the traditional transport policy discourse. In doing so, several weaknesses and missing aspects of the literature are identified. The following parts discuss critical planning and critical transport literature. In connection with that, I also describe the thesis' theoretical contributions.

In *Chapter Three*, the thesis' analytical framework is presented, defining and operationalising the key theoretical concepts of the study. I begin by situating the thesis within the critical realist and critical discourse-analytical traditions, followed by presentations of the key concepts used. Apart from *discourse*, *statements*, *patterns*, and *representations*, I develop the concept of *constitutive lines of reasoning* to capture general patterns in the discourse. Additionally, *discursive tension*, *silence*, and *naturalisation* are introduced, providing an interpretative framework for analysing discursive patterns.

Apart from these key concepts, the chapter presents theory related to sustainable mobility. I develop four theoretical categories for structuring the thematic analysis in Chapter 6 and adapt a typology of growth management to aid the reconstruction of the discourse presented in Chapter 7. Additionally, I expand on the normative standpoint of the thesis.

Following the analytical framework, *Chapter Four* presents methods and material. First, the chapter introduces and describes the methodological design of the thesis' three overarching analytical steps: mapping discursive patterns, reconstructing constitutive lines of reasoning, and situating the UEA policy within the transport field. Second, the chapter also includes my thoughts on case study design, case selection, and generalisation. Finally, it gives an overview of the empirical material relied upon in the thesis and, relatedly, develops how I rely on three levels of context.

*Chapter Five* provides a brief historical overview of Swedish transport policy development, highlighting the introduction of sustainability into this policy field. The chapter also thoroughly introduces the Urban Environment Agreement, focusing on its initial policy development. Thus, the chapter facilitates a better understanding of the relevant context for the analytical chapters and constitutes part of the comparison necessary to situate the UEA policy presented in Chapter 8.

The second part of the thesis consists of three analytical chapters (Chapters 6 to 8), providing the empirical analysis of the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy.

This part begins with *Chapter Six*, which identifies and maps discursive patterns through a thematic analysis. The chapter analyses the patterns' frequency and centrality, and interprets them using the analytical framework's concepts of naturalisation, silence, and discursive tension. The results demonstrate that the seemingly coherent surface comprises multiple patterns that conflict or at least conclude substantially different things on the same subject matter. Additionally, several patterns involve unquestioned representations and illustrate how conflicting ones are omitted from the discourse.

*Chapter Seven* continues the analysis by reconstructing constitutive lines of reasoning. This reconstruction has two parts. First, two constitutive lines of reasoning are presented: 'sustainable mobility as necessity' and 'sustainable mobility as progress'. In these two lines of reasoning, the tensions discovered in the thematic analysis are linked to illustrate dominant constructions of sustainable mobility. Whereas the first line of reasoning revolves around sustainable mobility as necessary to tackle the adverse effects of the growing city, the second one constructs sustainability as a central tool in promoting the progressive and expanding city. In the second part of the chapter, a third but silenced line of reasoning, 'sustainable mobility as restriction', is reconstructed by analysing the silences identified in the previous chapter.

In the final analytical chapter, *Chapter Eight*, the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy is situated within the transport policy field. This chapter consists of two parts. First, the naturalisations identified in Chapter 6 and their relationships are analysed to synthesise the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy to provide insights into the overarching sustainable mobility discourse. These naturalisations form three fundamental representations: the inevitability of growth, the imperative of sustainability and the salvation of transition. The latter includes three logics functioning as growth-centred solutions to the conflict between growth and sustainability. These fundamental and naturalised representations are conceptualised through the wheel of growth metaphor, delivering a theoretical understanding of how sustainable mobility discourse operates. Second, I compare the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy to the traditional transport discourse. Concretely, four central elements of the traditional discourse are used for the comparison: predict and provide, travel time minimisation, automobility, and economic growth. The main question is whether these elements of the traditional discourse are challenged or reproduced by the UEA policy. I argue that all elements except automobility are reproduced.

The third and final part concludes the thesis. *Chapter Nine* sums up the thesis' conclusions, summarising its main arguments: the discursive construction of sustainable mobility needs to be understood as a product of naturalised representations of growth. These naturalisations limit the available options to the dilemma of mobility other than growth-compliant ones, thus, emphasising so-called sustainable alternatives whilst catering for continuous growth. This conclusion section is followed by a discussion of how the thesis' results relate to findings in some recent studies on sustainable mobility. Finally, to end the chapter, I reflect upon what the results of the thesis imply for the critical challenge of creating a just transport system within the ecological constraints of the planet.





# The Critical Literatures on Planning and Sustainable Transport

The most difficult discourses to analyse and critique are always those to which we have value commitments, but these are precisely the ones that may play the most crucial roles in inhibiting social change. - Jay L. Lemke<sup>15</sup>

Nobody panics when things go according to plan, even if the plan is horrifying.  
- The Joker in *The Dark Knight*<sup>16</sup>

In this chapter, I review several interconnected literatures on transport, planning, sustainability, and growth. The chapter is structured in three parts. First, I discuss the sustainable transport literature and its relationship to the traditional transport discourse. In the second part, I engage with several strands of the critical planning literature<sup>17</sup>. My discussion focuses on power and conflicts, and how these perspectives have been used to study sustainability and growth. Finally, I present some of the critical transport studies this thesis builds upon in its study of the construction of sustainable mobility in the UEA policy, and I discuss the thesis' contributions.

At an early stage of my PhD project, I presented a paper on the two transport planning discourses, one of this chapter's focal points. The paper was meant for a political science conference, but I took the opportunity to present it at the Swedish Knowledge Centre for Public Transport (K2), to an audience quite different to the political scientists I would later face. The presentation went well but, to my surprise, the mere topic provoked one of the professors connected to the centre. Was I giving a fair description of the traditional discourse? And what are sustainable mobility discourse

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<sup>15</sup> Lemke (1995, p. 146).

<sup>16</sup> Christopher Nolan (2008).

<sup>17</sup> I treat transport as a subcategory of planning in contrast to other common viewpoints such as part of engineering or economics.

insiders taking for granted? We discussed these questions over several emails and later at a seminar devoted to the topic. Although I did not change my belief that the logic of *'predict and provide'* can be found in many Swedish transport projects (my example then was the motorway project called Stockholm Bypass)<sup>18</sup>, the general discussion stuck with me. I realised that the sustainable mobility discourse I had considered a critical intervention had become the dominant perspective on transport in many contexts and, more importantly, was rarely critically scrutinised. As my project proceeded, I increasingly felt that the lack of critical analyses on the sustainable mobility discourse was problematic. It is not that the normative concept is necessarily wrong, but the increased dominance of the connected discourse should entail increased critical studies on its embedded norms, assumptions, and practices. Consequently, one of the aims of this thesis is to respond to this shortcoming in the transport planning literature.

Although the two discourses (often described as paradigms in the literature) have often been presented as comparable approaches to transport planning (Banister, 2008; Marshall, 2001), I argue that there is a clear difference in how transport scholars discuss them. The traditional transport discourse is primarily analysed descriptively, i.e., its practices are assumed to reveal its characteristics. For example, if cost-benefit analyses are used in traditional transport projects, such as motorway constructions, they are assumed to be an inherent normative part of the discourse. Conversely, the same standards are rarely applied to the sustainable mobility discourse. Instead, it is analysed for *what it should* and *should not* be; the emphasis is on the overarching normative principles of the discourse, the implementation gap between its principles and policy outcomes, or its connection to specific topics.

One of the reasons for this discrepancy can be found in the history of the sustainable mobility discourse. Sustainable mobility was formed as a (primarily academic) intervention to the traditional discourse dominant at the time<sup>19</sup>. However, it has been over 30 years since the introduction of sustainable mobility and 20 years since it came to dominate the political conversation in Western European transport politics<sup>20</sup>. Undoubtedly, sustainable mobility has become, in many contexts, in the discourse terminology of this thesis, *the dominant way of thinking and writing*. However, if sustainable mobility has stopped being an intervention and evolved into a discourse equal to the traditional transport discourse, why is it not studied in the same way? In this review, I argue that critical analyses of the sustainable mobility discourse are lacking in the transport planning and policy literature.

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<sup>18</sup> Isaksson et al. (2017) develop this argument.

<sup>19</sup> Another related explanation is that most social scientists (if economists are excluded) working with transport are positioned within the sustainable mobility discourse.

<sup>20</sup> E.g., by the European Commission (EC, 1992a, 1992b, 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016, 2020).

# The Sustainable Transport Literature

In the literature on sustainable mobility, approaches or discourses related to transport planning are always related to a distinction between the sustainable mobility discourse and its assumed opposite. The latter is given different names, such as *traditional transport planning* and *predict and provide* but, in a general sense, it concerns the car-centred planning discourse that developed during the 20th century (see Section 5.1). Thus, the first part reviews how sustainable transport scholars have analysed the traditional discourse and how that work has formed an understanding of sustainable mobility. In the second part, I present three dominant strands of the sustainable transport literature and argue why these, some of which have a critical vantage point, need to be complemented by critical analysis of sustainable mobility itself.

## The Literature on Transport Planning Discourses

The literature on the sustainable mobility discourse initially developed through a criticism of the dominant planning practices of the times at hand. As early as the 1980s, critical scholars examined several fundamental components of the existing discourse. For example, John Adams (1981) comprehensively discussed transport forecasts and the many problems they entailed, while Peter Newman and Jeffery Kenworthy (1989) introduced the concept of *automobility dependence* in an investigation of gasoline consumption and urban form.

However, the principal contributions to analysing the traditional transport discourse came from the UK during the 1990s. Phil Goodwin's work (1997, 1999) was essential, especially as he was the main author of a widely circulated working paper published in 1991 (Goodwin et al., 2012 [1991]). Central was also Susan Owens' (1995) seminal paper 'From "predict and provide" to "predict and prevent"?'. While Goodwin's suggested *new realism* had to give way to alternative ways of framing the sustainable mobility discourse, Owens' *predict and provide* is still one of the terms often used to describe the traditional discourse. Nevertheless, since then, numerous different labels have been given to the discourse, such as *the traditional transport planning* (Vigar, 2002), *the conventional transport planning* (Banister, 2008; Litman, 1999), *the old paradigm* (Rye, 2020) and *the car-based paradigm* (Whitelegg, 2020).

The traditional discourse has been described in many different ways. Owens' characterisation, which focused on the provision of new (car) infrastructure based on forecasted traffic growth, reoccurs throughout the literature (Curtis & Low, 2012; Givoni & Banister, 2013a; Goulden et al., 2014; Johansson et al., 2016; Vigar, 2002). Additionally, David Banister's (2008) milestone article lists 14 traits (based on Marshall, 2001) of the discourse, highlighting the ideas of transport as a derived

demand and the emphasis on travel time minimisation. Similarly, Amanda Root singles out four aspects as the most important. These are the assumption of *transport as derived demand*, the use of *cost-benefit analysis*<sup>21</sup>, the practice of *predict and provide*, and the assumed link between *transport and economic growth* (Root, 2003b). In the Swedish context, Anders Hagson (2004) has thoroughly analysed the discourse's design aspects. Additionally, Per Lundin (2008) and Gunnar Falkemark (2006) have examined how the historical implications of the discourse connected to how the Swedish automobility society developed. Whereas the former focused on the role of experts, the latter emphasised path dependencies and policies.

In these critical assessments of the traditional discourse, sustainable mobility is explicitly or implicitly defined in relation to what it is not, namely traditional transport planning. For example, a common distinction is made between forecasting and vision-led planning (Pettersson et al., 2021), where the former is considered to be in line with traditional, and the latter with sustainable, transport planning.

### The Literature Within the Sustainable Mobility Discourse

I have identified three<sup>22</sup> major strands of the social scientific<sup>23</sup> literature on sustainable mobility. Undoubtedly, the most common kinds of studies are those discussing sustainable mobility in relation to a specific topic or concept. Several central anthologies, such as *the Handbook of Sustainable Transport* (Curtis, 2020), *Moving Towards Low Carbon Mobility* (Givoni & Banister, 2013b) and *Delivering Sustainable Transport* (Root, 2003a)<sup>24</sup>, contain chapters focusing on different elements of the transport system or specific aspects of transport planning. Similarly, most journal articles in the field also follow the same pattern. For example, studies have discussed the connection between sustainable mobility and: *equity* (Feitelson, 2002; Markovich, 2013), *gender equality* (Hanson, 2010; Kronsell et al., 2015; Polk, 2009), *space*

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<sup>21</sup> For a thorough critique of CBA, see Næss (2016b).

<sup>22</sup> It might be argued that there is a fourth, minor, strand in the literature, presenting successful examples and best practices (for example, Buehler et al., 2016; Decker et al., 2012).

<sup>23</sup> This distinction is made because there is a growing number of contributions from natural science, engineering, and economics concerned with sustainable mobility. See Sultana, Salon & Kuby (2017) for a comprehensive review. It is also worth mentioning that I do not engage with the sociological/cultural perspectives under the label of mobilities or the new mobilities paradigm (Sheller & Urry, 2006; Urry & Dennis, 2009), which focus on the cultural meaning of mobility and mobility's cultural embeddedness. For a comparison between the sustainable mobility paradigm and the new mobilities paradigm, see Aldred (2014).

<sup>24</sup> Not all of the individual contributions in these anthologies are by social scientists, but the book's point of departure is a social understanding of transport.

*distribution* (Gössling, Schröder, et al., 2016), and *governance* (Akyelken et al., 2018; Legacy et al., 2012).

Another strand in the literature concerns the normative principles of sustainable mobility<sup>25</sup>. The introductory and concluding parts of anthologies, like the abovementioned, often take this broader and principal viewpoint (Banister et al., 2013; Givoni & Banister, 2013a; Goodwin & Curtis, 2020). One of the most influential articles in this category is ‘The Sustainable Mobility Paradigm’ by David Banister (2008). Still, other works worth mentioning are ‘Integrating Mobility and Urban Development Agendas: a Manifesto’ (Bertolini, 2012), on the connection to urban development and ‘Delivering Sustainable Public Transport’, on public transport specifically (Stanley & Lucas, 2014). Notably, there is some overlap between this strand and some of the more critical works discussed below, particularly an awareness of the need to reduce overall traffic to achieve sustainability goals (Givoni & Banister, 2013a). For example, this awareness is evident in the conceptual triad ‘avoid, shift, improve’ (ASI), originating from the political sphere, which has become widely referenced and applied by sustainable transport researchers (Creutzig et al., 2018; Creutzig et al., 2022; Givoni & Banister, 2013a).

The third strand in the literature tackles the perceived gap between sustainable mobility ideas and transport policy implementation. This implementation gap is commonly analysed in terms of *barriers* to achieving sustainable mobility. A wide range of barriers have been identified and studied, such as *gender norms* (Kronsell et al., 2015), *institutional barriers* in general (Curtis & Low, 2012; Sturup et al., 2013) and *institutional preconditions* in particular (Norell Bergendahl, 2016), *intra-municipal competition* (Næss et al., 2011), *mental models* (Pettersson et al., 2021), *policy integration* (Hull, 2008; Isaksson et al., 2017), *power dynamics within local authorities* (Hrelja et al., 2013), and *transport taboos* (Gössling & Cohen, 2014). In the state-of-the-art report, *Challenges and Barriers for a Sustainable Transport System*, a long list of specific and general barriers is discussed (Forward et al., 2014).

Although different scholars use slightly different understandings of sustainable mobility, the notion and its normative foundation are usually treated as a given. Moreover, an implicit distinction is made between normative ideals and real-world implications by studying undesirable outcomes and practices as if external barriers cause them. Thus, rather than evaluating the sustainable mobility discourse by investigating real-world policies and practices, the latter is often disregarded as manifestations of the former.

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<sup>25</sup> Often, these are based on a critique of the traditional discourse described in the previous part, but I treat them separately for pedagogical purposes.

The three strands of the social scientific sustainable transport literature discussed above operate within the discourse and they often rely on assumed normative principles of sustainable mobility. Notably, with the increasing dominance of the sustainable mobility discourse, they have become mainstream science in many contexts. However, there is a lack of critical perspectives on the discourse, and few studies critically analyse sustainable mobility in the same way as traditional transport planning.

## The Critical Planning Literature

The critical planning literature scrutinises traditional planning approaches. This review discusses significant contributions that have developed critical perspectives on planning and transport, focusing on power and conflict. In parallel, I review how sustainability and growth, two empirical areas central to this thesis, have been studied through these critical perspectives.

### Planning Conflicts and Sustainability

A central aspect of critical planning theory is an increased emphasis on conflicts, especially within planning for sustainability. As contradictions and conflicts in policies for sustainability have often been seen as accidental (Carter, 2007, p. 209; Meadowcroft, 2000), questioning the assumed friction-free relationships between different aspects of sustainability has been a vital contribution. In his seminal article, ‘Green Cities, Growing Cities, Just Cities?’ (1996), Scott Campbell disputes this notion of a win-win situation in sustainable development. Building on, amongst others, Foglesong (2016 [1986]), Campbell argues that the central object of planning is to acknowledge and handle the conflicts that arise between the economy, equity, and the environment and that these conflicts are not ‘accidental or incidental, but rather intrinsic to the dynamics of capitalist urban development in a modern state’ (p. 390). This emphasis on conflicts is mirrored in Chantal Mouffe’s work on *the political and agonism* (2008), used in planning theory by, for example, John Pløger (2018).

Specifically connected to the conflicts amongst the Sustainable Development Goals, Spaiser et al. (2016) point to the centrality of economic growth as a means toward development as the core of the conflicts. Echoing this conclusion, Hickel (2019) empirically demonstrates the inconsistency between the goals of *harmony with nature* and *continuous growth*. Moreover, Oseland and Haarstad (2022) identify several strategies planners use to displace these kinds of conflicts rather than resolve them in the local setting. They link this to structural conditions in governance systems that

enable these conflicts to be displaced. In the sustainable transport literature, similar ideas have been used to explain the implementation gap caused by conflicting goals (Isaksson et al., 2017).

Returning to Campbell's work, one of his central points is that the equity (or development) dimension of sustainability has been marginalised by economic and environmental concerns (Campbell, 2016; Moore, 2016). This point has continued to be discussed and developed in the literature (Baeten, 2000; Fainstein, 2000; Gunder, 2006), sometimes connected to neoliberal planning (Baeten, 2012).

### Planning and Power

The conflict perspective on planning acknowledges power as a crucial analytical lens. Scholars have brought power to the forefront of their analyses. For example, Bent Flyvbjerg (1998) famously studied the intersection between power and rationality in urban planning. Flyvbjerg's study relied on a Foucauldian perspective and, together with Richardson, argues that this perspective is an essential way to analyse '*the dark side*' of planning (Flyvbjerg & Richardson, 2002). Following the discussion on the dark side of planning, Huxley suggests that Foucault's concept of *counter-conduct* might be a conducive theoretical tool to counter these adverse aspects of planning (2018). Contrastingly, power has also been incorporated into planning through the concept of ideology. Shepard et al. (2020) argue for the benefits of using the ideology concept to conceptualise power in planning. Through the same line of reasoning, Gunder (2010) makes a case that today's planning largely reproduces neoliberal ideology and that the concept is central to understanding contemporary developments, particularly in tandem with a discursive perspective (Zanotto, 2020).

Although power has been increasingly visible in the general planning literature, several scholars have pointed to a lack of attention paid to these perspectives in the analysis of transport planning (Cresswell, 2010; Macmillen, 2013). At the same time, there has been an increased effort to tackle this deficit (Bærenholdt, 2013; Cresswell, 2010; Givoni & Banister, 2013b; Legacy, 2016; Low, 2013b; Patterson et al., 2017; Vigar, 2002). In their widely cited review article, Greg Marsden and Louise Reardon (2017) argue along the same lines:

If we are to understand and advance the state of the art of transportation policy study then there is a need to engage with substantive questions of governance which pay greater attention to context, politics, power, resources and legitimacy. (p. 249)

Generally, it is fair to say that the sustainable transport literature tends to be more sensitive to power and politics than traditional transport research. Yet, as argued earlier,



critical analyses of the sustainable mobility discourse are a blind spot in the critical literature.

Discursive practices are crucial in a field that sits between academia and politics. It follows that a discursive power perspective on sustainable mobility may provide valuable insights into the whole policy field. Unfortunately, there are few examples where discourses are the focal point. Existing studies seldom focus on discourse per se but use the term as a way of discussing related aspects, such as the discrepancy between words and actions (Boussauw & Vanoutrive, 2017), barriers to achieving change (Curtis & Low, 2012), policy change (Tschoerner-Budde, 2017), and the competition over transport-related resources (Paget-Seekins, 2013). Viewing discourse as something more than a synonym for a discussion, i.e., practices that govern planning and policy, is an unfortunate lack in studies on sustainable and traditional transport planning.

### Planning and Growth

The critical planning literature on sustainability is closely related to questions of growth<sup>26</sup>. In planning studies generally, there have been several sub-fields concerned with growth. One such sub-field emphasises the rising importance of growth management (Feiock, 1994; Grant, 2018). For example, studying how cities promote population growth, Harvey Molotch (1976) proposed the very influential ‘city as a growth machine’ thesis, linking cities’ pursuit of growth to the dominance of property capital (see also Molotch & Logan, 1996). These ideas have been developed further by several others (Cox, 2017; Feiock, 1994; Harding, 1995; Lang & Rothenberg, 2016). Additionally, albeit not from a critical planning vantage point, Jonas Fjertorp (2012) has discussed how Swedish municipalities manage growth (see also Fjertorp et al., 2012)

Several critical scholars have studied notions of decoupling different growth forms (i.e., economic, mobility, and population) from their adverse environmental impacts (Givoni, 2013; Hickel & Kallis, 2019; Jackson, 2017; Næss, 2016a; Næss & Xue, 2016). These have been accompanied by critical analyses of concepts such as *green growth*, *smart growth*, *green urbanism*, etc. (Hickel & Kallis, 2019; Krueger & Gibbs, 2008; McCann, 2017).

Similarly, the conflicting relationships between growth and other concerns have been a particularly important discussion. Examples include how different forms of growth challenge environmental sustainability (Banister et al., 2011; Boussauw & Vanoutrive, 2017; Daly, 1990; Essebo & Baeten, 2012; Vogel, 2015); the relation between (mobility) growth and social issues (Adams, 2001; Cohen & Gössling, 2015), and how natural and social limits conflict with growth (Jackson, 2017; Meadows et al., 2004).

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<sup>26</sup> An alternative version of this review has been published in Isaksson (2023).

Finally, there is an increasing connection between these critical growth studies and social movements, where *degrowth* has become a central notion that proposes a pathway beyond economic growth (Latouche, 2009).

Specifically connected to transport planning, the sustainable transport literature has thoroughly discussed growth in its economic form as a central motif and driver of transport infrastructure. The main question has been whether transport investments promote economic growth (Ansar et al., 2016; Banister & Berechman, 2001; Yu et al., 2012), often assuming the desirability of the latter. From a more critical vantage point, several scholars have discussed the methods used in traditional transport planning; in particular, growth forecasts and the provision of infrastructure that often follows, and their environmental and social effects (Goulden et al., 2014; Johansson et al., 2016; Næss, 2016b; Owens, 1995).

This brief overview has given a few examples of how growth has been discussed in the literature. At the same time, it points to a lack of interaction between the different fields and how the particular growth forms are often investigated independently. However, it is precisely the relational nature of various growth concepts that is crucial when analysing sustainable mobility discourse.

## Critical Transport Studies and the Contributions of the Thesis

This thesis builds on many of the works cited above but aims to transgress their limitations. So far, I have identified three areas where the (critical) literatures on planning and transport are underdeveloped: critical analyses of the sustainable mobility discourse; discursive power as an analytical lens on transport policy; and how different growth forms are (discursively) interrelated and the conflicts between sustainability and growth in transport. I develop the contributions of my thesis below concerning these shortcomings, but first, I discuss several scholars who have indeed addressed some of these limitations. These are the works that my thesis builds upon more directly.

As mentioned, discourse-analytical approaches are underdeveloped in transport studies (Hickman & Hannigan, 2023), although several refer to the notion of *discourse*. This deficit is also evident in the Swedish transport research context where, historically, few scholars have actively used discourse-oriented perspectives. There are exceptions, though, such as Karolina Isaksson's thesis (2001) on the so-called 'Dennis-package', which she describes as 'a technocratic, depoliticised and heavily consensus-informed ecological modern discourse' (p. 245). Also, an exception is Fredrik Pettersson's thesis (2014), analysing the conditions for sustainable mobility in three Swedish mega-

projects. Additionally, in a study on regional transport planning discourse in Sweden (2013), Pettersson uses a framework of concepts and frames to conclude that the growth-centred idea of regional expansion strongly determines the discourse and limits the possibility of alternative, environmentally preferable frames to be used.

In contrast to the lack of discursive perspectives in transport research historically, recent years have seen an increasing number of, primarily young, scholars developing analysis using critical and discourse-influenced approaches. One such example is Karin Winter's thesis (2021), where she uses a discourse-theoretical approach (i.e., Laclau & Mouffe) to analyse how social differences and divisions are excluded from the dominant discourses in the Swedish Transport Administration. Contrastingly, from a Foucauldian viewpoint, Jacob Witzell (2021) investigates practices and knowledge perspectives in transport planning in relation to the need for transformative change. Additionally, also building on Foucault, Jens Portinson-Hyllander (2022) analyses rationalities and power in the historical processes that led to transport corridors dominating regional transport planning.

Particularly relevant for this thesis is Mathilde Rehnlund's doctoral thesis *Getting the transport right – for what? What transport policy can tell us about the construction of sustainability* (2019). Rehnlund studies the construction of sustainability through the lens of transport policies. She frames her contributions in terms of 'a more cohesive view of proposals for the studied time and place' (p. 49), and she treats transport as one system. From my perspective, Rehnlund's primary contribution lies in her approach to analysing sustainability and transport policies. She formulates the purpose of her thesis:

Rather than ask how 'unsustainable' measures could be promoted despite sustainability targets, I assume that the understanding of sustainability is built into policy. I aim to study what Stockholm policy for transport can say about what sustainability means and does. (p. 29)

As I have highlighted above, sustainable mobility (and indeed sustainability itself) is too often treated purely normatively, directing the focus to why its principles have not been fulfilled. Yet, using policies to give insights into the construction of sustainability (and sustainable mobility), as Rehnlund does, is much needed.

Whereas sustainability has been proven to contain inherently conflicting dimensions, similar critical analyses of sustainable mobility are rare. An important exception is Maja Essebo and Guy Baeten's critical discussion on sustainable mobility in their article 'Contradictions of "sustainable mobility" – The illogic of growth and the logic of myth'

(2012)<sup>27</sup>. They suggest that the inherent contradictions of sustainable mobility (promoting both increased mobility and sustainability) could be understood as a myth ‘that turns the illogical into something perfectly acceptable through the naturalisation of beliefs’ and, which is not something false, but merely a ‘story based on belief which alleviates anxiety and guides and rationalises everyday practices’ (p. 563). The contribution of Essebo and Baeten’s article is mainly conceptual in that they introduce a new perspective through which to view sustainable mobility. However, it also problematises growth in general, particularly the increase in mobility. Although similar critical views on mobility growth have been developed elsewhere (Bertolini, 2020; Ferreira et al., 2017; Goulden et al., 2014; Moriarty & Honnery, 2013a), it is an aspect of transport politics that needs further attention.

Although these works contribute to transgressing prior limitations of the sustainable transport and planning literatures, there is still much work to be done. I end this chapter by summarising the main contributions of the present thesis.

First, I study transport (i.e., the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy) as a venue for reaching knowledge on planning more generally. Time after time, it has become evident that transport contains a multitude of political tensions and conflicts. Thus, transport politics, policies, and practices represent particularly suitable places to gain knowledge of the conflictual nature of planning. One such area of conflict emphasised in the thesis is between growth and sustainability. Thus, the thesis contributes to critical analyses of ideas related to growth in the transport field. I analyse several interrelated growth forms, often discussed separately in the critical planning and transport literature. Moreover, I address the essential question of growth and the centrality that its different manifestations hold in transport discourses. This contribution goes beyond purely academic relevance and aligns with the burgeoning social movements addressing the urgency of climate change.

Second, this thesis represents an effort to critically study the sustainable mobility discourse present in a Swedish sustainable transport policy. As I argued, the increasing political influence of the sustainable mobility discourse in transport policies should entail a deeper critical engagement with how sustainable mobility is constructed and its implications. Thus, I go beyond the study of implementation gaps, barriers, and normative ideals, and I analyse the tensions, conflicts, assumptions, and naturalisations of sustainable mobility discourse. These have rarely been highlighted in sustainable transport literature. Although many of the results are generalisable to similar Western country policy contexts, the Swedish case remains the focus, and hence, in terms of detailed empirical analysis, it contributes to a deeper understanding of this context.

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<sup>27</sup> As the article is part of Essebo’s doctoral thesis, she has further explored the intersection of mobility and sustainability in her compilation thesis (Essebo, 2013). Baeten has also developed similar ideas elsewhere (e.g., Baeten, 2000).

Studying a policy (the UEA), including a contextual perspective of several administrative levels (local, regional, and national) creates a complex yet broad view of Swedish sustainable transport policy.

Third, as mentioned above, discourse analysis remains underdeveloped in transport research. Thus, one of the thesis' contributions is to develop methodological and conceptual tools suitable for studying transport policy from a discursive perspective. In contrast to previous studies having used discourse analysis in the planning field, this thesis deploys a unique combination of a CDA foundation, an abductive thematic analysis, and a novel framework for reconstructing the discourse. Additionally, I develop an (empirically informed) theoretical understanding of sustainable mobility discourse by exploring relationships between the dominant representations of the discourse. Finally, I adopt a comparative approach to draw out certain implications of the UEA policy discourse, comparing it with central norms of the traditional transport discourse.

# Analytical Framework

If we are to avoid thin, ambiguous, cryptic and incomplete accounts of power in society and its effects, we need to provide evaluative, critical accounts, instead of refusing normative judgement; critique is not an optional extra but a necessary part of social scientific description and explanation. - Andrew Sayer<sup>28</sup>

In this chapter, I construct an analytical framework that provides the conceptual structure for studying the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy.

The chapter consists of two major parts. The first revolves around key concepts, and I begin by broadly placing my approach within the critical discourse analytical and critical realist traditions. Furthermore, as the thesis is about discourse, I devote substantial space to defining, conceptualising, and operationalising the concept. Additionally, I discuss related concepts such as statements, representations, patterns, and constitutive lines of reasoning. Finally, I also operationalise the more detailed analytical concepts of naturalisation, silence, and discursive tensions to capture the complexities and internal contradictions of the discourse.

The second part is devoted to theory and develops several theoretical concepts to structure and provide the basis for interpretations in the following analytical chapters. Concretely, I construct several theoretical categories to understand discourses and a typology of approaches towards growth. In this part, I also develop the normative standpoint of the thesis.

While the analytical framework provides the theoretical and methodological framings of the thesis, its definitions and conceptualisations substantially affect the thesis' design, methods, and material, discussed in the next chapter. Thus, the two chapters need to be considered together to understand the theoretical, methodological, and analytical approach I rely on in this thesis.

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<sup>28</sup> Sayer (2012, p. 192).

## Key Concepts and Position in Philosophy of Science

I position myself within a critical realist (Bhaskar, 2008) approach towards social scientific inquiry. In particular, I follow scholars such as Andrew Sayer (2000, 2012), Dave Elder-Vass (2010, 2012b, 2014) and Norman Fairclough (1992a, 2003, 2010, 2015 [1989]), aiming to combine critical realism with central ideas from interpretative traditions.

Critical realism can be summarised as the propositions that a) the world exists regardless of our knowledge about it (ontological realism), b) our understanding of the world can never be objective or pure but is always mediated through theories and discourses (epistemic relativism), and c) one theory, interpretation, or explanation can be proven to be better than another (rejection of judgmental relativism) (Sayer, 2000, p. 10ff & 47).

Developed from these fundamental propositions, three more specific elements of critical realism are especially relevant to this thesis. First, social life is not exclusively discursive (i.e., an idealist position) (Fairclough et al., 2002, p. 6). In other words, human communication and interaction are performed within a material setting, which also influences the former (Sayer, 2000, pp. 17-18). Thus, it is difficult to make sense of, for example, discursive patterns of municipal population growth if aspects such as people's movement patterns, geographic differences, business establishments, etc., are not taken into the analysis. This is why these kinds of contextual references are present throughout my analysis.

Second, critical realism distinguishes between the intransitive and transitive dimensions, namely, the difference between the objects of study and the theories about these study objects (Sayer, 2012, p. 10). In other words, whatever is studied exists regardless of whether it is studied. Of course, social reality might partially be co-constructed by research, but it is more likely that historical processes have constructed the social objects of study (e.g., discourses, norms, etc.) (Fairclough et al., 2002, p. 90). Therefore, I consider the UEA policy and the sustainable mobility discourse relatively unchanged by my views and theories. Furthermore, I argue that the discourse I study is real, not a mere construct of mine. Of course, my descriptions of it might be flawed, and my interpretations might be misguided, but there is such thing as a sustainable mobility discourse regardless of me as a researcher<sup>29</sup>.

Third, critical realism rejects the claim that science should avoid values and evaluation, which positivism and post-structuralism sometimes prescribe (Sayer, 2012,

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<sup>29</sup> To acknowledge that you might be wrong presupposes that there is something to be wrong about (i.e., something real outside of me as a researcher). So in reverse, rather than being absolutist or dogmatic, rejecting judgmental relativism allows for the possibility that interpretations are wrong (including my own). Contrastingly, judgemental relativism might lead to an 'anything goes' attitude.

p. 190). Inquiry into many critical social issues involves implicit normative engagement. For instance, to describe something as unequal, racist, or unsustainable acknowledges its undesirable nature. These kinds of ‘thick ethical concepts’, involving both descriptive and evaluative aspects, are essential to social science. Moreover, this relates to the rejection of judgemental relativism as normative, and evaluative analysis implicitly claims to provide preferable or more accurate accounts of the studied part of social life. In Section 3.2.1., I expand on the normative foundation I build upon for critically analysing sustainable mobility discourse.

In addition to critical realism, I draw upon the tradition of critical-discourse analysis (CDA) as a general approach towards discourse. CDA was developed in the late 1980s, most prominently by Norman Fairclough (1992a, 1992b, 2015 [1989]) through his dialectical-relational approach, but important contributions have been made by others, such as Ruth Wodak (2001) developing the discourse-historical approach (DHA), and Teun van Dijk (1993; 1997), adopting psychological perspectives (cf. Krzyżanowski & Forchtner, 2016)<sup>30</sup>. CDA is a heterogeneous tradition with various intellectual sources, such as Marx, Gramsci, Giddens, Foucault, Bakhtin, Habermas, and Bernstein (Breeze, 2022). In particular, I build on the attempts to combine CDA with critical realism (Fairclough, 2010, p. 74; Fairclough et al., 2002)<sup>31</sup>. This strand of CDA is generally more tolerant towards realist concepts such as causality and effects (cf. Fairclough, 2003, p. 8; Fairclough, 2015 [1989], p. 175; Fairclough et al., 2002) than other discourse-analytical traditions that lean more towards post-structuralism.

The acknowledgement of the non-discursive dimensions within CDA is connected to an emphasis on history and context. CDA argues that discourses can only be understood in relation to their context and simultaneously change, and are changed by, their surroundings (Meyer, 2001). Notably, contexts are linked to interpretative theories, enabling the researcher to construct a framework for understanding the discourse (Krzyżanowski, 2010, p. 78ff; Svensson, 2019, p. 148f). The context also links the analytical results to the broader social and political reality and allows for critique. This *critical* dimension of critical discourse analysis is a commitment to challenge inequalities and unjustified use of power (van Dijk, 1993). Influenced by Marxism and the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, CDA especially highlights discourses’ role in maintaining ideologies (Bergström & Boréus, 2005a, p. 321f).

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<sup>30</sup> For discussions on the Foucault-inspired approach, discursive psychology, and the discourse theory of Laclau & Mouffe, the three other main traditions commonly discussed in the methodological literature, see Bergström & Boréus (2005a); Jørgensen & Phillips (2002); Neumann (2003); and Svensson (2019).

<sup>31</sup> Although post-structural influences in CDA have to be acknowledged (Leipold & Winkel, 2016; Wagenaar, 2015, p. 158ff), others, for example, Fairclough, explicitly connect CDA and critical realism. Fairclough states that ‘The position I take is a realist one, based on a realist ontology’ (2003, p. 14) and (together with Isabela Fairclough) claiming that ‘We find that Searle’s social ontology is compatible with that of critical realism (which underlies CDA)’ (2012, p. 73).



Although historically connected to societal groups, this critical engagement can be expanded to the non-human environment (Stibbe, 2018), a standpoint essential for this thesis.

Finally, CDA is known for its linguistic focus and the centrality it gives to texts. As CDA evolved from critical linguistics, this aspect has strong historical roots. Still, studies have expanded the scope, including elements from related fields, such as argumentation analysis, rhetoric, and conceptual history (Krzyżanowski, 2010, p. 83ff; Krzyżanowski, 2016). The level of detailed linguistic analysis is also the main difference between my approach and most CDA studies. As mentioned in the introduction, I mainly use CDA as a theoretical vantage point rather than relying on the detailed linguistic methods many of the tradition's scholars have developed. Therefore, when Fairclough differentiates between text (linguistic) analysis, discourse analysis, and social analysis (Blommaert, 2004; Fairclough, 2003), it is primarily the latter two that underpin the present thesis. Nevertheless, these different analyses are often intertwined, and several of my analytical concepts (such as discursive tension, naturalisation, and causal assumption) are closely related to tools used in linguistic analyses (cf. Bergström & Boréus, 2005b), as further discussed below.

### Discourse, Patterns, Statements, and Representations

In discourse analysis, needless to say, *discourse* constitutes the central concept<sup>32</sup>. Generally, discourse is about how communication follows certain pathways in particular times and places, not in its form (such as grammatical rules) but in its content (Elder-Vass, 2012a, p. 14). Following Fairclough (2015 [1989], p. 22), I see discourse as a form of social practice. Specifically, I rely on Kristina Boréus' definition of discourses as 'social practices – rules and tendencies for how we speak and write about a topic in a given context' (Boréus, 2010, p. 172, my translation)<sup>33</sup>. *Practice* is, in this usage, understood as 'habitualised ways [...] in which people apply resources (material

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<sup>32</sup> Rather than using the discourse concept, planning, particularly of transport, is regularly analysed in terms of *paradigms*. Thomas Kuhn (1996 [1962]) used the concept to describe the period of *normal science* occurring when assumptions, norms, and explanations are established within a scientific field. However, transport scholars use a broader definition of paradigms (cf. Hall, 1993) to distinguish between the traditional and sustainable transport planning paradigms. This broader usage makes it very much in line with a critical discourse analytical understanding of discourse related to material parts of society. In short, a paradigm consists of both discursive and non-discursive practices, making it a wider concept than only discourse. However, as I mainly analyse the discursive elements, I treat the transport planning paradigms as transport planning discourses.

<sup>33</sup> Reisigl and Wodak (2009) provide an overlapping but more technical definition. They define discourse as 'a cluster of context-dependent semiotic practices that are situated within specific fields of social action' (ibid., p. 89). Here, semiosis is similar to language but more general as it also includes aspects such as visual language (Fairclough et al., 2002, p. 23).

or symbolic) to act together in the world' (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 21). Thus, it points towards understanding discourse as something that evolves through repetition. Social norms often reinforce these practices (Elder-Vass, 2010), but multiple factors influence the discourse.

Discourse analysis is a broad term incorporating a wide range of approaches. Most of them have their specific understanding of discourse, and the different usages create a diverse and complex theoretical field. More often than not, the differences between definitions will also be significant within the same school of thought. Moreover, a single definition could be used whilst focusing on many different parts of the social reality, complicating the matter further. Adapted from a lecture given by Michał Krzyżanowski (2020), it is possible to distinguish between, amongst others, the following foci of discourse analyses:

1. The discourse can be analysed or categorised through its specific characteristics (such as 'a racist discourse').
2. The discourse can be analysed through its connection to an actor (such as 'the discourse of the nationalist party').
3. The discourse can be analysed through its construction (and often promotion) of a particular concept (such as 'the national identity discourse').
4. The discourse can be analysed through its general connection to a certain topic (such as 'the discourse about national identity').
5. The discourse can be analysed through its delimitation to a specific mode of expression (such as 'the visual discourse').

In reality, several of these foci are conflated. For example, studying the construction of sustainable mobility in the UEA policy relates to the list's second, third, and fourth foci. Thus, rather than claiming that analysis needs to confine to one of these foci, the crucial point is that it is insufficient to define the discourse concept as it can be adopted in distinctly different approaches. Therefore, discourse needs to be further operationalised and delimited.

The definition of discourse provides little guidance on the concrete endeavour of studying discourse in a material consisting of texts. Central to my operationalisation is two other concepts: statements<sup>34</sup> and patterns. *Statements* represent the fundamental elements of the discourse and allude to the content or meaning of an utterance<sup>35</sup>, while

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<sup>34</sup> In this regard, my CDA-inspired framework aligns with Foucault's early work, which also centred around statements (Foucault, 2002 [1969]).

<sup>35</sup> A statement is different from a sentence and not freestanding but determined by its relationship to other statements and the context. For example, the statement 'transport is polluting' can be formulated in many different sentences, such as 'our ways of moving are causing emissions', or in other languages, such as the Swedish transporter förorenar, yet it remains the same statement. However, if the context

*patterns* denote the fact that discourse involves the regularities of statements (Elder-Vass, 2010, pp. 145-150). However, I sometimes use *representation* when referring to a pattern. Representation is a concept used in some discourse-analytical traditions, defined by Neumann (2003) as ‘that which lies between the physical reality and our perception of it’ (p. 157, my translation). In this thesis, ‘representation’ is used as a generalisation of a statement. In contrast, a pattern refers to recurrence, thus indicating that the generalisation is general. Still, patterns and statements are sufficient for the operationalisation; therefore, discourse can be investigated as *the patterns of statements on a topic in a given context*. In this thesis, I specifically analyse the patterns of statements relating to sustainable mobility in the UEA policy (as developed below). Notably, the patterns of statements are not proof of discursive practices but the best indications of such practices available to the text analyst.

Delimiting a discourse is a critical methodological challenge, but as Neumann argues (2003, p. 53), a case study method is very useful to deploy in this endeavour<sup>36</sup>. Accordingly, I have delimited the discourse to the UEA policy (see Parts 1.3 and 5.2 and Section 4.1.1, where I introduce and justify the case). Thus, I consider the construction of sustainable mobility in the UEA policy a case of sustainable mobility discourse. However, when deciding on the borders of discourse, being precise about the relationship to its context is essential. Analytically, this is clarified by viewing discourses at different levels of abstraction, as Fairclough (2003) explains:

Discourses differ in their degree of repetition, commonality, stability over time, and in what we might call their ‘scale’, i.e. in how much of the world they include, and therefore in the range of representations they can generate. As in the case of genres (see chapter 4), it makes sense to distinguish different levels of abstraction or generality in talking about discourses. (p. 124)

In this thesis, I view the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy as one among several specific and partially competing manifestations of an overarching sustainable mobility discourse. In turn, on a higher level of abstraction, the overarching sustainable mobility discourse is competing with other discourses (notably the traditional transport discourse) within the policy field of transport.

Although I rely on CDA for my general approach towards discourse, I depart from the tradition regarding the analytical focus. As mentioned, CDA has strong linguistic

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changes, the same sentence represents a different statement. Today, ‘transport is polluting’ often refers to GHG emissions by vehicles with combustion engines. Yet, going back some 50 years, pollution instead meant local exhaust gases, such as nitrogen dioxide (which is still the main problem in many contexts). Travelling back further, before cars were introduced, ‘transport is polluting’ might have referred to animal droppings from carriage transport. The critical lesson is that the researcher must consider contextual aspects when interpreting a single statement.

<sup>36</sup> I further discuss case study method and case selection in Part 4.4.

roots and, consequently, the focus is often more on text than on discourse. Lemke (1995) explains how text and discourse relate:

Discourses, as social actions more or less governed by social habits, produce texts that will in some ways be alike in their meanings (...) The notions of text and discourse are complementary. When we want to focus on the specifics of an event or occasion, we speak of the text; when we want to look at patterns, commonality, relationships that embrace different texts and occasions, we can speak of discourses. (Lemke, p. 7)

Although text and discourse are complementary concepts, the emphasis on texts in many CDA studies results in analyses that ascribe texts to particular discourses (Fairclough, 1992b, 2015 [1989]; Krzyżanowski, 2010). Moreover, these discourses are often pre-defined and used to gain knowledge of the object of study; for example, a policy, a party programme, a doctor-patient interaction, etc.

In contrast, I use texts (connected to a policy) to understand an overarching discourse (the sustainable mobility discourse). Of course, this thesis somewhat depends on preconceptions of the sustainable mobility discourse. However, as my research interests lie in how this discourse is constructed, I do not pre-define sustainable mobility but treat statements that directly or indirectly relate to this notion<sup>37</sup> as part of the discourse. In this sense, I follow how Neumann exemplifies discourse analysis, for example, when he situates a diplomatic discourse within the context of the Norwegian foreign office (2003). My approach is also similar to how Rehnlund describes her point of departure, using Stockholm policy for transport to investigate the discursive construction of sustainability (2019, p. 29).

A consequence of my analytical focus is that the analysis primarily centres on one discourse (although Chapter 8 compares the UEA policy to the traditional transport discourse). Still, I do not conceive this discourse to be homogenous and without friction. Therefore, I deploy the concepts of discursive tension and constitutive lines of reasoning to account for the dynamic aspects of the sustainable mobility discourse (conflicts, tensions, etc.). These are developed in the following sections.

To sum up, I view discourse as a social practice manifested in rules and tendencies of how we speak and write about a particular topic in a given context (cf. Boréus, 2010, p. 172), operationalised as the patterns of statements relating to sustainable mobility in the UEA policy. Thus, I delimit discourse empirically to the UEA policy and consider the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy as one of several manifestations of the overarching sustainable mobility discourse.

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<sup>37</sup> Those scholars following Laclau & Mouffe (2001) would characterise sustainable mobility an *empty signifier* and the *nodal point* of the discourse.

## Constitutive Lines of Reasoning

So far, the thesis' analytical architecture consists of statements (the fundamental building blocks of discourse), patterns (the collections of similar statements), and the discourse (all patterns of statements in a given policy). However, the patterns of statements are not free-floating in the discourse but follow patterns of their own which I call *constitutive lines of reasoning*.

By *lines of reasoning*, I mean a collection of patterns that logically fit together, creating a coherent way of reasoning about whatever the discourse concerns. Additionally, *constitutive* refers to the fact that the lines of reasoning represent the main and dominant meta-pattern, constituting the core of the discourse. Importantly, I do not consider these lines of reasoning to necessarily be available for actors to reflect on and use consciously. In other words, I do not presume intentionality; instead, they represent the structural tendencies of reasoning in the discourse and are reconstructed through my analysis.

Specifically, the concept functions as a way to acknowledge the competing and contradictory constructions within a discourse but still adhere to my operationalisation of discourse as the patterns of statements related to sustainable mobility in the UEA policy. In that sense, it replaces the multiple discourses, often deductively derived, that other discourse-analysis often result in.

As constitutive lines of reasoning is a novel concept that I developed for the requirements of this thesis' aims, it is worth differentiating it from similar notions in the discourse-analytical literature. At least three other concepts bear a resemblance to constitutive lines of reasoning.

First, one related concept is *storylines*, most notably developed by Maarten A. Hajer (1997). Hajer explains a storyline as a 'generative sort of narrative that allows actors to draw upon various discursive categories to give meaning to specific physical or social phenomena', with the key function 'that they suggest unity in the bewildering variety of separate discursive component parts' (1997, p. 56). The main difference lies in how the concepts relate to agency. The constitutive lines of reasoning are macro-structures within a discourse analytically reconstructed from empirical material. They represent regularities in how patterns are combined. However, in contrast to storylines, they are not necessarily tools available for policy actors in their political pursuits. Storylines fit better in frameworks such as Hajer's, where actors hold a prominent position.

Another related concept is *rationalities*. Using the otherwise uncountable noun *rationality* in plural form signifies a relativist understanding of multiple and contradicting rationalities. Tim Richardson and Ole Jensen (2003) explain that:

[D]ifferent rationalities—with their distinctive horizons of values and norms that guide social actions—are implicitly acts of power in that they are attempts to govern what sort of social actions are to be carried out and what are not. (p. 19)

Hence, rationality is linked to power. Specifically related to discourse, Jens Portinson Hylander argues that rationalities ‘may thus be thought of as the ‘normative substance’ that is incorporated within a specific discourse’ (Portinson Hylander, 2022, p. 43). This understanding of rationalities is closely related to how I use constitutive lines of reasoning in this thesis. Still, the study of rationalities mainly stems from a Foucauldian tradition with different philosophical foundations than my approach. More importantly, the notion of rationalities is connected to values and norms, while I connect constitutive lines of reasoning more broadly to several forms of patterns in the discourse (i.e., reasons, norms, subjects, and causal assumptions).

Finally, Carol Lee Bacchi discusses *styles of problematisation*, claiming they are ‘patterns or “styles of problematization” in the ways in which “problems” are thought about (i.e., in the conceptual logics) across a range of policies’ (Bacchi, 2009, p. 6). Bacchi connects the concept to a wide range of similar notions used in governmentality studies (e.g., governmental rationalities, modes of governance, regimes of governance, and modes of rule). Although she distinguishes her approach from those scholars ‘attaching labels to those modes of rule or creating ideal types’ (ibid., p. 7), she maintains the concept’s centrality in the analysis. However, by connecting the ‘styles of problematization’ to ‘problem representation’ (the key concept of her framework), Bacchi also links the former to her deductive approach. Thus, it connects to a top-down method of identifying problem representations and disentangling them. Contrastingly, my approach is bottom-up by exploring (albeit a theoretically-driven exploration) statements and patterns before reconstructing dominant and overarching representations. As with scholars using the concept of rationalities, Bacchi also falls within the Foucaultian tradition and, thus, her point of departure differs from mine (for example, treating policy *as* discourse, not *containing* discourse).

Overall, I believe the difference between my approach and those above justifies introducing yet another concept to the discourse-analytical tradition, mainly because redefining existing concepts risks creating more confusion than clarity.

### Naturalisation, Silence, and Discursive Tension

Specific analytical concepts are needed in the detailed discourse analysis to make sense of the statements and patterns. Whereas CDA approaches often use concepts from linguistics and rhetoric, focusing on particular texts (Fairclough, 2003; Machin & Mayr, 2012), my analytical framework emphasises contradictions and dominance

within and between the discursive patterns. In essence, this is power in its most specific form, and to capture this, I rely on the concepts of naturalisation, silence, and discursive tension.

Alvesson and Deetz (2000) define *naturalisation* as a process where ‘a social formation is abstracted from the historical conflictual site of its origin and treated as a concrete, relatively fixed entity’ (p. 84). Thus, it involves a process where a statement or pattern of statements characterises a contingent social phenomenon as something inevitable. Naturalisation sometimes implies normative desirability, while at other times it refers to empirical inevitability. This distinction is useful for guiding the empirical analysis, as it captures how normative values are constructed as inevitable (for example, promoted population growth, see Section 6.1.3.). Moreover, naturalisations can be located at many levels of abstraction. Consequently, its applicability stretches from the most concrete level of statements to the most abstract level of fundamental representations of the discourse. A fundamental representation is conceptualised as a representation that combines several frequent and central patterns. In the analysis, several forms of growth are examples of such fundamental representations.

As with all analytical concepts of this framework, a central issue concerns operationalising naturalisation. In the close reading of the material, statements indicate the inevitability or the necessary desirability of a phenomenon<sup>38</sup>. Hence, the interpretations are based on the operational definition of naturalisation as *a statement or pattern that constructs contingent circumstances and phenomena as inevitable and natural*.

Importantly, naturalisation, per definition, involves the *silencing* of representations conflicting with the construction of inevitability. As everything can be viewed from alternative perspectives, positioning something as natural leads to silencing these alternatives. Investigating these silences is often a central aim for discourse analyses, or as Svensson (2019) argues:

However, it is essential not to forget the *silence* when studying language use in society. Which voices are allowed to be heard, and which voices are silenced or ignored? What themes, metaphors, or discourses are left out of the public conversation? (p. 170, my translation)

Naturally, not all omitted representations are analytically relevant, but the critical silences relate to the discourse’s central issues, problems, norms, etc. Thus, a general definition of silence is *a representation related to the discourse’s central issues omitted or*

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<sup>38</sup> Of course, as with all interpretations, identifying naturalising statements relies on the researcher’s preconceptions and theoretical perspectives. Being open with the interpretative process is the standard solution to this subjective aspect of research.

*missing in the discourse.* In the next chapter, I discuss the method for discovering (or interpreting) silences.

The third concept is *discursive tension*. Some patterns seem to point towards different conclusions in a discourse, sometimes explicitly in conflict, while other times merely providing alternative perspectives. For example, in the analytical chapters, a crucial tension resides between public transport's travel time and travel time ratio. While emphasising these different notions may lead to the same result, it is not necessarily the case depending on the relation to cars. Potentially, travel time and travel time ratio represent conflicting pathways for developing and organising the transport system (see Section 6.4.1.). A related idea can be found in linguistic analyses, where elements of texts (e.g., metaphors, concepts, narratives) may conflict. These tensions often necessitate explanations outside the texts (Bergström & Boréus, 2005b). Similarly, the discursive tensions identified in the thematic analysis are contextualised in the reconstruction, allowing for more general interpretations. In short, with discursive tension, I mean *potentially conflicting statements or patterns that conclude substantially different things on the same issue.*

The interpretation involved when analysing discursive tensions is substantial. What constitutes a tension depends on the context and theoretical perspectives. Still, as the concept's purpose is to convey uncertainty and ambiguity in the discourse, to open up what appears closed, the interpretative difficulties should not be considered a weakness of the operationalised concept.

It is pivotal to highlight that the above concepts have a dual function in my analysis. I first use them in the thematic analysis to investigate the dynamics of statements and specific patterns. Second, I use the concepts to look for generalities among the discursive patterns. In the second analytical step, I rely on the discursive tensions and silences to reconstruct dominant and silenced constitutive lines of reasoning. Moreover, in the final analytical step, I return to the naturalising patterns, analysing the discursive implications of the policy in terms of how it relates to the overarching discourses in the transport policy field.

## Normative Standpoint and Theoretical Categories

This thesis relies on a range of theoretical concepts, an eclectic collection brought together for the analytical purpose of understanding the constructions of sustainable mobility. So far, I have presented the discourse-analytical concepts of the framework. The remaining parts are devoted to more specific theories, underpinning my analysis of sustainable mobility.



The theory presented in this part principally allows me to structure the analysis and help categorise the material. Although these theoretical concepts come from abductive reasoning, where the empirical material has influenced the choice of concepts as much as vice versa, I have collected them in this part for clarity. Still, the aim is to be transparent and show how the concepts were developed through the analytical process.

However, before discussing theoretical categories and growth management typologies (the two theoretical elements in this part), I want to develop the normative standpoint of the thesis. I have included it here as it is central to the analytical framework but not explicitly connected to the discourse-analytical concepts in focus in the preceding part.

### Normative Standpoint

A fundamental principle in critical research is to be open about the theoretical and normative standpoint of the critique (Morrow, 2005). In this section, I expand on the thesis' normative point of departure based on two principal theoretical and political traditions. The ideas developed within these traditions inform many decisions and interpretations throughout the thesis.

The first tradition is radical green political thought (Dryzek, 2013, pp. 207-229). I agree with those arguing that the planet has ecological limits that should be reflected in the way human societies are organised and operate (Jackson, 2017; Meadows et al., 2004), questioning the possibility and desirability of unlimited material growth (Hickel & Kallis, 2019; Latouche, 2009). Although the discursive or ideological perspective on societies' relation to growth has to be acknowledged (Fridman, 2002), the materialist structural explanations are essential (Næss & Price, 2016); for example, those found in the eco-Marxist tradition (Burkett, 1999; Foster, 1999; O'Connor, 1998). Furthermore, while climate change is central, environmental responsibility goes beyond GHG emissions, including multiple aspects such as biodiversity, wildlife, clear air, fresh water, etc. Finally, the process of going from current destructive societies to societies in line with the above should involve principles of justice, emphasising the responsibility of the privileged and the legitimate needs of the underprivileged. As for transport, the dominance of increasing mobility determines the social space and how our societies are structurally configured (Illich, 1973, p. 11). Transport is, in fact, a critical arena where struggles between the opposing goals of growth and environmental and social concerns are particularly apparent (McKenzie, 2003, p. 20). Consequently, there is an increasing need to explore transport from a radical green perspective.

The second tradition is critical theory, broadly signifying theories emphasising the conflicting and political nature of society and which, although often focusing on ideational parts of social life, recognises the power and material interests. For example,

from a critical viewpoint, it is necessary to acknowledge the inherently contradictory and conflicting nature of planning (Campbell, 1996, 2016; Foglesong, 2016 [1986]). Ultimately, material interests largely govern the particular configuration of prevailing planning and transport policy, where social conflicts are a fundamental characteristic of modern capitalist urban development (Campbell, 2016, p. 390). Similarly, the theories and approaches used to handle this development usually reflect the needs of capital (Grant, 2018, p. 49). Finally, sustainability is particularly fused with conflicting concerns, trying to bridge social, economic, and environmental priorities. Thus, many actors and interests want to formulate sustainability according to their purposes (Carter, 2007, p. 213). Therefore, while sustainability may bring promising change, it is central to power struggles and conflicts, thus necessitating being scrutinised from critical viewpoints.

Nancy Fraser (1985) has defined the critical in critical theory as the framing of research ‘with an eye to the aims and activities of those oppositional social movements with which it has a partisan’ (p. 97). On the other hand, Neil Brenner (2010) emphasises the need for critical theory to be theoretical, reflexive, normative, and sceptical of instrumental reasoning; thoughts echoed in the critical-discourse analytical tradition (Forchtner, 2011). In short, critical policy and planning research is often considered to involve two distinct ways of being critical. Those following Foucault tend to focus on opening up the discursive space by deconstruction, while those inspired by Habermas commonly emphasise judgement based on an explicit normative framework (Fischer, 2015; Lövbrand & Stripple, 2015; Saretzki, 2015).

Additionally, it is vital to acknowledge how different strands of Marxism and post-Marxism (Harvey, 1989; 2006; Paden, 2003) have influenced planning and urban studies (as well as CDA). Generally, these traditions emphasise the role of capitalism in society. The independent role of cities sometimes taken for granted in urban studies is criticised and, instead, it is argued that urban development needs to be understood in relation to overarching economic and class structures within society (Jaret, 1983). Relatedly, those building on the work of Antonio Gramsci (1971 [1891-1937]) have contributed to the critical analysis of urban planning by adopting the concept of hegemony (Davies, 2013; Jessop, 1997).

The plethora of traditions towards critical analysis highlights the theoretically rich history of critical perspectives on aspects such as ‘discourse’ and ‘power’. Although I do not rely exclusively on one kind of critical theory, acknowledging the roots of my critical approach is essential. As mentioned above, this section highlights two principal theoretical and political traditions I use as the normative foundation for studying sustainable mobility discourse. However, several additional traditions are addressed in various locations of the thesis. Although I do not wish to repeat them here, they should be mentioned for transparency and to complete the picture of the thesis’ normative

standpoint. First, I present several contributions to an emerging field of critical transport research (see Part 2.3.) in the last part of the literature review. I very much share the vantage point of these critical scholars on perspectives concerning transport and discourse. Second, I substantially draw on the critical discourse analysts (most notably Norman Fairclough) referenced at the beginning of this chapter (see Part 3.1.), not only on discourse-related issues but also on their critical and normative approach towards social research. Similarly, the same holds for the general critical realist tradition (also see Part 3.1.). Finally, when I reconstruct the silenced constitutive line of reason titled ‘sustainable mobility as restriction’, several sections use critical scholars and theories to explore the silences of the discourse (see particularly Section 7.4.2 on the silenced social consequences of growth).

### Theoretical Categories

The theoretical categories I present in this section are used throughout the analytical chapters to direct the focus, formulate analytical questions, and organise the presentation and, as such, they constitute an essential part of the thesis’ analytical framework.

Creating theoretical categories is not a neutral endeavour but an integrated part of the analysis, dependent on theoretical preconceptions (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 124). The below categories have been constructed in three steps. First, general categories based on insights from the methodological literature on discourse analysis were identified. Second, I specified these initial theoretical categories by applying sustainable transport literature, using ‘sustainable mobility’ as an analytical lens (see Section 1.2.2.). Finally, the categories were reviewed using an abductive back-and-forth movement between my research focus (manifested in my research questions) and the empirical material (cf. Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, pp. 154-155; Svensson, 2019, p. 142).

There has been a productive discussion on what can be called *the elements of discourse* within the discourse-analytical literature. Although I have operationalised discourse as the patterns of statements, these patterns can be sorted into general categories by their function within the discourse. Different authors propose elements of discourse at various levels of abstraction and from somewhat different philosophical traditions. For example, Foucault (2002 [1969]), often associated with post-structuralism, uses (in his ‘archaeological’ work) four categories to describe how discourse formations are governed: rules for the formation of objects, enunciative modalities, subject positions, and concepts. Contrastingly, Laclau and Mouffe (2001), also working within the post-structuralist tradition, provide an alternative conceptualisation (also on the abstract side of the spectra). They present a detailed framework revolving around *nodal points*, acting

as centres in the *chains of equivalence* that organise discourses. A more concrete categorisation is provided by Jørgensen & Phillips (2002). They argue that different discourses can be delineated by focusing on:

The aspects of the world to which the discourses ascribe meaning; the particular ways in which each of the discourses ascribes meaning; the points on which there is an open struggle between different representations; and any understandings naturalised in all of the discourses as common-sense. (p. 145)

These categories resemble the practical applications in the works of both Bacchi and Dryzek. However, whereas Bacchi (2000, 2009, 2015) focuses on problem representations, analysed in connection to assumptions, historical processes, silences, effects, and production, Dryzek (2013) organises his analysis according to basic entities, assumptions, agents, and metaphors<sup>39</sup>.

Despite differences between these authors, I have focused on shared elements between these concrete conceptualisations. They have provided an inspiration for my construction of theoretical categories suitable to analyse sustainable mobility discourse. The common denominators between several approaches are: a) the aspects of the world emphasised in the discourse, b) the assumptions made in the discourse, and c) the agents or subjects recognised by the discourse<sup>40</sup>. Additionally, discourses manifested within policies are normatively driven. Consequently, they aim to achieve political goals and explicitly justify and argue for them. Bacchi's framework partially captures this element of political discourses focusing on problem representations. However, in contrast to Bacchi's approach, I have opted for a more general category of how political goals (i.e., sustainable mobility) are justified, which works better with the thematic analysis (see Section 4.1.). Accordingly, the following four categories have been used: reasons, norms, subjects, and causal assumptions. The first three are inspired and roughly correspond to three aspects commonly found in discourse analysis, whereas the fourth captures a central element of discourses within policies. Although the categories have changed several times during the analytical process, the main ideas have mostly remained the same.

Applying insights from sustainable transport literature and using sustainable mobility as an analytical lens, the fully developed categories are as follows. First, the category of *reasons for sustainable mobility* responds to questions about why our society values mobility and, more specifically, the rationale for sustainable mobility. For

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<sup>39</sup> As mentioned, Bacchi mainly builds on Foucault, whereas Dryzek primarily uses Hajer's understanding of discourse.

<sup>40</sup> In Bacchi's framework, subjects are discussed when the effects of subjectification and the 'lived effects' are of concern (Bacchi, 2009).

example, transport scholars have debated whether mobility is a derived demand or if people in certain circumstances seek mobility for its own sake (Banister, 2008; Banister et al., 2013). Others have discussed the overarching role of mobility in our societies (Bertolini, 2017; Low & O'Connor, 2013). Nevertheless, questions about the reasons for (sustainable) mobility are seldom explicit in transport policies. In addition to asking questions about policy objectives (e.g., increasing public transport travel), this category aims to capture the broader societal goals connected to promotion of sustainable mobility (e.g., gender equality). Generally, more implicit normative statements are found in the next category.

Second, the category of *norms of sustainable mobility* revolves around constructions of good and bad forms of mobility and how much mobility is preferable. Critical transport literature has thoroughly studied the norms that permeate transport policies. Topics range from the norms of *automobility* (Urry & Dennis, 2009) and *hypermobility* (Adams, 2001; Cohen & Gössling, 2015) to the amount of transport that our society needs/can handle (Moriarty & Honnery, 2013a, 2013b) and projections of growth in transport planning (Goulden et al., 2014; Owens, 1995). While the previous category captured the overarching reasons for sustainable mobility, this investigates how sustainable mobility as such is constructed. Although the construction of mobility might not seem normative at first glance, the kind of mobility and the amount of mobility prescribed by the texts have normative foundations. Therefore, another way to phrase the purpose of the category is to capture the normative assumptions of the texts. The normative assumptions in this category can be contrasted with the causal assumption category discussed below, both acting as implicit foundations of the discourse.

Third, the category of *subjects of sustainable mobility* is about who is supposed to benefit from sustainable mobility and, conversely, who needs to change their travel behaviours. A growing literature on equity and equality in the transport field discusses how different social groups are connected to the mobility system (Hanson, 2010; Markovich, 2013; Martens, 2006; Polk, 2009). This category focuses on the social groups targeted and recognised in the material. Thus, it primarily captures the explicit subject positions of the texts, although some necessitate more interpretations than others.

Fourth, the category of *causal assumptions about sustainable mobility* highlights which causal relationships are assumed to apply to sustainable mobility. Several scholars have scrutinised the established mobility truths in policies and research (Black, 2001; Essebo & Baeten, 2012; Hamilton, 2003; Næss, 2016b). Thus, this category highlights the patterns of assumptions and beliefs taken for granted in the discourse. Still, assumptions can be existential, propositional, and normative (cf. Fairclough, 2003, pp. 212-213). However, this category mainly concerns causal assumptions (propositional

assumptions), a delimitation illustrating my abductive approach well, as the initial reading of the material indicated the central importance of this particular kind of assumption.

As mentioned, the four theoretical categories above combine central insights from theories on discourse analysis and sustainable mobility with the specific requirements of the empirical material. Consequently, they constitute a nexus of this thesis' three essential components. Unsurprisingly, the categories are pivotal for the analysis and are used at multiple places, providing a theoretical and methodological foundation. In the next chapter on method, I return to these categories and operationalise them into specific analytical questions.

### Approaches to Growth Management

I early found a need for a theoretical understanding of growth to guide my reconstruction of discursive tensions and silences (in Chapter 7). While I present growth management theory here, I discuss the abductive process that led to a need for theories on growth and justify the interpretations of the material in Section 7.1.

Growth management theory is a planning literature on governmental approaches towards growth. Jill L. Grant (2018) argues that planning practice can be categorised into several 'philosophies' or approaches based on how they deal with growth. On one end of the spectra is *growth promotion*, characterised by the idea that 'growth is desirable'. Its proponents argue that planning ought to facilitate growth. Grant takes comprehensive planning as an example of a concrete planning idea based on growth promotion, using concrete strategies such as 'civic boosterism' and the notion of 'making room for growth' (ibid., p. 43). The second philosophy aims to manage growth<sup>41</sup>. While growth is considered desirable, it should be shaped to suit society's needs better. Here, well-known concepts such as 'new urbanism' and 'smart growth' can be found (ibid., p. 45).

A similar philosophy, but highlighting the need to restrict some forms of growth, is *controlling growth*. The underlying idea is that growth is desirable only if it is controlled. Grant claims that the traditional sustainable development framing belongs in this category, mitigating several sustainability concerns (ibid., p. 45). Finally, the last philosophy aims to *limit growth* based on the notion that growth is problematic. Although rare, approaches such as eco-cities and shrinking cities are examples of this philosophy (ibid., p. 44). At specific times, dominant ideas in different sectors or issues can be positioned along this spectrum. For example, there was a tradition of expanding

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<sup>41</sup> Confusingly, Grant uses growth management both as a general term to describe the theoretical literature and as a specific term for one of the approaches to growth.

cities for a long time in land use planning, thus promoting growth outwards. Since then, the pendulum has shifted, and urban sprawl is now seen as a critical problem for city development, more in line with ideas of managing or controlling growth (Bruegmann, 2015). Similar variations and changes can be seen in many areas of planning (e.g., transport planning and regional planning).

Grant's categorisation provides an appropriate point of departure from my reconstruction of the discourse in Chapter 7. However, one problem with the typology is the fuzzy difference between the two middle philosophies (i.e., managing and controlling growth). For example, while placing sustainable development and smart growth in separate categories, she quotes Krueger and Gibbs, stating that 'Smart growth is sometimes referred to as a uniquely 'American' variant of sustainable development' (Grant, 2018, p. 46). In contrast, Feiock (1994) makes a sharp distinction between the two approaches:

Growth controls are designed to limit significantly population growth, housing construction, and/or economic growth below levels that would otherwise be attained in an unconstrained market (Landis 1992, 490). Growth management seeks to redirect rather than reduce growth in order to protect the environment, preserve desirable community attributes, and ensure orderly and responsible development. (p. 211)

Still, defining growth control as Feiock does overlaps with how Grant describes the limiting growth-philosophy. As 'controlling growth' is used synonymously with either managing or limiting growth, it appears superfluous. Overall, it seems like the four-scale categorisation creates more confusion than clarity. Thus, if controlling growth is excluded, what is left is a typology including promoting, managing, and limiting growth. Growth promotion and growth management, the two approaches that are central in the coming analysis, are well summarised by Feiock (1994):

Both economic development and growth management represent attempts by state and local governments to use public policy both to alter private market decisions and to direct local population and economic growth. Together they constitute local officials' responses to a community's desire for more or less rapid growth. (p. 208)

Although the approaches are analytically distinct, they might overlap and be intertwined in reality.

## Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, I have constructed an analytical framework for the thesis. Positioning my thesis broadly within a critical discourse analytical tradition, I take the critical realist position, particularly building on scholars that argue for a constructionist epistemology.

The chapter has two principal parts: presenting and defining key concepts (primarily relating to discourse-analysis) and developing the theoretical categories used to analyse sustainable mobility.

There are several central discourse-analytical concepts that the thesis relies on. First, I define discourse as ‘social practices – rules and tendencies for how we speak and write about a topic in a given context’ (Boréus, 2010, p. 172, *my translation*). This definition is operationalised as the patterns of statements relating to sustainable mobility in the UEA policy. Statements represent the most fundamental part of discourse and form patterns that make up the discourse. However, these patterns are not free-floating but are parts of overarching construction, a phenomenon that I try to capture through the concept of constitutive lines of reasoning.

As I delimit the sustainable mobility discourse to its manifestation in the UEA policy, my analysis focuses primarily on this discourse, not the interplay between multiple discourses. My approach also deviates from the focus on texts in some CDA studies. Rather than using pre-defined discourses to analyse texts, I use texts to shed light on a discourse (the sustainable mobility discourse). This delimitation has some repercussions for the following conceptualisations and methods. One of these consequences is the need for concepts to capture the internal dynamics of discourse. Hence, I define and operationalise three additional and analytically specific concepts to tackle this: naturalisation, silence, and discursive tension.

The chapter also includes a section where I present the normative standpoint of the thesis. The critical approach I take builds upon two academic traditions. The first one is radical green political thought. Especially relevant is how this tradition critically approaches various forms of growth. The second tradition is the diverse perspectives captured under the critical theory label. Ranging from Foucauldian to Habermasian and neo-Gramscian theories, these provide a central critical foundation for the thesis.

Finally, I discuss and develop several theoretical categories used to structure and interpret the discursive patterns of the UEA policy. In other words, these categories are used to assist the analysis of how sustainable mobility is constructed in the UEA policy. I develop four theoretical categories abductively. The reasons for mobility is related to the reasons why mobility is promoted, the norms of mobility concerns the kinds of mobility constructed, the subjects of mobility revolves around which subjects are recognised and targeted, and the causal assumptions of mobility is about the underlying causal assumptions that are made about mobility. Moreover, I present and develop a



typology of approaches to growth management, essential for the latter reconstruction of constitutive lines of reasoning in Chapter 7.

In the next chapter, I develop concrete methods suitable to analyse discourse within policies. These are strongly influenced by the concepts discussed in this chapter. Notably, the definition of discourse guides the overarching design of the thesis, but the empirical material dictates how I approach the analytical process. Thus, the following chapter centres on how the concrete analysis of the UEA policy is undertaken in this thesis.

# Method and Material

It is worth repeating the insight of Kuhn (1987): a discipline without a large number of thoroughly executed case studies is a discipline without systematic production of exemplars, and that a discipline without exemplars is an ineffective one. - Bent Flyvbjerg<sup>42</sup>

This chapter outlines the methods I rely on to analyse sustainable mobility discourse. I broadly placed the thesis within a critical discourse analytical (CDA) tradition in the analytical framework. However, whilst providing central distinctions and definitions, I do not use the linguistic methods often connected to CDA. Therefore, this chapter aims to give a detailed and transparent account of the alternative methods I rely on and how they relate to the analytical process.

As presented in the introduction, the thesis rests upon three analytical steps: *mapping discursive patterns*, *reconstructing constitutive lines of reasoning*, and *situating the policy within the transport policy field*. One of the central aims of this chapter is to present the methods for these different types of analyses. The mapping is done through a thematic analysis, and in this part, I elaborate on several distinctions central to this method, most notably frequency and centrality. While this first step is relatively detailed and only concerns one part of the material, the reconstruction expands the focus, analysing the entire UEA policy and exploring several overarching constructions of sustainable mobility. Thus, in this part, the constitutive lines of reasoning developed in the previous chapter are further elaborated on, more precisely, with regard to how to reconstruct them. The final step revolves around situating the policy within the transport policy field. In this part, I expand on how to achieve this. This analysis is partly comparative; thus, the section mainly concerns how to make this comparison.

The second half of the chapter is devoted to methodological issues related to case study design. This part also elaborates on some of the advantages and limitations of the

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<sup>42</sup> Flyvbjerg (2006, p. 242).

case study as an overarching methodological structure. Additionally, I explain my selection of the Swedish Urban Environment Agreement policy as a case and argue why it can be viewed as a paradigmatic example of sustainable transport policy. Finally, I reflect on possibilities and limitations for using the case to generalise.

In the following part, I expand on the concept of context(s) and develop three levels of context with distinct functions related to the empirical material. This part ties into the final one, in which I present the empirical material of the thesis. I provide an overview of the different kinds of material and argue for their particular relevance for answering my research questions. Undoubtedly, various types of material have different advantages and challenges. As I have done interviews and participatory observations, I discuss the ethical implications of this production of new material and reflect on my position as a researcher. Moreover, because all policy documents are in Swedish and this thesis is written in English, I expand on how this has affected the work.

## Step One: How to Map Discursive Patterns

In the analytical framework, I presented the concept of *discourse*, operationalising it as the patterns of statements related to sustainable mobility in the UEA policy (see Section 3.1.1.). In this part, I elaborate on the actual methods used in the thesis. This initial step in the analytical process concerns identifying and mapping the discursive patterns using thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis is a broad term, and as a concrete method it is compatible with multiple other approaches and methodologies. For example, some versions of CDA (e.g., the discourse-historical approach) regularly use thematic analysis as an initial part of the analysis to ‘map out the content of the analysed texts and thus [...] ascribe them to particular discourses to which the analysed texts may belong’ (Krzyżanowski, 2010, p. 81). However, as I have mentioned earlier, the analysis does not aim to identify external discourse deductively in the material, but rather to investigate the discursive patterns within the UEA policy. Consequently, the thematic analysis has a more significant role in this thesis as it is used to identify the patterns that constitute the sustainable mobility discourse of the policy analysed. Concretely, this analysis is aided by the abductively-formed theoretical categories presented in Section 3.2.2.. However, before I discuss how these categories are used in the analysis, I specify the particular version of thematic analysis that I rely on for mapping the discursive patterns.

In their pedagogical article on thematic analysis, Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2006) list several decisions to be made when doing a thematic analysis: what counts as a theme; if the descriptions of the material are general or specific; if the reasoning is

inductive or theoretical (deductive); if the semantic or latent level is analysed; if the approach is essentialist or constructivist; what different kinds of questions are posed (ibid.). I use this list of methodological decisions to clarify my approach, as it captures the range and complexities in thematic analyses well.

When using thematic analysis, the primary and central issue is ‘what counts as a pattern/theme, or what “size” does a theme need to be?’ (ibid. , p. 82)<sup>43</sup>. Braun and Clarke make a critical distinction between ‘*keyness*’ and *prevalence*. Does ‘keyness’ imply prevalence? And how are these aspects measured in texts? In my approach, I operationalise ‘keyness’ and prevalence through the more specific concepts of *centrality* and *frequency*. First, frequency is the number of individual agreements containing statements constituting a pattern<sup>44</sup>. The lowest frequency of an identified pattern in the analysis was four, but generally, low-frequency patterns are present in six to eight agreements. Second, I have not used any definite number when a collection of related statements becomes a pattern, but four of the total 31 agreements analysed are approximately 10 per cent. Thus, to be counted as a pattern, it must be present in at least 10 per cent of the agreements in the analysis. Still, although I use frequency numbers, it is not for quantitative purposes but to visualise and argue why certain aspects of the material should be considered a pattern. Moreover, it also gives an idea about the strength of the pattern.

Notably, I have operationalised frequency as a binary; the pattern appears in an agreement or does not. The reason for not counting multiple examples of a statement within an agreement is that the results risk being skewed. As an indication of significant prevalence in the material, one instance in all 31 texts arguably says more about the discourse than 31 examples in one agreement, as discourse is about broader regularities<sup>45</sup> Still, it is relevant if a statement appears multiple times in one text. I capture these numerous examples in singular texts through the concept of *centrality*.

Braun and Clarke’s article discusses ‘keyness’, and I address this concern by specifying the centrality of the identified patterns. In my operationalisation, a pattern may be either central, ambiguous, or peripheral. Thus, a pattern is central if it (in the majority of the agreements where it is present) is either a) found or assumed in key statements, or b) frequently repeated. If neither of these conditions is met, the pattern is considered peripheral. Still, this begs the question of what a key statement is. I have worked with the guidelines that key statements often appear early in paragraphs (e.g.,

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<sup>43</sup> I use patterns instead of themes in this thesis. In Chapter 6, I present the discursive patterns in thematic sections, but I never analyse my material in terms of themes.

<sup>44</sup> See Section 4.6.1., for a presentation the UEA policy agreements.

<sup>45</sup> All the agreements are of comparable importance as there are no hierarchies between them. However, another set of material could consist of fundamentally different types of text, in which case my operationalisations might not have been adequate.

as a topic sentence) and directly answer questions posed in the text. Moreover, standalone statements are considered more key than statements that are part of an extensive list or present in an enumeration. Undoubtedly, establishing key statements is heavily based on interpretations; therefore, I have aimed to make the interpretative process as explicit as possible within the actual analysis. Although the two-scale operationalisation of centrality might be preferable from a methodological perspective, the inquiry has provided several examples where the centrality has been challenging to assess. Thus, I also use the additional category of ambiguous centrality for these complex cases. A last note on centrality is that it is a relative concept; hence, a pattern must be related to other patterns to determine its centrality properly.

Braun and Clarke's second question revolves around general versus specific descriptions of the material. As they write, 'you might wish to provide a rich thematic description of your entire data set, so that the reader gets a sense of the predominant or important themes'; however, '[i]n such an analysis, some depth and complexity is necessarily lost' (ibid., p. 83). In the previous chapter, when positioning my analytical framework in a CDA tradition, I mentioned that one difference from most CDA studies is that my approach is not based on a detailed linguistic analysis of texts. Nevertheless, I use several concepts to analyse the complexities of the UEA policy (see Section 3.1.3.). One of the purposes of dividing the analysis into several steps is to give both general and specific descriptions. Whereas the thematic analysis provides a detailed account of essential parts of how sustainable mobility is constructed in the UEA policy<sup>46</sup>, the following reconstruction and situating of the policy have more general and overarching aims.

Braun and Clarke make a third distinction between inductive and theoretical (deductive) reasoning. In short, the difference lies in the extent to which the material or theoretical assumptions guide the analysis. In an inductive approach, 'the themes identified are strongly linked to the data themselves', and conversely, a 'theoretical thematic analysis would tend to be driven by the researcher's theoretical or analytic interest in the area and is thus more explicitly analyst-driven' (ibid., p. 84). This thesis' main research question specifies the concept of sustainable mobility as the theoretical point of departure. Hence, my approach aligns with the theoretical or deductive thematic analysis (I elaborate on the thesis' normative standpoint in Section 3.2.1 and the sustainable and critical transport literature in Chapter 2). At the same time, the actual analysis is, in many aspects, inductive, particularly compared to other discourse analytical approaches such as Bacchi's (Bacchi, 2009, 2015) and DHA's thematic analysis (Krzyżanowski, 2010, p. 81). For example, no external discourses are a priori

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<sup>46</sup> The thematic analysis only concerns one part of the material (i.e., the agreements). However, this material is central and, as evident when comparing Chapters 6, 7 and 8, relatively representative of the entire policy.

applied to the material. Additionally, the way I base the reconstruction of the constitutive lines of reasoning in Chapter 7 on an extensive range of diverse patterns identified in the thematic analysis further demonstrates the inductive approach and resembles constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014). Thus, a fair assessment is that my approach uses both induction and deduction. This middle position is sometimes described as a third mode of reasoning, labelled *abduction*. Abductive reasoning is characterised by a back-and-forth movement between theories and data, and is commonly used by grounded theorists (Reichertz, 2011) and, more importantly, by CDA scholars (Krzyżanowski, 2010, p. 84; Meyer, 2001; Wodak, 2001).

A fourth decision of the thematic analysis is whether to analyse the semantic or latent level or, more accurately, if the analysis should include both levels or just the semantic one. Braun and Clarke (2006) specify that the latent level 'goes beyond the semantic content of the data, and starts to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations - and ideologies - that are theorised as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data' (p. 84). Again, my approach falls in between the dichotomy. On the one hand, I include latent elements of the material, analysing assumptions and implicit norms. On the other hand, I do not reinterpret explicit semantic elements by applying interpretative theories, claiming that the patterns indicate underlying ideas not evident from the semantic level. Thus, I study what the texts convey, not anything beyond the texts (altered by false consciousness or manipulation). This approach links to my operationalisation of discourse as the patterns of statements in a given context.

Finally, it is necessary to acknowledge the epistemological foundation of the study. Braun and Clarke write within the field of psychology and, thus, frame it as a choice between grounding the thematic analysis in either essentialist or constructionist philosophies. Moreover, as positivism holds a strong position within psychology, constructionism is primarily compared with positivism. Therefore, when they write that 'thematic analysis conducted within a constructionist framework cannot and does not seek to focus on motivation or individual psychologies, but instead seeks to theorise the sociocultural contexts, and structural conditions, that enable the individual accounts that are provided' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 85), that is very much in line with my approach. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasise that, what Braun and Clarke describe as a 'constructionist approach' also aligns with critical realism, the tradition I have positioned myself within (see Part 3.1.).

Now that I have specified the version of thematic analysis I use, it is time to return to the theoretical categories of sustainable mobility developed in the previous chapter: the reason for sustainable mobility, the subjects of sustainable mobility, the norms of sustainable mobility, and the causal assumptions of sustainable mobility. The purpose of these categories is to structure the analysis, and based on the above discussions of, on

one hand, latent and manifest analysis and, on the other hand, the distinction between normative and descriptive representations, the four theoretical categories can be understood through the following matrix:

**Table 4.1. The theoretical categories.** The theoretical categories according to the distinctions between normative-descriptive and manifest-latent.

	<b>Normative</b>	<b>Descriptive</b>
<b>Manifest</b>	Reasons	Subjects
<b>Latent</b>	Norms	Causal assumptions

Although this presentation is slightly simplified, it is useful to clarify the borders between the categories. As Svensson expresses it, ‘the ambition should be to maximise the differences *between* the categories, as well as the similarities *within* a category’ (Svensson, 2019, p. 142, *my translation*). While I use the categories in several parts of the analysis, they play the most significant role in the thematic analysis. Thus, as this analytical step relies heavily on these categories, I operationalise them further by formulating four related analytical questions.

When investigating the reasons for sustainable mobility, the following question guides the analysis of this category: *What are the reasons for sustainable mobility constructed in the text?* As an example of how this question is used, the agreement by Malmö Municipality (2016) illustrates the reasons attached to sustainable mobility: ‘Measures can be made to make public transport better and to increase its attractiveness, and in this way contribute to a more sustainable Malmö’ (p. 2)<sup>47</sup>. Thus, according to this example, the reason for sustainable mobility (in this case, public transport) should be to contribute to a sustainable city. Like in the example, these reasons are often manifest in the texts.

Likewise, the second category can be reformulated as an analytical question: *Which norms of sustainable mobility are present in the text?* The agreement by Jönköping Municipality (2016) can exemplify how norms of mobility are expressed in the texts:

To achieve a sustainable transport system in general, and in the central parts of the city in particular, a strong transition from cars to the sustainable modes of transport, walking/cycling and public transport is needed. (p. 1)

The quote defines sustainable mobility by labelling walking, cycling, and public transport as sustainable. However, as sustainability is assumed to be desirable, its normative value is transferred to the specific transport modes described in the quote.

The third category on subjects of sustainable mobility includes targeted and recognised subject positions, and therefore, the question is formulated as follows: *Which*

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<sup>47</sup> All quotes from primary sources in this section are translated from Swedish by me.

*subjects of sustainable mobility are targeted and recognised in the text?* The agreement by Östersund Municipality (2015) can exemplify the category:

Statistics show that more women than men travel by public transport or walk and cycle today. To stimulate public transport alternatives and improve the possibilities for pedestrians and cyclists, [...] entails increased gender equality. (p. 2)

In the quote, women are singled out as the primary beneficiaries of the measures. It is important to point out that if interpreted broadly enough, an almost endless range of subjects can be identified in the texts. For example, if an agreement states that an important goal is to facilitate regional enlargement, it can be interpreted as constructing commuters as central. Thus, it is primarily subjects which are explicit in the text that the question concerns. The list below illustrates the analytical process in the thematic analysis (adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87; and Svensson, 2019).

1. Read material.
2. Create categories and analytical questions.
3. Re-read material with categories and questions in mind.
4. Re-work categories according to new insights.
5. Code statements according to categories.
6. Identify patterns amongst the statements.
7. Merge similar patterns into more general patterns.
8. Organise the patterns in thematic sections.
9. Double-check patterns through keyword searches in compiled pdf-documents.
10. Re-evaluate patterns according to the more comprehensive information.
11. Determine the frequency and centrality of the patterns.
12. Investigate naturalisations, silences, and discursive tensions within and amongst patterns.

Finally, in the fourth category, I investigate assumptions, but as I address normative assumptions in the norms of sustainable mobility category, I mainly look at casual assumptions through this category. Therefore, I have posed the following question: *What causal assumptions about sustainable mobility do the texts contain?* A quote from Örebro Municipality (2016) illustrates the kind of causal assumptions common in the material, stating, 'Lower emission of greenhouse gases is a direct effect of increased public transport travels' (p. 7). From this statement, it is clear that a taken-for-granted causal relation is that increasing public transport travel leads to decreasing GHG emissions levels. In Table 4.2., these analytical questions are summarised together with the analytical steps and the main research questions.



With these conceptual clarifications, I have presented the first analytical step, mapping discursive patterns through thematic analysis. The analytical process so far is captured in the following points.

Thus, to briefly summarise the method of the thesis' first analytical step: I use thematic analysis to map discursive patterns. In this part, I have specified my approach by addressing several critical issues of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). First, I have operationalised prevalence and 'keyness' through the concepts of frequency and centrality to enable adequate descriptions of the discursive patterns. Second, I positioned my approach on the borderline between the three preceding dichotomies presented by Braun and Clarke (specific vs. general descriptions, inductive vs. deductive reasoning, latent vs. manifest level). Furthermore, my thematic analysis bears the most resemblance to the constructionist approach that Braun and Clarke present. Most notably, I argued that the theoretical categories I rely on are based on abductive reasoning. Finally, I returned to the previously constructed theoretical categories on which the thematic analysis builds.

## Step Two: How to Reconstruct Constitutive Lines of Reasoning

In the previous part, I presented the first step of the analysis, i.e., how to map the discursive patterns. This step aimed to analyse the discourse in detail, map patterns, and investigate complexities through the lenses of naturalisations, silences, and tensions. Contrastingly, the goal of the second step is to reconstruct the constitutive lines of reasoning within the UEA policy, looking for commonalities amongst the patterns.

In terms of empirical work, most of it is already done in the initial analysis. However, the results from the thematic analysis are reconstructed through the concept of constitutive lines of reasoning developed in the analytical framework. In short, I search for patterns amongst the discursive tensions and silences to analyse overarching constructions of sustainable mobility.

Moreover, whereas the first step only concerns one part of the empirical material (i.e., the agreements), the reconstruction contextualises the identified patterns by reassessing them against the entire policy material. Therefore, the following three concrete steps in the analytical process can be added to the above list:

13. Read the broader policy material and compare it with the patterns.
14. Reinterpret and reformulate patterns according to the broader policy material.
15. Identify patterns amongst the tensions and silences.

As described in the previous chapter, the constitutive line of reasoning concept aims to capture how tensions and silences interrelate and form several overarching constructions of sustainable mobility within the analysed policy. As political policies relate to political objectives, they tend to emphasise specific problems and solutions central to the policy. First, problems are explicit or implicit points of reference that legitimise actions. They constitute the aspects or phenomena that policies set out to tackle. Relatedly, solutions are the policies' general or specific transport measures to achieve their purposes. Finally, the problems and solutions are connected by underlying arguments. However, as noted by critical policy scholars, there are no objective problems, and research has to go beyond the intentions of the policymakers and investigate the problems and solutions implicit in the policy (Bacchi, 2000, 2009).

To organise the reconstruction of the constitutive lines of reasoning, I have reused the theoretical categories developed for the thematic analysis (i.e., reasons, norms, subjects, and causal assumptions). Thus, the lines of reasoning consist of specific alignments of patterns related to these theoretical categories, providing a coherent construction of the problems and solutions central to the context in which they exist. Notably, reconstructing the constitutive lines of reasoning is similar to discovering themes or patterns in the thematic analysis. It is an endeavour that can be inductive or aided by interpretive theories. Chapter 7 describes the process of identifying constitutive lines of reasoning within the analysed policy (Section 7.1). In short, I use a typology borrowed from growth management theory in an abductive way to organise the patterns into three constitutive lines of reasoning.

In practical terms, the constitutive lines of reasoning are reconstructed by analysing commonalities amongst the discursive tensions and silences (see Section 3.1.3. for definitions). The principal issue is to investigate how these tensions and silences of the discourse align and if they form general ways of reasoning. Thus, the first guiding analytical question is: *How do the discursive tensions interrelate?*

Although the tensions and silences are briefly identified in the previous analytical step (i.e., the thematic analysis), they are developed in this step. As for the silences, this second step is also where the interpretations they rely on are made explicit. Moreover, in forming constitutive lines of reasoning, the silences are analysed in the same manner as the above tensions. Thus, the following analytical question is used to investigate the silences: *How do the silences interrelate?*

Methodologically, the silences have been identified in one of two ways. The first way is by contrasting *detached statements* with the identified patterns. A detached statement is here defined as a statement which does not belong to a pattern but conveys something significant about issues connected to the policy field, in this case, transport. For example, in the UEA policy, there is one statement about the notion of a low-transport society. This notion indicates an alternative to the growth-centred approach to

transport and, thus, conflicts with several patterns connected to mobility growth. Therefore, the detached pattern illustrates a silence (albeit not complete) concerning alternatives to mobility growth.

The other way silences have been discovered is by contrasting naturalising patterns with the theoretical insights from critical planning and transport scholars presented in the analytical framework and the literature review. Particularly, the critical works reviewed in Sections 2.2. and 3.2.1. have helped determine the alternative viewpoints necessary to recognise the silences of the discourse. Moreover, as growth is central in the discourse, the theoretical perspectives on different growth forms have been especially valuable.

## Step Three: How to Situate the Policy Discourse Within the Transport Field

Situating the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy within the transport policy field constitutes the third step of the analysis. As the literature review revealed, two major discourses are often considered dominant in the transport field: the sustainable mobility discourse and the traditional transport discourse. The aim of situating the UEA policy discourse is to understand how it relates to these overarching transport discourses, and I use two different methods to achieve this task.

The first part of situating the UEA policy discourse within the transport field concerns the fundamental and naturalised representations in the discourse. By investigating these core representations, I hope to be able to provide insights into the overarching sustainable mobility discourse.

In contrast to the constitutive lines of reasoning, this part synthesises the general discursive features of the UEA policy discourse. One consequence is that the synthesis is more abstract and not concerned with the details to the same extent as the preceding analytical steps. On the other hand, as a result, a broader picture is provided, illuminating fundamental constructions. As the naturalised representations presented in the first step constitute what is constructed as natural and beyond contestation, these representations constitute the most fundamental constructions in the policy. Thus, the following analytical question forms the basis for the synthesis: *How do the naturalisations interrelate?*

As the synthesis is relatively abstract, it borders on theory development, illustrated by the metaphor I develop in Chapter 8. This metaphor aims to capture the essence of how sustainable mobility is constructed in the UEA policy, presenting a more comprehensive description of the dominant representations and filling gaps in the

empirical material. Generally, discourse analysis excels at providing ‘convincing empirical descriptions of a very important part of the social and political reality’ (Boréus, 2010, p. 172). However, CDA often relies extensively upon social theories to complement the analysis (Meyer, 2001). The degree to which the approach ‘forces’ pre-given theories on the empirical material is worth serious reflection.

Contrastingly, Richard Swedberg has argued that there has been an overemphasis on using and testing theory compared to the production of new theory. In his view, *theorising* is a process that goes beyond rigid methodological rules, necessitating creativity and intuition (Swedberg, 2012). Similarly, the grounded theory approach mentioned above shares this concern of emphasising theory development by not confining the analysis to pre-given theories (Charmaz, 2014). Although I do not systematically use these methods and approaches, they have influenced my synthesis, particularly in developing the metaphor.

Thus, while parts of the analysis follow the operationalisation and methodological principles laid out in this and the previous chapter (particularly Part 3.1.), other parts (i.e., developing the links between the naturalisations and developing a metaphor) are more in line with the creative process of theory development.

The second part of situating the discourse of the UEA policy within the transport policy field concerns the pivotal question of how the UEA policy discourse (as a manifestation of the overarching sustainable mobility discourse) relates to the traditional transport discourse. In simple terms, do the central representations in the UEA policy discourse challenge or reproduce the norms of the traditional discourse that have prevailed in the policy field for a long time? This analysis overlaps with an investigation of the institutional effects of discourse. For example, Neumann, exemplifying with an analysis of the Norwegian foreign ministry, argues for comparison as one of several suitable methods for studying institutional effects:

A third method is the comparative: an analysis of speechwriting in the Norwegian foreign ministry can be contrasted with how this discourse develops within, for example, the *Foreign Office (the British Foreign Ministry)*. (Neumann, 2003, p. 139, *my translation*)

Moreover, it also aligns with the critique of ideology common in the critical discourse analytical tradition. Fairclough argues for investigating ‘the effects of texts in inculcating and sustaining or changing ideologies’ (Fairclough, 2003, p. 9), and Boréus describes the rationale of the analysis to demonstrate the ‘ideological implications’ of the discursive patterns (Boréus, 2010, p. 175). Thus, these authors advocate a critical comparison between different discourses or manifestations of discourses in the social field. However, rather than engaging with the profound literatures around these

notions, I opt for a more straightforward approach, simply investigating whether the traditional discourse is challenged or reproduced by the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy.

The comparison necessarily involves more than one reference point, and whereas the first two analytical steps provide insights into the central representations of the UEA policy discourse, how I have identified the norms of traditional transport discourse remains to be developed. The description of the traditional discourse is based on how it is described and analysed in the sustainable transport literature. As I argued in Chapter 2, sustainable transport scholars often contrast their approach with what is considered to be a more conventional understanding of the transport system. I will use these analyses of what constitutes the central norms of the traditional discourse for the comparison. Understandably, objections might be raised about whether this does not create a partial and skewed picture. However, I see it quite differently. I have already stated several times that one of this thesis' purposes is to critically analyse the sustainable mobility discourse on the same premises that its proponents use to analyse the traditional discourse. Thus, in line with this ambition, one rationale behind using sustainable transport literature as the basis of my comparison is to investigate how it stacks up against its own normative standards. However, another reason is purely pragmatic because there are few comprehensive analyses of traditional transport planning done outside sustainable transport research.

The selection of works describing the traditional transport discourse is based on the literature review done in Chapter 2 and, to some extent, the policy background of Chapter 5. Concretely, the most influential works by prominent scholars in the research field have been used. This selection has not been pursued by any quantitative methods (such as counting citations, etc.) but is instead based on the general knowledge of the sustainable transport literature I have acquired by having engaged with it for several years.

### Summary of Analytical Steps

I have now presented the three analytical steps of mapping discursive patterns, reconstructing constitutive lines of reasoning, and situating the policy within the transport field. Additionally, the two latter comprise the sub-steps of, on one hand, the constitutive lines of reasoning of tensions and silences and, on the other hand, situating the UEA policy discourse within the transport field (relating it to the sustainable mobility and traditional transport discourses). Several concepts have been addressed and operationalised in all sections, and analytical questions have been derived. The table below illustrates how the steps and analytical questions relate to my main and sub-research questions. This summarising table concludes the first part of the method chapter, and now I turn my attention to the case study methodology and the empirical material.

**Table 4.2.** The questions used to guide the three analytical steps and how they connect to the main and sub-research questions.

Research question	Step	Sub-questions	Analytical questions
How is sustainable mobility constructed in the Swedish Urban Environment Agreement policy?	Mapping discursive patterns	What are the discursive patterns of sustainable mobility in the UEA policy?	What are the reasons for sustainable mobility constructed in the text?
			Which subjects of sustainable mobility are targeted and recognised in the text?
			Which norms of sustainable mobility are present in the text?
			What causal assumptions about sustainable mobility do the texts contain?
	Reconstructing lines of reasoning	Which are the dominant constitutive lines of reasoning in the UEA policy, and which ones are silenced?	How do the tensions interrelate?
			How do the silences interrelate?
	Situating the policy Discours	How does the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy relate to the traditional discourse in the transport policy field?	How do the naturalisations interrelate?
			Is the UEA policy discourse reproducing or challenging the central norms of the traditional transport discourse?

## Case Study

This thesis aims to understand how sustainable mobility is constructed in the UEA policy. While this requires an in-depth qualitative analysis design, the purpose is also to say something about the overarching sustainable mobility discourse (at least how it appears in the Western European context). For that reason, I use a *case study design* as the overarching empirical method of this thesis.

There is no ready-made blueprint for combining case study and discourse-analytical methodology (Mills et al., 2010), but generally, they fit together well (Neumann, 2003, p. 53). Like discourse analysis, single case studies allow for an in-depth mode of inquiry, particularly emphasising the significance of context (Yin, 2018, p. 15). Complexities, unexpected relationships, etc., are better captured through the detailed exploration of one or a few cases rather than large-N studies. Notably, a good case study excels in conceptual validity due to the possibility of allowing for more nuanced concepts (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 19).

Although many discourse analyses can be characterised as case studies (broadly defined), my reason for adopting a case study design relates to the thesis' qualitative ambition. Comparative or statistical approaches do not serve the explorative qualitative aim of understanding particular discursive constructions. Yet, as the term *case* reveals, whatever the study object (e.g., an event, a phenomenon, an object, a process, a policy, or a discourse), it is an example of a broader category (Gomm et al., 2000, p. 102).

The feasibility of studying the general through the particular is based on the methodological ideas of single case study generalisation and the crucial role of *good examples* in scientific research (Flyvbjerg, 2006). In short, the potential for generalisation from a single case relies on an information-oriented selection strategy<sup>48</sup>. Flyvbjerg argues that 'it is incorrect to conclude that one cannot generalise from a single case. It depends on the case one is speaking of and how it is chosen' (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 225)<sup>49</sup>. While this premise might be controversial for some, the approach has been used regularly in social scientific planning and transport literature (Hrelja et al., 2015; Hrelja et al., 2013; Isaksson et al., 2017; Kronsell et al., 2015; Legacy, 2016; Vigar, 2002; Winter, 2021).

### Selection of Case

In the introduction, I presented the Swedish UEA policy as the case of the study. In this section, I justify this selection and argue why it is possible to draw certain general conclusions from this single case.

Following Flyvbjerg (2006), I argue that the UEA is a *paradigmatic case*. I base this on the idea that it represents an illustrative example of the more general category of sustainable mobility discourse within Western European sustainable transport policies and that, therefore, it enables me to discover essential features of this said category. The rationale is based on the fact that Western European countries are relatively similar in economic and social aspects and have experienced comparable sustainable transport

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<sup>48</sup> Several ways of generalising in qualitative research have been proposed. Apart from the logic of paradigmatic case selection that I rely on, Flyvbjerg (2006) also mentions extreme/deviant cases, maximum variation cases, and critical cases (p. 230). Contrastingly, Larsson (2009) describes three (or four) lines of reasoning: enhancing generalisation potential by maximising variation, generalisation through context similarity, generalisation through recognition of patterns, and studies that undermine established universal 'truths' (which he does not accredit generalising potential, in contrast to Flyvbjerg, who labels it a critical case) (p. 28). Finally, Gobo (2008), argues that qualitative generalisations depend on three logics of inference: comparative inference, deductive inference, and emblematic case (p. 204). Of course, there are major overlaps between these three ways of conceptualising qualitative generalisations. For my purposes, the most interesting similarities are between 'paradigmatic case', 'emblematic case' and 'generalisations through recognition of patterns', which I take to refer to more or less the same thing.

<sup>49</sup> For a discussion on the problems with probability sampling, see Gobo (2008).

policy development over the past decades. Notably, because I am focusing on sustainable mobility discourse within these policies, there might be potential for general knowledge beyond this context as most of the worldwide discursive development of sustainable transport is connected to Western Europe<sup>50</sup>. However, as Flyvbjerg concludes, the researcher commonly has to base the justification of a paradigmatic case on their intuitions (2006, pp. 232-233). The following is an attempt to solidify my intuitions with arguments.

Comparing the initial formulation of the UEA with how the sustainable mobility discourse has developed in Western European transport policies, two key aspects indicate that the former can be considered a paradigmatic case. First, the focus on sustainability with its three-part definition (environmental, economic, and social sustainability) has been the standard framing since the Brundtland commission (WCED, 1987), particularly in the European context (see Section 5.1.3.). As sustainable mobility in many senses is an intervention into traditional transport planning, the environmental aspect of sustainability has been the main discursive emphasis (see Chapter 2). The UEA shares these two traits of, on one hand, using a three-dimensional understanding of sustainability and, on the other hand, emphasising environmental sustainability (Government Directive, 2015, p. 3; SFS 2015:579).

Second, looking at the mobility side of sustainable mobility, another triad is central: public transport, cycling, and walking (EC, 2011, p. 8; Gössling & Choi, 2015). Public ownership and large-scale application of public transport have led to it being emphasised in sustainable mobility discourse within Western European transport policies (Holden et al., 2020; Stanley & Lucas, 2014). These prioritisations are also found in the UEA. For example, the government directive states that ‘The Urban Environment Agreements should stimulate sustainable transports, primarily through improved public transport’ (Government Directive, 2015, p. 3) and at other places in the directive, it is made clear that besides public transport, cycling and walking are the additional forms of transport that should be promoted (Government Directive, 2015).

In Chapter 5, I give an overview of the international context of the UEA, but it is also worth briefly expanding on it in this section. Although I have not made a systematic review of Western European transport policies, it is easy to find similarities in other policies across Western Europe. The two key characteristics discussed above are present in many places. For example, the mid-term review of the European Commission’s 2001 Transport White Paper states, ‘The objective of an EU sustainable transport policy is that our transport systems meet society’s economic, social and environmental needs’

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<sup>50</sup> Arguably, countries such as Japan are also influential regarding alternatives to automobility. However, Western Europe is still leading regarding the connection between transport and sustainability. For a critical view of the relationship between transport and the colonial history of Western societies, see Schwanen (2018).



(EC, 2006, p. 3). Further down, it reads, 'Shifts to more environmentally friendly modes must be achieved where appropriate, especially on long distance, in urban areas and on congested corridors' (EC, 2006, p. 4). The sustainability triad is apparent in these quotes, and the connection between environmentally friendly modes of transport and congestion is similar to formulations in the UEA (Government Directive, 2015).

Another example is the UK White Paper on the Future of Transport, which emphasises that: 'We have had to make hard choices on how to combat congestion and pollution while persuading people to use their cars a little less - and public transport a little more' (DETR, 1998, p. 2). Again, the connections drawn between public transport, congestion, and pollution are similar to the government directive (Government Directive, 2015). Finally, the Norwegian Urban Environment Agreement (Bymiljøavtale), expresses that 'The goal of the government is that the growth in personal travel within the metropolitan areas should be accommodated by public transport, cycling and walking' (Aksnes, 2014, p. 3)<sup>51</sup>. As previously mentioned, this triad of sustainable modes of transport is also essential in the Swedish version. Although these kinds of statements represent easily accessible parts of the policies, since it is only through discourse analysis (or similar methods) that I can find implicit norms and assumptions, this is what I have to settle for in my case selection<sup>52</sup>.

An aspect worth acknowledging is that the UEA is a particular kind of policy instrument (allowing municipalities to apply for funding of investments). Presumably, this affects how texts and, consequently, discursive patterns are constructed. For example, an investment policy can be expected to emphasise increasing mobility compared to other policy instruments, such as those related to taxes. Thus, as some traits of the UEA are unique, the possibilities for treating the case as paradigmatic might be affected.

However, although there are substantial differences between policy instruments, these should not be over-emphasised regarding the discursive level. For example, in

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<sup>51</sup> Discussing the Norwegian version of the Urban Environment Agreement raises the question of why I have focussed on the Swedish policy and not its Norwegian counterpart. Apart from the apparent difficulties in analysing material in a language I do not fully master, the Swedish policy is more coherent as it is formed by applications evaluated according to a fixed framework and not individually negotiated agreements. Additionally, the Swedish policy is more diverse in terms of the city sizes than the Norwegian, only focussing on the metropolitan areas. Thus, these aspects point towards the conclusion that the Swedish policy is preferable for studying general discursive conflicts and tensions permeating the transport policy field in Western Europe.

<sup>52</sup> It is important to acknowledge that sustainable mobility is a broad term used in many different ways. For example, a business-driven understanding of the concept exists, less about public transport and more about electrical (and often autonomous) cars promoted by companies such as Tesla and Volvo. This construction sometimes penetrates government policies, but sustainable mobility is seen along the lines described in the argument above at the time of the UEA policy and in the Western European context.

several of the interviews I have made, it is evident that restrictions on car traffic have been an important consideration (Interview 2015-06-24; Interview 2019-02-25; Interview 2020-05-07). Moreover, policies introducing car or fuel taxes are often framed in a non-restrictive way, i.e., not as restrictions on car traffic per se. Thus, as most tax-based instruments used in the Swedish context aim to achieve an increased share of non-petrol cars or non-petrol fuels,<sup>53</sup> these policies share many of the traits of the UEA, which emphasises the increased share of travel with public transport.

Moreover, as the policy was a significant part of *Fossil Freedom on the Roads* (SOU, 2013:84), which was (and still is) the most comprehensive government-commissioned inquiry on sustainable transport in Sweden, it arguably represents the current state of Swedish sustainable transport policy. Additionally, focusing on a broad sustainable transport policy is preferable when studying the tensions and conflicts compared to more specific policies; for example, adjusting taxes. In the government directive, it is evident that the UEA is a standard sustainability policy that aims to ‘do it all’ (Government Directive, 2015). Campbell and others have elaborated on sustainable planning’s tendency not to acknowledge political tensions, and they have theorised the conflicts that, nevertheless, permeate sustainable planning (Campbell, 1996, 2016; Gunder, 2006; Rosenbloom, 2016). Thus, the UEA policy provides an excellent venue to critically explore tensions and conflicts.

As the above arguments suggest, the UEA’s main characteristics allow me to treat it as a fruitful case for studying the general category of Western European sustainable transport policy and its inherent sustainable mobility discourse. Still, it is vital to be aware of the provisional nature of this proposition. As Flybjerg states, ‘it is not possible consistently, or even frequently, to determine in advance whether a given case [...] is paradigmatic’ (2006, p. 233). Re-evaluation might, thus, be needed further along the line.

### Limitations and Possibilities for Generalisation

As the case study in this thesis is limited in scope and time (I analyse the first two years of the UEA policy), the discursive patterns presumably do not represent something entirely new. Thus, as I mentioned already, I argue that, although some aspects of the UEA policy are specifically related to its design, for the most part, the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA is a manifestation of an already established discourse, namely the overarching sustainable mobility discourse within the Western European context. This relates to my aim to say something about the general sustainable mobility

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<sup>53</sup> Examples are the Bonus-Malus policy, increasing the cost of highly polluting cars while reducing the cost of less polluting ones (The Swedish Government, 2017) and the Greenhouse Gas Reduction mandate (SFS 2017:1201), forcing fuel suppliers to blend in a given percentage of biofuels.

discourse, as its manifestation in Western European sustainable policies constitutes a central part of it.

Nevertheless, the single case study has some clear limitations. For my inquiry, the most notable is the difficulty in studying causality (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 25). Although I have not formulated my research goals in terms of causal explanations, analysing how the policy reproduces or challenges traditional transport discourse would benefit from knowledge about the actual influence of the policy. However, a proper analysis of causal effects would need to go beyond the case, adding more elaborated comparative or statistical methods or a rigorous process-tracing method. Thus, as the time frame analysed is short, my study cannot establish actual discursive changes. Still, my prime focus is not on discursive change but on exploration of the representations dominant at the present moment. Therefore, a key motivation for this short time frame is that it better suits the purpose of the thesis.

Analysing a case necessarily involves internal generalisation (Gobo, 2008; Gomm et al., 2000). This process results in increasingly abstract and general descriptions of the case, making the case consistent with the broader category which it belongs to. However, and importantly, this process could be extended so that the case becomes so general that it aligns with almost anything. It follows that the crucial task is to stop generalising and abstracting in time for the case to both be general and bring novel insights (a process analogous to constructing theoretical concepts, where the goal is to find the sweet spot between extent and explanatory power). For example, a particular part of a policy might revolve around the values of increasing public transport rides on a given bus line. While this very specific pattern can hardly be seen as something generally applicable, a generalised version that instead concerns the value of increasing public transport travel may transgress the particularities of the policy.

Thus, much like the process of theory development in grounded theory, the analytical chapters move from the specific to the general, and thereby from less to greater generalisable conclusions. Still, this does not mean that the first analytical step, where I map and identify discursive patterns, provides no room for generalisations, as many findings might apply to other contexts. However, making those arguments on the generalisability of particular patterns is beyond the thesis' scope. Instead, transferability or natural generalisation is applicable here (Gomm et al., 2000). Larsson (2009) explains that one way to generalise is to provide as descriptions as detailed as possible to enable readers to conclude the transferability to similar contexts. Although this puts some of the analytical burdens on the reader, it is an integral and often assumed part of much qualitative research. Then, in the reconstruction in Chapter 7, the constitutive lines of reasoning generally apply more to Swedish sustainable mobility discourse and beyond. It makes sense, as this analysis concerns overarching constructions of sustainable mobility, which are less case specific. Finally, the most

general conclusions are drawn when situating the UEA policy in Chapter 8. The aim of the chapter is partly to enable a better understanding of the sustainable mobility discourse through analysing the UEA policy, but it is also to compare the UEA policy to the traditional transport discourse, determining to what extent there is a conflict between the two or if they are in agreement.

The above discussion on generalisability is from a methodological point of view. Therefore, I will return to the issue in the concluding chapter, with the hindsight of the empirical analysis.

## Three Levels of Context

Before turning my attention to the thesis' empirical material, one more concept has to be addressed and developed. *Context* is an essential but elusive concept within many forms of discourse analysis. A single text, discourse, or policy never exists in a vacuum. There are always things happening 'around', which affect and are affected by whatever is analysed. Analytically it is possible to extract one aspect of reality and use it as an object of study, but this piece cannot be properly understood or explained without considering its linkages to the surroundings.

I deploy three levels of context, pragmatically determined by my definition of discourse, the character of the empirical material, and how I have designed the study. When defining discourse, I use the word context to delimit it<sup>54</sup>, and the sustainable mobility discourse I analyse is located in the UEA policy. Consequently, all relevant policy material must be analysed to enable convincing conclusions about the policy discourse.

However, from a CDA perspective, different types of material belong to different genres (Wodak, 2001)<sup>55</sup>. Although I do not use the genre concept to the extent that some of the more linguistically-oriented discourse analyses do (Krzyżanowski, 2010), it helps motivate my approach in this particular instance. *Genres* can be used to make sense of certain aspects of regularities amongst texts. These relate to the *form* rather than the discursive *content* of the texts. For example, when looking at a press release

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<sup>54</sup> This usage of context is more or less synonymous with 'field of social action', which other definitions use (Krzyżanowski, 2010; Reisigl & Wodak, 2009).

<sup>55</sup> Fairclough defines genre as a 'socially ratified way of using language in connection with a particular type of social activity' (Fairclough, 1995: 14). I think it makes sense to view genres as norms that limit the articulation of discourse within different types of texts (cf. Elder-Vass, 2010, 2012b). Thus, a text is created in relation to institutionalised norms pertaining to one or several genre(s). Genres govern texts, not discourses. Here, I deviate from how CDA scholars often use the concept (particularly the DHA version) as they consider both genres and texts to be realisations of discourse (Wodak, 2001, p. 5).

from a political actor, the genre of political communication sets certain limits on the structure of the text and the types of content perceived as acceptable. The tone is often impersonal, the message concise, and the text usually includes a couple of quotes by the main actors. Thus, the genre will limit the expression of the discourse and only show those aspects that align with the norms associated with the particular type of text. There are many consequences, but for my purposes, the critical conclusion is that material belonging to different genres might need to be analysed with different analytical concepts and methods.

Concretely, this relates to the particular character of my material, consisting of two major parts: on one hand, a wide range of different policy texts (legislation, reports, press releases, interviews) and, on the other hand, 31 agreements between the municipality or region and the Swedish Transport Administration (see next section for a detailed presentation of the empirical material). The fundamental difference between these two parts of material has made it difficult to use the same framework, resulting in the above discussed research design with three analytical steps.

I have already presented the three analytical steps in detail, but the levels of context link the analytical steps to different types of material. In the first step, I identify and map discursive patterns within the agreements through thematic analysis. At the onset, this analysis is strictly based on the agreement texts and the statements they contain, but these are part of what I call the '*context of statements*'. This consists of external texts somehow related to the analysed texts. Thus, different statements have different contexts of statements, but these are only incorporated into the analysis as they are needed for interpretation. A concrete example from the analysis is the representation of 'an attractive city'. What is meant by this is not defined in the agreements. As a result, to interpret the statements, external texts demonstrating a distinction between 'an attractive city' as 'a growing city' or 'a sustainable city' had to be included. Significantly, though, the '*context of statements*' is separated from the policy context, which may also lead to reinterpretations, but this time of the patterns, not the single statements.

In the second step, I reconstruct constitutive lines of reasoning. Whereas statements are the fundamental object of study in the thematic analysis, the reconstruction is based on analysing the patterns. However, the patterns identified in the thematic analysis are only based on the agreements, an essential but limited part of the material. Thus, these patterns are reinterpreted by including the '*context of agreements*', constituted by the broader policy material. As mentioned above, the sum of the policy material represents the borders of the discourse and has to be included. In other words, to convincingly describe the general nature of the discourse, the entire discourse needs to be analysed.

Finally, the third step is to situate the discourse within the transport policy field. I first explore how the UEA policy discourse relate to the overarching sustainable mobility discourse. Then, in the second part, I compare the UEA policy discourse with the

traditional transport discourse. I use the policy background and literature review identify the central norms of the traditional transport discourse. The material used for this comparison constitutes the '*context of policy*'. Thus, although the 'context of policy' surrounds the UEA, its specific delimitations and characteristics are an analytical product.

Whether the context is discovered or constructed has been extensively debated within and between text analytical traditions (Stenvoll & Svensson, 2011; Svensson, 2019, pp. 148-149). Many CDA studies (especially in the discourse-historical approach versions) use multiple levels of context. These contexts are explicitly linked to interpretative theories at various levels of abstraction (Krzyżanowski, 2020; Reisigl, 2018; Reisigl & Wodak, 2009) and are based on the idea that contexts are researcher constructs (van Dijk, 1997, pp. 15-16). Contrastingly, the notion of analytically constructed contexts has been questioned. These critics have pointed to the lack of systematic treatment of contexts within some discourse-analytical traditions (mostly CDA), and the choice of contexts is politically motivated rather than based on the analysed texts (Blommaert, 2004; Schegloff, 1997). Claiming the middle ground, Stenvoll and Svensson propose that by *anchoring* the context to the analysed texts, contextualisations allow broader interpretations while remaining connected to the empirical material (Stenvoll & Svensson, 2011). Although the contextualisation does not need to be literal (in that parts of the texts explicitly refer to the context), the researcher must provide plausible arguments for why a particular context is relevant (ibid.). My use of context aligns with the suggestions of Stenvoll and Svensson. As this part has explained, the three levels of contexts have distinct purposes linked to the design and material of the thesis. In this sense, the contexts are constructed but still anchored in the material.

In sum, I use three levels of context with distinct analytical functions. First, the 'context of statements' concerns external material related to the statements within the UEA policy agreements. Concretely, this context functions as an expansion of the material to interpret the statements properly. Contrastingly, the 'context of agreements' allows for reinterpretations of the identified patterns by incorporating the entire policy material. Finally, I use the 'context of policy' to situate the UEA policy discourse within the transport policy field more generally, and the central representations of the policy are contrasted and compared with the background and previous research external to the UEA policy.

## Empirical Material

In this final part, I present the empirical material used in the thesis. I have used a wide range of material, such as agreements, legislation, reports, press releases, interviews, and field notes, delimited by the scope of the case study.

Notably, all material is considered texts and analysed through the text analytical method of discourse analysis. However, not all types of material are analysed in all three analytical steps developed above. The reason for making a sharp distinction between different materials relates to the analytical tools used in the thesis. The specific relationship between the texts, where some (such as legislative ones) strongly influence others, makes the texts uneven and quite different. Moreover, how I have identified discursive patterns, pointing out frequency and centrality, also lends itself to analysing a homogenous material.

Thus, to avoid these problems, I first analyse the agreements using the thematic analysis developed above, then add additional material to contextualise the initial findings. Therefore, the material used to complement the agreements allows me to answer the second and third of the sub-research questions better. In the thematic analysis (answering the first sub-research question), I mainly rely on the so-called agreements between the Swedish Transport Administration and individual municipalities and regions. Still, based on the ‘context of statements’ (see the discussion in the previous section), other texts are sometimes included to help interpret ambiguous statements.

For the second step (corresponding to my second sub-research question), reconstruction of the constitutive lines of reasoning, the entire policy material is included. The analysis is based on the result from the thematic analysis, but these are reinterpreted through the additional material, also referred to as the ‘context of agreements’. Thus, except for the agreements, a wide range of policy texts, including interviews and field notes, is used to reconstruct general discursive contradictions and commonalities in the policy. Still, and importantly, the broader policy material may also be part of the ‘context of statements’ used in the previous step, but then it aids the analysis and is not analysed itself.

Finally, when situating the UEA policy within the transport policy field (to answer the third sub-research question), I contrast findings of the preceding steps with previous research and policy background. This ‘context of policy’ consists of the secondary sources used in Chapter 2 on previous literature and Chapter 5 on the policy background.

## Agreements (2015-2016)

One unique feature of the UEA is that it includes many so-called agreements<sup>56</sup> between the national and municipal (sometimes regional) levels. The Swedish Transport Administration invites municipalities and regions to apply for part-financing during one or two calls per year (see Section 5.2 for a description of this process). I base my analysis on all 31 agreements from the first three calls during 2015 and 2016 (see Appendix A for a list of all included agreements)<sup>57</sup>. The documents are between seven and 25 pages long, containing both technical and political parts.

Since the UEA is continuously expanding through new projects being co-funded, it has been necessary to delimit the empirical material somehow. The decision to draw the line after the three first rounds of calls was made for two reasons. The first reason relates to the policy's formulation. After the third round, the government amended the regulation to include bicycle infrastructure projects (SFS 2017:9). Although this shift would have been intriguing to capture, the quality of those later agreements in terms of texts diminished significantly. Bicycle infrastructure projects are generally smaller and the deadline to finish them was before the end of 2018, so thus the document mainly contained technical and financial specifications about the concrete transport measures. As noted above, the earlier agreements included political argumentation and discussion, which proved to be the parts I could use in my analysis. Second, an in-depth qualitative method limits the amount of material possible to study thoroughly. Looking at the extent of patterns in Chapter 6, analysing 31 documents appears to strike the right balance between quantity and quality.

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<sup>56</sup> The term agreement is slightly misleading as it is rather an application submitted by a municipality or region to the Swedish Transport Administration (Isaksson & Knaggård, 2019). Still, I use agreement because it is the term referred to within the policy.

<sup>57</sup> In each round, many applications were rejected. In the first round, 27 were not approved, mostly due to the suggested measures not fulfilling the criteria in the secondary legislation (e.g., they were about cycling and walking infrastructure or public transport vehicles and operation costs). Undoubtedly, the uncertainties and the short time frames played a big part in why so many applications failed to meet the formal criteria. Contrastingly, in the second round, seven applications were rejected. Approximately half of these contained the same deficit as the ones in the first round, whereas the other half formally fulfilled the criteria but was expected not to lead to the desirable results (i.e., increasing the ratio of public transport travel and housing construction). Finally, in the third round, 10 applications were rejected based, on one hand, on the unlikelihood of leading to the desired results and, on the other hand, that the measures were not planned to be finished in time (before the end of 2018). Therefore, I have chosen not to include these rejected applications in the thesis' empirical material. While their inclusion might have provided some insights into the mechanism and borders of the discourse (i.e., what separates the insiders from the outsider and according to what norms), most of the applications were rejected purely on technical grounds. Furthermore, the rejections by the Swedish Transport Administration are very short and do not elaborate on the precise grounds for the decision. Thus, they would be difficult to use as indications of discursive norms.



The application forms to be filled in by municipalities (the foundation of the agreements) contained many mandatory fields. Generally, they were either political or technical in character. The former revolved around how the proposed municipal transport measures and service-in-return lived up to the requirements of the regulation. In contrast, the latter pertained to financial and technical matters, such as the time schedules of the projects. For my study, the politically more elaborated parts turned out to be the most relevant. Below, I present the application headlines containing these descriptions (see Appendix B for an early version of the application form).

The first headline, requiring a free text answer, was titled: ‘A general description of how the applied measures and service-in-return fit the overarching work with a sustainable urban environment by the municipality or the county council (8 §)’ (The Swedish Transport Administration, 2016a, p. 1)<sup>58</sup>. The answers to this tended to concern an abstract, city-planning level and include discussions about the overarching aims of the transport measures and general transport policies.

After several specific headlines about the transport measures’ particularities, another heading called for more general descriptions: ‘An analysis of how the measures lead to a greater share of the city’s personal travel being made by public transport and help to fulfil the environmental quality goal of good build environment [*God bebyggd miljö*] 8§’ (ibid., p. 3). Further down, it was specified that the analysis should include how the municipal transport measures will lead to energy-efficient solutions with low GHG emissions. The answers to this headline also contained more elaborate descriptions. Still, they were, for the most part, more closely related to the measures themselves than the previously mentioned policy and city planning level.

Finally, a third part of the application that turned out to be particularly significant for my analysis concerned the effects and had the headline: ‘A description of how applied measures, the service-in-return, and their effects will be followed up (8 §)’ (ibid., p. 6). The sub-headline, requiring the applicant to ‘describe the expected effects’, was helpful for my purposes of studying causal assumptions within the agreements.

The agreements provide coherent yet complex material originating from many sources. Thus, as the principal material used to investigate the construction of sustainable mobility, it allows me to identify the discursive patterns to analyse tensions and commonalities within the UEA policy.

## Policy and Background Material

In addition to the agreements, the main policy material consists of many diverse texts. However, they all have in common that they explicitly relate to the UEA. Thus, I

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<sup>58</sup> This quote, as well as the following quotes from the application form, have been translated by me.

include all relevant<sup>59</sup> textual material concerning the UEA between 2015 and 2016. This additional policy material principally enables me to contextualise the discursive patterns found in the agreements. Thus, certain patterns might be reinterpreted in light of these additional texts. For example, looking at the pattern of housing construction (identified in the agreements) in light of the other policy documents, it could also be understood to specifically relate to a housing shortage (see Section 7.2.1.). These kinds of contextualisation are done in both the second and third analytical steps.

These years cover the formal initiation of the policy in the government directive (Government Directive, 2015), several preparatory reports (The Swedish Transport Administration, 2015d, 2015e, 2015f) and the secondary legislation (SFS 2015:579). In the government directive, the Transport Administration was instructed to investigate the preconditions for a policy according to several general guidelines. Hence, the two preparatory reports directly responded to this directive. Finally, the secondary legislation was partly based on the recommendations in the preparatory reports. Thus, these texts stand in a specific relationship, affecting each other. Moreover, as foundations of the policy, these documents have influenced the other policy texts, including the agreements. Therefore, although I do not analyse intertextuality in the material in any systematic way (in contrast to more text-oriented discourse analyses, e.g., Fairclough, 2003), it is vital to keep in mind how the types of material are related as the earlier documents are the point of departure for the later ones.

Additionally, the broader policy material includes parliamentary records referring to the policy during these years (Parliamentary Record, 2014/15:57, 2014/15:73, 2014/15:86, 2014/15:112). In Chapter 5, on the policy background, I argue that environmental concerns were substantially downplayed during the parliamentary debates. Still, some aspects were elaborated on in these debates, such as housing construction. Furthermore, as my analysis investigates silences, material that appears irrelevant at the onset must be included to avoid the risk of ignoring texts where the silences are not so silent.

Finally, all press releases and debate articles concerning the UEA during the investigated period have been analysed (Johansson & Kaplan, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c; Johansson et al., 2015; Kaplan, 2015; The Swedish Transport Administration, 2015a, 2015c). These texts are excellent in illustrating the aspects emphasised by the leading policy actors, thus demonstrating the main ways in which the policy is justified and legitimised nationally.

Apart from the specific documents relating to the UEA during 2015-2016, a wide range of materials has been used in the other parts of the inquiry. As elaborated on

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<sup>59</sup> I exclude material from other sources than policy actors (politicians and civil servants). Thus, material such as news articles that briefly mention the policy or reproduce press releases is not included.

earlier, the 'context of statements' involves additional texts for interpretative purposes. There are no general rules or guidelines for when to include other texts or which text to use, but all additional texts are related to the representations in discourse. Above (Section 4.5.), I exemplified how this was done concretely for the representation of the attractive city.

Moreover, when situating the UEA policy, I rely on policy background texts conceptualised as the 'context of policy'. Therefore, many secondary and primary sources are used in this description of the policy background in Chapter 5. Notably, the analysis of the processes leading to the finalisation of the UEA is done by looking at documents before 2015, such as government, agency, and commission reports (e.g., SEPA, 2014; SNBHBP, 2014; SOU, 2013:84; The Swedish Transport Administration, 2015f).

In short, many documents are used in addition to the agreements in the analyses following the thematic analysis. These texts enable contextualisation for the reconstruction constitutive lines of reasoning and the comparison when situating the policy within the transport policy field. Thus, this broader material provides the foundation for a more comprehensive answer to how sustainable mobility is constructed, as offered in Chapters 7 and 8.

## Interviews and Field Notes

Twelve semi-structured interviews with, in total, 13 civil servants and politicians at the local, regional, and national levels were conducted.<sup>60</sup> They lasted between 20 and 90 minutes and all were recorded and transcribed. The first selection process was guided by an informed selection of several key policy actors based on an initial case overview. Contrastingly, the following selection relied on recommendations from the first interviews, also known as snowball selection (Edwards & Holland, 2013; Marshall, 1996).

Similar to the policy and background material, the interviews and field notes enable me to contextualise the discursive patterns from the first analytical step. However, more specifically, the principal purpose of doing interviews was to acquire in-depth and contextual information lacking in document analysis. Thus, the selection strategy aimed to cover all relevant levels of the policy and locate the central actors of those levels. Accordingly, most interviews were made with informants on the national level to balance the fact that the bulk of the documents analysed concerned the local level. The following is the complete list of interviews:

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<sup>60</sup> In two of the interviews, two interviewees participated, and one participant was interviewed twice. The first interview (Interview 2015-06-24) was conducted and transcribed by Åsa Knaggård.

- two politicians from the national level (Interview 2017-04-13; Interview 2020-04-27);
- four civil servants from the municipal level (Interview 2017-03-29; Interview 2018-12-11; Interview 2021-12-07);
- one civil servant from a ministry (Interview 2019-01-11);
- three civil servants from the Swedish Transport Administration (Interview 2015-06-24; Interview 2019-01-09; Interview 2019-02-25);
- three civil servants from related agencies on the national level (Interview 2019-02-05; Interview 2020-05-07; Interview 2020-05-11).

About half of the interview questions were specific to the person interviewed, while the other half were general questions posed to everyone (see the interview guide template in Appendix C).

In addition, the empirical material includes field notes made through participant observations at eight workshops or similar events related to the UEA policy. Most of them were attended by civil servants from the Swedish Transport Administration and involved municipalities. The length of the field notes varies considerably, with the shortest being only a couple of paragraphs and the longest consisting of about seven pages.

In the fieldwork literature, a distinction is made between explicitly participatory fieldwork and that which aims not to affect what is researched (Emerson et al., 1995). I position my research in the first category, but this raises the question of how my participation affected the events. At most workshops and seminars, information about me and other participating researchers was provided at the start. Undoubtedly, the presence of researchers may have influenced the discussion. Still, the purpose of the field notes is not to provide ‘true accounts’ of practices or events but to give insights into the discourse, similar to the interviews. As a central part of discourse is the restriction of the conversations according to customs and norms, the participation of researchers may even facilitate these insights.

In qualitative research, questions of positionality are generally considered crucial (Lincoln, 1995). There is a dual need to be aware and explicit about the assumptions of the research and the researcher’s position in society (Morrow, 2005). As Guillemin and Gillam (2016) state, a ‘reflexive researcher is one who is aware of all these potential influences and is able to step back and take a critical look at his or her own role in the research process’ (p. 275). Additionally, it is critical to recognise the specific societal position of privileges and power that you, as a researcher and individual, possess in relation to the participants and informants of the study. This second dimension of positionality might be less of a concern in document analysis, where the analysed texts are not co-produced by the researcher. However, as this thesis also involves material that has been co-constructed by myself, positionality is an important concern.

Ethical considerations revolve around questions researchers might face during their research practice. Many ethical considerations need to be addressed in all kinds of

research (Guillemin & Gillam, 2016), but perhaps even more so in studies involving active participation by non-researchers. Guillemin and Gillam (2016) distinguish between *procedural ethics* and *ethics in practice* (p. 263). Procedural ethics are about the issues before the actual study, highlighting the need for ethical considerations when designing the research. These are the ethical questions answered in application forms to ethical committees. In contrast, ethics in practice are the ethical issues arising when conducting research. For this thesis, ethics in practice mainly concerns how the interviews and participatory observations are done and subsequently used.

From a general and outside view, none of the interviewees or workshop participants belonged to any vulnerable group. On the contrary, all participants were influential and well-paid civil servants or politicians. Therefore, the thesis is more aligned with 'studying up' (Edwards & Holland, 2013, p. 83). These 'elite interviews' have their particular difficulties, primarily related to the agendas of the participants and the risk that there are formal or legal constraints on what they can talk about (ibid., p. 84). These constraints were especially evident in the interview with the civil servant at the ministry (Interview 2019-01-11, 2019) but have been presumed to apply to all interviews. Although the participants can be categorised as belonging to privileged societal groups, on all occasions, I was aware that my views of the participants' positions were limited, and I treated them as provisional (cf. Edwards & Holland, 2013, p. 77ff).

For all the interviews, informed consent by the participants was attained<sup>61</sup>. However, the question of informed consent is not as unproblematic as it sometimes might seem in ethical codes of conduct. First of all, the formalisation of the interview or observation could be in the way of honest and rich accounts. Conversely, signing a consent form might trick the participants into thinking the revealed information will be handled in a way which is not the case (Edwards & Holland, 2013, p. 67). Notably, according to the *Swedish principle of public access to official records*<sup>62</sup>, interview and observation transcripts used in research are common property.

The purpose of conducting interviews and taking field notes is not linked to the individual policy actors, as would be the case in other research designs. Instead, I use this material to contextualise the patterns from the thematic analysis of the agreements and attain insights into the policy background. Thus, the identity of the participants is less relevant in the analysis, making interviewees less vulnerable.

In sum, the purpose of the interviews and field notes is to provide contextual information and occasionally determine the proper interpretations of vague statements or patterns in the principal material. However, more importantly, they are both used

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<sup>61</sup> In one interview, this informed consent was only given verbally (Interview 2015-06-24). In the early interviews, a relatively limited form was used. However, since the introduction of GDPR (EU 2016/679, 2016), it was replaced by a more comprehensive form (see Appendix D).

<sup>62</sup> Offentlighetsprincipen in Swedish.

to reconstruct the constitutive lines of reasoning and contextualise the patterns identified in the thematic analysis. Thus, they contribute to the answer to my second and third research sub-question in Chapters 7 and 8.

### Reading and Translating the Material

This thesis process has been genuinely bilingual. All primary material is in Swedish, while most of the literature and my analytical categories have been in English. As I write in English, translation is required before or after the analysis. Fairclough has pointed out the difficulty of using translated data as the source of discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992, p. 196); text nuances, contradictions, and ambiguities risk getting lost in translation. Although I do not use linguistic methods as detailed as those of Fairclough, I sympathise with the concern. As my native language is Swedish, I have undertaken the initial analytical work in Swedish and translated all the quotes from the material<sup>63</sup>. This turns the concern about interpretative knowledge into a question of correct translation. This problem is alleviated somewhat by relying on a broad social scientific approach (compared to Fairclough's more detailed, cf. Chapter 3), where the meaning of a statement transgresses language barriers.

Even though something might be lost in translation from the reader's perspective, there are definite gains with the translation process from the analyst's perspective. Translating a text forces a deep investigation of the meaning conveyed by the text and creates an awareness of the general linguistic and discursive norms in the cultural-linguistic context of the material.

### Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, I have presented and developed the methods used in the thesis, including a single case study design. I have also presented the empirical material of the thesis and expanded on the three levels of context I deploy. As the analytical part of the thesis is divided into three steps, I expanded on the methods and specific analytical questions used for each step.

The first step is mapping and identifying discursive patterns, where I rely on thematic analysis. I discussed several concepts related to this method, particularly prevalence and keyness, which I operationalise as frequency and centrality. Additionally, I developed how the theoretical categories constructed in the analytical framework are used in the

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<sup>63</sup> This applies throughout the thesis if nothing says otherwise. Hence, the customary phrase '*translated by the author*' is not added to the quotes from the empirical material.

thematic analysis, posing analytical questions about the reasons, subjects, norms, and causal assumptions of sustainable mobility that are present in the texts.

The second step, namely the reconstruction, is twofold. First, it aims to capture the tensions in the UEA policy. For this purpose, I returned to the concept of constitutive lines of reasoning developed in Chapter 3 and elaborated on how these dominant patterns might be reconstructed. Consequently, I presented the aim of analysing how the tensions interrelate. Furthermore, this step also includes an investigation of the silences within the UEA policy and I addressed how these silences might be located and analysed in the material.

The final analytical step revolves around situating the discourse within the transport policy field. First, I presented the tools used for exploring how the UEA policy discourse relates to the overarching sustainable mobility discourse. Moreover, I developed how to compare the UEA policy discourse to the central norms of the traditional transport discourse.

In addition to the concrete analytical methods, the chapter also presented case study as the overarching design. I argued that the UEA policy could be viewed as a paradigmatic case of Western European sustainable transport policy. More specifically, I focus on sustainable mobility discourse; thus, the UEA policy constitutes a typical manifestation of this discourse, enabling generalisation. The categorisation of the case as paradigmatic is necessarily provisional, but based on its explicit characteristics, the UEA policy (its focus on public transport, environmental sustainability, and technical innovations) represents a typical sustainable mobility policy.

I also reviewed the central role of contexts. In short, I developed how the thesis relies on a multi-level use of context. Whilst several previous studies link the different levels of context to interpretative theories, I connect them to my empirical material. Concretely, I presented three levels, the 'context of statements', the 'context of agreements', and the 'context of policy', linking them to different parts of the empirical material and the three analytical steps of the thesis.

Finally, a substantial part of the chapter was devoted to an overview of the empirical material used in the thesis. I presented the different types of material according to the analytical steps developed earlier. The so-called agreements between municipalities or regions and the Swedish Transport Administration are used for the thematic analysis (I analysed 31 agreements in total). Conversely, a broader set of policy material is included for the reconstruction, consisting of reports, parliamentary records, and press releases. Moreover, I also rely on interviews and field notes in this analysis. Twelve semi-structured interviews with, in total, 13 civil servants and politicians at the local, regional, and national levels are used. Additionally, eight observation field notes from workshops or similar events are included. Concerning this co-constructed material, I discussed essential issues of positionality and ethics.

In the next chapter, the empirical work begins as I review the policy background of the UEA. However, rather than only being descriptive, the chapter constructs the essential backdrop for the following analytical chapters, particularly with regard to the initiation of the UEA policy.





# Swedish Transport Policies and the Urban Environment Agreement

A new approach to mobility policy is now emerging which is trying to find a balance between the two [predict & provide and predict & prevent]. It is trying to identify forms of mobility which acknowledge the need and desirability of mobility and, at the same time, can reduce its negative effects. This is what is generally meant by 'sustainable mobility' and is supported by a growing array of actors spanning academia and the profession. - Luca Bertolini<sup>64</sup>

Not surprisingly, policymakers the world over, told that they can have their cake and eat it, have seized on the idea. Almost every country is now committed, at least on paper, to the principles of sustainable development. - Neil Carter<sup>65</sup>

This chapter consists of two major parts. In the first part, I contextualise the case study by sketching the general traits of Swedish transport policies, emphasising how sustainability was introduced into such policies during the past decades. This thesis' case, the Urban Environment Agreement (UEA), constitutes only a brief recent part of a century-long development of the transport system. Therefore, this chapter provides the case study's necessary context.

In addition, the chapter also functions as a point of reference when I situate the UEA policy discourse and compare it to the traditional transport discourse in Chapter 8. In the previous chapter, I introduced the 'context of policy' (see Section 4.5.). The present chapter helps to provide this context through a descriptive analysis of the historical development of Swedish national-level planning and transport policy.

In the second part, I provide a detailed description of the UEA sustainable transport policy, in which the analysed discourse is located. The political processes analysed in

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<sup>64</sup> Bertolini (2012, p. 18).

<sup>65</sup> Carter (2007, p. 208).

this part provide insights into the policy's social and political background, enabling me to contextualise and interpret statements and patterns investigated in the subsequent analyses.

## Swedish Transport Policies

I describe two overarching periods in this account of the historical development of Swedish transport planning policies. The first one concerns the development of the modern transport system, roughly from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to around 1990. Around the second half of this period, accommodating cars through rational planning became the dominant development. However, in early 1990, new ideas began influencing transport policies. Sustainability was increasingly integrated into transport policies following general societal trends in Western Europe. I have delimited the overview to this second period between 1990 and 2015 (the latter year was when the UEA was launched). Importantly, these two periods mirror the distinction between traditional transport and sustainable mobility discourses described in Chapter 2.

### Traditional Transport Policies in Sweden

At the turn of the 20th century, the Swedish transport system was predominantly made up of trains, horse-drawn carriages, and active modes of travel (i.e., cycling and walking) (Falkemark, 2006). However, this period was the beginning of a complete transformation whereby cars would come to dominate the environment. The state had started to regulate the contours of the developing automobile society through the automobile regulation of the year 1906 (*automobilförordningen*)<sup>66</sup>, the automobile bill of the year 1916 (*automobilpropositionen*), and several tax regulations between the years 1922 and 1924 (Falkemark, 2006, pp. 190-200). Still, as Lundin (2008) expresses it, 'The absence of intentional and major decisions and the lack of strong actors caused the Swedish automobility to develop mostly without steering during the first half of the twentieth century' (p. 21, *my translation*). Consequently, Sweden did not get a regulation that took a broader and more long-term perspective on the fast-changing transport system until 1959, when the *Roadmap for Sweden (Vägplan för Sverige)* was launched.

The motivation for the Roadmap was the risk that 'through shortcomings in the long-term planning, there are great difficulties to evaluate proposed projects, thus

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66 In this chapter, I have translated all the titles and quotes from the reports and government bills without official English translations.

jeopardising the economic benefits from refurbishing the road network' (SOU, 1958:1, p. 18, my translation). A broad coalition of businesses, experts, and politicians advocated the 'scientific approach' pervading the Roadmap, which marked the beginning of expert-led planning of the transport system (Falkemark, 2006, p. 275; Lundin, 2008, p. 23). This coalition included the Social Democratic party and became the end of their scepticism towards the car. Thus, despite initially being connected to liberalism, the car as a symbol of freedom was adopted by Social Democrats (Falkemark, 2006, p. 262 & 277f), and, importantly, as the Social Democrats were the dominant party of the time<sup>67</sup>, their shift concerning automobility had significant effects on how Sweden developed.

Several critical issues characterised the discussions preceding the Roadmap. One such issue was the debate on whether traffic modes (cars) pay their costs, which surfaced for the first time. This debate has been present ever since (for example, Gössling & Choi, 2015; Haraldsson & Nilsson, 2016). Another one was congestion and traffic accidents that, in the 1950s, were already widely perceived as severe societal problems, causing significant debates (Lundin, 2008, p. 22).

Although Swedish society was heading towards car dependency, the reality was more complex, with a mix of different transport modes being important. Especially in cities, where population density and compact urban form allowed it, busses, trams, and active modes continued to be central. For example, in Stockholm, the first metro lines opened in the early 1950s and continued to be expanded throughout the century. However, the metro also enabled road expansion as the tramway, at that time considered outdated, was removed (Paulsson, 2020).

The coming decades were simultaneously characterised by further attention to external effects (as well as to pollution) from cars, the unquestioned idea of increasing (auto)mobility and growing faith in societal planning (Falkemark, 2006, pp. 331-337). These developments resulted in the establishment of a new planning discourse, partly formalised through *The SCAFT Guidelines 1968 – Principles for urban planning with respect to road safety* (1968)<sup>68</sup>. According to this discourse, an increase in traffic volumes could be combined with a decrease in traffic accidents through the proper form of societal planning. The planning principles of *localisation, separation, differentiation, and conformity* aimed to fulfil this vision (Hagson, 2004, pp. 31-32). The discourse's underlying assumptions were that planning should be guided by the requirements of the car (to enable speed) and the predicted increase in traffic volumes (to minimise

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<sup>67</sup> Except for a couple of months, the party was in government from 1932 to 1976, alone or in coalition.

<sup>68</sup> SCAFT stands for *Stadsbyggnad, Chalmers, Arbetsgruppen för Trafiksäkerhet*, which translates to *Urban Planning, Chalmers [University of Technology], Working Group on Traffic Safety*.

congestion) (Falkemark, 2006, p. 275; cf. Owens, 1995). The question of congestion would later become a critical divide between those maintaining the solution of providing additional infrastructure and those arguing for growth management policies (Pettersson et al., 2021). Although the development was not without its critics, particularly concerning how the city was continuously being adapted to cars, the general direction of planning was not changed (Pettersson, 2014, p. 84).

At this point, Sweden had fully transformed into a society of *automobile dependency* (cf. Newman & Kenworthy, 1989). One of the critical explanations for this development was the widespread construction of automobility as a natural phenomenon (i.e., naturalisation). A coalition of experts, businesses, and politicians proclaimed automobility's unavailability as a growing socio-technical system (Lundin, 2008, p. 271ff). Also, the automobility interest was represented by many powerful lobbying groups, which the alternative modes lacked (Falkemark, 2006, p. 359). As for other modes of transport, the development was radically different. While buses were not at the forefront of the modern transport system's formation, the railway was arguably the initial driver of the transport revolution and remained important throughout the twentieth century. Still, during the first half of the century, the railway lost its central place as the car began to structure society. Finally, in 1939, the crisis of privately-owned railways culminated in the railway system's socialisation (Falkemark, 2006, pp. 250-259). Interestingly, decades later, similar economic deficits for the state-owned railway company SJ served to justify closing many non-beneficial lines (Falkemark, 2006, pp. 346-352). However, the tide turned again as the 1990s was characterised by the dual processes of railway expansion and deregulation (Falkemark, 2006, pp. 262-264). These processes connect to the increased influence of sustainability in transport politics, developed in the next part.

To summarise, in the early 20th century, various transport modes were important, but transport policy increasingly turned its attention towards automobility. Even though the railway kept its relevance, the car restructured society completely. Initially, the development occurred without significant legislation and governance, but further on, it was promoted by an advocacy coalition of experts, politicians, and businesses. This coalition operated according to the traditional transport discourse, the dominant perspective on transport during those years.

## Sustainable Transport Policies in Sweden

Environmental concerns in transport planning can be traced back to the critical voices of the 1970s mentioned above. In a government bill in the late 1980s, environmental targets were included (1987/88:50), but mainly concerned local pollution, proposing bypasses as key strategies to improve the air quality of cities (Pettersson, 2014, p. 85).

However, as a central notion in Swedish politics, sustainability arose first in the aftermath of the 1992 Rio Summit. In 1996, the newly elected leader of the Social Democratic Party, Göran Persson, introduced a notion of the environmentally friendly state, *the green version of the People's Home*<sup>69</sup> (Persson, 1996). As far as transport is concerned, sustainable mobility ideas appeared increasingly from the mid-1990s onwards (Hysing, 2009). This was a dual process: on one hand, sustainability was given increased attention in transport politics; on the other hand, transport issues were, to a greater extent, emphasised in environmental policies.

The increasing attention to sustainability in transport policies saw one of its first manifestations in the governmental report *A New Direction for Transport Policy* (SOU, 1997:35). The report was written by the Commission of Communication, an all-party commission responsible for the inquiry. The report argued for a range of changes in transport policy, proposing an increased carbon tax, technical improvements, and biofuels as solutions to the climate effect of cars. At the same time, it assumed a continuous growth in car traffic (ibid.). For that reason, Falkemark (2006) describes the work of the Commission of Communication as a complete failure in challenging car dependence. In 1997, the government put forward a bill labelled *Transport Politics for Sustainable Development* (Government Bill, 1997/98:56)<sup>70</sup>, which modified the goals of transport policy to include sustainability alongside socio-economic efficiency (ibid., p. 2), as suggested in the report of the commission. A couple of years later, an amendment introduced gender equality (Government Bill, 2001/02:20)<sup>71</sup>. All of these bills were initiated by Social Democratic governments. In its last year in power, the party presented *Modern Transports* (Government Bill, 2005/06:160)<sup>72</sup>, which clarified

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<sup>69</sup> *Det gröna folkhemmet* in Swedish.

<sup>70</sup> For the most part, the counterproposals by the other parties followed their traditional priorities. The Left Party and the Green Party wanted to sharpen the goals and the measures necessary to achieve the goals. The centre party also wanted to sharpen goals and measures, but with the addition of a stronger rural focus. However, the principal counterproposal (winning the votes over the other counterproposals) was co-signed by the Liberal Party, The Christian Democratic Party, and The Conservative Party. Contrary to the other counterproposal, this emphasised distinctly different priorities: highlighting economic rationalities and reliance on technological innovations, opposing taxes, and proposing further privatisations and deregulations as principal measures (Committee Report, 1997/98:TU10; Parliamentary Record, 1997/98:116).

<sup>71</sup> In the final vote, the Social Democrats and the Left Party voted in favour, and only the Conservative Party voted against it (Parliamentary Record, 2001/02:48). The latter's principal argument against the proposition was that it omitted necessary road infrastructure investments: 'We consider it illogic and improper to respond to an expected traffic increase on the road network without a corresponding increase in the budgetary allocation' (Committee Report, 2001/02:TU2, pp. 121-122).

<sup>72</sup> Around this time, the block politics of the Swedish parliament was cemented. While the Social Democratic Party, the Left Party, and the Green Party supported the proposition, the newly formed alliance between the Conservative Party, the Centre Party, the Liberal Party, and the Christian Democratic Party opposed it. The centre-right alliance voted to amend the goals, adding one of promoting the tourist industry,

the relationship between transport and the environmental objectives proposed in 1997 (Government Bill, 1997/98:145)<sup>73</sup>.

The second process was the inclusion of transport in environmental policies. In 1998, *Local Investment Programmes* (LIP) were launched, of which approximately 10 per cent, or SEK 454 million, went to the transport sector. These programmes included measures such as biofuel, infrastructure construction, and carpools (SEPA, 2008). Following LIP, the *Climate Investment Programmes* (Klimp) were implemented, of which transport projects received about 27 per cent, or SEK 320 million. These supported projects were less about biofuels and more about public transport and mobility management (SEPA, 2013). Between 2000 and 2012, the primary policy measures were, through taxes and subsidies, directed towards a transition to biofuels (SOU, 2013:84, p. 193). In the year 2008, Prime Minister Reinfeldt's centre-right cabinet introduced the goal of a fleet of vehicles independent of fossil fuels by the year 2030, or, as expressed in the government bill *Goals for Future Travels and Transports*:

The transport sector shall contribute to the fulfilment of the environmental quality objective of *Limited impact on the climate* through a gradually increased energy efficiency of the transport system and a terminated dependence on fossil fuels. By 2030, Sweden shall have a fleet of vehicles that is independent of fossil fuels. (Government Bill, 2008/09:93, p. 2)

Additionally, it emphasised traditional goals for the transport sector and distinguished between goals of functionality (concerning accessibility for citizens and businesses) and goals of consideration (concerning safety, health, and the environment), both of which transport policies and planning should strive to fulfil. This distinction manifested the conflicts between economic and environmental concerns present since the introduction of sustainability, analogous to the overarching contradiction between growth and the environment in society generally. Despite the increasing rhetorical weight placed on environmental concerns, the transport system's functionality (often roads specifically) remained the main task of transport planning (Hult et al., 2017, p. 13).

Shortly before the 2014 general election, after which Sweden got a new government, the Reinfeldt cabinet put forward the terms of reference for a commission of inquiry on high-speed rail between the three metropolitan areas of Sweden (Stockholm, Göteborg, and Malmö). The process that later would be named The National

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emphasising the need for increasing rural growth, and suggesting improvements to regional airports (Committee Report, 2005/06:TU5; Parliamentary Record, 2005/06:131).

<sup>73</sup> The environmental objectives were passed by the parliament one year later (Parliamentary Record, 1998/99:87)

Negotiation on Housing and Infrastructure<sup>74</sup> aimed to prepare the introduction of high-speed rail through, amongst other things, an investigation of the financial situation and how it could be used to enable housing construction, as well as negotiations with concerned municipalities (Government Directive, 2014:106; SOU, 2017:107). The focus and formulation of these negotiations resemble the early descriptions of the UEA, which the subsequent government of the Social Democrats and the Green Party presented only half a year after the election.

In addition to these processes (increasing attention to transport in environmental policy and vice versa), two other developments, partly driven by concerns for sustainability, were historically important. First, during this time, several large-scale infrastructure projects were launched, presented, and negotiated as ‘packages’. These packages were major investments governed by the state, involving extensive negotiations (Pettersson, 2014, p. 92); for example, the ‘Dennis packages’, aiming to improve the traffic in and around Stockholm to reduce congestion and improve environmental quality (Isaksson, 2020). In terms of governmental practices, these packages (like the Local Investment Programmes mentioned above) share many similarities with the UEA. The second development regarded congestion charging, which caused significant political debate in Stockholm (and has continued to do so in Göteborg). Although congestion charging was initially motivated on environmental grounds, it became a way to finance increased road capacity (Isaksson, 2020, p. 420).

In sum, the introduction of sustainable mobility in Sweden during the 1990s was characterised by two trends: transport policies became increasingly influenced by sustainability, and environmental policies incorporated transport to a greater extent. The process culminated in 2009 when the ambitious goal of a fleet of vehicles independent of fossil fuels by 2030 was adopted. Nevertheless, traditional goals of transport functionality (resulting in continuing investments in car infrastructure, etc.) persisted, constituting a strategic conflict between goals of functionality and consideration.

## The International Context

When the automobile society developed, North America was the primary role model. Swedish transport experts made overseas study trips, adopting the principles of rational transport planning. Today, the Western European context is considered central to the ambition to transition from car dependency. From a Swedish perspective, policy and knowledge developed in the UK and the EU form an essential background. Moreover, as the Norwegian Urban Environment Agreements was the main inspiration for the

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<sup>74</sup> *Sverigeförhandlingarna* in Swedish.



Swedish UEA policy, the Norwegian policy developments are particularly relevant. In this section, I briefly overview some historical processes in these contexts.

Much of the early academic and policy development of sustainable mobility was located in the United Kingdom. The country was also the first to adopt a legally binding climate change strategy act (Whitelegg, 2012). However, until the late 1980s, traditional transport planning dominated the political scene, crowned by the conservative government's release of the controversial white paper *Roads for Prosperity* (Vigar, 2002, p. 2). The white paper marked a shift as the environmental movement heavily contested its proposed massive road network extensions, producing an alternative report, *Roads to Ruin* (Tromans, 1991, p. 5). Similarly, academics such as Phil Goodwin began to formulate ideas for an alternative approach called *the new realism* (Goodwin et al., 2012 [1991]). The following developments bear a close resemblance to what happened in Sweden. First, after winning the election, the Labour Party rhetorically embraced this new direction in transport policy. Then, this shift was formally made with the release of *A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone* (DETR, 1998). However, the radical transformation never occurred, and the years of the Labour government left few lasting marks on the transport system (Docherty & Shaw, 2011, p. 12).

Although on a different administrative level, a parallel development occurred in the European Union, where sustainable mobility was increasingly used as a central policy concept. The landmark years followed the same pattern as in the UK and Sweden, with rising concerns beginning in the early 1990s (EC, 1992a, 1992b). Of course, this development cannot be separated from Sweden and the UK as these countries were EU members during most of the period<sup>75</sup>. Still, the continuity of the European Commission and its more technocratic form of governance made for a more consistent attitude towards sustainable mobility. Moreover, the continuous publications by the commission have become more focused and clearer about the necessity to transform the transport system (EC, 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016, 2020). Yet, there is an evident implementation gap where reality fails to meet the level of the ambitions (Gössling, Cohen, et al., 2016). When the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) was formalised, it did not include transport (except air travel). Thus, sustainable mobility has principally been advocated through other mechanisms, such as improved technical standards, the promotion of alternative fuels, and collaborative policy programmes (Gray et al., 2016; Gössling & Cohen, 2014). In addition, many of the critical transport issues remain national matters.

The third context, more directly connected to the urban environment, is developments in Sweden's neighbouring country, Norway. Several interrelated

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<sup>75</sup> Sweden entered the European Union (called The European Communities until 1993) in 1995, while the UK was a member between 1973 and 2020.

processes characterise the Norwegian history of sustainable mobility. First, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, discussions on financing public transport became increasingly important, with the state unwilling to bear the responsibility for public transport operations (Norheim & Berggren, 2017). Simultaneously, the continuous increase in road traffic in urban areas and the following congestion gained more attention (ibid.). As a result, agreements between the national and local governments, so-called ‘city pacts’ (*Bypakter*), were enacted to solve congestion problems. The hope was to manage these issues by increasing the road capacity financed through state money and newly instated road tolls. However, the difficulties posed by induced traffic and rapid growth soon became apparent. As a result, several central reports were released around 2010, such as the government’s white paper on *GHG Abatement* and the *Public Transport Pledge (KollektivLøftet)* by the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise, shifting the focus to public transport (Ministry of Climate and Environment, 2012; NHO, 2009). In the latter, the influential zero-growth goal (*Nullvekstmålet*) was introduced, proposing that car traffic should not increase in urban areas. Later, two different kinds of agreements aimed to achieve this goal. First, the ‘reward scheme’ (*Belønningsordningen*), formalised through agreements between the state and the municipality, was to incentivise increasing public transport travel by providing result-dependent rewards; for example, to finance reduced public transport fees (Fridstrøm, 2012; Hammes, 2021; The Norwegian Government, 2021). Second, *The Norwegian Urban Environment Agreements (Bymiljøavtaler)* aimed to integrate transport and land use issues for more holistic planning (The Norwegian Government, 2021). Together with *Urban Development Agreements (Byutviklingsavtaler)*, the Norwegian Urban Environment Agreements would be transformed into *Urban Growth Agreements (Byvekstavtaler)*. The Norwegian developments were essential for how Sweden would design its sustainable transport policies, partly because of the close cooperation between top transport civil servants from the two countries (Field notes, 2017).

To summarise, it is clear that the introduction of the sustainable mobility discourse in the UK, the EU-level, and Norway demonstrate the same trends as Sweden. The notion of sustainable mobility has increased in importance since its introduction in the early 1990s, even though rhetorical engagement has often been greater than the actual will or ability to implement forceful sustainable transport policies. Notably, the links between policy developments are evident, particularly between the Norwegian and Swedish contexts from 2010 onwards.

## The Urban Environment Agreement

The history of the Urban Environment Agreement started with a group of transport experts and civil servants working in the state-mandated Commission on Fossil-Free Road Transport, producing the extensive report *Fossil Freedom on the Roads* (SOU, 2013:84). As mentioned above, Norway had launched several similar policies, which the commission picked up and used as a blueprint for one of the report's policy suggestions. Given attention in several later agency reports (SEPA, 2014; SNBHBP, 2014), the UEA finally received earmarked funding in the 2015 state spring budget.

At that stage, the Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications commissioned the Swedish Transport Administration to develop a draft policy. The agency proposed a legislative framework that, in all relevant aspects, was approved by the government and made into secondary legislation. Finally, the Transport Administration was tasked to implement the policy. The chosen model to distribute the money was through an application process. Further guidelines were added to an application form (see Appendix B), made available for municipalities and regions in the autumn of 2015. When a municipality or region applied, the application went through a review process conducted by several civil servants at the Transport Administration and related agencies, such as the Environmental Protection Agency. The application became a binding agreement between the applicant and the Transport Administration if approved.

In the municipalities, the planning department often initiated the decision to apply, and the politicians' degree of involvement varied substantially amongst the applying municipalities. Still, for the most part, the transport measures in question were formally approved by a political body (e.g., the municipal council or the planning board) before the application was made. As for the substance of the agreements, the suggested projects varied substantially. The projects involved (in order of frequency) general refurbishments and developments; public transport stops; separate public transport lanes; terminals and travel centres; charging points; BRT; and trams (Svensson, 2017). The policy governed the range of projects, as the secondary legislation explicitly limited the projects to public transport infrastructure, not allowing support to vehicles or operating costs.

Financially, the municipality was compensated by the state for a maximum of 50 per cent of the total costs. In addition to paying half the costs, the municipality committed to providing *services-in-return*<sup>76</sup>. These had to be external to the main project and financed entirely by the municipality. Generally, the number and magnitude of the services-in-return were expected to be proportional to the requested support. The three

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<sup>76</sup> *Motåtgärder* in Swedish. I follow the Swedish Transport Administration's translation of this term.

most common services in return were detailed development plans (for housing construction), bicycle lanes, and footways (The Swedish Transport Administration, 2016b, 2016c).

In summary, the sustainable transport policy called the Urban Environment Agreement was initiated in 2015. The policy allows municipalities and regions to make public transport infrastructure investments that are partly financed by the state. The allocation of means is done through an application procedure in which the Transport Administration assesses proposals by a municipality or region. Approved applications are considered binding agreements.

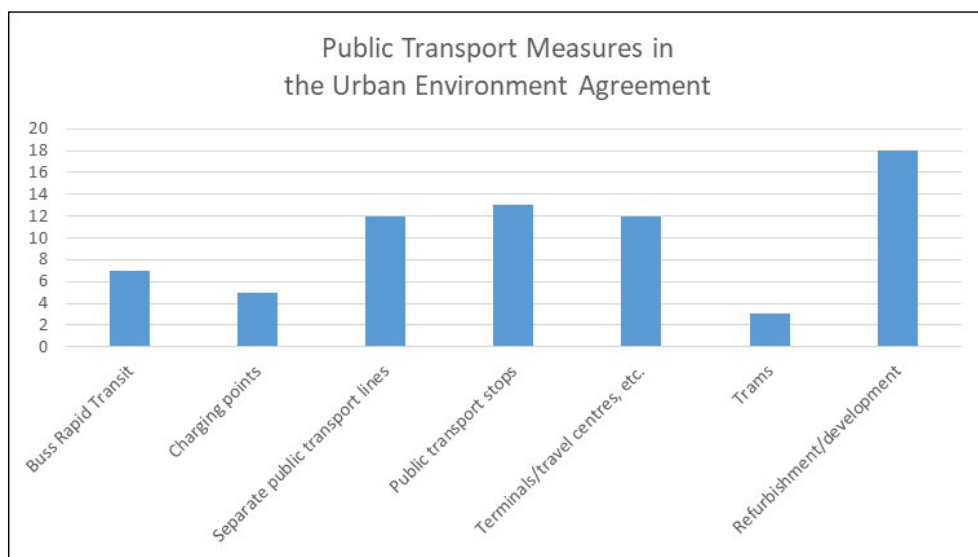


Figure 5.1. Public transport measures in the UEA policy. Adapted from Svensson, 2017.

### The Policy’s Journey Through the National Political System

In this section, I describe the initial policy process of the UEA: from its initiation by civil servants in national-level sustainable transport reports to the negotiations and political circumstances deciding its final formulation.

#### *Reduced Car Traffic: The Goal That Withered Away*

Whether car traffic should decrease is a sensitive question in transport politics. The policy process of the UEA demonstrates this well. The original formulation of the policy can, as mentioned above, be traced back to the report by the Commission on Fossil-Free Road Transport (SOU, 2013:84). The report states that:

Through measures [...] in combination with policy instruments, there is a possibility to gear the increased need for travel towards public transport, walking and cycling so that car traffic can decrease. (SOU, 2013:84, p. 759)

The wording was directly inspired by the abovementioned Norwegian Urban Environment Agreements, which formulated the zero-growth goal of car traffic (Aksnes, 2014). This idea of gearing the increase in traffic to other modes than cars reoccurs in the commission report. However, when the government later picked up the policy idea and formulated a directive to the Swedish Transport Administration, the purpose was phrased differently:

[T]o create preconditions for a greater share of city transport to be made by public transport, cycling or walking, and sustainable transport. Through that, preconditions for reduced car traffic are created, leading to a better urban environment and less congestion. (Government Directive, 2015, p. 3)

Although minor, a shift in emphasis occurred between the two formulations: from *reduced car traffic* to *preconditions for reduced car traffic*. While the former objective appears in the partial report by the Transport Administration (The Swedish Transport Administration, 2015d, p. 4), it is changed in the final report and given a formulation very close to the one used in the government directive (The Swedish Transport Administration, 2015e, p. 48). Still, the two first formulations are relatively similar, but the policy radically changed when it was finally enacted. In the secondary legislation, all mentions of car traffic reduction were removed:

To encourage sustainable urban environments, The Transport Administration may, if funding for the purpose is available, according to this secondary legislation, give support to municipalities and regions for measures that lead to a greater share of personal transport being made by public transport. (SFS 2015:579)

Thus, in summary, a movement can be observed from a goal to reduce car traffic, via the creation of preconditions for car traffic reduction, to a final formulation where the aim is a greater share of personal transport by public transport. The reasons for this shift are well-known in this policy field, as goals dictating car reduction are politically controversial (Forward et al., 2014; Hrelja et al., 2013; Isaksson, 2020). A civil servant confirms it:

I would say that it is all through political wording. We, the civil servants who have worked with the Urban Environment Agreement, have envisioned reduced car traffic in favour of other modes of transport all along, but it is not doable to go out with this as an objective; no politician dares to do this. (Interview, 2020-05-07)

Another civil servant expresses the changed goal in pragmatic terms as a way to achieve the ambition of car reduction without jeopardising the life of the policy:

We think there is a pedagogical value in emphasising what we want to stimulate - the sustainable - rather than the unsustainable, what we want to get rid of. Had we called it *the Urban Environment Agreement – to reduce car traffic*, we would most certainly have had an entirely different discussion during the spring that would have been of a political character and which we would have had great difficulties handling in every kind of way. Now, we believe we can reach the same thing, but with another wording and by emphasising the sustainable aspects. (Interview 2015-06-24)

These quotes demonstrate an awareness of how sensitive the issue of car reduction is for politicians. For example, one politician phrases the reluctance to propose reductions in car traffic very straightforward:

Politicians have been afraid that restricting car traffic, which would be the case [with another goal formulation], wouldn't get the citizens' approval. Being a politician is usually not permanent employment, but rather you are dependent on the voters' support to continue, and there is a [...] fallacy amongst many politicians that it's harder for the public to accept restriction of car traffic than it actually is. Still, this fallacy greatly determines what you dare to propose and what you dare to stand by and not stand by. (Interview, 2017-04-13)

At least two features are particularly noteworthy in this process of changed ambitions. First, it is evident that politicians influenced the policy, changing how civil servants formulated the goals. Of course, politicians are responsible for making the final decisions on policies and legislation. Still, the radical shift in policy formulation appeared without public debate and is only traceable by closely comparing the different policy formulations.

Second, the initial process is characterised by efforts to keep it out of political debate, and central actors convey the view that such debate would endanger the policy. Many things indicate that the ambition was to keep the policy uncontroversial and, to some extent, under the radar. For example, at a workshop on the UEA, I mentioned to a civil servant that the policy was categorised as *local climate transition* in the latest environmental budget presentation (cf. Löfven et al., 2016). The civil servant was very sceptical and told me there are clear benefits of using *sustainable urban development* since nobody can be against that, thus, facilitating political decisions (Field notes, 2017).

### *No Time, no Debate, No Transport*

From the start, the UEA was characterised by short time frames, little political debate, and a downplaying of its transport-related objectives. This low-key initiation is noteworthy given that its advocates would later thoroughly praise the policy (e.g., Romson 2016).

The UEA was created as a pilot policy with short project time frames. Compared to how it was initially proposed, this downscaling of the policy has been criticised by actors initially engaged (Interview 2017-03-29; Trivector, 2016, p. 16), but it can partly be explained by the power asymmetries between the two political parties in government. The Green Party was the principal advocate of the policy but was both a junior partner (sitting in government for the first time) and a minor part of the coalition<sup>77</sup>. Consequently, the Green Party was forced to make concessions in the negotiations on policy formulation. One of these was to reduce the policy's scope and budget from 11 to three years and from SEK 30 billion to SEK 2 billion, compared to what was proposed in the *Fossil Freedom on the Roads* report (Interview 2017-04-13; SOU, 2013:84, pp. 754, 760; Svensson, 2017).

Additionally, the UEA's formalisation largely circumvented the parliament. In the 406 page-long budget proposition, only one small paragraph concerned the UEA (Government Bill, 2014/15:1, p. 43), and few details about the policy were specified at the budget vote. Instead of a formulated policy, the budget included earmarked money with the general ambition to improve urban environments through public transport investments. After the parliament granted the money via the budget, the policy never returned for consideration in the Parliamentary Chamber but was passed as secondary legislation, a form of law that the government is entitled to enact (Interview 2019-01-11).

Although the policy surfaced in a few parliamentary debates, it generally received little attention. For example, in the report by the Committee on transport and communications, only a short appraisal in a separate statement of opinion by the red and green parties mentions the UEA (Committee Report, 2014/15:TU1, p. 71). Similarly, while it was referred to several times in parliamentary sessions from October 2014 until the government decision approximately one year later, it mostly appeared as merely one point in an enumeration without creating any debate (e.g., Parliamentary Record, 2014/15:73, p. 61). The only debate regarded the connection between infrastructure development and housing construction (Parliamentary Record,

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<sup>77</sup> The Green Party received 6.9 per cent of the votes in the election, compared to the 31 per cent of the Social Democrats (SCB 2020).

2014/15:73, p. 62), and neither the government parties nor the centre-right opposition ever raised the question of car reduction<sup>78</sup>.

The emphasis on housing highlights the noticeable lack of transport issues in the debates. In direct contrast to the policy's earlier formulations (emphasising transport and, particularly, car reduction), the government presented the UEA as an initiative to facilitate housing construction. One of the two responsible ministers, Mehmet Kaplan, expressed it as follows:

The Urban Environment Agreements is – to make it clear what it's all about – a solution where municipalities that possess land that the construction companies don't consider to be sufficiently attractive to build on, so-called 'B' and 'C' locations, can make those locations more appealing by ensuring to plan for public transport extension. (Parliamentary Record, 2014/15:57, pp. 32-33)

Mehmet Kaplan was Minister of Housing and this rhetorical reformulation may be due to his priorities and responsibilities in the government. However, in the press releases co-authored with the other responsible minister, the Minister for Infrastructure, Anna Johansson, housing remained the central goal (Johansson & Kaplan, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c; Johansson et al., 2015).

#### *Minority Government and Controversial Proposals*

Two contextual circumstances must be considered when reviewing the policy-making process behind the UEA. First, the coalition government was historically weak, as the two oppositional blocks held the parliamentary majority together. The red-green coalition could only form a government because of the centre-right alliance's unwillingness to cooperate with the Sweden Democrats. However, in the budget vote, the Sweden Democrats voted on the centre-right budget. Consequently, the centre-right budget was passed instead of the government's. A cross-coalition agreement avoided an extraordinary election<sup>79</sup>. Although the budget at that stage only concerned the limits of the government expenditures and, in general terms, how to distribute the money among the expenditure areas, the government's failure to pass its budget was proof of weakness. Consequently, this presumably limited the degree of controversial proposals the government could make, implied by the fact that significant setbacks would endanger their legitimacy to govern.

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<sup>78</sup> At one time, the issue of car reduction was indeed raised, but by the Left Party (Parliamentary Record, 2014/15:86, p. 173).

<sup>79</sup> The so-called December Agreement was an agreement between the red-green coalition and the centre-right alliance to ensure the Sweden Democrats were prevented from having any influence. The agreements stated that whichever of the two blocks received the most votes would be allowed to form the government and have its budget accepted (af Schmidt & Möller, 2020).



The second aspect was that two other transport political controversies overshadowed the UEA. First, the government froze the gigantic motorway construction project Stockholm Bypass (Parliamentary Record, 2014/15:73, p. 61)<sup>80</sup>. The project's cost was projected to be around SEK 25 billion, more than 10 times the budget of the UEA and, since the start, the Green Party had been opposing it. Officially, the freezing of the project was explained by a need to renegotiate its financing details. However, its proponents saw the freezing as a win for the Green Party and the first step toward a complete project termination (e.g., Parliamentary Record, 2014/15: 28, p. 82). The result was a fierce parliamentary debate that ultimately forced the government to restart the construction.

The other controversial decision regarded the ambition to close one of the two airports close to Stockholm, Bromma airport. More precisely, it concerned the appointment of a negotiator between the state and the municipality on this matter. Again, the decision led to a heated debate that made the government withdraw its initial proposal (Committee Report, 2014/15:TU1; Written communication from the Swedish parliament, 2014/15: 85). The government's handling of these events was later criticised by the parliamentary Committee on the Constitution (Committee Report, 2014/15:KU20).

Considering the Stockholm Bypass and Bromma airport controversies, it is reasonable to assume that the government's subsequent proposals were characterised by great caution. Additionally, it has been argued that the ministries developed a 'zero-mistake culture' over the past decades. This culture hampers the possibility of proposing potentially controversial policies (Engström, 2020, p. 270f; 2021). Against this backdrop, the UEA was finalised, and its specific formulations need to be understood in this context.

## Summary of the Chapter

In this background chapter, I have sketched the development of the automobile society and the formation of the traditional transport discourse. I have also described the rise of sustainable mobility as an emerging alternative discourse and its manifestation in policies and politics. These competing ways of thinking about and planning the transport system are related to conflicts and tensions that generally permeate planning and policies. One of the central conflicts concerns reducing car usage, exemplified in the UEA's policy process. The chapter's contextual analysis of this policy process shows several important factors influencing the final policy formulation. Most importantly,

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<sup>80</sup> *Förbifart Stockholm* in Swedish.

the policy became limited in scope and less radical than the initial suggestions, partly explained by the political landscape, which might have made it difficult to propose a bolder policy. Moreover, an effort was made to keep the policy outside of the political arena. For example, the political decision circumvented parliament for the most part, and noticeably few aspects of the policy were openly discussed.

This chapter has given the background to the UEA, an overview necessary to understand the case as a small part of the long development of transport policies and the transport system. Additionally, the ‘context of policy’ (see Part 4.5.) provided by this chapter will enable me to situate the UEA policy within the transport policy field in Chapter 8.

The next chapter introduces the first of the three analytical steps. This step maps and identifies discursive patterns through thematic analysis. Thus, it constitutes the foundational analysis on which all the analytical parts of the thesis rely.



# Mapping Discursive Patterns

Transportation officials, whether of public or private organizations, have special interest in growth: they tend to favour growth along their specific transit routes. But transportation doesn't just serve growth, it creates it [...] Transit bureaucrats today, although not typically in the land business, function as active development boosters; only in that way can more riders be found to support their systems and help pay off the sometimes enormous debts incurred to construct or expand the systems.  
- Johan Logan and Harvey Molotch<sup>81</sup>

This first analytical chapter describes the discursive patterns found in the material. I use thematic analysis to shed light on them, constituting the initial analytical step to answer how sustainable mobility is constructed in the UEA.

The chapter's analytical purpose is to identify the patterns in the material and examine their relative importance<sup>82</sup>. The chapter will also provide a thorough empirical foundation for the following chapters. Therefore, the material is referenced and cited extensively throughout the text, sometimes making it slightly less accessible. Hopefully, the transparency of the analytical process outweighs this stylistic deficiency. For the selective reader, the chapter can be used as a reference point when looking for the foundation of arguments made later in the thesis.

As elaborated in Chapters 3 and 4, I use four theoretical categories: the reasons, subjects, norms, and causal assumptions of a discourse. These constitute the building blocks of my conceptualisation of the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy (and provide the structure of this chapter). Four analytical questions have been posed to the material based on these categories, allowing me to discover commonalities in the reasons, subjects, norms, and assumptions of the discursive patterns. Moreover, to describe the prevalence of identified patterns, I present the frequency (i.e., in how many of the individual agreements the pattern is present) and centrality (i.e., if patterns are

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<sup>81</sup> Logan and Molotch (1996, pp. 309-310).

<sup>82</sup> In terms of frequency and centrality. Compare this with Chapter 4.

repeated within, or in key positions within, individual agreements). These are tools used only for the qualitative purpose of determining central patterns in the discourse at hand.

The second purpose of this chapter is to begin disentangling the relationships and complexities of the discourse. Therefore, I use the theoretical concepts of discursive tension, silence, and naturalisation presented in the analytical framework as interpretative tools<sup>83</sup>. This initial analysis is a stepping-stone for the next chapters, where relationships between the patterns are the focal point.

The material demonstrates a wide range of patterns, although the analysed texts (i.e., the applications or agreements written by Swedish municipalities, see Section 4.6.1.) are written in response to the same national level policy (i.e., the UEA). Due to the sheer volume of patterns, I present some in more detail than others.

The chapter is organised according to the four theoretical categories, and in each of them the patterns are presented thematically in separate sections. Thus, in the first part, I present the reasons for sustainable mobility concerning economy, housing, population, the environment, attractiveness, and social progress. The second part revolves around the norms of sustainable mobility, divided into qualitative norms, quantitative norms, and norms explicitly relating to automobility. In the third part, I present the subject of sustainable mobility, distinguishing between transport users and disadvantaged groups. Finally, in the last category, I identify the causal assumptions of sustainable mobility. These are presented in the two sections: increased public transport travel and the causal effects of public transport.

## Reasons for Sustainable Mobility

The reasons why sustainable mobility is worth pursuing are an essential aspect of the sustainable mobility discourse. Reasons justify the proposed transport measures and demonstrate underlying norms permeating the policy field in which the discourse exists<sup>84</sup>. This category is the one with the most extensive range of patterns. Although

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<sup>83</sup> As a brief recap, discursive tension is operationalised as potentially conflicting statements or patterns that conclude substantially different things about the same issue, and naturalisation as statements or patterns that construct contingent circumstances and phenomena as inevitable and natural. Finally, a silence is a representation related to the discourse's central issues that is omitted or missing in the discourse.

<sup>84</sup> For the most part, the reasons analysed are manifest justifications for sustainable mobility. However, this decision to depart from alternative approaches by, for example, emphasising problem representations (Bacchi, 2009; Rehnlund, 2019), reveals some of the methodological assumptions of the thesis. My departure point is that discourse can only be analysed through what texts convey, in contrast to an understanding of discourse as limitations on ways of thinking (see Section 3.1.1.).

my interpretation of the statements affects the exact number of identified patterns, the chapter illustrates the width of reasons for sustainable mobility and, thus, the societal value attributed to it.

Given that the UEA is a sustainable transport policy, the frequency and centrality of some reasons are surprising. Although environmental concerns constitute central patterns, they are not well-developed. In contrast, population and housing stand out as central reasons for sustainable mobility in general and public transport in particular. Still, it is important to note that there are clear links between the patterns that this analytical step does not fully consider. These will be analysed in the next chapter.

I have structured the presentation of the patterns thematically into six sections: economy, housing, population, the environment, attractiveness, and social progress.

## Economy

The first section concerns economy and includes two main patterns: economic growth and improving work opportunities.

The first pattern is economic growth, also expressed in terms of development and increased consumption<sup>85</sup>. Approximately one-third of the agreements formulate economic growth as a reason to develop sustainable mobility. In addition, it is mentioned in the government directive to the Transport Administration and the agency's response (Government Directive, 2015, p. 3; The Swedish Transport Administration, 2015e, p. 41)<sup>86</sup>.

Economic growth and mobility are widely assumed to correlate strongly in the transport sector (Banister & Berechman, 2001). However, the exact causality is not always developed when economic growth is presented as a reason for sustainable mobility in the material. One exception is the connection between long-term public transport infrastructure (such as tramways and BRT systems) and business investments. For example, Norrköping Municipality (2016), with tramway investments in their application, writes that 'new public transport infrastructure, in particular, creates growth through increased interest by businesses and service providers to establish along

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<sup>85</sup> Generally, economic development is understood in either of two ways: as economic growth (Daly, 1990) or as 'an economy that is sustainable over time and supports the possibilities to achieve other sustainability goals' (Finnveden, 2021, p. 5, my translation; cf. KTH, 2021). Consequently, if I use *economic growth* to describe the pattern, individual statements need to be interpreted according to the above distinction. Thus, when facing statements on economic development, I have first looked at the sentence and paragraph in search of clues to which understanding is relied upon, and if needed, I have made a judgement based on the entire text.

<sup>86</sup> The interpretation of economic development as economic growth in the government directive is based on, amongst other examples, Johansson & Damberg (2015).

the line' (p. 3)<sup>87</sup>. Although Karlstad Municipality's project involves a BRT system, it similarly emphasises the relationship between rail-bound public transport and business investments (2015, p. 15), implying that BRT can also be expected to increase investments. Furthermore, the municipality also links the effect to decreased travel times, which is assumed to attract investments and increase growth (2015, p. 17).

Still, economic growth is often constructed as a reason for sustainable transport in a general sense, connecting public transport to increased commerce (Linköping, 2015, p. 5; 2016, p. 3; Nyköping, 2016, p. 2; Stockholm Region, 2016, p. 15) or general terms such as economic sustainability (e.g. Government Directive, 2015). For instance, Luleå Municipality (2015) specifies that its general plan addresses every one of sustainability's 'three perspectives; social, economic and ecological' and that 'well-developed public transport contributes to all three parts of sustainability' (p. 1). As the quote illustrates, sustainable mobility is seen to benefit the economy alongside social and environmental objectives. In line with traditional sustainable development discourse, these three aspects of sustainability are constructed as mutually supportive. Moreover, the quote illustrates a broader tendency in the material, in that the assumed economic benefits of sustainable mobility are rarely supported through arguments or empirical facts.

The second pattern is about increasing work opportunities through sustainable mobility investments, most notably by expanding labour markets and regional enlargement. However, this pattern is less frequent in the material than economic growth, and only four agreements explicitly mention this reason.

The pattern builds on the common idea that increasing mobility translates into economic benefits through an increased ability to travel further, thus widening the possibilities to work and consume. For example, Linköping Municipality (2015) writes that 'good regional public transport benefits sustainable regional enlargement and thus economic growth' (p. 2). Similarly, Malmö Municipality (2016) notes that 'the measures are part of an emphasis on creating preconditions for a multifaceted business sector that contributes to more work opportunities' (p. 8). Moreover, whether increased travel opportunities create more jobs or primarily result in increased employment through better matching between work supply and demand, tackling so-called frictional unemployment, is not developed. Still, it is generally assumed in the agreements that unemployment will be reduced<sup>88</sup>.

Compared to how the economy is discussed in traditional planning discourse (e.g., Norman & Börjesson, 2017), there is an explicit or implicit acknowledgement of

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<sup>87</sup> I have translated all quotes of the empirical material from Swedish in this chapter if nothing else is mentioned.

<sup>88</sup> To what extent this assumption is accurate will be left unanswered here, but two Swedish review studies point to the question's complex and context-dependent nature (Börjesson, 2019; Transport Analysis, 2017).

sustainability in the UEA policy. Consequently, although economic reasons are addressed, the sustainability of the issue is seen to be pivotal. By promoting those modes considered sustainable instead of cars, the idea is to achieve economic benefits within the frame of sustainability.

In the general sense illustrated by the patterns above, economic aspects are present in most parts of the material. However, compared to other reasons for sustainable mobility, they play a minor role. Following my operationalisation of centrality (see Section 4.1.), neither economic growth nor improved work opportunities are recurrent in the individual agreements or found in the key statement of the documents.

Of course, it can be argued that economic concerns are integral parts of, for example, population growth. The point is that the central aspect of population growth objectives is to gain economic development in the form of additional taxpayers and business establishments (cf. Cox, 2017; Molotch, 1976). Although I contextualise economic growth along these lines in the following chapters, within the agreements, even with such an interpretation, economic issues are primarily indirect reasons for sustainable mobility and are subordinated to the other reasons discussed below.

While the economic patterns play a minor role, they are constructed as fully compatible with the other, more dominant, patterns, such as population issues and environmental concerns. In other words, increasing economic activity is never constructed as something that might conflict with other concerns, such as the environment. The above-mentioned sustainability triad (environmental, economic, and social) is a typical example of these assumed friction-free relationships<sup>89</sup>. In contrast, representations of economic growth are often highly contested, or at least problematised, within general environmental discourses (Dryzek, 2013). However, this conflict between economic growth and environmental concerns, acknowledged outside the UEA policy, is missing in the material, thus effectively being silenced. Instead, economic growth is constructed as a naturally occurring and inherently positive phenomenon, exemplified by statements such as public transport ‘benefiting [...] economic growth’ (Linköping, 2015, p. 2), ‘new public transport infrastructure, in particular, creates [economic] growth’ (Norrköping, 2016, p. 3), and ‘we create [...] 40 000 m<sup>2</sup> business area for commerce’ (Kungälv, 2016, p. 2)<sup>90</sup>. Thus, economic growth is naturalised in the UEA policy, and its conflicts with, amongst other aspects, environmental concerns are silenced.

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<sup>89</sup> Additional examples are found in the agreements by Eskilstuna (2016), Malmö (2016, p. 3) and Umeå (2016; 2016, p. 2).

<sup>90</sup> It is important to note that the term *economic growth* is sparsely used compared to the more general term *growth*, which is very frequent in the material. The latter often signifies population growth, but sometimes it can be interpreted as both concerning economic and population growth.



In summary, the two economic reasons for promoting sustainable mobility found in the UEA policy are economic growth and improving work opportunities. Although not as dominant as other reasons, economic growth is present in approximately one-third of the agreements and in several other policy documents (the reason for improving work opportunities is found only in four agreements). Still, economic concerns, especially economic growth, complement other growth representations and are unquestioned and naturalised in the material. Consequently, conflicts between economic growth and competing concerns, such as the environment, are silenced.

**Table 6.1. Patterns on the economy.** Frequency (F\*) can vary between four and 31, where four is the minimum number of agreements containing the statements for the regularity to be characterised as a pattern, and 31 is the total amount of agreements. Centrality is determined according to a three-fold distinction: Central, Ambiguous, and Peripheral. The number in brackets refers to the page in the agreement where the statement is found.

Statements	Pattern	F*	Centrality	Agreements
Economic growth	Economic growth	10	Peripheral	Karlstad (4, 15, 17); Lund (2); Linköping (2015, 2, 5; 2016, 1, 3); Malmö (3-4); Norrköping (3, 9); Eskilstuna (1); Luleå (1); Nyköping (2); Stockholm Region (15)
Economic development				
Increased consumption				
Expanded labour market	Improving work opportunities	4	Peripheral	Karlstad (15); Linköping (2015, 2, 5; 2016, 1, 3); Malmö (8)
Regional enlargement				
Improving work opportunities				

**Key interpretation(s):** Naturalised view of economic growth and silenced conflict between economic growth and the environment.

### Property (Development)

The second section with reasons for sustainable mobility is *property (development)* and consists of two patterns: *housing* and *densification*.

The first pattern, housing, revolves around the construction of dwellings. Sustainable mobility infrastructure is considered pivotal for increased housing, and the latter is thus an important reason for developing sustainable mobility. Karlskrona Municipality (2016) concisely formulates this connection between sustainable transport and housing:

Good public transport is the key to increased housing and an attractive urban environment. With better communication and well-developed public transport, more locations in Karlskrona will be attractive for new dwellings. (p. 12)

The increased attractiveness is connected to an assumed rise in land values close to public transport extension. For example, in its agreement, Uppsala Municipality (2016) writes that:

The expectations are that the investments will lead to increased land value in connection to the public transport stops, leading to increased development in these locations. More housing [...] will, thus, be created in proximity to public transport. (p. 12)

Similarly, Lund Municipality (2015) claims that ‘property investors have stated that a tramway is needed to decide whether to construct dwellings and offices’ (p. 16).

The statement that public transport investments will increase the willingness of the market to construct in otherwise unattractive locations echoes Mehmet Kaplan, Minister of Housing and Urban Development, at the time of the initiation of the UEA. Kaplan’s statement in the parliamentary debate, quoted in Chapter 5, is worth reiterating here:

The Urban Environment Agreements is – to make it clear what it’s all about – a solution where municipalities that possess land areas the construction companies don’t consider to be sufficiently attractive to build on, so-called ‘B’ and ‘C’ locations, can make those locations more appealing by ensuring to plan for public transport extension. (Prot. 2014/15:57 10, p. 32-33)

Thus, these examples indicate the central rationale of sustainable mobility investments as a tool to achieve market-driven property development<sup>91</sup>.

Although there are several examples where the pattern is forcefully formulated, its strength is ambiguous. As a policy goal, the centrality of housing is undisputable. Throughout the material, plans, projects, and goals to construct or facilitate new dwellings are brought up repeatedly. Naturally, this has to do with the design of the policy (see Chapter 5)<sup>92</sup>. In contrast, housing as a reason for sustainable mobility is not as frequent. The pattern can be found in eight individual agreements, and its centrality varies substantially. The above quotes are examples of instances where the statements uphold a central position but, in a roughly equal number of agreements, the pattern is less accentuated (e.g., Eskilstuna, 2016, p. 2; Kungsbacka, 2016, p. 3; Linköping, 2015,

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<sup>91</sup> Kaplan further emphasised this point in a later debate, arguing that ‘the urban environment agreements will enable municipalities to extend public transport to areas and, by that, increase the land value and increase the profitability to build on it. The state does not construct; the municipalities, real-estate businesses and private companies do. When this type of support is given, it is a way to show the direction regarding the kind of construction we want to see. You cannot live in public transport. But without public transport, you will not be able to build attractive city neighbourhoods’ (Parliamentary Record, 2014/15:73, p. 62).

<sup>92</sup> One of the most apparent illustrations is in the application form used by the municipalities and regions to apply for part-financing. The form states that the municipality or county should describe the services-in-return they commit to doing, including ‘the plans for central development’ and ‘how they contribute to increased housing, number of dwellings’ (The Swedish Transport Administration, 2016a).

p. 5; 2016, p. 3; Norrköping, 2016, p. 9). Consequently, it is not possible to be assertive on the centrality of the pattern<sup>93</sup>.

While the pattern discussed in this section concerns housing as a reason for sustainable mobility, the material conveys a two-directional relationship. Thus, property development, particularly housing, is presumed to increase public transport travel<sup>94</sup>. For example, Landskrona Municipality (2016) describes how: 'Increased housing provides a foundation for continuous development of public transport' (p. 2), and Skellefteå Municipality (2016) claims that 'a development of the city bus line 3 and 30, together with the new dwellings planned, create good conditions for a substantial increase in public transport travel' (p. 11). Several similar accounts can be found throughout the material (e.g., Eskilstuna, 2016, p. 1; Umeå, 2016, p. 20; Västerås, 2016, p. 4; Örebro, 2016, p. 6). Thus, depending on whether housing or public transport is emphasised, arguments exist for investing in either of them to support the other.

This distinction between housing as one of the ways to increase sustainable travelling and public transport to enable more housing developments represents a tension in the material. The two reasons indicate different approaches, possibly with distinct solutions. For example, if housing is given primacy, the total volume of mobility services available is the principal concern, while if increased sustainable transport is the goal, proximity to services and restrictions on car use are critical.

The second pattern revolves around *densification*, including statements on *the compact city*, *land development*, and *building a new city*. This pattern portrays sustainable mobility as a way to densify the city, particularly related to increased housing. For example, Landskrona (2016) writes that 'bus traffic, free from emission with lower levels of noise, enables increased densification of the city' (p. 5). In a similar vein, Karlstad (2015) concludes that:

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<sup>93</sup> Interestingly, this illustrates a general disagreement amongst influential actors promoting the UEA. One perspective is that the focus on housing was included for external reasons, i.e., not for its direct importance to transport. Some of the motifs mentioned in the interviews were that housing concerns were an explicit request from the minister of housing (Interview 2019-01-11), that they represented a general political trend (Interview 2019-02-25), and that they were a concession to the Social Democratic Party (Field notes, 2019a). Conversely, another perspective highlights housing's importance for sustainability (Field notes, 2019a) and claims that the UEA should have included a broader focus on societal planning to improve sustainability (Interview 2020-05-07).

<sup>94</sup> Statements on this reversed causality have not been included in the table on frequency and centrality as they do not answer any of the analytical questions of this chapter. Still, they indicate a tension relevant when discussing sustainable mobility and are, therefore, developed in this part.

More effective flows of electricity-driven public transport remove emissions and noise from the inner city, creating increased opportunities for environmental-friendly development and densification of housing, workplaces and services. (p. 4)

Thus, it is possible to densify the surroundings by removing emissions and noise from the streets (both by improving busses and reducing car traffic)<sup>95</sup>.

This reason for sustainable mobility is present in nine individual agreements, almost one-third, and places it amongst the more frequent patterns in the material, although towards the lower end. Furthermore, I interpret it as a central pattern as it is frequent within several of the agreements and is found in key positions within others<sup>96</sup>.

The two principal statements of this pattern are *densification* and *land development*. One way to distinguish between them is through their relation to property development, as property growth may come from developing 'new' land or the densification of existing areas. However, my interpretation of the material is that land development is primarily thought of in terms of densification, thus making densification and land development belong to the same general pattern. This interpretation is well-illustrated by Karlstad's quote above, but also by Karlskrona when writing that:

Together with lowered speeds, the bus lane also enables the development of additional land in connection to the new development areas close to the city centre (Karlskrona, 2016, pp. 1-2).

This quote demonstrates that it is a densification process implicitly referred to as reduced speeds and bus lanes are seen to open up spaces for development in the central areas (see Uppsala, 2016, p. 5, for another example).

While effective public transport is seen as a precondition for a denser urban form, the causality is also thought to go the opposite direction, and a fair number of statements explicitly express this reversed causality (e.g., Borås, 2016, p. 2; Eskilstuna, 2016, p. 1; Gävle, 2015, p. 9; Norrköping, 2016, p. 2)<sup>97</sup>. The idea is well-illustrated by Skellefteå (2016), writing that 'with the ongoing densification of dwellings and services in central Skellefteå, a greater base for the city [public transport] travelling is created' (p. 8) and by Umeå Municipality (2016), claiming that:

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<sup>95</sup> In addition, densification is also related to parking spaces. The idea is that improved public transport allows for the removal of parking spaces, thus enabling densification projects (e.g., Kungälv, 2016, p. 4; Västerås, 2016, p. 8).

<sup>96</sup> For instance, when Luleå (2015), on the first page, states that 'the municipality's ambition is to densify the city in the central parts, reinforcing the need for a very environmentally friendly public transport' (p. 1).

<sup>97</sup> As with the pattern on housing, the statements demonstrating the reverse causality compared to the main pattern have not been included in the table on frequency and centrality for the reasons mentioned above.

By continuing to complement and densify housing environments down the mainline network and build dwelling neighbourhoods with high density in strategic positions, good conditions to increase the market share of public transport in Umeå are created. (p. 20)

These two contrasting ways to construct the relationship between sustainable mobility and densification are analogous to the tension discussed above between sustainable mobility as a tool for increasing housing and increasing housing to achieve more public transport travel.

In sum, property development is an important reason in the UEA policy. Both housing and densification are relatively frequent in the material, and while the centrality of the former is difficult to assess, the latter is often central in the concerned agreements. Also, both patterns contain a tension between promoting sustainable mobility through housing development/densification and facilitating housing construction and a denser city through public transport investments.

**Table 6.2. Patterns of property development.** Frequency (F\*) can vary between four and 31, where four is the minimum number of agreements containing the statements for the regularity to be characterised as a pattern, and 31 is the total amount of agreements. Centrality is determined according to a three-fold distinction: Central, Ambiguous, and Peripheral. The number in brackets refers to the page in the agreement where the statement is found.

Statements	Pattern	F*	Centrality	Agreements
Housing	Housing	8	Ambiguous	Eskilstuna (2); Karlskrona (1-2, 10); Kungsbacka (3); Linköping (2015, 5; 2016, 3); Norrköping (9); Lund (10, 16); Karlstad (4); Uppsala (12)
Densification	Densification	9	Central	Göteborg (12); Luleå (1); Lund (4, 9, 10, 11); Helsingborg (1, 4); Uppsala (1-2, 5, 12); Karlskrona (1-2); Karlstad (4); Landskrona (5); Skellefteå (15)
Compact city				
Land development				
Building a new city				

**Key interpretation(s):** Tension between housing to increase sustainable travel and public transport as a way to enable housing development.

## Population

This third section investigates patterns relating to *population* as reasons for sustainable mobility. Two patterns are included: *managing population growth* and *promoting population growth*. Notably, issues concerning population are crucial aspects of the UEA policy, and the patterns are linked to many of the other central patterns.

The first pattern is *managing population growth*, which is both frequent and central in the UEA policy. A majority of the agreements (17 in total) describe a growing population as one of the main reasons for developing sustainable mobility. The logic is that car traffic is expected to increase as the number of inhabitants grows, with severe

adverse effects. Moreover, I consider inevitable population growth to be a central pattern of the material as its constituting statements occupy key positions (in opening sentences etc.) and are recurrent throughout the individual agreements.

The pattern includes two representations, differing in the degree they highlight specific adverse effects of increased car traffic. The first links population growth to *capacity shortage*, sometimes as an existing problem (e.g., Karlskrona, 2016, p. 5), but most of the time as an anticipated future issue (e.g., Karlstad, 2015, p. 2; Kungälv, 2016, p. 10; Lund, 2015, p. 10). Stockholm Municipality (2016), for example, writes:

Stockholm grows. The prognoses show that the inhabitants of Stockholm city will be approximately 25 % more in the year 2030. To enable Stockholm's transport system to function efficiently despite the increase [...], the share of transport made by car needs to reduce (p. 5)

Similarly, Umeå (2016) states that:

A substantial population and workplace growth create, during the coming years, a need for additional bus trips, as well as more vehicles, to tackle the expected increase in volume. (p. 11)

Thus, sustainable mobility becomes a pivotal means to avoid capacity and efficiency problems, present or future, that increasing populations entail.

In contrast, another part of the pattern specifically emphasises the environmental consequences of a growing population (e.g. Malmö, 2016, p. 2; Växjö, 2016, p. 6). Because population growth is expected to be followed by an increase in car traffic, sustainable mobility is constructed as a central transport measure to reduce transport's environmental impact. For instance, Gävle Municipality (2015) writes that:

The measures promote a sustainable urban environment, primarily through improved preconditions for public transport so that Gävle can grow in the number of inhabitants but without the increased amount of trips leading to increased strains on the environment. (p. 1)

Likewise, Göteborg Municipality (2016) claims that several strategies to invest in sustainable mobility will 'enable Göteborg to achieve both local, regional and national climate goals whilst the city grows by roughly 150 000 inhabitants' (p. 8). Similar expressions can be found in the government directive that initiated the UEA (Government Directive, 2015, p. 2).

The above quotes and referred agreements illustrate a broader commitment to national and global emissions goals. Conversely, the earlier-mentioned emphasis on capacity shortage and system efficiency indicates a local understanding of the problems

associated with an increasing population. This distinction between local and national/global considerations is a tension that will reappear in several patterns later in the analysis.

The patterns revolve around the idea that an increasing population is inevitable, thus necessitating investments in sustainable mobility. In other words, a process of *naturalisation* of population growth occurs. As defined in Chapter 3, naturalisation refers to constructing a social phenomenon as natural and thus beyond the reach of societal interventions. Therefore, when population growth is presented as a fact, the representation is naturalised, focusing on effects and solutions rather than whether the representation is inevitable. Turning to the second pattern in this section, I will show how this implicit empirical naturalisation is sometimes complemented by explicit normative naturalisation.

*Promoting population growth* represents the second pattern concerned with population. Although explicit goals to increase the number of inhabitants are less frequent than the managing population growth pattern (only explicit in five agreements), they constitute a central pattern<sup>98</sup>. Kungälv Municipality (2016) illustrates the centrality of promoting population growth well:

The overarching goal for central Kungälv is to double the number of inhabitants and to create an attractive and sustainable city centre that meets the demand for service and infrastructure from both the city and the other urban centres of the municipality (p. 2)

By emphasising the goal right from the start, its importance is highlighted. The quote also shows the connection to transport, similar to how the pattern of managing population growth is constructed. In fact, sustainable mobility is described as a crucial aspect of reaching the population growth goals, for example, in the agreement by Karlstad (2015):

The goal is 100,000 inhabitants, to be compared with the present 88.000. Several strategic, future-oriented investments will contribute to the fulfilment of the vision. One is the new travel centre close to Karlstad central station [...] the third is an investment in Karlstadsstråket, an attractive and high-capacity public transport line inspired by BRT. (p. 2)

In this quote, environmental concerns are missing. Still, achieving population growth without increasing the strain on the environment is an essential rationale for sustainable

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<sup>98</sup> As with the previous pattern, this interpretation is based on the central position (in opening sentences, etc.) and the reoccurrence of the statements within the individual agreements.

mobility in this pattern (Kungälv, 2016, p. 2; Skellefteå, 2016, p. 2; Umeå, 2016, pp. 1-2).

The agreements (and thus municipalities) can be divided according to the distinction between managing and promoting population growth demonstrated by the two above patterns. For many municipalities, population growth is constructed as beyond control and needs management. Generally, this is true for the metropolitan cities (Stockholm, Göteborg, and Malmö) and large cities in their proximities (i.e., Helsingborg, Lund, Uppsala, and Linköping). In contrast, several municipalities have explicit population growth goals, making conscious efforts to increase inhabitants<sup>99</sup>. These tend to be medium-sized municipalities with some distance from the metropolitan regions (for example, Skellefteå, Karlstad, and Växjö). Sometimes these different approaches lead to contrasting reasons why sustainable mobility is important. For example, managing population growth through public transport investments may require other measures than if the objective of sustainable transport is to promote population growth. Still, for the most part, these two motifs are compatible, and an additional category of municipalities explicitly combines the two (for example, Umeå and Luleå<sup>100</sup>). As for the relation between transport, the relationship between transport and population growth is sometimes perceived as the former influencing the latter while, at other times, vice versa.

However, despite the difference in how population growth is discussed in the two patterns, the main message is clear: the population will grow, either by natural forces or by conscious political efforts. From that perspective, transport represents a central vehicle for managing or promoting this growth.

If the patterns are treated as one, it is fair to say that population growth is dominant in the UEA policy. Population growth as a reason for sustainable mobility is frequent and central in the material. Furthermore, alternatives are silenced, and the economic and social consequences are not discussed (although the environmental impact is discussed, it is not recognised as something discrediting the value of a growing population). This taken for granted view is further highlighted by the uncertainty of civil servants when asked about population growth goals. It was nothing commonly reflected upon, and the general perception was that it had been imposed by the political level (Field notes, 2016; Interview 2018-12-11).

To summarise, population issues are constructed as crucial reasons for sustainable mobility in the UEA policy. Yet, while population growth is naturalised, alternatives and consequences of this growth are silenced. However, there is a difference between being empirically and normatively naturalised (i.e., promoted), and municipalities can

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<sup>99</sup> Approximately one-third of the Swedish municipalities had explicit population growth goals when this was studied by Fjertorp (2012, pp. 20-22).

<sup>100</sup> Luleå's population growth goal is not explicit in its agreement but clearly stated in the city's comprehensive plan, referenced in the agreement (Luleå, 2013a, 2013b).



be partly divided along this distinction, with metropolitan cities constructing population growth as a naturally occurring phenomenon in contrast to medium-size municipalities promoting it.

**Table 6.3. Patterns on population.** Frequency (F\*) can vary between four and 31, where four is the minimum number of agreements containing the statements for the regularity to be characterised as a pattern, and 31 is the total amount of agreements. Centrality is determined according to a three-fold distinction: Central, Ambiguous, and Peripheral. The number in brackets refers to the page in the agreement where the statement is found.

Statements	Pattern	F*	Centrality	Agreements
Managing population growth without adverse effects	Managing population growth	17	Central	Gävle (1, 8); Karlstad (2); Kungälv (10); Malmö (2, 4); Norrköping (3-4, 6); Göteborg (8); Jönköping (2); Stockholm (4, 6); Uppsala (6); Västerås (8); Örebro (6); Umeå (11); Karlskrona (5); Lund (2, 10); Växjö (6); Borås (8); Luleå (6)
Managing promoted population growth without adverse effects				
Promoting population growth	Promoting population growth	5	Central	Umeå (1, 2, 4); Växjö (2, 12); Kungälv (2, 15); Skellefteå (2); Karlstad (2, 7)

**Key interpretation(s):** Naturalisation of population growth and silenced consequences and alternatives.

## Environment

The fourth section concerns *environmental* reasons for sustainable mobility, within which three main patterns are found: *sustainable urban environment*, *global environment*, and *local environment*.

In the first pattern, *sustainable urban environment*, the rationale behind sustainable mobility investments is their contribution to the sustainability of urban environments. This goal is often presented in general terms; for example, when the municipality of Borås Municipality (2016) writes that ‘the societal development of Borås needs to emanate from the prerequisite of public transport to strengthen the travel growth and reach the goal of a sustainable city’ (p. 4). Similarly, the municipality of Lund (2015) states that ‘the tramway will also create conditions for and be a fundamental part of a sustainable and attractive urban development’ (p. 2). Representations such as *sustainable city* and *sustainable urban development* are assumed self-evident in these quotes, as in the material overall. Nevertheless, other agreements elaborate on how sustainable transport might achieve this desirable development. Helsingborg Municipality (2016) claims that:

Through the effort with reduced travel time, the ambition is that more car users choose public transport. That way, the disturbance on central streets caused by cars is reduced, which should contribute to a more sustainable urban environment. (p. 2)

In this quote, the municipality links reduced car use to a more sustainable urban environment, arguing that improved public transport will enhance the city's urban environment by inducing mode change. Similarly, a city such as Malmö, experiencing rapid population growth, argues that sustainable transport is central in tackling population growth, implicitly relating it to increased car travel:

Public transport plays a critical role in developing Malmö as an attractive and sustainable city. An attractive, environmentally friendly, high-capacity public transport is necessary to manage the population growth Malmö experience. (2016, p. 4)

Statements such as the above are frequent in the material, and little more than half of the agreements explicitly discuss a sustainable urban environment as a reason for sustainable transport investments. Moreover, within those agreements, the centrality of the pattern is indisputable, being mentioned several times and often in key positions (i.e., early or in summarising paragraphs). Of course, general descriptions that sustainable mobility should lead to improved sustainable urban environments are unsurprising, given the nature of the policy. These representations follow directly from the policy directives (SFS 2015:579), and, in their application, the municipalities are required to answer how the transport measures will improve the sustainable urban environment (The Swedish Transport Administration, 2016a; See Appendix B). Therefore, what might seem like a high frequency is surprisingly low, as a little less than half of the agreements fail to explicitly refer to sustainable urban environments as a critical reason for their sustainable mobility investments (e.g., Eskilstuna, 2016; Karlskrona, 2016; Kungsbacka, 2016; Norrköping, 2016; Nyköping, 2016; Värnamo, 2016; Västerås, 2016).

There is no obvious explanation for this difference, where one-half of the agreements explicitly discuss the reason while the other half do not. A brief comparison between some of the agreements from each category reveals that those mentioning sustainable urban environments generally have more thorough descriptions of the rationale behind the investments (e.g., Borås, 2016; Gävle, 2015; Göteborg, 2016; Hörby, 2016; Karlstad, 2015). In contrast, agreements from the other category are narrower in their focus, discussing the particular measures and the expected increases in public transport travel (e.g., Karlskrona, 2016; Kungsbacka, 2016; Norrköping, 2016; Värnamo, 2016). Another aspect to consider is if the essence of a sustainable urban environment is captured through other formulations. The two patterns discussed below, global and local environment, to some extent represent specifications of the more general representation of a sustainable urban environment. When those statements are added, only six agreements lack representations connecting sustainable mobility to an

improved environment (Eskilstuna, 2016; Kungsbacka, 2016; Nyköping, 2016; Trollhättan, 2016; Uppsala, 2016; Västerås, 2016)<sup>101</sup>.

Moreover, there is an interesting vagueness in the representation of *sustainable urban environments*. In the secondary legislation regulating the UEA (SFS 2015:579), the formulation of this goal is followed by two sentences specifying that the concrete transport measures should lead to a greater share of personal transport being made by public transport and with low GHG emissions. However, as I argue in the following chapter (Section 7.4.3.), increasing the share of public transport travel does not necessarily translate to reduced emissions. Furthermore, the way it is formulated states that the transport measures should have low emissions levels, not lead to lower emissions overall. Thus, regarding reducing GHG emissions, the legislation is ambiguous.

This ambiguity connects to a tension within the environmental reasons for sustainability. On one hand, sustainable urban environment points toward the local level and the pressing issues directly affecting the local environment. On the other hand, the local affects the global, and the reduction of GHG emissions has been an implicit goal of the policy and criteria when evaluating the applications<sup>102</sup>. I will develop this tension between global and local concerns in the following sections.

The material also allows for the interpretation of *sustainable urban environment* as a configuration of the local that is globally sustainable. In this second pattern concerning the *global environment*, sustainable mobility is constructed to remedy the current cities' adverse effects on the intra-local<sup>103</sup>. As with the previous pattern, approximately half of the agreements reference global environmental concerns as reasons for sustainable mobility, but in this case, the centrality of the statement is unclear. While global environmental issues have a central position in some agreements (e.g., Skellefteå, 2016, p. 3; Örebro, 2016, p. 1), they appear as one of many concerns in others (e.g., Göteborg, 2016, p. 6; Östersund, 2015, p. 2).

Additionally, there is some disparity within the pattern of the term used. Most agreements discuss the global environment in terms of GHG emissions (Göteborg, 2016, p. 6; Kungälv, 2016, p. 2; Linköping, 2015, p. 1; 2016, p. 1; Lund, 2015, p. 3;

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<sup>101</sup> These agreements, nevertheless, contain statements about the environmental benefits that the proposed measures have on the local public transport system, but they do not present the environment as a reason for sustainable mobility investments. The distinction is based on the theoretical categories developed in Chapter 3.

<sup>102</sup> This has become evident throughout the K2-led evaluation of the policy (financed by the Swedish Transport Administration) in which I have been involved.

<sup>103</sup> Note that the term *global environment* (or rather its Swedish equivalent) is not used in the agreements. However, I use it for summarising the statements I have interpreted concerning global climate issues. Of course, the effects of climate change are experienced locally, but it is generally discussed as a global problem.

Norrköping, 2016, p. 7; Umeå, 2016, p. 9; Örebro, 2016, p. 7; Östersund, 2015, p. 2). Norrköping (2016), for instance, writes that: ‘the tramway is powered by renewable electricity [...], and a shift from car to tram will lead to a reduction of GHG emissions’ (p. 7), and Karlstad (2015) formulates its goal as ‘substantially increased use of sustainable modes of transport, reduced energy consumption, as well as, less GHG emissions and impact on the climate’ (p. 3). Moreover, several agreements are going even further, specifying the exact reduction in tons of CO<sub>2</sub>/year (e.g., Gävle, 2015, p. 17; Luleå, 2015, p. 6).

In contrast, some agreements refer to the climate, or climate neutrality, as to why sustainable mobility investments are necessary (Gävle, 2015, p. 2; Karlstad, 2015, p. 3; Lund, 2015, p. 6; Malmö, 2016, p. 8). Finally, two municipalities mention fossil-fuel independence (Skellefteå, 2016, p. 3; Örebro, 2016, p. 1). This statement is presumably borrowed from the report *Fossil Freedom on the Roads* (SOU, 2013:84), which was essential for the initiation of the UEA (see Chapter 5). Still, despite different terms being used, the statements share a similar understanding of global environmental issues motivating sustainable mobility investments.

Representations of global environmental issues constitute an essential reason for sustainable mobility as the increase of ‘sustainable modes of transport’ (mostly public transport in the statements) is assumed to reduce the carbon impact of the present transport system. Interpreting sustainable urban environment as the global environment also indicates something important about the emphasis of the policy measures, especially in relation to a focus on more local issues.

Another way in which municipalities approach environmental issues is through a local perspective. In this third pattern, the *local environment* is constructed as the reason for sustainable mobility, including aspects such as air quality, noise, and congestion. For example, Malmö (2016) writes that ‘on certain lines, the bus transport is close to its limits in terms of capacity, at the same time as Malmö is struggling with poor air quality in several places’ (p. 3), formulating sustainable mobility as a solution to these problems caused predominately by car traffic.

The pattern is common and can be found in 18 of 31 agreements. However, as with the previous pattern, I have had difficulty determining its centrality, as it is somewhat frequent in individual agreements but is seldom found as central statements in the texts. Still, the ambiguity of the pattern is partly resolved when analysing its constituent parts. For example, while statements on noise are frequent (present in 12 agreements), they are not developed or found in central positions within the agreements. Furthermore, although frequent in approximately the same number of agreements, air quality, in contrast, tends to be a fundamental reason for sustainable mobility. This centrality is particularly true for municipalities with poor air quality (e.g., Luleå, 2015, p. 2; Skellefteå, 2016; Umeå, 2016, p. 2). Finally, congestion is neither frequent nor central.

Given this heterogeneity among the pattern dimensions, uniformly categorising the local environment can be questioned. Still, many agreements treat local issues in connection (e.g., Göteborg, 2016, p. 15; Malmö, 2016, p. 3; Stockholm, 2016, p. 10; Umeå, 2016, p. 11), and compared to the tension between global and local concerns, the aspects constituting the local environment are internally compatible.

Although local and global objectives can often be pursued simultaneously, they might also conflict. For example, air quality is mainly a problem of concentrated urban traffic. Conversely, GHG emissions are an effect of the total traffic volume. Thus, dispersing traffic will solve the first problem but not the second, which might worsen if the solution creates longer distances or increased road infrastructure.

While local goals are missing from the secondary legislation (SFS 2015:579), it is mentioned in the government directive to the Transport Administration (Government Directive, 2015) and elaborated in a report by the same agency (The Swedish Transport Administration, 2015e). Thus, the tension might best be described as a difference in emphasis rather than entirely different goals by the various administrative levels. Additionally, agreements that highlight the importance of the local environment (e.g., Luleå, 2015, p. 2) sometimes include statements about global issues; for example, when Luleå (2015) writes that its ‘overarching goal is to be part of a sustainable society’ (p. 1). Nevertheless, the tension highlights potentially conflicting goals, especially when one understanding of the environment is used to justify transport measures counterproductive to the other understanding (see an example of this in Section 7.4.1.)<sup>104</sup>.

In summary, a sustainable urban environment constitutes an essential reason for sustainable mobility within the UEA policy. However, its high prevalence might partly be explained by the relationship between the agreements and the secondary legislation (i.e., the latter regulating the former), as a sustainable urban environment is stated as a goal of the policy.

The pattern can be divided into two specific reasons: the global and the local environment. Both are frequent in the material, but their centrality is ambiguous and tends to differ depending on which aspects of the patterns are analysed. Although global and local reasons for sustainable mobility are often compatible, they represent a tension in the UEA policy as they might point to different policy solutions, potentially in conflict.

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<sup>104</sup> As air quality is regulated by law (SFS 2010:477), which GHG emissions are not, municipalities facing these problems are likely to treat them as more pressing and, thus, emphasise local instead of national goals. In an interview with a public agency civil servant, the tendency for local issues to dominate the discussion was brought up, expressing concerns about the risk that these local and very concrete issues would overshadow the more abstract national and global problem of climate change (Interview 2019-02-25).

**Table 6.4. Patterns on the environment.** Frequency (F\*) can vary between four and 31, where four is the minimum number of agreements containing the statements for the regularity to be characterised as a pattern, and 31 is the total amount of agreements. Centrality is determined according to a three-fold distinction: Central, Ambiguous, and Peripheral. The number in brackets refers to the page in the agreement where the statement is found.

Statements	Pattern	F*	Centrality	Agreements
Sustainable urban environment	Sustainable urban environment	17	Central	Borås (4, 6); Gävle (1); Göteborg (2); Helsingborg (2015, 1; 2016, 2); Hörby (2); Karlstad (2, 4, 13); Kungälv (3, 14); Landskrona (2, 3); Luleå (1); Lund (2, 3, 9); Malmö (1, 3, 4); Stockholm Region (9); Umeå (11); Växjö (2); Örebro (2); Östersund (1, 2, 6)
Sustainable city				
Sustainable city development				
Climate neutrality	Global environment	14	Ambiguous	Gävle (2); Göteborg (6, 8); Karlstad (3, 12); Kungälv (2, 15); Linköping (2015, 1; 2016, 1); Lund (3, 6); Luleå (2); Malmö (8); Norrköping (7); Skellefteå (3); Umeå (9, 11); Örebro (1, 7); Östersund (2)
Reduce GHG emissions				
Fossil-fuel independence				
Improved air quality	Local environment	18	Ambiguous	Göteborg (15); Helsingborg (6); Jönköping (6); Karlskrona (5, 13); Karlstad (2, 8, 25); Kungälv (10, 15); Landskrona (5); Linköping (2015, 1; 2016, 1); Luleå (2, 6); Lund (6); Malmö (3, 8); Norrköping (3); Skellefteå (2-2, 4); Stockholm (10); Umeå (11); Värnamo (2); Östersund (2, 6, 6-7)
Reduced local emissions				
Reduced noise				
Reduced congestion				

**Key interpretation(s):** Tension between the local and global environment.

## Attractiveness and Social Progress

The final section analysing the reasons for sustainable mobility focuses both on *attractiveness* and *social progress* and includes patterns of the attractive city and social progress.

Although attractiveness and social progress appear to be distinct thematically, there are good reasons for treating them together. First, the similarities between attractiveness as sustainability and social progress will be evident from the following discussion on the two constructions of attractiveness. In essence, the attractive city is a socially-progressive city in this understanding. Additionally, attractiveness as growth can be interpreted in connection to social progress, particularly the construction of gender equality as a positive outcome free from connotations of power. From this perspective, the social outcomes of sustainable mobility improve the attractiveness of cities and increase populations and businesses.

*The attractive city* is a pattern describing sustainable mobility as a fundamental aspect in increasing the attractiveness of urban areas. For instance, Karlstad (2015) states that ‘an attractive public transport is a part of an attractive city’ (p. 14), and Umeå (2016)

argues that ‘an increased share of sustainable trips is a precondition to creating an attractive and modern Umeå’ (p. 9). Over half of the agreements contain references to attractiveness, and the statements are both frequent and in key positions within individual agreements.

Still, what is meant by attractiveness and how it is achieved through sustainable mobility is not always clear. General descriptions such as the above are common in the UEA policy. However, analysing the pattern further, two relatively different understandings of attractiveness permeate the material.

First, the pattern includes a representation that connects the attractive city with general ideas about sustainability (e.g., Gävle, 2015, pp. 6, 8; Göteborg, 2016, pp. 2, 9; Malmö, 2016, p. 4; Skellefteå, 2016, p. 11; Uppsala, 2016, p. 6). Thus, when Malmö (2016) writes that ‘an attractive public transport can strengthen Malmö’s ambition as an attractive and sustainable city’ (p. 3), the municipality connects attractiveness to sustainability. In essence, attractiveness in a sustainable city is about removing unsafe, polluting, and noisy cars from the urban environments, connecting to statements about *the vivid/bustling city* and *healthy and exciting urban environments* (e.g., Helsingborg, 2016, p. 4; Hörby, 2016, p. 2; Karlstad, 2015, pp. 16, 20). One feature referred to in particular is how speed limitations will increase this kind of attractiveness (Kungälv, 2016, p. 15; Linköping, 2015, p. 10; 2016, p. 6; Stockholm, 2016, p. 8). For example, Uppsala (2016) writes:

The plan is created according to the method ‘correct speed in the city’ and aims to change the speed limits in the city to make a safer and more attractive city with room for encounters, liveliness and movement (p. 10).

In other words, by reducing the speed of cars and improving sustainable mobility, an attractive city with ‘liveliness’ and ‘room for encounters’ is thought to be achieved<sup>105</sup>.

In contrast, a second, more instrumental understanding of the attractive city links the concept to population and economic growth (e.g., Karlskrona, 2016, p. 12; Karlstad, 2015, p. 14; Kungälv, 2016, pp. 3, 15; Lund, 2015, p. 2; Umeå, 2016, p. 9; Östersund, 2015, pp. 2, 6). For example, Karlstad (2015) writes that its vision ‘entails that Karlstad should be an attractive city that grows and attracts both people and

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<sup>105</sup> Interpreting attractiveness in terms of sustainability mirrors the handbook on *Traffic for an Attractive City* (TRAST), released jointly by the Swedish Transport Administration, The National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, and The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR), and referred to in the preparatory report by the Transport Administration (2015e). The handbook defines the attractive city as a: ‘city or an urban centre, big or small, that people happily spend time in and is socially, economically, and ecologically sustainable. Furthermore, the attractive city gives people a safe platform to live and work in’ (TRAST Handbook, 2015, p. 8). Thus, in this understanding, attractiveness is explicitly linked to the sustainability triad.

businesses' (p. 1), connecting attractiveness to improved public transport through its effects on extending labour markets and reducing travel times (ibid., pp. 15, 17). Thus, 'to be attractive' implies being attractive to someone else, and in this understanding, an attractive city is constructed as a place that attracts people and businesses from other parts. In short, an attractive city is a city that grows, which is deeply connected to the representations of population and economic growth<sup>106</sup>.

As seen from the above, there are two distinct ways that attractiveness is constructed in the material: one in line with traditional sustainable development discourse and one tied explicitly to promoting growth. This tension is also present in the extended policy material with, on one hand, expressions connecting with the first understanding (Parliamentary Record, 2014/15:73, p. 62; The Swedish Transport Administration, 2015d, p. 5) and, on the other hand, explicit descriptions of increased growth, such as by the Transport Administration:

A more sustainable urban development, with denser, greener, and mixed-service cities that are easy to move in by foot, bicycle, and public transport, can be motivated by creating attractive cities that attract inhabitants, visitors, and economic interests. (The Swedish Transport Administration, 2015e, p. 40)

The tension can be interpreted as a difference in emphasising the city's current inhabitants and focusing on potential inhabitants (cf. Fjertorp, 2012), analogous to the focus on current and future public transport users discussed below. Although these different priorities might complement each other, it is not difficult to imagine them leading to fundamentally different solutions. For example, constantly rebuilding transport infrastructure (amongst other things) might signal expansion and progress to outsiders but mainly entail inconvenience and interruptions for the current population.

The second pattern is *social progress*, including statements on *gender equality*, *integration*, and *social sustainability*. Social progress represents a minor pattern within the material, present in eight agreements and peripheral within those<sup>107</sup>. Of the social aspects, gender stands out as the most important. However, when gender is discussed, gender equality is not described as a structural problem, in contrast to the typical way it is usually discussed. Instead, the message conveyed is more neutral. It appears as an additional benefit of improved sustainable transport. In its agreement, Linköping (2015) writes:

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<sup>106</sup> The Swedish Agency for Growth Policy Analysis makes the same interpretation, concluding that: 'what is meant by attractiveness is not clearly defined in any policy document, but the national and municipal/regional efforts on attractiveness during the recent years can primarily be connected to an ambition to increase or sustain municipal population growth' (SAGPA, 2014, p. 3).

<sup>107</sup> The two agreements by Linköping are exceptions where gender quality appears as a central reason for sustainable mobility (2015, p. 1; 2016, p. 1).



To reduce car dependency through, for example, prioritisation of walking, cycling and public transport in the physical city and infrastructure planning contributes to increased gender equality for both women and men. (p. 1)

In this quote, gender equality becomes merely a positive outcome, without any sensitive issues of responsibility and distribution, neutralised further by the inclusion of *men*. This kind of construction is present in several agreements (e.g., Linköping, 2016, p. 1; Växjö, 2016, p. 2) and makes gender equality appear more like an advertisement phrase than a concern connected to power.

Nevertheless, there are also examples where a distinction is made between the travel behaviour of men and women. The idea is that, as women generally use public transport to a greater extent, improvements in this mode of transport will benefit women the most (Jönköping, 2016, p. 2; Norrköping, 2016, p. 3; Östersund, 2015, p. 2).

In addition to gender, integration is also described as a social reason for sustainable mobility, albeit without developed explanations for how it is to be achieved. However, generally, it is based on the same idea of unequal levels of mobility amongst social groups; in this case, according to ethnicity (e.g., Malmö, 2016, p. 8; Norrköping, 2016, p. 3; Östersund, 2015, p. 2). These statements overlap the statements on gender and those more generally describing social sustainability.

In summary, attractiveness and social progress are two distinct but closely related overarching reasons for sustainable mobility within the material. Statements on the attractive city as a reason for advancing sustainable mobility are widespread in the material, and the pattern is central within many documents. However, two different constructions of attractiveness permeate the UEA policy: one connected to sustainability and one to growth. The tension between these constructions can be interpreted as emphasising either the city's current inhabitants or its future residents.

In contrast, social progress represents a relatively minor and peripheral pattern. Still, social progress and attractiveness overlap, as the connotations of power otherwise common for social concerns are missing, thus constructing it as a positive outcome of sustainable mobility investments and an essential part of the attractive city.

**Table 6.5. Patterns on attractiveness and social progress.** Frequency (F\*) can vary between four and 31, where four is the minimum number of agreements containing the statements for the regularity to be characterised as a pattern, and 31 is the total amount of agreements. Centrality is determined according to a three-fold distinction: Central, Ambiguous, and Peripheral. The number in brackets refers to the page in the agreement where the statement is found.

Statements	Pattern	F*	Centrality	Agreements
Attractive city	Attractive city	18	Central	Gävle (6, 8); Göteborg (2, 9); Helsingborg (4); Hörby (2); Karlskrona (12); Karlstad (14, 15, 16, 17, 20); Kungälv (3, 15); Landskrona (1); Linköping (2015, 10; 2016, 6); Lund (2, 7); Malmö (3, 4); Skellefteå (11); Stockholm (8); Trollhättan (12); Umeå (9); Uppsala (6, 10); Östersund (2, 6)
Modern city				
Bustling and vivid city				
Healthy and exciting urban environments				
Gender equality	Social progress	8	Peripheral	Jönköping (5); Linköping (2015, 1; 2016, 1); Luleå (1); Malmö (8); Norrköping (3); Växjö (2); Östersund (2)
Social integration				
Social sustainability				

**Key interpretation(s):** Tension between attractiveness as sustainability (emphasising the city's current inhabitants) and growth promotion (with a focus on the city's potential inhabitants).

## Conclusions on the Category of Reasons for Sustainable Mobility

The reasons for sustainable mobility are normative justifications manifest in the UEA policy analysed in this thesis. In this part, I have presented such reasons thematically in six sections. These are often closely related and part of overarching constructions of sustainable mobility (i.e., constitutive lines of reasoning, see Section 3.1.2.), a conclusion I will develop more thoroughly in the following chapter.

Most sections involved tensions understood as potentially conflicting statements or patterns that conclude substantially different things concerning a problem or issue. Several of these, such as between current and future city populations, and between public transport to promote housing and housing to promote public transport, indicate the existence of two viewpoints among the discursive patterns. As I argue in the next chapter, these viewpoints, conceptualised as constitutive lines of reasoning (see the analytical framework, Section 3.1.2.), can be found throughout the material and represent significant ways in which sustainable mobility is constructed.

Two of the sections also include naturalised patterns. First, economic growth is constructed as something which follows from public transport investments and is inherently desirable, silencing conflicting concerns and alternative viewpoints. Second, most agreements construct population growth as inevitable, although several explicitly promote it. Similar to economic growth, alternatives to increasing populations are silenced, and its economic and social consequences are not discussed.

**Table 6.6. The patterns and key interpretations in the reasons for sustainable mobility category.**

	<b>Pattern</b>	<b>Key interpretation(s)</b>
<i>Economy</i>	Economic growth	Naturalisation of economic growth and silenced conflicts between economic growth and the environment
	Improving work opportunities	
<i>Property (development)</i>	Housing	Tension between housing to increase sustainable travelling and public transport as a way to enable housing development
	Densification	
<i>Population</i>	Managing population growth	Naturalisation of population growth and silenced consequences and alternatives.
	Promoting population growth	
<i>Environment</i>	Sustainable urban environment	Tension between the local and global environment
	Global environment	
	Local environment	
<i>Attractiveness and social progress</i>	Attractive city	Tension between attractiveness as sustainability (emphasising the city's current inhabitants) and growth promotion (with a focus on the city's potential inhabitants)
	Social progress	

## Norms of Sustainable Mobility

Several norms are found within the material, answering what kind of sustainable mobility is desirable according to the UEA policy. These norms are closely related to the reasons for sustainable mobility discussed above but differ in two ways. First, they are not as manifest as the reasons. Instead, they commonly operate as latent normative assumptions in the material. Second, whereas *reasons* are related to general societal benefits, *norms* are, in my conceptualisation, more closely tied to transport, specifying what good and bad mobility entails. Thus, the two categories of reasons and norms complement each other, and a more nuanced picture of the UEA policy's justification of sustainable mobility is attained through the inquiry of its norms.

I have structured the results thematically into three sections. The first concerns qualitative norms, which link sustainable mobility to desirable attributes and label particular modes of transport as sustainable. Conversely, the second section is about quantitative norms and relates to questions of desirable growth. Finally, the last one revolves around the relationship between sustainable mobility and automobility. Although it includes a norm about a continuing need for cars, the emphasis is on the desirability of prioritising so-called sustainable modes of transport.

## Qualitative Norms

The first section in the category of sustainable mobility norms concerns qualitative aspects of desirable mobility. This section includes three main patterns: the first two link desirable attributes to public transport, and the third specifies sustainable transport modes.

One central pattern in the discursive construction of sustainable mobility relates to desirable attributes. These attributes characterise desirable public transport as *silent, high-speed, high-capacity, comfortable, modern, reliable, safe, and environmentally friendly*. Together, these descriptions are present in 24 agreements, although there is some variance in how frequently individual attributes appear. This variance relates to the centrality of the pattern, which I have interpreted as ambiguous, including both central and peripheral statements.

The most dominant attribute is high capacity, for instance, as described by Malmö (2016):

Public transport plays a pivotal role in developing Malmö as an attractive and sustainable city. To manage the present population growth of Malmö, attractive, environmentally friendly, high-capacity public transport is necessary. (p. 4)

In this case, high capacity is constructed as a necessary attribute of public transport to handle the experienced population growth. Although not always providing motivations as clear as those in Malmö's agreement, *high capacity* is explicitly referenced in 16 agreements, and all 31 agreements relate to the term somehow as this is a requirement in the application form (The Swedish Transport Administration, 2016a, see Appendix B)<sup>108</sup>. Still, there is an intriguing difference in how high capacity is constructed. The majority of the agreements only address it when the application form requires it. Contrastingly, several agreements are more elaborative, indicating a greater emphasis on the representation. This more elaborated use of high capacity is almost exclusively found in agreements proposing BRT measures (Helsingborg, 2015; Jönköping, 2016; Karlstad, 2015; Malmö, 2016; Uppsala, 2016) and tramway infrastructure (Lund, 2015; Stockholm Region, 2016). For example, Lund (2015) explicitly compares tramways' capacity with traditional buses, concluding the benefits of the former in this regard (p. 9). This finding makes sense from a general transport context as both BRT and tramways are justified by their high-capacity potential (e.g., Spårvagstäderna, 2021; X2AB, 2015).

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<sup>108</sup> In comparison, the other attributes appear in three to six agreements, except statements on speed, which ten agreements contain.

I have identified two principal patterns among the attributes that illustrate a tension within them: the shortcomings of public transport and the shortcomings of cars. On one hand, one group of attributes appears to respond to a negative picture of public transport as noisy, slow, uncomfortable, unreliable, unsafe, and outdated. For example, when Skellefteå (2016) writes that ‘modern, comfortable and silent electrical busses are expected to [...] lead an increased number of public transport travellers’ (p. 3), and when Luleå (2015) states that ‘emission-free buses do not disturb to the same degree as those propelled by fossil-fuels’ (p. 6), it implicitly references this negative view of public transport. If its comfort levels do not limit current public transport, there is no need to improve comfort to increase trips. These attributes are also related to the perception of cars, often viewed as a faster, more comfortable, and more reliable alternative.

On the other hand, another group of attributes seems to relate to the shortcomings of cars. Thus, emphasising public transport’s high capacity and environmental friendliness (e.g., Helsingborg, 2016, p. 1; Stockholm, 2016, p. 4) may be contrasted with inefficient and polluting cars. I have already developed how high capacity is frequently described as a desirable attribute of mobility and a quality possessed by public transport. Additionally, high capacity is often connected to the presumed environmental friendliness of public transport, working in tandem to alleviate the flaws of car-centred mobility (e.g., Karlstad, 2015, p. 4; Kungälv, 2016, p. 22; Malmö, 2016, p. 4).

The tension between the shortcomings of cars and public transport is highly relevant because it may affect which transport measures are prioritised. Thus, if the dominant representation is that current public transport is insufficient, it follows that it must be improved to become viable. Contrastingly, by indirectly pointing out the problems with automobility, restrictions on car use presumably become a legitimate alternative.

In the third pattern, particular transport modes are constructed as sustainable<sup>109</sup>. Dominating this pattern is the view that *public transport, cycling, and walking* constitute these sustainable modes of transport (e.g., Karlstad, 2015, p. 20; Norrköping, 2016, p. 10; Umeå, 2016, p. 10; Örebro, 2016, p. 1). For example, Malmö (2016) writes:

For a long time, the city of Malmö has been working actively to improve the urban environment and to prioritise the sustainable modes of transport, walking, cycling, and public transport, in city planning. (p. 2)

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<sup>109</sup> Constructing particular modes as sustainable might be considered an empirical assumption rather than a normative one. However, ‘sustainability’ and ‘sustainable modes’ are doubtless representations loaded with normative content, i.e., it is desirable to be sustainable. I treat the pattern in this part of the chapter for that reason.

And Jönköping Municipality (2016) formulates this point almost identically:

To achieve a sustainable transport system in general, and in the central parts of the city in particular, a strong transition from cars to the sustainable modes of transport, walking/cycling and public transport is needed. (p. 1)

Although similar formulations might be accidental, they are more likely to reveal a widespread norm in the UEA policy. Moreover, this interpretation is reinforced by how the pattern is assumed in the material. Although only six agreements explicitly define sustainable mobility as walking, cycling, and public transport (Jönköping, 2016, p. 1; Karlstad, 2015, p. 20; Malmö, 2016, p. 2; Norrköping, 2016, p. 10; Umeå, 2016, pp. 2, 10; Örebro, 2016, p. 1), it is fair to say that the pattern is implicit throughout the material. Many agreements use the term ‘sustainable modes of transport’ without defining it, but from the rest of the text, it is evident that they allude to walking, cycling, and public transport (e.g., Gävle, 2015, p. 8; Landskrona, 2016, p. 3; Luleå, 2015, p. 9; Lund, 2015, p. 14; Norrköping, 2016, p. 10; Skellefteå, 2016, p. 2; Stockholm, 2016, p. 1; Umeå, 2016, p. 3; Växjö, 2016, p. 1). Lund (2015), for instance, writes that:

It [mobility management] aims to make more people use the sustainable modes of transport [...] Examples of measures are try-it-campaigns, leave-the-car-and-go-to-work-by-public-transport, marketing the simplicity of walking and cycling instead of driving cars in the city. (p. 14)

As the quote illustrates, although ‘sustainable modes of transport’ is not directly connected to walking, cycling, and public transport in the paragraph, it is clear from the provided examples that this is how it is defined.

Additionally, interpreting ‘the sustainable modes of transport’ as a norm running through the material is strengthened when the agreements’ main transport measures are compared to the services-in-return. In general, the measures concern public transport, while the services-in-return often involves improvements for walking and cycling (The Swedish Transport Administration, 2016b, 2016c). Thus, together the triad becomes the only way sustainable modes of transport is constructed<sup>110</sup>.

A critical effect of the pattern is the naturalised unity between the sustainable modes of transport. Thus, by treating them, more or less, as a whole, internal tensions are

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<sup>110</sup> An intriguing sidenote is that, when comparing with the recent development in Sweden and the rise of so-called micro-mobility, the historical context of the material is clear as there are almost no statements on the sustainability of anything else than walking, cycling, and public transport. However, defining taxis, rental cars, and carpools as ‘alternative sustainable modes’ (2016, p. 17), Kungälv’s agreement is the exception that proves the rule.

silenced. Even when conflicts between transport modes are acknowledged, for example, when Karlstad states that ‘when there are conflicting goals, corridors for walking, cycling and public transport should be prioritised before the flows of cars’ (Karlstad, 2015, p. 20), the so-called sustainable modes of transport are presumed to be internally friction-free<sup>111</sup>. However, if this unity is taken apart, it becomes evident that public transport, cycling, and walking have different rationalities and social and environmental impacts<sup>112</sup>.

Summing up this section on qualitative norms of sustainable mobility, I have identified three main patterns within the material. A wide range of qualitative norms is formulated in the first two, describing qualitatively desirable sustainable mobility. Of these attributes, high capacity stands out as the most important. However, considering all attributes, two general patterns can be distinguished. These involve a tension about whether the qualitative attributes respond to the perceived shortcomings of public transport or highlight the problems with car traffic. Furthermore, the centrality of the pattern is ambiguous, as some attributes are given more attention than others. In the second pattern, public transport, cycling, and walking are constructed as the sustainable modes of transport. Although only explicit in approximately one-fifth of the agreements, the construction is assumed throughout the material. The pattern involves a naturalised unity and a silenced conflict between these sustainable modes of transport.

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<sup>111</sup> Still, there are some indications of awareness regarding the potential conflicts between ‘sustainable modes’; for example, in Växjö’s agreement (Växjö, 2016, p. 3) and during one of the interviews with local civil servants (Interview 2018-12-11).

<sup>112</sup> This silenced conflict is discussed further in the Sections 6.4.2. and 7.4.2.

**Table 6.7. Patterns on qualitative norms.** Frequency (F\*) can vary between four and 31, where four is the minimum number of agreements containing the statements for the regularity to be characterised as a pattern, and 31 is the total amount of agreements. Centrality is determined according to a three-fold distinction: Central, Ambiguous, and Peripheral. The number in brackets refers to the page in the agreement where the statement is found.

Statements	Pattern	F*	Centrality	Agreements
Silent	The shortcomings of public transport	16	Ambiguous	Göteborg (7); Jönköping (1, 2, 3); Karlskrona (5, 13, 16); Karlstad (16); Kungsbacka (2); Kungälv (11); Linköping (2015, 5; 2016, 3); Luleå (2, 6); Skellefteå (3); Stockholm (7); Trollhättan (5); Uppsala (6); Värnamo (2); Västerås (3); Växjö (7)
High-speed				
Modern				
Comfortable				
Safe				
Reliable				
High capacity	The shortcomings of cars	17	Ambiguous	Eskilstuna (6); Göteborg (7, 17); Helsingborg (2015, 1, 6; 2016, 4); Jönköping (3, 4); Karlstad (2, 4, 13, 24); Kungsbacka (2); Kungälv (9, 22); Luleå (1, 6); Lund (3, 9); Malmö (4); Skellefteå (7); Stockholm (5); Stockholm Region (8); Uppsala (6, 12); Örebro (6); Östersund (6)
Environmentally friendliness				
Sustainable modes of transport	Sustainable modes of transport	13	Central	Gävle (8); Jönköping (1); Landskrona (3); Luleå (9); Lund (14); Umeå (2, 3 10); Karlstad (20); Malmö (2); Norrköping (10); Skellefteå (2); Stockholm (1); Växjö (1); Örebro (1)

**Key interpretation(s):** 1) Tension between an emphasis on the shortcomings of cars and the shortcomings of public transport. 2) Naturalisation of public transport, cycling, and walking as the sustainable modes of transport, and a silenced conflict between public transport and active modes.

## Quantitative Norms

The quantitative norms relate to the amount of sustainable mobility that is desirable. The section includes the pattern of *public transport growth*, including representations of *increased public transport travel* and *the aim to double public transport*.

The desirability of public transport growth is evident throughout the material. Norrköping (2016), for example, writes that ‘thus, the capacity for increased travel with public transport in a growing city is secured’ (p. 6), while Västerås (2016) states that:

It was a success! Both customer satisfaction and travel with public transport increased continuously. The targeted effect of increasing travel by 40 per cent was fulfilled one year earlier than estimated. (p. 3)

Both the use of value words (‘secured’, ‘success’, and ‘earlier than estimated’) and the framing in terms of objectives (targeted effect, etc.) make the desirable nature of travel increases obvious. Undoubtedly, norms about public transport growth are expected in the material as the UEA is about investments in improved public transport. The high



frequency of the pattern present in 25 of 31 agreements, and the centrality of those statements within the individual agreements, confirm this expectation<sup>113</sup>.

Still, there is tension around the underlying rationale for this desirable growth of public transport. In many parts of the material, the connection to car traffic reduction is acknowledged (e.g., Helsingborg, 2016, p. 6; Karlskrona, 2016, p. 6; Norrköping, 2016, p. 3; Värnamo, 2016, p. 1; Örebro, 2016, p. 15), often relating to the assumption that increased public transport travel will reduce car use (I discuss this assumption later in this chapter). For example, Karlskrona (2016) writes that ‘plans and steering documents support an increased share of walking, cycling and public transport and, thus, a reduced automobile dependency’ (p. 1), clearly linking increased sustainable mobility with decreased car traffic. In connection with this representation, several municipalities construct increased sustainable mobility as something necessary to mitigate the forecasted traffic growth (e.g., Gävle, 2015, p. 5; Lund, 2015, p. 2; Malmö, 2016, p. 3; Umeå, 2016, p. 11), well exemplified by Lund (2015), concluding that:

Some bus lines are expected to encounter problems with capacity when the city grows and develops, and tramways can provide the capacity needed to attract increased public transport travel. Produced travel prognosis shows the need for a tramway from a capacity perspective. (p. 10)

Thus, increased public transport is desirable as it caters for the increased travel demand created by the growing and developing city.

Contrastingly, many statements indicate a view of increased public transport travel as intrinsically desirable (e.g., Kungsbacka, 2016, p. 2; Kungälv, 2016, pp. 13-14; Landskrona, 2016, p. 5; Linköping, 2015, p. 5; 2016, p. 3; Luleå, 2015, p. 5; Lund, 2015, p. 6; Örebro, 2016, p. 7). The first two quotes in this section are good examples of this representation, additionally exemplified by Luleå’s agreement (2015), stating that ‘in recent years, Luleå has had an excellent travel increase in city traffic [i.e., public transport]; an increase of more than 28 per cent between 2006 and 2014’ (p. 5). These examples demonstrate the normative nature of the statements, explicitly or implicitly emphasising the desirability of public transport growth. Furthermore, the few examples of justifications for this growth point towards its intrinsic value<sup>114</sup>.

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<sup>113</sup> Additionally, many agreements excluded from this pattern contain statements on increased public transport. As these statements concern the presumed effects of the proposed investments, the difference between a neutral account of effects and a normative statement is not always self-evident. Therefore, if the formulation is unclear, I have interpreted more elaborated statements on public transport increase as normative while short and concise statements (often in lists) as descriptive.

<sup>114</sup> Of course, ‘intrinsic value’ might be a slightly misleading term. As the previous category showed, there are several fundamental reasons sustainable mobility is considered important, all of which are external. Nevertheless, I use it to capture a central feature of the representation: increasing public transport is never conditioned. In other words, sustainable mobility growth is constructed as desirable no matter

A specification of this latter representation is the aim to double public transport<sup>115</sup>. This industry-formed ambition is referenced several times in the UEA policy (e.g., Karlstad, 2015, p. 2; Umeå, 2016, p. 10). For instance, Jönköping (2016) writes that:

The action programme clarifies the phases of measures needed to achieve the municipality's goal to double the number of trips, per capita, with public transport. (p. 2)

Similarly, Lund (2015) explains that 'the vision aims to double public transport travel by 2020, compared to 2006 years travelling' (p. 6).

The aim to double public transport was a target set by partner cooperation between multiple private and public actors concerned with public transport and has been present in local and regional public transport planning for some time. The initial goal was to promote a doubling of the number of public transport trips, which was modified to achieve a doubling of public transport's market share (The Swedish Public Transport Association, 2021). However, neither a doubling of actual trips nor public transport's market share will reduce car usage by default. Thus, increased public transport and the aim to double public transport represent one side of a tension: between sustainable mobility growth to reduce car traffic and as something intrinsically good (or at least justified on non-environmental grounds).

Still, regardless of whether sustainable mobility growth is seen as a means or an end, its virtue is naturalised in the UEA policy. To reiterate, I have operationalised naturalisation as the statements or patterns that constructs contingent circumstances or phenomena as inevitable and natural, including silenced consequences and alternatives (see Section 3.1.3.). The naturalisation of increased public transport travel is evident from how widespread the norm is and, more importantly, how it is never questioned or critically discussed in the material<sup>116</sup>. A consequence of this naturalisation is that the adverse effects resulting from all forms of motorised transport are silenced (a proposition I will develop further in the next chapter). This silence is easily identified when sustainable mobility growth is constructed as an intrinsic value. However, when

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what. Contrastingly, a non-intrinsic norm would state that increased public transport is good only if it fulfils certain external goals, such as reducing car use.

<sup>115</sup> The Swedish word used is *fördubblingsmålet*.

<sup>116</sup> In a general sense, increasing mobility is never questioned. However, there are traces of potentially conflicting statements, although not enough to categorise them as a pattern. In recent years, public agencies have begun to refer to a 'transport-efficient society' [*transporteffektivt or transportsnålt sambälle* in Swedish] more frequently (e.g., The Swedish Energy Agency, 2022). Some of its first expressions are present in the material (Borås, 2016, p. 3; The Swedish Transport Administration, 2015e, p. 13), which may be interpreted as conflicting with the pattern of increased sustainable mobility. Still, to what extent this representation contradicts the dominance of (sustainable) mobility growth is debatable, which I discuss more in Chapter 7.

public transport growth is explicitly related to reduced car use, the environmental cost of public transport is likewise left undeveloped. Thus, naturalisation is based on critical assumptions about the effects of increased public transport travelling, silencing conflicting constructions.

In sum, the material contains a dominant quantitative norm about public transport growth, being naturalised in the UEA policy. This naturalisation includes silencing potential conflicts between increased public transport and its adverse effects. However, there is a tension between the construction of public transport, on one hand, as a means to other ends, such as protecting the environment and, on the other hand, as being something valuable in itself, exemplified by the aim to double public transport.

**Table 6.8. Patterns on quantitative norms.** Frequency (F\*) can vary between four and 31, where four is the minimum number of agreements containing the statements for the regularity to be characterised as a pattern, and 31 is the total amount of agreements. Centrality is determined according to a three-fold distinction: Central, Ambiguous, and Peripheral. The number in brackets refers to the page in the agreement where the statement is found.

Statements	Pattern	F*	Centrality	Agreements
Increased public transport travel	Public transport growth	25	Central	Borås (10); Eskilstuna (2); Göteborg (6); Gävle (3, 5); Helsingborg (2015, 6); Jönköping (2, 6); Karlskrona (1, 5, 10); Karlstad (1, 17); Kungsbacka (2, 3); Kungälv (1, 13-14, 20); Landskrona (5); Linköping (2015, 5; 2016, 3); Luleå (5); Lund (2, 6, 10, 13); Malmö (3); Norrköping (3, 6); Nyköping (5); Skellefteå (2, 7-8); Stockholm Region (8); Umeå (8, 10, 11, 20); Värnamo (1); Västerås (3); Örebro (7, 15); Östersund (2)
The aim to double public transport				

**Key interpretation(s):** 1) Tension between increased public transport travel to reduce car usage and as intrinsically valuable. 2) Naturalisation of public transport growth and silenced adverse consequences and alternatives (although indications of an alternative exist in the representation of a transport-efficient society).

### Explicit Relation to Automobility

The final section concerning norms of sustainable mobility explores the relationship to automobility. The dominant normative pattern is *the prioritisation of sustainable modes of transport*, including statements on *reducing automobile dependency* and *travel time ratio*. However, the section also includes a conflicting pattern revolving around the *continuing need for cars*, creating a central tension here and, as the following chapter will show, the discourse as a whole.

The first and most prominent normative pattern within the section is the prioritisation of sustainable modes of transport. As with several of the patterns discussed above, this norm partly follows from the policy formulation, although it is not explicitly stated in the legislation<sup>117</sup>. Hence, it is unsurprising that the pattern is frequent in the

<sup>117</sup> In the legislation, ‘increased share of public transport’ is mentioned (SFS 2015:579), signalling a prioritisation of public transport. However, even more closely connected to the pattern, the final report by the transport administration, outlining the design of the UEA, describes the prioritisation of sustainable mobility as suitable measures and services-in-return (The Swedish Transport Administration, 2015e, pp. 25, 31).

material, found in roughly two-thirds of the agreements. Likewise, the centrality is expected, and is confirmed by the norm being mentioned multiple times in the individual agreements and found in key positions within the texts.

There are several representations included in the overarching pattern. One of these is reducing automobility (e.g., Göteborg, 2016, p. 12; Karlskrona, 2016, p. 1; Linköping, 2015, p. 1; 2016, p. 1; Malmö, 2016, p. 8). For instance, Stockholm (2016) concludes ‘when the city works to reduce automobile dependency, the possibilities to use sustainable modes of transport needs to be improved’ (p. 1). Although there is a difference between reducing the actual number of car trips and reducing automobile dependency, it signals the desirability to move away from automobility as the primary configuration of the transport system. To some extent, the representation of reducing automobile dependency goes beyond mere prioritisation and is more in line with the original intentions of the policy<sup>118</sup>.

In contrast, a more concrete representation revolves around the travel time ratio, constituting an essential specification of the prioritisation pattern (found in 13 agreements). As travel time is considered critical to the attractiveness of different modes<sup>119</sup>, the ratio between different modes is seen as pivotal when prioritising one transport mode over the other (e.g., Borås, 2016, p. 4; Helsingborg, 2015, p. 3; Karlskrona, 2016, p. 5; Karlstad, 2015, pp. 2-3; Landskrona, 2016, p. 5). Generally, the preferred way to achieve an improved travel time ratio for public transport is by speeding up this mode, but the same result may come from slowing down car traffic, relating to a tension between restricting car traffic and enabling public transport that permeates this section<sup>120</sup>.

Although the travel time ratio represents a concrete example of prioritising public transport, it is not always clear what *prioritisation* entails. A typical way prioritisation is discussed can be found in Eskilstuna Municipality’s agreement, stating that ‘by constructing separate bus lanes, bus traffic is given clear priority and is prioritised higher than the car traffic on the particular road sections’ (Eskilstuna, 2016, p. 6). However, even separate bus lines involve ambiguity on how prioritisation is understood. For example, one municipality proposed transforming a car lane into a bus lane. This transport measure would redistribute road space from cars to public transport, thus prioritising the latter. However, in its final proposal, the transport measure was changed and instead became an *addition* of a public transport lane to the existing road, thus

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<sup>118</sup> The original intention of the policy (see Chapter 5) has partly continued to be significant; for example, through the criteria the applications have assessed against (Interview 2015-06-24; Interview 2019-02-25).

<sup>119</sup> Travel time is also highly valued in cost-benefit analyses as an economic benefit (cf. Næss, 2016b).

<sup>120</sup> The tension between travel time and travel time ratio is further expanded on in the last part of this chapter (Section 6.4.1.).

widening it (Interview 2019-01-09). Are both of these measures giving priority to public transport? In one sense they are, as public transport would receive a separate lane either way. Still, when busses are removed from the regular road, the space for cars is improved. A civil servant claims that this is a recurrent phenomenon:

Many applications sent in have revolved around constructing separate public transport lanes [...]; however, my view is that very few also restrict the possibilities of private motorists by reducing the number of lanes. It often comes down to adding a public transport lane outside the ordinary road. Thus, you add; with the result, that for car traffic, the difference is further improved flows because busses step aside and create more space and car capacity. (Interview 2020-05-07)

Consequently, *priority* is an ambiguous concept and points to a tension within the pattern. On one hand, the representation is constructed as improvements for public transport. In theory, this would elevate the position of the mode relative to cars, although the practice might turn out to be something else. One plausible interpretation is that improvements in sustainable modes of transport are preferred when car reduction is controversial<sup>121</sup>. On the other hand, priority may allude to limitations on car traffic, thus comparatively strengthening public transport. These two approaches are, of course, not mutually exclusive. Nevertheless, they are distinct and, more importantly, linked to the political conflict visible in the initial concretisation of the UEA on whether to improve the *desirable* or limit the *undesirable* (see Chapter 5).

The second pattern relates to the continuing need for cars, including statements on the flexibility of cars, sustainable car use, a balance between cars and the surroundings/public transport and car parking for an attractive city. Both in terms of frequency and centrality, the pattern is minor. Only eight agreements contain some reference to the continuing need for cars, and the statements are peripheral in these agreements. Nevertheless, the pattern highlights that the central conflict between sustainable mobility and automobility in society is also present in the UEA policy (see Chapter 5).

As the UEA is a sustainable mobility policy, representations of the continuing need for cars might be controversial. Consequently, these statements are not as self-explanatory as those of other patterns and have required more interpretative work on my part. Therefore, I will provide several examples of the pattern and how I have interpreted them.

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<sup>121</sup> The result of this *logic of provision* (see Chapter 8) risks increasing travel and, potentially, emissions. However, technical innovations, improved efficiency, and the use of alternative fuels may, overall, lead to decreasing emissions, as in the case of Sweden's development over the last years (SEPA, 2021a).

First, flexibility is used to refute an all or nothing approach and propose a system where cars are one among several essential modes of transport (e.g., Gävle, 2015, p. 5). Skellefteå writes that their point of departure is ‘the prioritisation of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport and to increase the flexibility of cars and reduce its adverse effects’ (Skellefteå, 2016, p. 2). Thus, the dominance of cars needs to be broken, but they still have a fundamental role to play.

Another example is when Umeå (2016) states that its parking programme ‘should encourage a sustainable car use from an ecologic, economic and social perspective’ (p. 16). Presumably, ‘sustainable car use’ differs from what we experience today, but it remains car use nevertheless. Finally, Karlstad (2015) argues that ‘car travel should not increase at the same pace as earlier, and the car traffic system should be in balance with the surroundings’ (p. 2). This quote conveys an expectation that car traffic will increase and that the goal is to reduce this increase, not that car traffic should decrease overall. Moreover, a car system in balance with the surrounding might necessitate changes in the current situation, but the term ‘in balance’ indicates a less radical perspective than otherwise presumed.

From the above quotes, it is apparent that, although the continuing need for cars is present in the statements, they also emphasise sustainable modes of transport in line with the main patterns of the material. Nevertheless, the less critical view of cars that the pattern illustrates might reveal something important about the political conflicts the municipalities have to negotiate, where car traffic reductions are often controversial.

To sum up, the dominant pattern in the present section is the prioritisation of sustainable modes of transport. However, there is a tension within the pattern with regard to whether such prioritisation involves restrictions on car traffic or the promotion of sustainable alternatives (the logic of provision). In contrast to prioritisation, the second pattern indicates the continuing need for cars. Although this second pattern is neither frequent nor central, it conflicts with the previous pattern and, more importantly, it highlights that the societal conflict between sustainable mobility and automobility is present in the UEA policy.

**Table 6.9. Patterns on the explicit relation to automobility.** Frequency (F\*) can vary between four and 31, where four is the minimum number of agreements containing the statements for the regularity to be characterised as a pattern, and 31 is the total amount of agreements. Centrality is determined according to a three-fold distinction: Central, Ambiguous, and Peripheral. The number in brackets refers to the page in the agreement where the statement is found.

Statements	Pattern	F*	Centrality	Agreements
Prioritisation of sustainable modes of transport	Prioritisation of sustainable modes of transport	20	Central	Borås (4, 6); Eskilstuna (2, 6); Helsingborg (2015, 3); Hörby (2, 3, 7); Karlskrona (1, 4, 5); Karlstad (2-3, 7, 13, 15, 20); Landskrona (5); Linköping (2015, 1, 5; 2016, 1, 3); Lund (1, 16); Malmö (1, 2); Norrköping (2); Nyköping (5); Stockholm (1); Stockholm Region (2, 8, 9); Umeå (15, 18); Uppsala (2, 6); Värnamo (1, 5-6); (Växjö 14); Örebro (2, 7, 15)
Reducing automobile dependency				
Travel time ratio				
Flexibility of cars	The continuing need for cars	8	Peripheral	Gävle (5); Karlstad (2, 15); Skellefteå (2); Umeå (16); Västerås (8); Örebro (7)
Sustainable car use				
A balance between cars and the surroundings/ public transport				
Car parking for an attractive city				

**Key interpretation(s):** 1) Tension between restricting cars and providing for public transport. 2) Tension between a negative and more neutral view of car traffic.

## Conclusions on the Category of Norms for Sustainable Mobility

In this category, I have discussed patterns concerning norms of sustainable mobility. A range of patterns has been identified, but generally, they either emphasise sustainable modes of transport or problematise car traffic.

The category includes several tensions, most of which concern the difference between an intrinsic view of public transport (and, to some extent, other non-automobile modes) and an instrumental one related to reducing car usage. For example, the qualitative attributes of public transport constructed as desirable emphasise either the shortcomings of public transport or cars. In addition, there is also a tension between the dominant representation of prioritising sustainable modes of transport and the continuing need for cars.

Contrastingly, two patterns involve the naturalisation of, on one hand, public transport growth and, on the other hand, the sustainable modes of transport understood as public transport, cycling, and walking. Whereas the first pattern silences alternatives and consequences of this growth, the second excludes the potential conflicts between these modes.

Finally, similar to the previous category, many patterns and tensions in this part align with a distinction between promoting sustainable alternatives and restricting cars. In

the following chapter, this distinction is central. However, two more categories will be analysed before I further develop these findings.

**Table 6.10. The patterns and key interpretations in the norms of sustainable mobility category.**

	<b>Pattern</b>	<b>Key interpretations(s)</b>
<i>Qualitative norms</i>	The shortcomings of public transport	1) Tension between an emphasis on the shortcomings of cars and the shortcomings of public transport. 2) The naturalisation of public transport, cycling and walking as the sustainable modes of transport, and a silenced conflict between public and active modes.
	The shortcomings of cars	
	Sustainable modes of transport	
<i>Quantitative norms</i>	Public transport growth	1) Tension between increased public transport to reduce car usage and intrinsically good. 2) Naturalisation of public transport growth and silenced adverse consequences and alternatives (although indications of an alternative exist in the representation of a transport-efficient society).
<i>Relations to automobility</i>	Prioritisation of sustainable modes of transport	1) Tension between restricting cars and providing for public transport. 2) Tension between a negative and more neutral view of car traffic.
	The continuing need for cars	

## Subjects of Sustainable Mobility

The guiding question for this category concerns which subjects of sustainable mobility are constructed in the UEA policy. In line with discourse methodology, the material's particular subjects (individuals) are not the focal point here but so-called subject positions, i.e., societal groups.

This category is structured into two main sections. The first is about transport, including car users, active transport users, and public transport users. Contrastingly, the second revolves around disadvantaged social groups benefiting from public transport investments.

### Transport Users

The first section in the category revolves around transport users. Three patterns dominate this: *car users*, *active transport users*, and *public transport users*. These subject positions are usually not considered societal groups. Nevertheless, these positions play an essential role in the UEA as they are part of several tensions in the material and foundational in the assumptions discussed later in this chapter.

The first pattern is about car users. As a subject position, car users are neither particularly frequent nor found in central places within the individual agreements. In



total, 10 agreements contain some references to car users. This comparatively low frequency relates to the tendency for the alternative term *car traffic* to be a more commonly used term<sup>122</sup>. Still, car users are an important target for the proposed transport measures. For example, Skellefteå (2016) writes about a mobility management project aiming to ‘get daily car drivers<sup>123</sup> to change their travel behaviour and try taking the bus instead of the car’ (p. 4). This quote is representative of how car drivers are discussed in the material: as a group targeted by interventions aimed to achieve a mode change from car traffic to sustainable transport (e.g., Helsingborg, 2016, p. 2; Karlstad, 2015, p. 7; Kungsbacka, 2016, p. 7; Linköping, 2015, p. 9; 2016, p. 6; Luleå, 2015, p. 2; Malmö, 2016, p. 8).

As with the other groups in this section, there seems to be a qualitative difference between car users and other social groups and categories usually discussed in discourse analyses, such as low-income people, the elderly, women, and others. The problem is that car user is a relatively inconstant category. For example, when is a person a car user? Is it when they own a car? Or simply when they are driving a car? To be elderly, in contrast, is far more stable, even though exact definitions and cut-off points of the category are debatable.

A way to confront this problem is to consider whether particular social groups are linked to the different transport users in the UEA policy. In the case of car users, who is behind the motorist mask? As few explicit references exist to any groups constituting car users, interpretations are needed.

One way is to invert the construction of public transport users. Thus, if, as is evident in the next section, the groups linked to sustainable mobility are children, women, the elderly, and people with norm-breaking functionality, then presumably the conceived car user is an adult, but not too old, male, with norm-compliant functionality. This straightforward approach can be triangulated by two additional ways to go about the task, which, as I will demonstrate, expand and reach similar conclusions.

First, many characteristics, such as high-speed, comfort, accessibility, and the perception of it being modern, are considered essential to achieving a mode change from cars to public transport (e.g., Kungsbacka, 2016, p. 7; Luleå, 2015, p. 2; Lund, 2015, p. 10)<sup>124</sup>. However, if the current public transport is not sufficiently comfortable,

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<sup>122</sup> A possible interpretation for this tendency is that restrictive measures feel less threatening to the individual car user due to the use of ‘car traffic’ instead of ‘car users’.

<sup>123</sup> *Vanbilister* in Swedish.

<sup>124</sup> At this point, it is clear that the theoretical categories overlap in ways that necessitate attention. The relation between subjects and public transport attributes is one such intersection present in several categories. As I argued, connected to the previous category, several norms exist about desirable attributes of public transport that can be linked to present or future public transport users. The same attributes reappear in this category when I analyse the subjects of the discourse. As the next part will show, there is an assumption connecting the attributes and the subjects. Thus, although the same

accessible, fast, and modern, who are the people using it? One interpretation is that public transport users are those without other choices. If so, the car users targeted in the UEA policy are people able to choose between the modes.

Secondly, the concealed understanding of car users is analogous to a particular use of *everyone* in the material. Here, *everyone* seems to mean ‘not only underprivileged people’. For example, in the agreements by Luleå (2015), it is stated that:

Well-developed public transport contributes to all three parts of sustainability, and an important goal is to create a more attractive public transport system that is perceived as modern and innovative and that is for everyone. (p. 1)

This statement is possible to interpret in at least two ways. The first one is to interpret the different desirable attributes of the public transport system (attractive, modern, and innovative) as separated from the phrase ‘it ought to be for everyone’. This separation would decouple the two phrases and thus make for a more traditional interpretation of the phrase ‘for everyone’, emphasising people who are sometimes excluded from certain transport services; for example, elderly people or people with norm-breaking functionality. However, a second interpretation that I find more plausible is that the expression ‘for everyone’ is connected to ‘attractiveness’, ‘modern’, and ‘innovative’. Adding such value words suggests that ‘everyone’ are the people with a choice, unlike those structurally dependent on public transport. This group of, in some ways, privileged people is, thus, thought to value the attractive, modern, and innovative. The second interpretation is strengthened by another quote from the same agreement, where Luleå (2015) states:

The experience shows that travellers put a high value on these factors [being modern and environmentally friendly] and that a transition to electrical busses thus, with high probability, will lead to additional travel by bus. (p. 6)

These values are supposed to attract car users privileged to choose between different modes. Similarly, Umeå (2016) writes:

As a traveller from and to Vasaplan [the city’s central public transport node], you are to feel prioritised, modern, and safe in the future. This is also a way to attract new groups that presently do not travel by public transport to the same degree; for example, men. (p. 8)

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aspects of attributes and subjects are discussed in all three categories, the analytical foci differ: first on the normative attributes, second on the subjects, and finally on the relation between them.

Interestingly, the quote specifies the gender of this privileged group and emphasises the need to make people from this group feel prioritised, modern, and safe. Thus, this interpretation points toward the same conclusion as the previous approach. Therefore, several aspects indicate that car drivers are constructed as privileged transport users, predominantly adult (although not too old), male, and with a physical functionality that aligns with the configuration of the transport system.

The second pattern revolves around *active transport users*. In the material, active users of transport are predominantly cyclists and pedestrians. For the majority of the statements, these two modes are treated together. For example, when Västerås Municipality (2016) writes that ‘in every construction project, the situation for pedestrians and cyclists is improved’ (p. 8). If car drivers are subjects supposed to be convinced to change modes of travel, active transport users are presumed to benefit directly from the suggested infrastructure improvements.

Of the three patterns in the section, this one is the most frequent, present in 21 agreements<sup>125</sup>. However, its centrality is ambiguous. Although active transport users are repeatedly mentioned in many agreements, the statements are rarely in key positions within the texts. Moreover, as with several patterns discussed above, the application for the UEA contains a question specifically about active transport users (The Swedish Transport Administration, 2016a, p. 5), thus making it hard to determine the importance given by the municipalities<sup>126</sup>.

As with car drivers, active transport users is an equivocal subject position. For example, some might identify themselves as cyclists, but cycling is presumably primarily an activity and not an identity for most people. Therefore, the same method used for car drivers does not provide the same possibility for identifying cyclists in the material, i.e., the attributes connected to the cyclists are not related to particular societal groups. One exception is safety and the speed of surrounding traffic, which are described as major issues for cyclists (e.g., Eskilstuna, 2016, p. 11; Gävle, 2015, p. 14; Göteborg, 2016, p. 14; Stockholm Region, 2016, p. 6; Örebro, 2016, p. 11)<sup>127</sup>. However, safety

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<sup>125</sup> The high frequency of active modes, especially cycling, is intriguing from a policy context perspective as the urban environment was amended in 2017 to include cycling infrastructure (SFS 2017:9).

<sup>126</sup> Of course, it can be argued that the inclusion of active transport users in the application form demonstrates its institutionalisation, often considered the strongest form of discursive governing (Hajer, 1997, pp. 57-58; Vigar, 2002, p. 27). Still, I maintain that, as the applications are made to attain funding, there are inherent difficulties in determining the centrality of patterns that follow directly from the application questions. Are the patterns central within the sustainable mobility discourse or a result of strategic choices by the local actors (or both)? Unfortunately, the material does not allow me to draw conclusive answers to those questions.

<sup>127</sup> Additionally, using the opposite subjects as clues to the construction of active transport users, as is done for car drivers, is not feasible. Although cyclists, for instance, might be disadvantaged in the transport system, cycling cannot be done by everyone. Groups such as small children, the elderly, and people

is arguably a universal interest and not linked to particular social groups, except for often being more pronounced when children's mobility is discussed. Still, as part of the general representation of sustainable modes of transport, they are, together with the public transport travellers, connected to several other societal groups. Before I discuss this construction, however, I turn to the final pattern of this section.

Analogous to car drivers and active transport users, a final pattern revolves around *public transport users*. Although public transport is presumably the central aspect of the UEA, public transport users are not a dominant subject position, evident from the low frequency (only present in eight agreements) and its peripheral centrality (neither common nor in key positions within the individual agreements). Again, this relates to the focus on concepts rather than subjects in the UEA policy, but it might also be the case that public transport users are an assumed subject position<sup>128</sup>.

No minor representations are connected to public transport users, partly due to few statements. Nevertheless, several agreements connect the interests of public transport users with travel time and travel time ratio (e.g., Karlskrona, 2016, p. 13; Karlstad, 2015, p. 3), a connection in line with many other patterns in the UEA policy. However, it is important to note that public transport users are often linked to social groups such as children, women, the elderly, and people with norm-breaking functionality. I discuss this connection more in the next section when the groups are the focal points of the inquiry.

In summary, the discursive construction of transport users is imprecise and equivocal. Although frequency and centrality vary substantially amongst the patterns, several subject positions represent central parts of other patterns, such as assumptions about mode change (see Section 6.4.2.). Few explicit statements link transport users with other societal groups. This is especially evident in the construction of active transport users, a subject position sparsely developed despite its high frequency. In contrast, car drivers and public transport travellers are mentioned fewer times but are constructed in more detail. Although implicit, car drivers are linked to privileged mobility users, primarily adults, men, and people with norm-compliant functionality.

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with a norm-breaking functionality may have difficulty riding the bicycle. Thus, there is no necessary link between groups disadvantaged in the automobile society and cyclists.

<sup>128</sup> Yet another reason might have to do with the interpretative choices I have made during coding. To be considered a statement on subjects, it needs to involve something about the interests of the groups. In contrast, many statements mention public transport users but only as a category that should increase; for example, Uppsala writes that 'the purpose is to improve the network by making it easier to understand, for example, through prioritised lines. A tried and tested method to increase the share of public transport travellers' (Uppsala, 2016, p. 2). In this quote, *public transport travellers* are not a subject-position or a societal group but a synonym for *public transport share* and similar expressions. Thus, such statements have been excluded, causing a substantially lower frequency.

Contrarily, public transport users are explicitly constructed in terms of several groups being disadvantaged in the transport system, such as children and the elderly.

**Table 6.11. Patterns on transport users.** Frequency (F\*) can vary between four and 31, where four is the minimum number of agreements containing the statements for the regularity to be characterised as a pattern, and 31 is the total amount of agreements. Centrality is determined according to a three-fold distinction: Central, Ambiguous, and Peripheral. The number in brackets refers to the page in the agreement where the statement is found.

Statements	Pattern	F*	Centrality	Agreements
Car users	Car users	10	Peripheral	Helsingborg (2016, 2); Karlskrona (13); Karlstad (7); Kungsbacka (7); Linköping (2015, 9; 2016, 6); Luleå (2); Lund (10); Malmö (8); Skellefteå (4)
Pedestrian	Active transport users	21	Ambiguous	Eskilstuna (3, 6, 11); Gävle (14, 15); Göteborg (2, 13, 14, 15, 17); Hörby (3, 9); Karlskrona (2, 8); Karlstad (20); Kungälv (15, 20); Linköping (2015, 10; 2016, 5); Lund (13); Malmö (8); Norrköping (2, 10); Skellefteå (2); Stockholm (6); Stockholm Region (9, 10); Trollhättan (8); Umeå (11, 15, 16); Västerås (8); Växjö (3); Örebro (10, 11, 12); Östersund (2)
Cyclists				
Public transport users	Public transport users	8	Peripheral	Karlskrona (13); Karlstad (3, 14); Kungsbacka (3, 7, 20); Skellefteå (3, 4, 5); Stockholm Region (9); Umeå (11, 15); Uppsala (6); Växjö (3)
Bus users				

**Key interpretation(s):** Tension between prioritising existing (disadvantaged groups) and potential (car users) public transport users.

## Disadvantaged Groups

In contrast to transport users, this second section concerns the construction of subject positions more often recognised as societal groups, such as *children*, *the elderly*, *women*, and *people with norm-breaking functionality*<sup>129</sup>. I treat these representations of societal groups as one pattern constructing disadvantaged groups as a subject position of sustainable mobility. These groups are disadvantaged in the automobile society and are seen to benefit the most from better public transport improvements. For example, Jönköping (2016) describes how:

A strong public transport corridor [...] leads to a socially and economically more equal society as public transport attracts many different target groups: children and youth, low-income people, people with disabilities, and those unable to drive. (p. 5)

<sup>129</sup> The Swedish word mostly used was *personer med funktionsnedsättning*, translating to ‘people/individuals with disabilities’ in English.

Several of the subject positions within this section are mentioned in the quote, connected to the benefits of improved public transport. Still, although their connection to the transport system relates to unequal opportunities, these subject positions are not described in detail. Thus, it is not developed why these groups have lower mobility, what that entails or, most importantly, the relationship to high-mobility groups<sup>130</sup>. Regarding frequency and centrality, the weight of each group is roughly the same, with children and people with norm-breaking functionality (including the elderly) present in 10 agreements each and women in seven<sup>131</sup>. Furthermore, determining the centrality is unclear, as the position of statements and the frequency in the individual agreements vary substantially.

There seems to be a qualitative difference between how, on the one hand, women are constructed and, on the other hand, how children, the elderly and people with norm-breaking functionality are described. Although not thoroughly developed, some agreements contrast women with car-driving men. For example, Östersund Municipality (2015) writes:

Statistics show that more women than men travel by public transport or walk and cycle today. To stimulate public transport alternatives and improve the possibilities for pedestrians and cyclists, [...] entails increased gender equality. (p. 2)

Thus, the relationship between car-driving men, and women relying on sustainable modes of transport, is explicitly constructed as a part of the problem.

In contrast, no agreement acknowledges the conflicts between children, the elderly, and people with norm-breaking functionality and privileged transport users. For example, although children's autonomous mobility is severely limited by car-driving adults (Hillman et al., 1990; Whitzman, 2013), this is not a perspective in the material when children are constructed as a subject. The same is also true for the elderly and people with norm-breaking functionality.

In the previous section, I argued that car drivers are constructed as privileged mobility users that should be convinced to change to sustainable modes of transport (mainly public transport). Relating the construction of car drivers to how the other transport users and the disadvantaged groups are described, a tension between the two

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<sup>130</sup> Nevertheless, as Tim Cresswell (2010) claims, 'One person's speed is another person's slowness [...] Speeds, slownesses, and immobilities are all related in ways that are thoroughly infused with power and its distribution' (p. 21). Thus, considering the transport system as a whole, low-mobility groups are not isolated from the hypermobile. Similar critical perspectives on equity and mobility are common in the literature (for example, Feitelson, 2002; Gössling, 2016; Markovich, 2013; Martens, 2006; specifically on children's mobility, Whitzman, 2013), yet they are strikingly absent in the discourse.

<sup>131</sup> Although, women are indirectly referenced through the concept of gender equality in several additional agreements (Malmö, 2016, pp. 3-4, 8; Norrköping, 2016, p. 3). Also, compare with the discussion above on social progress as a reason for sustainable mobility.

kinds of patterns can be identified: whether the transport measures are directed towards the privileged or the disadvantaged. Another way of viewing the tension is whether the priority is on the current or the future (potential) public transport users.

For example, incentivising privileged wrongdoers by providing further benefits, such as improvements adapted according to their needs, is arguably in contrast to an emphasis on the disadvantaged. Undoubtedly, improving equity through transport planning is a complex endeavour and includes weighing multiple aspects against each other (Litman, 2021). Still, focusing on disadvantaged groups would likely lead to substantially different transport measures than constructing new infrastructure to persuade car drivers to transition to public transport. However, the UEA policy does not acknowledge these distributional effects of different emphases<sup>132</sup>.

A notable aspect of the pattern concerns the disadvantaged groups not being acknowledged. Importantly, subject positions related to neither class nor ethnicity are given much attention in the UEA policy compared to the other subject positions<sup>133</sup>. This silence is particularly apparent in light of the substantial literature on the subject (see Section 7.4.2.)<sup>134</sup>.

To summarise, several social groups are constructed as subjects of the UEA policy based on their disadvantaged position in the transport system. These groups are projected to benefit the most from investments in public transport. However, there is a tension between these groups and the subject position of car users previously identified. Moreover, focusing on either the disadvantaged or the privileged may entail substantially different policy solutions. Finally, although occasionally mentioned, subject positions related to ethnicity and social class are largely omitted from the UEA policy. This silence is discussed more in the next chapter.

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<sup>132</sup> The tension can be viewed in light of the distinction between enabling and restricting, mentioned several times. By increasing the relative attractiveness of sustainable mobility through improvements, the much more politically-sensitive strategy of restricting car traffic does not have to be used. Thus, behavioural measures, such as mobility management, are linked to this political strategy.

<sup>133</sup> Low-income and ethnicity are each mentioned in one agreement (Jönköping, 2016; Malmö, 2016).

<sup>134</sup> While all other silences in discourse relate to naturalisations, social class represents an exception. It might be argued that the other disadvantaged groups are naturalised in the discourse, but I believe that would be stretching the concept a bit too far. The reason for the subject category providing this exception relates to the mentioned lack of emphasis on subjects in these kinds of discourses generally.

**Table 6.12. Patterns on disadvantaged groups.** Frequency (F\*) can vary between four and 31, where four is the minimum number of agreements containing the statements for the regularity to be characterised as a pattern, and 31 is the total amount of agreements. Centrality is determined according to a three-fold distinction: Central, Ambiguous, and Peripheral. The number in brackets refers to the page in the agreement where the statement is found.

Statements	Pattern	F*	Centrality	Agreements
Women	Disadvantaged groups	16	Ambiguous	Eskilstuna (1); Göteborg (2, 14); Hörby (3); Jönköping (1-2, 2, 5); Linköping 2015, 1-2, 9; 2016, 1, 6); Malmö (2, 7); Nyköping (4, 8); Skellefteå (11); Stockholm Region (15); Trollhättan (1); Umeå (1, 4, 8, 15); Västerås (5); Växjö (2); Örebro (7); Östersund (2);
Children				
The elderly				
People with norm-breaking functionality				

**Key interpretation(s):** Tension between prioritising existing (disadvantaged groups) and potential (car users) public transport users. Silenced consequences for economically disadvantaged groups.

### Conclusions on the Category of Subjects of Sustainable Mobility

Although subjects play a minor role in the analysed policy, several patterns include representations of societal groups. These subject positions can be separated according to a distinction between car users (future public transport users) and current public transport users. This tension is related to an equity dimension as current public transport users are expected to have lower levels of mobility and often be part of disadvantaged social groups. In contrast, car users are primarily constructed as privileged. As briefly demonstrated above, prioritising certain groups over others might lead to transport measures with clear distributional effects.

There is a difference between the three kinds of transport users and disadvantaged social groups in the UEA policy. Transport users are in a more conceptualised subject position than disadvantaged groups, which relates to Krzyżanowski's (2016) claims on the increasing conceptual nature of discourse. For the most part, transport users are not connected to any societal groups or social categories, leading to more abstract construction. Moreover, the patterns categories as transport users are also more common in the UEA policy, particularly as these are often implicitly alluded to in statements such as *car traffic* and *public transport travel*.

**Table 6.13. The patterns and key interpretations in the subjects of sustainable mobility category.**

	Pattern	Key interpretations(s)
<i>Transport users</i>	Car users	Tension between prioritising existing (disadvantaged groups) and potential (car users) public transport users. Silenced consequences for economically disadvantaged groups.
	Active transport users	
	Public transport users	
<i>Disadvantaged groups</i>	Disadvantaged groups	



## Causal Assumptions of Sustainable Mobility

The final theoretical category of this first analytical chapter is *causal assumptions of sustainable mobility*<sup>135</sup>. The material contains a range of assumptions on widely different topics. Hence, in this category, the analytical focus on mobility proved especially crucial as a tool for delimiting the inquiry. Still, the UEA policy consists of many patterns about mobility and sustainable mobility, even with this delimitation. As discussed in the analytical framework (Section 3.2.2.), normative assumptions are analysed in the norms of the sustainable mobility category; thus, the present category focuses only on causal assumptions.

The category consists of two types of assumptions. The first regards ways assumed to increase public transport attractiveness and travel, and the second concerns the assumed effects of improved public transport. Each of these sections contains two patterns, making four in total. In addition, I have identified many less frequent assumptions, which I discuss in aggregated form in the two sections.

Causal assumptions fill a fundamental role in a discourse, linking the normative content (found in the reasons and norms) to empirical elements, such as the proposed transport measures of the agreements. Furthermore, looking beyond the agreements, these assumptions are widely relied upon in the policy formulation of the UEA and many parts of society in general. Some are also visibly in motion, well-illustrated by the increasing importance of assumptions on electrification in Sweden (and other countries) today.

### Increased Public Transport Travel

Several empirical assumptions underpin the norm of public transport growth elaborated on earlier. In this section, I present two dominant patterns related to the methods for achieving such public transport growth. However, the representation of public transport attractiveness needs to be addressed first.

It is generally assumed in the UEA policy that the various sustainable mobility measures proposed in the agreements will lead to increased public transport attractiveness and, thus, increased travel. Stockholm Region (2016)<sup>136</sup> provides an

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<sup>135</sup> No doubt analysing the assumptions of the discourse has proved most difficult. Moreover, the implicit nature of assumptions has made many practical elements of the analysis hard, such as searching with keywords and coding. Therefore, the frequencies should be viewed as indications of the pattern's strength rather than firm results.

<sup>136</sup> I have translated *Stockholms landsting* to 'Stockholm Region' in line with the changes made in The Swedish Local Government Act (2018/19:162), where *Landsting* (County Council) was replaced with 'Region' (Region).

illustrative example, stating that its project ‘contributes to a more attractive public transport and thus increased public transport travel’ (p. 2). Although this quote seems to convey a fundamental assumption in the UEA policy, taking a closer look reveals the statement is tautological, as attractive public transport is used synonymously with *increased public transport travelling*. Thus, from an analytical perspective, the assumption is trivial<sup>137</sup>.

The range of transport measures assumed to lead to increased attractiveness and, thus, increased travel is more intriguing. These improvements include:

- station service (Kungsbacka, 2016);
- ability to combine modes of travel (Östersund, 2015, p. 2 & 6);
- modern trams (Lund, 2015, p. 10);
- improved accessibility (Malmö, 2016, p. 8; Nyköping, 2016, p. 8; Stockholm Region, 2016, p. 2);
- comfort (Landskrona, 2016, p. 5; Malmö, 2016, p. 8);
- safety (Stockholm Region, 2016, p. 9; Trollhättan, 2016, p. 1; Växjö, 2016, p. 1);
- functional centrum stops (Skellefteå, 2016, p. 8);
- punctuality and reliability (Stockholm, 2016, p. 5; Stockholm Region, 2016, p. 9);
- frequency (Stockholm Region, 2016, p. 9; Västerås, 2016);
- simplified changes (Stockholm Region, 2016, p. 2);
- shorter waiting times (Växjö, 2016, p. 8);
- appealing bus stops (Luleå, 2015, p. 5; Umeå, 2016, p. 2; Växjö, 2016, p. 8);
- straighter bus lines (Nyköping, 2016, p. 8);
- housing development (Landskrona, 2016, p. 2; Östersund, 2015, p. 6);
- densification (Hörby, 2016, p. 9);
- improved traffic flow (Eskilstuna, 2016, p. 2 & 6; Stockholm, 2016, p. 5);
- enhanced accessibility to stations (Hörby, 2016, p. 9).

Although some of the different improvements are only mentioned a few times each, they create an image of the wide variety of causal presumptions in the material. Furthermore, while the assumptions appear intuitive, empirical evidence or arguments are not provided in support, and their causal mechanisms are never developed. Finally, as they are about incremental changes to an entire transport system, the assumptions are inherently difficult to evaluate, making them elusive (but perhaps helpful in receiving funding). Like in the norms of the sustainable mobility category, the emphasis on particular aspects of public transport might say something about the current

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<sup>137</sup> Equating attractiveness with travel growth fails to acknowledge the critical difference between structurally and non-structurally determined travel patterns. For example, a transport mode could become increasingly attractive (defined as the willingness to use it) without an increase in travel if structural factors hamper the possibilities of changing modes.

perception of public transport. For example, assuming that improved safety, comfort, and simplicity will lead to higher attractiveness indicates that these aspects are not perceived to be sufficiently developed in the existing public transport.

The first significant pattern in this section revolves around *electric public transport leading to increased travel*. Undoubtedly, the electrification of transport has recently been a significant trend in recent politics, mirrored in the UEA, albeit to a lesser extent<sup>138</sup>. Seven agreements contain the assumption that the electrification of public transport leads to increased travel. Still, the pattern is peripheral within these agreements as it is neither frequent nor in key positions in most concerned agreements.

The material is ambiguous regarding the causal relationship within the assumption. In some agreements, the mechanism involved in increasing travelling is left out. For example, Östersund (2015) concludes ‘that the services are run by electric buses is expected to increase the interest in travelling collectively’ (p. 2). Similarly, Karlstad (2015) states that ‘the new electrified public transport will become so attractive that it will tempt many more to travel collectively and to use the private car to a lesser degree’ (p. 23). Thus, the properties of electric public transport generating growth in trips remain unclear.

Contrastingly, several agreements develop this crucial link between electrification of travelling increase. For instance, Luleå (2015) highlights the emotional and psychological value of electric public transport, writing that:

To continue the positive trend with public transport travel and to hamper the increase in car traffic, Luleå wants to introduce electrical busses to show that public transport is modern and environmentally friendly [...] experience demonstrates that travellers put a high value on these aspects and that a transition to electrical busses, thus, with a high probability will lead to increased travel by bus. (p. 6)

Consequently, the assumed travel growth relates to the perception of electric public transport as modern and environmentally friendly (see Skellefteå, 2016, for another example). Additionally, several municipalities portray the superior comfort of electric vehicles (with their smoother accelerations and less noisy engines) as the primary reason for increased attractiveness (Landskrona, 2016, p. 5; Skellefteå, 2016, p. 3; Värnamo, 2016, p. 6). Interestingly, when it comes to tramways, electricity is not emphasised. Instead, the tramways’ capacity and structuring effect on the urban landscape are highlighted (e.g., Lund, 2015; Norrköping, 2016; Stockholm Region, 2016).

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<sup>138</sup> The hype around electric vehicles is visible everywhere in society, well-illustrated by the specific commission on electrification established in the year 2020 by the Swedish Government (2020) to ‘advance the work on electrification of heavy road transport and the transport sector as a whole’ (p. 1).

The second pattern is about the assumption of *shorter travel times leading to increased public transport travel*. This travel time minimisation represents the measure most frequently assumed to increase public transport trips.

In traditional transport planning, aggregated travel time savings are regularly used as a basis for economic calculations (Næss, 2016b). Similarly, these often-incremental travel time savings are assumed to translate into substantial increases in public transport travelling in the UEA. The importance of the pattern is illustrated by its relatively significant frequency, present in almost half of the agreements, and its centrality within the individual agreements. Notably, travel time savings are partly linked to car traffic but are treated separately in the UEA policy at other times.

The first version of the assumption, the so-called travel time ratio, captures the general difference in time between modes of transport (Borås, 2016, p. 6; Eskilstuna, 2016, p. 2; Jönköping, 2016, p. 5; Kungsbacka, 2016, p. 7; Stockholm Region, 2016, pp. 2, 9). For example, Landskrona (2016) writes that its investments will lead to an ‘improved travel time ratio, which increases the attractiveness of public transport and thus leads to increased travel’ (p. 5). Therefore, it is commonly presupposed that the attractiveness of public transport is raised if the speed is increased compared to that of cars<sup>139</sup>. However, an improved travel time ratio may be achieved by limitations on car traffic, an approach not explicitly developed in the material<sup>140</sup>.

Contrastingly, travel time is also given a value independent of car traffic as it is not always specified that the increase in travel will be achieved at the cost of cars. In fact, this representation is much more common than the previous (e.g., Eskilstuna, 2016, p. 12; Gävle, 2015, pp. 9, 10; Helsingborg, 2016, p. 6; Jönköping, 2016, p. 5; Linköping, 2016, p. 3; Malmö, 2016, p. 8; Norrköping, 2016, pp. 1, 7; Stockholm, 2016, p. 5; Uppsala, 2016, p. 2; Växjö, 2016, pp. 1, 15; Örebro, 2016, pp. 2,6, 7, 15). For example, when Linköping (2015) writes that ‘conversely if the total travel times savings achieved by the individual traveller are taken into account, you see that the travel growth is manifold’ (p. 5), increasing speed is not primarily related to cars, but assumed as a means to raise public transport travel regardless<sup>141</sup>. Notably, if statements on travel

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<sup>139</sup> Although research indicates that this might be accurate at an aggregated level (Holmberg, 2013, pp. 62-70), the strength of this causality seems to be highly dependent on contextual factors (Norheim, 2017, pp. 111-126) and cannot be taken for granted.

<sup>140</sup> Improved public transport times can (all things being equal) be expected to have the multiple effects of: a) getting car drivers to go by public transport, b) getting active transport users to go by public transport, and c) creating new travel demand. In contrast, increased travel times for cars will: a) get car drivers to go by public or active transport, and b) decrease travel demand (Banister et al., 2013; Brundell Freij et al., 2022; Holmberg, 2013; van Goeverden et al., 2006).

<sup>141</sup> It is interesting to note that, although the dominance of time savings considerations in traditional planning has been thoroughly criticised throughout the sustainable transport literature (Banister, 2008; Root, 2003b; Whitelegg, 1993), it remains a dominant representation within the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy, albeit concerning public transport and not cars.

time ratio tend to omit the possibility of reaching this improved ratio through car traffic restrictions, the emphasis on public transport travel time reduction says nothing at all about the relationship to other transport modes. Therefore, it is based on a *logic of provision* dictating that it is sufficient to provide additional sustainable alternatives to reduce the adverse impacts of the transport system (see Chapter 8).

As briefly discussed in Section 6.2.3., the difference between the travel time and travel time ratio represents a tension in the UEA policy. Similar to several previously mentioned tensions, reducing travel time is about increasing the speed of public transport, whilst increasing the travel time ratio may be done through restrictions on car traffic.

This distinction also ties into the silenced conflict between public transport and active modes of transport (discussed above and below), as increasing the speed of any heavy vehicle may limit the mobility of other modes, creating barrier effects and reducing safety<sup>142</sup>. It may also cause active travellers to take public transport, with adverse health and environmental consequences.

To summarise, many assumptions exist in the UEA policy on measures leading to increased public transport attractiveness and travel. Although these do not represent significant patterns, they form a coherent picture of causal relations presupposed in the material. Nevertheless, two significant assumptions are present in the section. First, the societal trend toward electrification constitutes an assumption that electrified public transport translates into increased travel. This increase relates to material factors, such as less noise, values of modernity, and environmental friendliness, that are expected to improve public transport attractiveness. Secondly, a dominant representation in traditional transport discourse is time savings. This continues to be the case in the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy. However, while the former mainly considers cars, the latter emphasises public transport. The focus on time savings involves a tension between speeding up public transport and increasing its relative speed compared to cars, made possible through, for instance car, traffic restrictions.

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<sup>142</sup> In the previous part, I quoted Cresswell stating that ‘One person’s speed is another person’s slowness’ (2010, p. 21), which also is applicable in this case.

**Table 6.14. Patterns on increased public transport.** Frequency (F\*) can vary between four and 31, where four is the minimum number of agreements containing the statements for the regularity to be characterised as a pattern, and 31 is the total amount of agreements. Centrality is determined according to a three-fold distinction: Central, Ambiguous, and Peripheral. The number in brackets refers to the page in the agreement where the statement is found.

Statements	Pattern	F*	Centrality	Agreements
Electric public transport → increased travel	Electric public transport → increased travel	7	Peripheral	Karlstad (23, 17); Kungälv (20); Landskrona (5); Luleå (6); Skellefteå (3); Värnamo (6); Östersund (2, 6)
Shorter travel times → increased public transport travel	Shorter travel times → increased public transport travel	16	Central	Borås (6, 10); Eskilstuna (2, 12); Gävle (9, 10); Helsingborg (2016, 6); Jönköping (5); Kungsbacka (7); Landskrona (5); Linköping (2015, 5; 2016, 3); Malmö (8); Norrköping (1, 7); Stockholm (5); Stockholm Region (2, 9); Uppsala (2); Växjö (1, 15); Örebro (2, 6, 7, 15)
Improved travel time ratio → increased public transport travel				

**Key interpretation(s):** Tension between travel time savings (increased speed) and travel time ratio (increased relative speed) of public transport.

## Causal Effects of Public Transport

The second section within this category, and the last one of the chapter, revolves around how public transport is assumed to create several positive effects. More precisely, I have identified two interrelated patterns of assuming improved public transport and increased public transport trips, leading to several positive outcomes and, most importantly, reduced GHG emissions<sup>143</sup>.

The first pattern concerns the assumption of *improved public transport* leading to *reduced car traffic* and *reduced emissions*. Within the UEA policy, this assumption is critical for several reasons and norms analysed earlier<sup>144</sup>. Approximately half of the agreements include examples of the assumption, but as it is an essential part of the documents regulating the policy (Government Directive, 2015; SFS 2015:579), it is reasonable to think it is even more widespread<sup>145</sup>. Furthermore, its importance within the UEA policy relates to its centrality, as many elements of individual agreements rely on the assumption. For instance, arguing about the importance of sustainability and proposing improvements for public transport infrastructure makes no sense without assuming that the former will benefit from the latter. Therefore, the assumption has been categorised as a central pattern. The pattern can be divided into two parts. The

<sup>143</sup> Dividing the assumptions into two patterns is primarily for pedagogical purposes as there are, in fact, multiple and interacting assumptions in the discourse that state similar things but with slight variations. At the end of the section, Figure 6.1 illustrates this complexity.

<sup>144</sup> Likewise, it is central from a policy perspective (see Chapter 5).

<sup>145</sup> As this part concerns assumptions, statements on the *desirability* of mode change and reduced emissions have been treated in the parts on reasons and norms.

first states that improved public transport will lead to reduced car traffic (e.g., Göteborg, 2016, p. 7; Helsingborg, 2015, p. 3; Luleå, 2015, p. 2; Växjö, 2016, p. 1). For example, Lund (2015) writes: 'A more attractive city bus network is expected to attract more travellers and leads to reduced need to travel by car' (p. 16). Similarly, Norrköping (2016) claims that as its proposed transport measures are estimated to reduce travel time by several minutes, the attractiveness of public transport will increase, and as a result, car traffic will decline in sensitive inner-city environments. (p. 1). These examples relate to the previous section, where several factors were assumed to translate to improved public transport attractiveness. However, it is taken one step further here, assuming that this increased attractiveness will cause a reduction in car trips.

In contrast, the second part of the assumption goes even further, explicitly including reduced emissions (e.g., Borås, 2016, p. 6; Gävle, 2015, p. 1; Göteborg, 2016, p. 18; Karlstad, 2015, p. 23; Kungälv, 2016, p. 15; Linköping, 2015, p. 1; 2016, p. 1; Värnamo, 2016, p. 6; Östersund, 2015, p. 2). Örebro (2016) provides an illustrative example, stating that:

The travel time ratio between public transport and car traffic is expected to change so that public transport achieves shorter travel time in relation to car traffic. Thus, a transition from other transport modes is expected, which ought to result in reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. (p. 15)

An almost identical statement can be found in Helsingborg's agreement (2016, p. 6), also assuming a straightforward causal chain between reduced travel time ratio, increased public transport travel, reduced car traffic and declining emissions.

The second pattern regards the assumption of *increased public transport* travel leading to *reduced car traffic* and *reduced emissions*. This pattern is related to the first but specifically concerns the effect of increased public transport trips on car usage and emissions. However, there are two crucial differences between the assumptions. First, increased public transport travel may be caused by factors other than improved public transport, most notably, restriction on car traffic (but also behavioural and cultural changes). Second, whereas improved public transport is commonly related to cars (focusing on the relative attractiveness of public transport relative to cars), increased public transport travel is a more growth-centred approach, narrowly focusing on achieving higher patronage on collective modes of transport<sup>146</sup>.

The assumption of increased public transport trips is less frequent than the previous pattern and is only present in six agreements. Likewise, as it is more specific and only concerned with increased trips, it is peripheral in the individual agreements.

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<sup>146</sup> For example, compare with the discussion on the doubling goal of public transport travel discussed in Section 6.2.2.

Nevertheless, it is an intriguing assumption, mirroring how these things often are communicated, equating increased public transport trips with decreased car trips. Here, Lund (2015) provides a representative example:

By significantly increasing public transport travel, car trips can be reduced and, thus, reduce the climate effect, noise, accidents, and the land use of traffic simultaneously as the accessibility improves. (p. 6)

Or even more strongly phrased, Karlskrona (2016) writes that:

Blekinge region estimates that the suggested measures will generate 500,000 new trips [by public transport] until 2018. Car travel will decrease correspondingly, and thus too will the adverse effects on the environment. (p. 5)

From this quote, it is clear that a straightforward causality is presupposed: for every additional trip with public transport, there will be one less made by car. Still, more details about the mechanisms at play are not provided, making public transport trips appear to reduce car traffic automatically<sup>147</sup>. Moreover, in contrast to the previous pattern, almost every statement includes the effect of declining emissions (except for Norrköping, 2016, p. 2).

The two patterns in this section involve naturalisations: the relationship between improved (and increased travel on) public transport and reduced car usage (with the following decline in emissions) is constructed as something natural and inevitable. Of course, the nature of an assumption implicitly portrays something as self-evident, similar to the process of naturalisation. Still, whereas the assumptions in this section presuppose a causality between particular infrastructure improvements and reduced car traffic, the naturalisation constructs these relationships as natural, inevitable, and without conflicts. Thus, naturalisation is a stronger claim than a mere assumption and involves silenced conflicts. The naturalisation silences at least two fundamental conflicts.

First, public and active modes of transport are seen as complementary or even reinforcing, but these modes of transport can likewise compete. Thus, if public

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<sup>147</sup> Contextually, the assumption can be viewed in light of the changed policy goals discussed in Chapter 5. The aim to reduce car traffic was very clear initially but disappeared during the policy process and ended up being a goal to increase the share of public transport. However, the interviews reveal that most key actors continued to recognise reduced car usage as the primary purpose (Interview 2015-06-24; Interview 2019-02-25; Interview 2020-05-07). This tension between official and unofficial goals demonstrates the political conflicts that car reduction raises in the general public debate. It also connects to a tension between restricting the car and providing for public transport: when it is assumed that increased trips by public transport automatically translate to reduced car traffic, it is based on *the logic of patronage* (see Chapter 8).



transport travel increases at the expense of active modes of travel, it will not result in fewer car trips and, consequently, will increase overall emissions. Second, the conflict between public transport and environmental concerns is silenced. Although public transport is a relatively environmentally friendly mode compared to cars, it still has an environmental impact. Therefore, if increased public transport travel comes from newly generated trips, it will affect the environmental evaluation negatively. In the next chapter, I critically disentangle this assumption (see Sections 7.4.2. and 7.4.3.).

Besides reducing car traffic and declining emissions, improved public transport and increased trips are assumed to translate into several other positive outcomes. Although none of these outcomes constitutes a pattern on its own, similar to in the previous section, they illustrate the benefits of public transport assumed in the UEA policy.

A distinction can be made on whether the positive outcomes are related to reduced car use. Within the first category, several beneficial consequences besides lowered emissions are assumed to come from increased public transport and reduced car traffic. Östersund (2015), for example, writes that ‘by public transport replacing car traffic, congestion reduces along the line and enables city space to be used for things other than car parking’ (pp. 6-7), assuming a causal link between reduced car traffic and parking spaces. Additionally, other assumed benefits are:

- more green areas (Helsingborg, 2016, p. 4; Örebro, 2016, p. 16);
- more efficient land use (Hörby, 2016, p. 7; Malmö, 2016, p. 8);
- reduced resource consumption (Jönköping, 2016, p. 5);
- improved energy efficiency (Umeå, 2016, p. 9);
- improved air quality and reduced noise (Linköping, 2015, p. 1; 2016, p. 1; Malmö, 2016, p. 8; Norrköping, 2016, p. 3; Stockholm Region, 2016, p. 10);
- reduced need for new road infrastructure (Värnamo, 2016, p. 6).

Contrastingly, other beneficial outcomes are not explicitly connected to reduced car traffic. For instance, when Norrköping (2016) states that:

Increased public transport travel [...] contributes to gender equality and social integration as groups without cars, or those with less access to cars, benefit from the travel time savings. (p. 3)

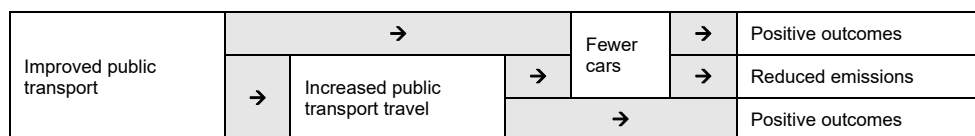
Although cars are mentioned in the quote, the positive effects stem from increased public transport travel.

In addition, several more outcomes of improved public transport are assumed:

- an equal society (Jönköping, 2016, p. 5);
- increased employment (Norrköping, 2016, p. 3);

- economic growth (Norrköping, 2016, p. 3);
- gender equality and social integration (Linköping, 2015, p. 1; 2016, p. 1; Östersund, 2015, p. 2);
- more walking and, thus, improved health (Värnamo, 2016, p. 6).

Thus, neither the benefits linked to car traffic reduction nor those without any connection to car traffic constitute significant patterns in isolation. However, the many positive outcomes create a general picture of the importance of assumptions in the UEA policy and the width of benefits assumed to follow from public transport growth. The below figure illustrates the assumed causal relationships:



**Figure 6.1. Illustration of assumptions on public transport effects.**

In summary, the causal assumptions on improved public transport and increased trips reducing car traffic and emissions constitute central patterns in the material. Moreover, they are foundational for many other patterns in the UEA policy, such as several reasons and norms that justify public transport investments. The dominance of these assumptions can be interpreted in terms of naturalisation, i.e., constructed as natural and inevitable. This process involves silencing alternatives: the environmental impact of public transport and the conflict between public transport and active modes of transport. These conflicts point to the impending risk of increased public transport travel originating from other sources than car traffic. Finally, as in the previous section, many additional assumptions have been identified. Although none is frequent enough to be considered a pattern, they demonstrate the range of assumed positive outcomes of improved public transport that feature in the material.

**Table 6.15. Patterns on the effect of public transport.** Frequency (F\*) can vary between four and 31, where four is the minimum number of agreements containing the statements for the regularity to be characterised as a pattern, and 31 is the total amount of agreements. Centrality is determined according to a three-fold distinction: Central, Ambiguous, and Peripheral. The number in brackets refers to the page in the agreement where the statement is found.

Statements	Pattern	F*	Centrality	Agreements
Improved PT → reduced emissions	Improved public transport → reduced car traffic → reduced emissions	18	Central	Borås (6); Göteborg (7, 18); Gävle (1, 11); Helsingborg (2015, 3; 2016, 6); Hörby (17); Karlstad (23); Kungälv (15); Linköping (2015, 1; 2016, 1); Luleå (2, 6); Lund (16); Norrköping (1, 11); Skellefteå (15); Värnamo (1-2, 6); Växjö (1, 15); Örebro (15); Östersund (2, 6)
Improved PT → reduced car traffic				
Increased PT travel → reduced emissions	Increased public transport travel → reduced car traffic → reduced emissions	6	Peripheral	Eskilstuna (7); Helsingborg (2015, 6); Karlskrona (5, 10); Lund (6); Norrköping (2); Örebro (7)
Increased PT travel → reduced car traffic				

**Key interpretation(s):** Naturalisation of improved public transport and increased trips leading to reduced car usage and declining emissions; and the silenced conflicts between a) public transport and the environment and b) public transport and active modes of transport.

## Conclusions on the Category of Causal Assumptions on Sustainable Mobility

Several causal assumptions discussed in this section act as the UEA policy's causal foundation, pivotal to understanding the rationale and implications of many other patterns. For example, increasing public transport ridership can only be seen as an environmentally beneficial measure based on the assumption that this increased ridership will reduce car usage. Similarly, concrete transport measures like electrification depend on several assumptions of their causal effects on emission levels to be sensible as environmental measures.

I have identified two kinds of assumptions presented in separate sections, each containing two patterns. First, *electric public transport* and *reduced travel times* are assumed to increase public transport attractiveness and travel. However, the latter includes a tension between reduced travel time and reduced travel time ratio, with a difference in the degree to which they relate to cars. Additionally, a wide range of transport measures is mentioned in the material, illustrating the multitude of assumptions present, although not constituting patterns by themselves.

The second section focused on the assumed causal effects of improved public transport and increased trips. Although several interconnected assumptions were identified, they can be sorted into two general patterns. The first is about improved public transport leading to reduced car traffic and emissions. This central assumption naturalises the complex and contingent relationship between public transport and emissions, thus silencing the environmental impact of public transport and the conflict

between public transport and active modes of transport. The second pattern is a growth-centred assumption stating that increased public transport travel will lead to reduced car traffic and emissions. As with the previous section, many additional assumptions about the positive effects of improved and increased public transport were identified.

**Table 6.16. The patterns and key interpretations in the causal assumptions of sustainable mobility category.**

	<b>Pattern</b>	<b>Key interpretations(s)</b>
<i>Increased public transport travel</i>	Electric public transport → increased travel	Tension between the travel time savings (increasing speed) and travel time ratio (increasing relative speed) of public transport.
	Shorter travel times → increased travel	
<i>Causal effects of public transport</i>	Improved public transport → reduced car traffic → reduced emissions	Naturalisation of improved public transport and increased trips leading to reduced car traffic and declining emissions; and the silenced conflict between: a) public transport and the environment, and b) public transport and active modes of transport.
	Increased public transport travel → reduced car traffic → reduced emissions	

## Summary of the Chapter

In this first analytical chapter, I have mapped the discursive patterns of the UEA policy through thematic analysis, answering the first sub-question posed in the introduction: what are the discursive patterns of sustainable mobility in the UEA policy? Notably, the results of this inquiry are a wide range of patterns, which have been described through the methodological tools of frequency and centrality, and interpreted through the theoretical concepts of discursive tension, naturalisation, and silence. The analysis has been structured by four theoretical categories: reasons, norms, subjects, and assumptions. Furthermore, each category was structured into several sections, presenting thematically connected patterns.

In the first category, population, property (development), attractiveness, and the environment were the most dominant reasons for sustainable mobility, with the economy and social progress being less accentuated. The patterns include multiple tensions, naturalisations, and silences, creating a complex and ambiguous picture of the overall UEA policy. As for naturalisations, economic and population growth were constructed as inevitable, with the silencing of adverse consequences and alternative viewpoints. Furthermore, the category also included tensions between housing development to increase sustainable travelling and public transport to enable housing

developments. Additionally, patterns connected to attractiveness involved a tension between attractiveness as sustainability (emphasising the city's current inhabitants) and growth promotion (focusing on the city's potential inhabitants). Finally, a tension was identified between the local and global environment.

The second category concerned the norms of sustainable mobility found in the UEA policy. Here, the dominant quantitative pattern of public transport growth was identified. Sustainable mobility was also described in qualitative terms in the UEA policy, through various ascribed desirable attributes. The final section of the category revolved around the relation to automobility. Two patterns stood out as particularly dominant, involving naturalisation: (1) public transport growth, with the silenced conflict between growth and its adverse effects, and (2) the construction of public transport, cycling and walking as the sustainable modes of transport with the silenced conflict between public transport and active modes. In addition, several tensions were present: between increased public transport as a means to reduce car usage and as being something intrinsically valuable; between an emphasis on the shortcomings of cars versus that of public transport; and finally, between restricting cars and enabling public transport. Lastly, an explicit conflict between a negative and a more neutral view of car traffic was also identified.

The third category, subjects of sustainable mobility, was analysed in two sections: transport users and disadvantaged groups. The subject positions emphasised in the UEA policy were car users, active transport users, and public transport users. Although not constructed in detail, car users were primarily represented as a target for the policy, intended to be persuaded to change their mode of transport. Moreover, car users were implicitly portrayed as a privileged group, predominantly male, adult (but not elderly), and having norm-compliant functionality. In contrast, the second section highlighted women, children, the elderly, and people with norm-breaking functionality as the central subject positions. These groups were connected to public transport and seen to be disadvantaged in the current transport system. The distinction between privileged car users and underprivileged societal groups constituted the only tension within the section.

In the final category, the causal assumptions of sustainable mobility were examined. Several assumptions constitute the fundament of the UEA policy. They can be illustrated as a chain of causal assumptions: measures improving public transport are assumed to cause a more attractive public transport, leading to additional public transport travel, which entails several positive effects, particularly reduced car usage and declining emissions. The key interpretation in this category was the naturalisation of increased public transport resulting in reduced car traffic and emissions. This naturalisation silenced the impact of public transport increase on active modes of transport and its environmental consequences. Finally, the category also included a

tension between improved travel time and travel time ratio for public transport, with the difference in how these representations relate to car traffic.

This chapter has provided a comprehensive and detailed analysis of how sustainable mobility is constructed in agreements between municipalities (and regions) and the Swedish Transport Administration. These agreements are the fundament of the UEA policy and essential material in the thesis. The thematic analysis has laid the foundation for all answers to my research questions. However, the detailed analysis of the discursive patterns has not fully developed the relationships between the patterns central to the broader implications of the sustainable mobility discourse.

Throughout this thematic analysis, I have pointed out that besides the statements following specific patterns, there are also regularities among the patterns. In other words, the patterns relate to, and resemble and contradict, each other. Throughout the chapter, I have indicated the existence of two overarching constructions of sustainable mobility. Hence, the thesis now shifts its attention from detailed mapping of the discursive patterns within a subset of the material to a reconstruction of constitutive lines of reasoning based on the entire policy material. This latter endeavour is the focus of the next chapter.



# Reconstructing Constitutive Lines of Reasoning

Sustainable development involves more than growth. It requires a change in the content of growth, to make it less material- and energy-intensive and more equitable in its impact. - Brundtland Commission<sup>148</sup>

The 'first objective' of transport policy is not just the removal of constraints on growth but the positive promotion of growth: 'to contribute to economic growth and higher national prosperity'. - John Adams<sup>149</sup>

Whereas the previous chapter 'took apart' the UEA policy, identifying and mapping discursive patterns foundational to its sustainable mobility discourse, this chapter 'rebuilds' the discourse by reconstructing constitutive lines of reasoning<sup>150</sup>. The chapter identifies three constitutive lines of reasoning from the patterns, tensions, and silences found in Chapter 6. Using the typology from growth management literature presented in the Analytical Framework (Section 3.2.3.), I reconstruct two distinct lines of reasoning that permeate the discourse: 'sustainable mobility as necessity', and 'sustainable mobility as progress'. Additionally, connecting the typology with the silences identified in the thematic analysis, I also reconstruct a third, silenced line of reasoning: 'sustainable mobility as restriction'.

These three constitutive lines of reasoning represent overarching constructions of sustainable mobility in the discourse (dominant or omitted), aligning a series of reasons, norms, subject positions, and causal assumptions.

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<sup>148</sup> WCED (1987, p. 48).

<sup>149</sup> Adams (1981, p. 149).

<sup>150</sup> When I write 'the discourse' in this chapter, I refer to the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy.



The chapter provides a comprehensive understanding of how sustainable mobility is constructed in the UEA policy. While the previous chapter gave a detailed but fragmented answer, analysing patterns partially in isolation, this analysis offers a more holistic answer to my primary research question about the overarching ways in which sustainable mobility is constructed. More specifically, the chapter answers the second sub-question about the constitutive lines of reasoning dominant in the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy and about those constitutive lines being silenced.

In Chapter 4, I argued that the composition of the empirical material, with agreements written by municipalities and a broader policy context material, necessitated a design where the different types of material were analysed separately (see Part 4.6. on the materials of the thesis). The thematic analysis focused exclusively on the UEA policy agreements<sup>151</sup>. Yet, the policy comprises more than the agreements. Thus, to acquire a more comprehensive understanding of the sustainable mobility discourse in the UEA policy, the broader policy material (e.g., reports, press releases, interviews, and field notes) has to be included. Therefore, I compare the patterns from the thematic analysis with the broader policy material (the ‘context of agreements’) and, when necessary, reinterpret representations from my initial analysis. This extended analysis has two principal functions. First, it enabled me to perform the thematic analysis systematically, as it could be performed on comparable texts without missing essential insights from the broader policy material, reintroduced in the present chapter’s contextualisation. Second, it provides a bridge between the thematic analysis of the previous chapter and the reconstruction in this chapter, which departs from the close readings of texts and emphasises the more general construction in the discourse.

In concrete terms, the contextualisation is based on a search in the broader policy material for statements contradicting or indicating the need for alternative interpretations of the findings in the thematic analysis. Four patterns have been reinterpreted through this contextualisation. In order of appearance, they are: housing shortage, mobility growth, automobility, and property growth. However, to avoid unnecessary repetitions, I do not address them in a separate section here.

The chapter begins by describing the process of identifying and reconstructing the constitutive lines of reasoning. It is based on the typology from growth management theory presented and developed in the analytical framework in Chapter 3. This is followed by two extensive parts where I present ‘sustainable mobility as necessity’, and ‘sustainable mobility as progress’; the two dominant lines of reasoning reconstructed.

In the fourth part, I critically scrutinise the silences of the discourse. These silences represent the opposite of the naturalisations identified in the first analytical chapter and

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<sup>151</sup> However, additional texts were used to interpret unclear statements. See the discussion on the ‘context of statements’ in Part 4.5. and Section 4.6.2.

are interpreted as a third and omitted constitutive line of reasoning: ‘sustainable mobility as restriction’. All silences relate to growth; therefore, I have organised the analysis into three general sections according to their different relationship to growth. The part also makes the analytical process of interpreting silences more transparent by presenting the relied-upon theoretical concepts (in addition to the ones exemplified in the normative standpoint, see Section 3.2.1).

## Constitutive Lines of Reasoning

In any discourse, patterns of statements are linked in particular ways. These relationships are vital to understanding the discourse’s broader political force and impact. This chapter aims to reconstruct discursive macro-structures from the patterns identified in the previous chapter. A typology borrowed from growth management theory allows me to organise the patterns descriptively into two constitutive lines of reasoning (see Section 3.2.2.). The main conclusion is that sustainable mobility is constructed either as a *necessity* or as *progress*, connecting to ideas about managing and promoting growth. Although I hold these lines of reasoning analytically separate, they are in many senses complementary, a proposition I explore in the next chapter.

In the thematic analysis, I identified a range of tensions, highlighting potentially conflicting aspects of the patterns (see definition in Section 3.1.3.). For example, many tensions revolve around an emphasis on either restricting cars or promoting public transport. Consequently, it is essential to consider the tensions when analysing how the patterns are related to more general ways of reasoning in the discourse. Furthermore, while the lines of reasoning are based on findings in the previous chapter, the material has been expanded to include the broader policy material. One of the results is that certain of my initial interpretations have been re-evaluated, and the patterns rephrased for the reconstructive analysis. For example, in Chapter 6, I describe a tension between sustainable mobility as a means to promote housing construction, and housing construction as a means to promote sustainable mobility. However, when rephrased in line with ‘sustainable mobility as necessity’, sustainable mobility can be phrased as a necessary solution to the housing shortage instead of promoting housing construction. This ‘problem representation’ of a housing shortage is evident in the broader policy material but not explicit in the agreements. Thus, the first formulation is preferable when analysing the specific agreements in themselves, but the second interpretation appears more suitable when the wider policy material is included and the patterns contextualised.

Finally, to recapitulate, I conceptualise constitutive lines of reasoning as patterns of patterns. The thesis' analytical architecture consists of statements (the fundamental building blocks), patterns (the collection of similar statements), and discourse (operationalised as the patterns of statements relating to sustainable mobility within the UEA policy). However, the patterns of statements are not free-floating in the discourse but follow patterns of their own which I call constitutive lines of reasoning. In the analytical framework, I constructed four theoretical categories (reasons, norms, subjects, and causal assumptions) to illuminate the differences so as to structure the analysis. The line of reasoning consists of specific alignments of these theoretical categories, constructing problems and solutions central to the transport policy field. I have identified two constitutive lines of reasoning in the discourse: 'sustainable mobility as necessity' (management of growth), and 'sustainable mobility as progress' (promotion of growth). Below, the process of going from patterns to the lines of reasoning is described.

### From Patterns to Constitutive Lines of Reasoning

It is evident that the patterns cluster in specific ways when considering the entire thematic analysis in Chapter 6. I have indicated two distinct ways to understand the patterns and tensions in the material. In its simplest form, the distinction is between enabling and restricting certain forms of mobility. Moreover, it is about the expected results of these two approaches in terms of sustainability, population, property development, and economy.

A common denominator between most key patterns is the centrality of growth. However, growth does not mean one thing in the discourse but is used in multiple ways. For example, growth (or, more commonly, zero-growth) is often connected to car traffic by transport agencies. Conversely, public transport operators speak about growth in terms of increasing trips and patronage. Additionally, growth commonly signifies increasing GDP at the national political level, while the municipalities use it to describe an increasing city population. Notably, the different understandings of growth are related to each other discursively, and their relationships are central in the discourse. For example, there are direct links between the representations of sustainable mobility, population growth, property growth, and adverse environmental consequences, where sustainable mobility is constructed as the necessary solution to the problems of the growing city. Acknowledging the centrality of growth, it makes sense to use the strand of planning theory concerned with growth to give a theoretical foundation for the constitutive lines of reasoning. Hence, I turn to growth management theory to aid the reconstruction of the discourse.

In the analytical framework, I adapted a typology of approaches toward growth. In short, I distinguish between three main approaches: promoting, managing, and limiting growth. In using this categorisation to interpret the patterns and tensions, the distinction between enabling and restricting indicated in the thematic analysis falls into place. Most of the patterns and tensions can be situated in either of these approaches, creating two distinct lines of reasoning. Although I have primarily used the typology to organise the more general patterns and tensions, concrete text samples demonstrate the validity of the results. A quote from the preparatory report by the Swedish Transport Administration (2015e) can be examined to briefly exemplify how the two lines of reasoning appear in the material, how they are sometimes intertwined, and how they might be identified. This report laid the foundation for the UEA, and in it, the agency states that:

A more sustainable urban development, with denser, greener and more service-mixed, that is easy to move around by foot, bicycle and go by public transport, can be motivated by an ambition to create attractive cities that attract inhabitants, visitors and businesses. It creates preconditions for reducing car traffic, which is necessary to reach the climate objectives together with technical development and fuel. (p. 41)<sup>152</sup>

The initial statements of the quote specify some attributes connected to a sustainable urban environment, including improved sustainable mobility. Measures to strengthen such a city is linked to two principal reasons. First, it is motivated by the increased attractiveness and ‘progress’ in promoting growth in population, tourism, and business investments. Conversely, the quote’s final part describes the ‘necessity’ of applying the suggested measures to manage car traffic growth and achieve climate objectives. As illustrated by the quote, the lines of reasoning are about either managing or promoting growth. However, these general planning concepts can be reconceptualised to fit the sustainable transport context. They are about the ‘necessity’ of investing in sustainable mobility to combat climate change and the ‘progress’ achieved when an attractive city is promoted through sustainable mobility. Thus, with the help of growth management theory, two distinct lines of reasoning can be reconstructed from the previous analysis: ‘sustainable mobility as necessity’, emphasising the need to manage certain forms of growth, and ‘sustainable mobility as progress’, focusing on the promotion of growth. I have organised the patterns and tensions in the table below according to these overarching frameworks.

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<sup>152</sup> I have translated all quotes of the empirical material from Swedish in this chapter if nothing else is mentioned.

**Table 7.1. The patterns and tensions from the thematic analysis** The patterns and tensions are organised according to the typology between the management and promotion of growth. The 'limiting growth' approach was not found in the material.

Category	Growth promotion	Growth management
<i>Reasons</i>	Economic growth	The local and global environment
	Public transport to enable property growth and property development to increase sustainable travelling	Public transport to enable property growth (to solve housing shortage)
	Promoting population growth	Manage population growth
	Attractiveness as growth	Attractiveness as sustainability
<i>Norms</i>	The shortcomings of public transport	The shortcomings of the cars
	Public transport as intrinsically good	Public transport to reduce car usage
	Providing for public transport	Restricting cars
<i>Subjects</i>	Prioritising existing (disadvantaged groups) public transport users	Prioritising potential (car users) public transport users
<i>Causal assumptions</i>	Travel time savings (increasing speed) of public transport	Travel time ratio (increasing relative speed) of public transport
		Improved public transport → reduced car traffic → reduced emissions

I have emphasised their differences when reconstructing the two lines of reasoning. However, three things are vital to acknowledge. First, the lines of reasoning are analytical products. Thus, in reality, the distinction is more blurred. The main aim is to account for the essence of the two alternative ways of understanding and constructing sustainable mobility. Second, it is crucial to realise that the lines of reasoning are not identical in form and thus not opposites but partly work in different spheres of the discourse, with separate functions (I develop this idea in the synthesis in the next chapter). Third, some common denominators have been left out as the objective has been to point to differences rather than similarities. Nevertheless, they are central in the discourse (after all, they transgress different ways of understanding sustainable mobility) and are not ignored but saved for the next chapter.

Moreover, some patterns fall outside the reconstruction when applying growth management theory, conflicting with the overarching lines of reasoning. If the lines of reasoning represent central approaches to mobility, the alternative representations are found at the extremes of the spectra, with 'the continuous need for cars' on one end and 'a low-transport society' on the other. Neither of these representations is prominent in the agreements, but they become relevant when including the broader material as they might point to present or future political struggles. I discuss the latter in the second part of this chapter and the former in the next chapter.

## Silenced Representations: The Third Constitutive Line of Reasoning

The thematic analysis demonstrates few examples of anything proposing to limit growth<sup>153</sup>. When looking at the silences identified earlier, they generally align with this third approach from the growth management typology. In Chapter 6, I identified the following seven silences:

**Table 7.2. The identified silences in the discourse and their related theoretical category.**

Category	Silence
<i>Reasons</i>	Silenced conflict between economic growth and the environment.
	Silenced consequences and alternatives to population growth.
<i>Norms</i>	Silenced conflict between public transport and active modes of transport.
	Silenced consequences and alternatives to public transport growth.
<i>Subjects</i>	Silenced consequences for economically disadvantaged groups.
<i>Assumptions</i>	Silenced conflict between public transport and the environment.
	Silenced conflict between public transport and active modes of transport.

As defined and operationalised in Section 3.1.3., naturalisations involve silences. In the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy, these silences are omitted alternative representations that conflict with the present representation or unacknowledged consequences of the present representation.

The ‘limiting growth’ approach is about restricting growth, not just redirecting it. Thus, this line of reasoning, ‘sustainable mobility as restriction’, may be described as breaking with the ideas of either unreservedly increasing growth or replacing one form of growth with another.

Notably, the presentation of the silenced line of reasoning differs somewhat from the two lines of reasoning present in the discourse. Since silences per definition are omitted from the material and, thus, not visible to the same extent as other patterns, they cannot be analysed using the same methodological tools. Consequently, besides describing this third line of reasoning, the part also demonstrates the theoretical ideas on which the identification of silences is based. In addition, since the silences often represent critique towards dominant representations, my critical engagement is more pronounced in this part, connecting to the normative standpoint developed in Section 3.2.1.

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<sup>153</sup> The notion of a low-transport society could be interpreted as an approach to limiting growth, but it is only mentioned once in the agreements (Borås, 2016, p. 3). Nevertheless, as it is a concept that has risen in importance since then and appears in some related documents (e.g. SOU, 2013:84; The Swedish Transport Administration, 2015f), I discuss it separately in the fourth part of this chapter.

# Sustainable Mobility as Necessity and the Management of Growth

Sustainable mobility as necessity is a constitutive line of reasoning in which specific modes of transport are constructed to solve the adverse effects of growth. It draws its force from representations of the problems facing the growing city, simultaneously naturalising inherent growth processes. I argue it is a core construction of sustainable mobility as it responds to the challenges posed to transport planning and policy by environmental concerns. This part is structured according to problems and solutions connected to the growing city. Within this overarching structure, I disentangle the reasons, norms, subjects, and assumptions acting as fundamental elements of the line of reasoning.

## The Demands of the Growing City

In ‘sustainable mobility as necessity’, core representations revolve around the many challenges facing the growing city: congestion, capacity shortage, emissions, air quality, and housing shortage. As a civil servant at the municipal level put it: ‘they [the politicians] recognise that there are conflicting goals and that growth also hurts, and we see it, it is enough to open the newspaper. It hurts every day, and it is tough’ (Interview 2018-12-11). This uncharacteristically honest account illustrates an awareness of the problems experienced by the growing cities, but it also indicates the degree to which growth is considered necessary or inevitable since it is pursued despite its inherent problems.

In the government directive that initiated the UEA, this construction of the demands of the growing city and the central place of transport is spelt out:

The population in Sweden’s large cities grows considerably. [...] Capacity shortage in the transport system is causing congestion. In growing cities, public transport passengers face congestion as well. Several Swedish cities need to develop their public transport to, amongst other things, reduce GHG emissions and improve accessibility. At the same time, a growing population leads to more transport, which needs to be made more efficient and environmentally adapted. People in many cities face noise problems, and there are problems with the norms for outdoor air quality not being fulfilled. In addition, there are challenges related to traffic safety for, amongst other, unprotected transport users. (Government Directive, 2015, p. 2)

This quote perfectly illustrates the line of reasoning, and the short passage captures the specific alignment of reasons, norms, subjects, and assumptions representative of

‘sustainable mobility as necessity’. The growing city is a place where mobility inevitably increases, and several adverse local and global environmental problems risk getting worse<sup>154</sup>.

Although traffic-related problems are central in this line of reasoning, constructing ‘sustainable mobility as necessity’ is broader in scope and includes the inter-related effect of the housing shortage. Here, I provide the first contextualisation of a pattern identified in the previous chapter.

In the thematic analysis, I identified patterns relating to property development. Amongst these patterns, there was a tension between housing to increase sustainable travelling and public transport to enable housing development (see Section 6.1.2.). The two representations are evident in the agreements but are based on an implicit idea of a housing shortage, evident from the broader policy material. In the parliamentary debates and press releases, this representation comes out clearly. For example, leading politicians advocating the policy stated that ‘the housing shortage is noticeable in entire Sweden but, in times of rapid urbanisation, it is most apparent in our cities’ (Johansson et al., 2015) and ‘today’s housing shortage confines people’s life choices and hampers Sweden’s development’ (Johansson & Kaplan, 2015c). Likewise, it was a central representation in the parliamentary debates where the UEA was discussed (e.g., Parliamentary Record, 2014/15:57, p. 27).

Housing shortage and the lack of ‘constructible land’ are directly linked to the city’s growth. An increasing number of inhabitants put pressure on land use, and in cities where most accessible spaces have already been developed, conflicts over future priorities are increasingly getting pronounced. For example, in a debate article signed by the two ministers that initiated the UEA, this point is illustrated:

It is a positive thing that our cities grow. The dense city has great opportunities for climate-smart housing and travelling with adequate planning. However, rapid city growth also entails challenges. Housing shortage increases and traffic congestion is getting increasingly severe [...] the lack of constructible land is a problem for housing development. (Johansson & Kaplan, 2015b)

The recognition of growth-induced problems constitutes the overarching ‘problem representation’ in the line of reasoning. However, this representation is built upon several naturalisations and assumptions. Thus, before I turn to the solution-side of ‘sustainable mobility as necessity’, I will bring these implicit constructions to light.

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<sup>154</sup> The recognition of traffic-induced problems is also related to an idea about the attractive city. As shown in the previous chapter, the attractive city is understood in two ways, one of which connects to sustainable mobility as necessity. Thus, combating congestion, poor air quality, and inadequate traffic safety is considered critical to achieving a locally sustainable and attractive city.



## The Inevitable Mobility Growth

In ‘sustainable mobility as necessity’, mobility growth is naturalised. As defined in Chapter 3 and demonstrated in the thematic analysis in Chapter 6, naturalisation signifies a process where contingent circumstances and phenomena are constructed as inevitable and natural. This process of naturalisation can be illustrated through a simplified argument:

**Table 7.3. The inevitability of mobility.** The presumed inevitability of mobility growth in the line of reasoning when reconstructed as an argument with premises (P) and conclusions (C).

<b>P1</b>	Population growth is inevitable
<b>P2</b>	Population growth leads to mobility growth
<b>C</b>	Mobility growth is inevitable

The first premise is about the inevitability of population growth. Earlier, I have shown how population growth is often constructed as beyond control (although, at times, framed as imperative) and a naturally occurring phenomenon that necessitates actions (see Section 6.1.3.). For example, the first sentence of the above-quoted passage from the government directive illustrates the naturalisation: ‘The population in Sweden’s large cities grows considerably’ (Government Directive, 2015). Similar statements can be found in multiple places in the discourse; for example, by Stockholm municipality (2016), stating that ‘Stockholm grows’, full stop (p. 5) or in a debate article by four leading politicians, where they frame their text as ‘in a time of population growth and rapid urbanisation’ (Johansson et al., 2015)<sup>155</sup>. In these examples, the growing population is naturalised, seen to be constant, and beyond political influence.

The argument’s second premise concerns an assumed causal relationship between population and mobility growth. However, this relationship revolves around mobility growth as a general phenomenon, not sustainable mobility specifically. Thus, a second contextualisation of the patterns from the thematic analysis is needed here. Under the norms of sustainable mobility category, I discussed the central and naturalising normative pattern of increased public mobility growth. Focusing on public transport instead of mobility growth is a result from my analytical focus and the theoretical categories (see Sections 1.1. and 3.2.2.). Therefore, statements concerning mobility generally were not investigated in this initial analysis. However, for the argument I develop in this part, mobility as a general representation is essential. And if the lens of mobility is used to view the material, it is apparent that it also constitutes a central

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<sup>155</sup> The naturalisation of population growth is sometimes built on growth prognosis. For example, the quote by Stockholm continues like this: ‘Forecasts show that the inhabitants of Stockholm city will be approximately 25 per cent more the year 2030’ (Stockholm, 2016, p. 5).

representation. The links between population and mobility and the naturalisation of mobility demonstrate this centrality. For example, mobility is assumed to grow parallel with the increasing population. Again, the government directive can illustrate this, stating that ‘a growing population leads to more transport’ (Government Directive, 2015, p. 2). Likewise, Stockholm municipality (2016, p. 5) discusses measures to enable the transport system to function efficiently despite increasing traffic assumed from population growth forecasts. The premise is based on a *ceteris paribus* assumption, where mobility demand is assumed to increase proportionally to population growth, all things being equal. In other words, it is assumed that transport supply matches the demand; that traveller behaviour is constant; that limiting factors that also might increase, such as congestion, are avoided, etc. Consequently, two conflicting ideas exist simultaneously: a) that politics and planning can accommodate growth by providing infrastructure, tax benefits, etc., enabling a situation where the relationship between population and mobility growth is undisturbed, and b) that politics and planning cannot (or do not want to) change or challenge growth.

The final part of the argument concludes that mobility growth is inevitable. If the premises are accurate, the conclusion is also valid. Thus, the construction of population growth and its link to mobility growth is foundational for the naturalisation of the latter. For example, when Lund (2015) writes that ‘the public transport in the city has to develop to cater for the increasing travelling and the planned growth of the city’ (p. 2), increasing mobility is assumed to be a result of the growing city. Similarly, Gävle (2015) states that an ‘increasing number of trips from the additional residents in the area’ (p. 5) is expected. Thus, as illustrated below, sustainable mobility is a necessary response to general mobility growth.

The above argument is, of course, very simplified. Hence, although population growth is the dominant representation in this line of reasoning, other growth forms are linked both to population and mobility growth. In the thematic analysis of Chapter 6, I discussed the inter-connected growth processes of mobility, population, property development, and economy (Sections 6.1.1., 6.1.2. and 6.1.3.). All of these remain important in this line of reasoning. Thus, housing and property growth also reinforce the idea of ‘sustainable mobility as necessity’. As also discussed in Chapter 6, the relationship between sustainable mobility and housing construction is dual in the discourse, relating to the identified tension between sustainable mobility to promote housing construction and property development to increase sustainable travelling (for example, through densification). Below I discuss the construction of sustainable mobility as a necessary tool to facilitate increased housing construction. However, property growth is constructed in an additional way, not explicitly tied to the housing shortage. In short, property growth is seen to result in increasing mobility demand. Therefore, property growth can be understood as the neighbourhood-level

manifestation of municipal population growth. For example, Kungälv (2016) writes: ‘Here we construct close to 1,000 new residences [...] which forces us to make sure that as many trips as possible are made by public transport’ (pp. 2-3). In expanding the city, property development is linked to increasing mobility demand and highlights the need for modes of transport other than cars. In addition to property growth, economic growth is also considered to contribute to overall growth. Although economic growth is less explicitly related to population and property growth, examples can be found. For example, a civil servant states that ‘it is connected. Employment is, to a large extent, driving population growth’ (Interview 2018-12-11). Moreover, there are no indications of contradicting views, and undoubtedly, the connections between economic and population growth are common assumptions beyond the context of the UEA (cf. Cox, 2017; Fjertorp et al., 2012; SAGPA, 2014).

### Unsustainable Mobility

As I have demonstrated in this and earlier chapters, a key discursive idea connected to ‘sustainable mobility as necessity’ is that the growing city creates several traffic-related problems. The thematic analysis described the dual environmental concerns, with a local and a global side. Both of these sides are connected to car traffic. With an increasing population (and economy and land use), traffic is expected to grow, and in the current configuration of the transport system, this growth will predominantly be car-based. However, increasing the number of cars leads to congestion<sup>156</sup>, deteriorating air quality, traffic accidents, unsafe environments for unprotected traffic users (i.e., pedestrians, bicyclists, etc.), and rising GHG emissions<sup>157</sup>. Therefore, the centrality of the car as the primary cause of environmental problems in the transport system is a dominant representation in this line of reasoning.

Earlier, I demonstrated that a fundamental assumption in the discourse revolves around increased public transport’s proposed effects on reducing car traffic and emission levels (Part 6.4.). Although there are examples where cars are explicitly linked to the transport system’s environmental problems, more commonly, this is something taken for granted. By contextualising the assumption, the centrality can be illuminated.

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<sup>156</sup> Interestingly, the line of reasoning reveals a traditional view of congestion and capacity shortage as burdens and social-technical problems necessitating actions. But, contrastingly, these phenomena could also be seen as important developments that reduce travel demand.

<sup>157</sup> Understanding that these adverse consequences are not solved by switching to electric cars is critical. Although fossil fuels produce greater GHG and local emissions, electric cars are not free from these problems. With GHG emissions, the central question is how the electric cars are produced whereas, with local emissions, particles from tires and roads considerably contribute to deteriorating air quality (Kole et al., 2017). Moreover, there is no significant difference between fossil fuel and electric cars regarding congestion and safety.

The ideas about car traffic presumably have multiple origins, but a pivotal one is the Swedish Transport Administration's report on *Energy Efficiency and Limited Climate Effect* (2015f). In the report, the agency presents its climate scenario. The report concludes that private cars represent the most significant contributor to GHG emissions and that the number of vehicles has to be reduced despite technical innovations (p. 34ff). This report, which also launched the idea of urban environment agreements, highly influenced the preparatory report of the UEA, published only a couple of months after the former and by the same author. Therefore, it is unsurprising that the norms and assumptions from the former report permeate the latter (e.g., The Swedish Transport Administration, 2015e, pp. 9, 12, 13).

In some aspects, the municipal agreements are strongly governed by the preceding policy material. Owing to their origin as applications for part-financing to the Transport Administration, the agreements incorporated the ideas of unsustainable automobility as a fundamental assumption. Although the link between car traffic and unsustainability is implicit in most of the discourse, it indirectly manifests in several patterns. For example, regarding qualitative norms, several attributes of desirable mobility relate to the shortcomings of cars (see Section 6.2.1.). This pattern emphasises cars' inefficiency and polluting character, providing additional force to the connection between car traffic and unsustainable mobility.

### Resolving the Dilemma: Changing Mode, Not Growth

Compiling the above arguments and assumptions, the core of this constitutive line of reasoning begins to take shape. Again, in the form of an argument, it can be presented like this:

**Table 7.4. The solution to unsustainable mobility.** The presumed solution to unsustainable mobility in the line of reasoning when reconstructed as an argument with premises (P) and conclusions (C).

<b>P1</b>	Mobility growth in its current form is unsustainable
<b>P2</b>	Mobility growth is inevitable
<b>C</b>	To be sustainable, the current form of mobility has to change

The above points to the logical conclusion that sustainable mobility is a necessity. Furthermore, in this line of reasoning, sustainable mobility in the form of public transport becomes the solution to the adverse effects of mobility growth, or as Göteborg (2016) explains it:

Altogether, the strategies [to improve sustainable transport] aim to enable Göteborg to reach local, regional and national climate objectives while the city grows by about 150.000 inhabitants. (p. 8)<sup>158</sup>

The dual challenge of reaching climate and emissions objectives despite growth is at the core of this line of reasoning. The necessity for public transport is explicitly developed by Malmö (2016), writing:

Public transport plays a critical role in developing Malmö as an attractive and sustainable city. An attractive, environmentally friendly, high-capacity public transport is necessary to manage the population growth Malmö experience. (p. 4)

Although the line of reasoning is primarily based on the naturalisation of population and mobility growth, sustainable mobility is the necessary solution regardless of the cause of growth. For example, population growth is regularly present as a political goal (overlapping the second line of reasoning discussed below). Consequently, public transport is also presented as a solution to the adverse effects of increased traffic caused by promoted growth. Kungälv (2016) writes:

The overarching goal for central Kungälv is to double the number of inhabitants and create an attractive and sustainable city centre. At the same time, Kungälv municipality is to reduce its carbon dioxide emissions, improve its air quality by lowering driving distance by car, and transition to a greater share of sustainable travel in the municipality, primarily through an increased share of travel by public transport. (p. 15)

This twin challenge of promoting population growth while working to reduce the adverse transport-related effects of the same development is a local version of the dilemma of mobility (Bertolini, 2017) described in the introduction. Similarly, it relates to the different municipality types discussed in the previous chapter, where some relatively large cities simultaneously naturalise growth empirically and normatively (see Section 6.1.3.). However, the point is that the connection between population growth

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<sup>158</sup> Two additional examples where the core of the line of reasoning is well illustrated are Stockholm and Umeå: 'Stockholm grows'. The prognoses show that the population of Stockholm city will be approximately 25 per cent more in the year 2030. To enable Stockholm's transport system to function efficiently despite the increase [...] the share of transport made by car needs to reduce' (Stockholm, 2016, p. 5) and 'A substantial population and workplace growth create, during the coming years, a need for additional bus trips, as well as more vehicles, to tackle the expected increase in volume' (Umeå, 2016, p. 11). The previously quoted statement from Lund municipality also illustrates this idea well: 'The public transport in the city has to develop to cater for the increased travel and the planned growth of the city' (Lund, 2015, p. 2).

and sustainable mobility, central to this line of reasoning, is independent of the driving force behind the growth.

### Sustainable Mobility as a Solution to the Adverse Impact of Transport

So far, I have reconstructed the central arguments of the ‘sustainable mobility as necessity’ line of reasoning. These provide a general idea of the solutions at hand. However, several more concrete patterns and tensions also align with this line of reasoning, giving concrete solutions to transport-related problems.

Relating to the distinction between management and promotion, it is clear that the emphasis lies on managing car traffic (often through public transport measures). Thus, in general, the transport measures discussed all aim at the same thing: to generate a transition from car traffic to public transport (or sustainable modes of transport). The thematic analysis identified the quantitative norm revolving around increased public transport contained a tension between public transport growth as intrinsically good and a means to achieve mode change. Undoubtedly, the second aspect is related to this line of reasoning, and, as discussed earlier, a critical link in the overall argument is this idea of mode change. Due to modal shifts being considered essential, car drivers are the central subject in this line of reasoning. If the solution to transport-related problems is to convince car drivers to go by public transport, it follows that concrete transport measures have to maximise this transition. Consequently, if car drivers constitute both the problem and solution, their perceived interests become the benchmark for the changes in the transport system.

One of the central aspects connected to the ideas about achieving mode change is prioritising public transport. As seen, prioritisation can take two distinct forms: promoting public transport or restricting car traffic. Again, the second alternative connects to this line of reasoning, including concrete transport measures such as reducing road space for cars, lowering speed limits, and removing parking spaces. These measures often lead to indirect benefits to public transport (by allocating space) and entail *relative* improvements as the favourable conditions for car traffic are reduced. Additionally, and pertaining to the distinction between absolute and relative improvements, one of the most important transport measures is improving the travel time ratio (or increasing the relative speed). Ambitions to improve the travel time ratio of public transport provide a good illustration of the ideas on prioritisation. The discourse shows a difference in how travel time and travel time ratio are viewed (see Sections 6.2.3. and 6.4.1.). Whereas the former only concerns the speed of the particular transport mode (i.e., public transport), the latter includes a comparison between different modes (i.e., public transport and cars). Thus, the travel time ratio of public transport might be improved by factors that make car travel less attractive; for

example, speed limits and reduced road space. The result is a broader view of the transport system, aligning with an ambition to reduce car traffic found in the line of reasoning. Although improved travel time ratio is sometimes explicitly an explanation for modal shift, the assumption that improved public transport will reduce car traffic is generally undeveloped. Yet this assumption, at the core of the line of reasoning, provides the critical link between measures to improve public transport, reduce car traffic, reduce emissions, and consequently, foster greater sustainability.

### Sustainable Mobility as a Solution to the Housing Shortage

The growing city produces not only traffic-related problems but also results in an increasing demand for housing<sup>159</sup>.

There are two principal ways to increase the space available for housing development, and sustainable mobility is constructed as a necessary solution for both. First, as demonstrated earlier (Section 6.1.2.), sustainable mobility, particularly public transport, is considered necessary to increase the willingness of private property developers to build on otherwise unattractive land<sup>160</sup>. This construction of public transport as a necessary tool for land development is clear in several statements by the political leadership when the UEA was launched, and I have already provided several examples (for example, Sections 5.2.1. and 6.1.2.). However, in a final example, Johansson and Kaplan (2015b) sum it up perfectly, writing that ‘well-developed public transport is a way to open up additional areas for housing construction. New housing districts can be built thanks to the land becoming more attractive’. In short, the growing number of inhabitants necessitates increasing housing, which demands property development. However, to ensure sufficient property development, the sustainable mobility network has to be expanded to increase the land value of secondary locations.

Second, sustainable mobility is portrayed as pivotal to reducing inner-city emissions and facilitating densification. Thus, to increase housing construction in central areas, polluting and space-demanding cars must be replaced by less populating and more space-efficient public transport. Once again, the reasoning is based on assumptions about continuous mobility growth and the inability (and unwillingness) to challenge it. In the thematic analysis, the two patterns of densification and electrification included

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<sup>159</sup> It also leads to a growing need for public services, such as schools, health centres, libraries, sports facilities, etc. Increasing these services creates similar pressure on land use, but as the UEA policy does not, to any significant degree, include them, I use housing to illustrate my points in this chapter.

<sup>160</sup> It is important to note that a fundamental assumption behind this reasoning is a division of labour between the public and the private, where the former provides preconditions while the latter is left to do the actual development. This assumption aligns with the current ideas on public-private partnership and neoliberal planning (Baeten, 2018).

this idea (Sections 6.1.2. and 6.4.1.). To reiterate, Karlstad (2015), for example, states that:

More effective flows of electricity-driven public transport remove emissions and noise from the inner city, creating increased opportunities for environmental-friendly development and densification of housing, workplaces, and services. (p. 4)

Bearing in mind the ‘problem representation’ of a housing shortage underlying the reasoning, sustainable mobility’s capacity to enable densification becomes a necessary solution.

### Concluding Remarks

In sum, sustainable mobility is constructed as a necessary solution to the demands of the growing city. Various forms of growth are portrayed as natural developments in cities whilst, at the same time, bringing several adverse consequences such as emissions, congestion, and poor air quality. To combat these effects, sustainable mobility, in the form of public transport, is constructed as a necessity. Within the line of reasoning, sustainable mobility is the answer to the twin challenges of facilitating and managing forms of growth and their adverse consequences. In concrete terms, the solutions provided by this line of reasoning relate to car traffic and the possibility of achieving a modal shift to primarily public transport. Central to achieving this shift are relative improvements in sustainable mobility, such as improved travel time ratio and its priority relative to that of cars.

## Sustainable Mobility as Progress and the Promotion of Growth

There is a significant effort in the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy to portray sustainable mobility as attractive and progressive, and to replace the car as a sign of a modern lifestyle. An attractive and progressive city is a city that grows, and in the constitutive line of reasoning ‘sustainable mobility as progress’, sustainable mobility is one of the most important means to promote the growing city. Compared to the previous line of reasoning, this second one aligns a different set of reasons, norms, subjects, and assumptions in a problem-solution configuration akin to ideas of promoting growth.



Although ‘sustainable mobility as progress’ strongly connects to various growth forms, it also includes a broader view of progress. In this more general view, several social goals are seen to be advanced through sustainable mobility. Most notably, gender equality is constructed as an outcome of increased sustainable mobility. I have called the line of reasoning ‘sustainable mobility as progress’ instead of alternative terms alluding to its growth-centred approach. I have done it for two reasons. First, growth is considered progress, and progress is often described in terms of growth (i.e., increasing population, growing economy, increasing property development, growing public transport patronage). Second, in comparison to sustainable mobility as necessity, the line of reasoning emphasises progressive outcomes of increased sustainable mobility rather than the necessity of sustainable mobility to combat problems. These outcomes are the growth processes discussed, but they are also the perception of modernity, urbanity, and equality. As I discussed in the thematic analysis (Sections 6.1.5. and 6.3.2.), gender equality is mainly constructed as a beneficial outcome, aligning with the growth-centred understanding of progress that fails to problematise inequality. Thus, measures directed toward social concerns are framed as progressive ways to achieve an attractive city. This attractive city is synonymous with the growing city. In simplified form, the ideas can be illustrated as an argument:

**Table 7.5. The relationships between growth, progress and sustainable mobility.** The presumed relationships between growth, progress and sustainable mobility in the line of reasoning when reconstructed as an argument with premises (P) and conclusions (C).

<b>P1</b>	Growth = progress
<b>P2</b>	Sustainable mobility → Growth
<b>C</b>	Sustainable mobility = Progress

### The Promotion of the Growing City and the Threat of Declining Growth Rates

Growth is a central notion in Swedish politics and is generally equated with progress<sup>161</sup>. At the municipal level, this has several manifestations, but it most clearly concerns the ambition to achieve attractive cities with growing populations and activities. However, the rationality behind growth promotion is not always explicit but often appears as self-evidently desirable.

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<sup>161</sup> A connection well exemplified by the directives to (never mind the existence of) the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (SFS 2009:145) and the Swedish Agency for Growth Policy Analysis (SFS 2016:1048). Furthermore, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions sums it up: ‘A positive population trend is, perhaps, the primary sign of success for a municipality’ (SKL [SKR], 2014). See also Fridman (2002, p. 218f).

Considering how growth is represented in the discourse, it is pivotal to acknowledge the landscape in which Swedish municipalities exist. Populations and business establishments are generally considered a zero-sum game where municipalities face national and global competition with other cities and regions (Niskanen et al., 2023)<sup>162</sup>. Therefore, the failure to grow risks creating a downward spiral as competitors strengthen their position. Thus, the threat of declining growth rates looms in the background. However, due to the agreements aimed to convince of the need for infrastructure investments, problematisations of growth and descriptions of potentially failing growth rates are omitted in the material<sup>163</sup>. Still, traces exist, and the notion of being a *growth engine* (e.g., Lund, 2015, p. 2) is one such example. The concept alludes to urban areas pulling weaker parts of a region along, thus motivating cities with strong growth to pursue even higher numbers. For example, a civil servant from Umeå claimed that the entire northern region is in danger if Umeå cannot shoulder the responsibility as a growth engine (Field notes, 2019b). Consequently, despite the municipality experiencing rapid growth, its role in the regional context incentivises it to continue promoting growth. Several similar ideas can be found in the policy material, for example, in a statement by a civil servant in a medium-sized Swedish city:

The municipality is thought of as a growth engine for [the county] [...] growth is one of the big challenges in a sparsely populated region. Thus, it is highly prioritised within municipal politics to place growth high on the agenda because there is a strive to be relevant.<sup>164</sup> (Interview 2021-12-07)

The competitive dimension comes through in this quote, where the 'strive to be relevant' explicitly points to the competitive landscape between municipalities; as Feiock (1994) argues, 'local governments compete to improve their position in systems of stratification' (p. 209). In sum, the context of local and global competition between cities and regions needs to be considered when analysing 'sustainable mobility as progress'. Through such a perspective, the explicit promotion of growth can be contrasted with the implicit problem of declining growth rates.

Additionally, contextual aspects of the Swedish political-administrative system have to be considered. On the one hand, Sweden has strong municipalities with substantial autonomy, so-called local self-government (SKR, 2022). Thus, in principle, the success

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<sup>162</sup> The recent competition between Swedish cities over battery factories is a good example (e.g., Strandberg, 2021).

<sup>163</sup> Because if growth is declining or problematic, there is presumably no urgent reason to invest in transport infrastructure.

<sup>164</sup> The names of the region and municipality have been removed from the quote to maintain the interviewee's anonymity.

of a municipality is determined by its own actions. However, on the other hand, the local government equalisation system makes the marginal revenues of population growth uncertain (SKL [SKR], 2014), and municipalities' pursuit of growth may be affected by this (The National Audit Office, 2020). Consequently, 'psychological factors', perhaps better seen as discursive factors, may be pivotal to explaining the municipalities' rhetoric and actions.

### The Growth Triad and Mobility

The thematic analysis demonstrated that several growth forms are key reasons for investing in sustainable mobility (Section 6.1.). As with the previous line of reasoning, the connection between growth and sustainable mobility can be illustrated as an argument:

**Table 7.6. The relationship between growth and sustainable mobility.**  
The presumed relationship between growth and sustainable mobility in the line of reasoning when reconstructed as an argument with premises (P) and conclusions (C).

<b>P1</b>	Growth should be promoted
<b>P2</b>	Sustainable mobility enables growth
<b>C</b>	Sustainable mobility should be promoted

The first premise of the argument is about the desirability of growth. Thus, before delving into the relation to mobility, the three other forms of growth identified in earlier chapters should be discussed separately.

A central representation in the line of reasoning is the *attractive city*. With similar terms, such as *modern*, *integrated*, *bustling* (or *vivid*), the attractive city is a goal consistent with ideas of urbanity and modernity. The attractive city and its related concepts reoccur throughout the discourse. 'To be attractive' implies being attractive to someone else. Compared to the construction of attractiveness as sustainability (see Section 6.1.5.), this line of reasoning constructs the attractive city as one that attracts people and businesses. Thus, in short, the attractive city is a growing city.

As argued in the previous chapter, population growth is fundamental to the sustainable mobility discourse. But, in contrast to the previous line of reasoning, 'sustainable mobility as progress' relates to the goals of increasing the number of inhabitants. A growing population is equated with success and progress, and it is often a highly prioritised goal. Thus, in this line of reasoning, the desirability of an increasing population is naturalised, and population growth goals are treated as a given. For example, when asked why the municipality has a population growth ambition, a civil servant answered:

I don't really know; it's a political ambition. I think it, as with businesses, has to do with reaching another step and that 100,000 inhabitants represent such a step where the public services [administration] become more of a self-playing piano. (Civil servant, Fieldnotes 2016-10-12)

The self-playing piano metaphor is intriguing. It suggests a level of population optimal for public services<sup>165</sup>. Additionally, the role of the politicians seems to be to create a self-playing piano rather than playing the piano itself. But, more importantly, the unpreparedness for the question indicates the assumed and unquestioned nature of population growth goals in municipalities.

The thematic analysis demonstrated that property and economic growth are essential representations in the discourse (Sections 6.1.1. and 6.1.2.). While economic growth is a naturalised but peripheral representation, property growth is central yet involves a tension.

Although not always explicit, the connection between population and property growth is relatively straightforward. For example, housing construction is seen as a consequence of population growth and a facilitator of the same (e.g., Johansson & Kaplan, 2015b; Parliamentary Record, 2014/15:57, p. 27). Conversely, property growth is also connected to population growth insofar as constructing housing is a precondition for an increasing population, thus indirectly increasing mobility demand. Admittedly, this relationship is not well-developed in all parts of the discourse. Nevertheless, in the parliamentary records, Mehmet Kaplan develops the idea:

The housing shortage is a major societal problem that affects all of us. The housing shortage creates problems in the labour market when businesses cannot recruit, and people cannot move to where the jobs are. (Parliamentary Record, 2014/15:57, p. 27)

This connection between population and property growth is often an underlying assumption in these contexts. Similarly, connections are made between population growth and economic growth, made clear in an interview with two local civil servants: 'It's connected. To a large extent, the employment rates are driving population growth, so the business sector is something that we, obviously, work a lot with' (Interview 2018-12-11). Hence, there is a widely held view that the different growth forms are connected and desirable (i.e., normatively naturalised). Although the growth forms vary in centrality, a common denominator is that they are generally discussed in favourable terms.

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<sup>165</sup> However, as Molotch (1976) notes, "optimal" size is obviously determined by the sorts of values which are to be maximized' (p. 319).

The second part of the argument concerns the relation to sustainable mobility. Sustainable mobility holds a central position within the ideas of the progressive city. It is constructed as a key tool in pursuing different forms of growth. I partly demonstrated the relationships between growth and mobility in the thematic analysis, but its general features are worth reiterating. In ‘sustainable mobility as progress’, the construction of attractiveness, and its relationship to public transport, is fundamental. For example, Karlstad (2015) formulates it as ‘an attractive public transport is part of an attractive city’ (p. 14), and, further emphasising the active role of sustainable mobility, Malmö (2016) states that ‘in the development of Malmö as an attractive and sustainable city, public transport plays a crucial role’ (p. 4). As mentioned above, attractiveness is regularly connected to similar concepts such as ‘a bustling city’<sup>166</sup> as in Landskrona’s agreement (2016): ‘Developed public transport is one of the enabling factors to make the whole municipality more attractive and bustling’ (p. 1). The attractive city connects to the several growth forms discussed above, all of which are seen to be promoted by increased sustainable mobility. Population growth is central, and sustainable mobility is constructed as a tool to achieve population goals. Partly, this connects to the former line of reasoning as the increased transport work expected from a growing population is thought to be alleviated by sustainable mobility. Still, sustainable mobility is also constructed as an instrument for achieving the population growth goals in the first place (see Section 6.1.3.).

Earlier, I have extensively demonstrated the connections between mobility and property growth (i.e., housing construction) made in the discourse (Section 6.1.2.). In the former line of reasoning, I contextualised the pattern of property development and argued that it might be interpreted in terms of the housing shortage. However, although that interpretation is valid, contrastingly, property development is also described as a more general growth process. In the previous chapter, many examples clearly emphasised a growing property market as a reason for sustainable mobility rather than resolving the housing shortage. Therefore, sustainable mobility is constructed as critical to expanding this market and increasing property growth for urban areas (through densification) and sub-urban locations (through expanding the transit network).

Finally, as with property development, enhanced transport infrastructure is sometimes assumed to increase economic growth, and several mechanisms are connected to the presumption. For example, strong public transport corridors (preferably by tramway or BRT) are motivated by the assumed growth of property and businesses along the lines. Additionally, an improved public transport network is seen to yield increasing work opportunities regionally, connecting to common ideas about how shorter travel times translate to economic benefits. Thus, sustainable mobility is

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<sup>166</sup> *Levande* in Swedish.

described as a vital tool for achieving economic growth by increasing mobility and improving the attractiveness of places in its proximity.

The four forms of growth discussed are discursively interlinked and strengthen the normative naturalisation of each other. Consequently, a significant rationale behind sustainable mobility is its potential to generate economic, population, and property growth. In essence, this is what 'sustainable mobility as progress' means.

### The Absolute Increase in Public Transport

Sustainable mobility plays a crucial role in achieving a growing city and avoiding the perceived threat of declining growth rates. Several measures and priorities are connected to this purpose.

First of all, the overarching argument I pursue in this part is that the most distinctive feature of 'sustainable mobility as progress' is the promotion rather than the management of growth. This feature is most evident concerning car traffic, which is left out of the line of reasoning. The difference to the previous line of reasoning is striking, as the former focuses on the connection between increased sustainable mobility and decreased car traffic. Conversely, 'sustainable mobility as progress' does not explicitly engage with the issue of car traffic but aims to expand and improve public transport. Most notably, the tension found in the pattern about prioritising sustainable mobility is critical here. Interpreting prioritisation as weight put on public transport relative to cars might lead to a fundamentally different approach than if prioritisation only means improving public transport. For example, as I showed earlier, adding a bus lane will improve public transport but simultaneously benefit the flow of cars (Section 6.2.3.). Improvements in sustainable mobility that are pursued independently of the effects on car traffic are characteristic of the line of reasoning. Paradoxically, the specific transport measures often respond to a negative view of public transport, where the measures aim to remediate the deficits of public transport to increase its attractiveness and, consequently, travel.

One of the most apparent differences regarding solutions is the distinction mentioned above between travel time and travel time ratio. In 'sustainable mobility as progress', the emphasis is on reducing the travel time of public transport (i.e., increasing its speed). This travel time minimisation is mainly pursued regardless of the relationship to cars. Thus, the focus is not on enabling a modal shift but on promoting sustainable mobility growth relating to the subjects recognised. For example, the previous line of reasoning focused heavily on achieving a mode shift, taking measures to convince car

drivers to take the bus<sup>167</sup>. In contrast, prioritising disadvantaged groups (current public transport users) does not involve reducing mobility. Its benefits for disadvantaged social groups legitimise the approach, and the particular measures are geared towards increased public transport, assumed to be beneficial for these groups.

As I have argued, several beneficial outcomes (primarily growth-oriented) are assumed to follow from increased public transport<sup>168</sup>. However, the previous chapter concluded that many statements pointed to sustainable mobility's intrinsic value, a pattern that can be developed now. Although the assumption of transport as a derived demand has been criticised in research (e.g., Banister, 2008; Root, 2003b), there might be underlying motifs for the seemingly independent promotion of mobility growth. Although environmental reasons are often found in the argumentation of promoting sustainable mobility growth, like many other growth goals (e.g., population growth goals), it appears to have evolved into a goal in itself. A good example is the doubling goal of public transport, mentioned several times already, which historically has been justified on environmental grounds (The Swedish Public Transport Association, 2021) but is constructed as an end goal within the material.

Two contextual aspects need to be considered to understand this confusing tendency. First, it is important to remember that transport is a sector with many market actors motivated by the increased revenues created by mobility growth. As a leading civil servant expressed it:

Naturally, it is always more fun to grow, and the companies providing public transport services are, of course, interested in achieving an increase [in the share of travelling made by public transport]. This increased share is often discussed, but there is little discussion about reduced car traffic. (Interview 2019-01-09)

Thus, there are vested market interests in sustainable mobility<sup>169</sup>. High levels of mobility become essential for transport businesses and actors depending on the mobility provided, such as cities wanting to attract people and investments. More

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<sup>167</sup> Although this could be interpreted as a promotion of growth, it is more accurately described as the management of growth because it aims to increase something (sustainable mobility) at the expense of something else (car traffic).

<sup>168</sup> The reasons for sustainable mobility, such as growth and attractiveness, are generally assumed to be improved by increasing public transport. Additionally, I identified several more concrete beneficial outcomes in the thematic analysis; for example, increased employment, economic growth, gender equality, social integration, and improved health (Section 6.4.2.).

<sup>169</sup> Over 150 years ago, Marx (1956 [1885]) noted that 'The transport industry forms on the one hand an independent branch of production and thus a separate sphere of investment of productive capital. On the other hand its distinguishing feature is that it appears as a continuation of a process of production *within* the process of circulation and *for* the process of circulation' (p. 88).

importantly, these two rationalities are sometimes intertwined, making it unclear which one is pursued<sup>170</sup>.

The second contextual aspect relates to the dynamics of public relations and communication. For example, when asked about the motives behind the doubling goal of public transport, a civil servant in a municipality explained:

It was more like a visionary goal, I think. It is easy to express; easy to remember. And visionary goals should be formulated, so they are remembered. Nobody remembers 33 or 64 per cent. It is not punchy. *Doubling* is, in some ways, it reaches the heart, and even if it is not fully achieved, it has a very clear direction.

Continuing, the population goal of the municipality surfaced in our discussion:

It is a vision the municipality has. It wants to be a 100,000 inhabitants municipality. To some degree, it resembles the doubling goal in its simplicity. It is easy to communicate; easy to attach things to. You are able to say 'the municipality of 100,000' and things like that. Part of it is that it should be punchy, and everyone should remember it.<sup>171</sup>

In the municipality discussed in the quote, the growth goals appear to be partly based on strategic and communicative considerations. Of course, the goals originate from a political process, but their communicative element might detach them from their initial motivation, making them into advertising headlines or political mantras. Thus, growth becomes an intrinsic goal, which sustainable mobility as progress partly exhibits.

### Concluding Remarks

In sum, 'sustainable mobility as progress' is a constitutive line of reasoning in which particular modes of transport (primarily public transport) are constructed as tools for promoting growth. It is based on the implicit threat of declining growth rates, and multiple growth processes, such as population, property, and economic growth, are linked to sustainable mobility. Moreover, the line of reasoning contains several related concepts, supposedly advanced by promoting, primarily, public transport. For example, the representation of the attractive city frequently appears as an explicit goal; likewise, representations such as modernity and bustling city connect to sustainability as progress. Finally, the line of reasoning also demonstrates a broader take on progress

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<sup>170</sup> A similar argument can be made for population growth goals, where many actors (most notably property capital) benefit from increasing populations (Cox, 2017; Molotch, 1976).

<sup>171</sup> In this quote, I have replaced the name of the municipality with 'the municipality' to preserve the interviewee's anonymity.



beyond the purely growth-centred one, including gender equality and similar social issues, argued to be promoted by developed public transport.

In times of rising environmental concerns, the fossil-fuel car has played its role as the pivotal symbol of progress. Sustainable mobility (variously defined) is constructed as the replacement of cars, and as progress equals growth, sustainable mobility is seen as the principal tool for promoting the growing city.

## Sustainable Mobility as Restriction and the Limits to Growth

In this third constitutive line of reasoning, 'sustainable mobility as restriction', I return to the silences identified but not fully explored in the previous analytical chapter. Whereas the two dominant lines of reasoning reconstructed above primarily build on the tensions in the discourse, this silenced line of reasoning revolves around what is omitted.

Apart from developing a line of reasoning similar to the first two, this part also serves as justification for the interpretation of the silences made in Chapter 6. Recognising when something is silenced is based on knowledge about alternative ways to understand the issue. Hence, the critical research referenced below has enabled me to look beyond manifest representations of the discourse. These studies also represent part of the normative standpoint of this thesis that I presented in the analytical framework (Section 3.2.1.).

As Chapter 6 and Parts 7.2 and 7.3 in this chapter demonstrated, growth is central in the discourse, and most dominant representations can be understood as relating to overarching naturalisations of growth (I will further elaborate on this in the next chapter). Consequently, the identified silences are also connected to these naturalisations of growth. For that reason, I have structured this part in three sections: the silenced alternatives to growth, the silenced social consequences of growth, and the silenced environmental consequences of growth. Notably, not all growth forms analysed earlier are relevant to each section. Moreover, although they are strongly interrelated, I sometimes hold them apart for clarity; for example, in the first section where I discuss population and mobility separately.

While the presentation of this final line of reasoning differs slightly from the previous two, it is also based on the theoretical categories (reasons, norms, subject positions, and assumptions) developed in earlier chapters (see Section 3.2.2. and Part 4.1.).

## The Silenced Alternatives to Growth

As previous chapters have demonstrated, several norms and reasons for sustainable mobility permeate the discourse. In this first part, I investigate how the naturalisation of several growth forms silences alternative viewpoints. The first two sections use Umeå municipality to empirically illustrate the lack of alternatives to mobility and population growth within the local discourses. Finally, I critically investigate the representation of a low-transport society (or transport-efficient society), which is found a few times in the policy material<sup>172</sup>. While this representation is underdeveloped in the discourse, it is getting increasing attention in the policy field<sup>173</sup> and relates to central ideas about mobility growth, thus warranting critical examination. Finally, although economic growth is naturalised, I do not discuss the comprehensive literature on alternatives to this growth form because of space limitations<sup>174</sup>. Still, this growth form is highly interconnected with the others and, thus, indirectly addressed when I investigate population and mobility growth (I further develop this proposition and discuss economic growth in detail in many parts of the thesis, for example, Sections 2.2.3, 6.1.1., 7.3.2., 8.1.1. and 8.2.5.).

As the main material analysed in this thesis is the agreements of the UEA policy, it is difficult to go beyond the descriptions of discourse and study how it operates in practice. Therefore, I have included the material from Umeå to demonstrate how alternatives to growth are silenced, and the implications of this process. However, and importantly, the examples provided are mainly from the same period as the primary material (2015-2016). Moreover, one of the agreements analysed in the earlier chapters was the agreement by Umeå. Consequently, the additional material is in line with the broadening of the material argued for in Part 4.5., where the ‘context of statements’ and the ‘context of policy’ allow the analysis to incorporate new texts (for example, central municipal documents referenced in their agreements or interviews and field notes).

The first example from Umeå demonstrates two phenomena previously discussed. It shows how the promised win-win situation involves conflict between opposite planning goals rather than being friction-free, much in line with Campbell’s theories (Campbell, 1996, 2016). The motorway expansion, leading to higher GHG emissions, is

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<sup>172</sup> Albeit not frequently enough to be counted as a pattern, see Part 4.1., for a discussion on patterns and frequency.

<sup>173</sup> For example, the six-year research programme on a ‘transport-efficient society’ by the Swedish Energy Agency (2020).

<sup>174</sup> Undoubtedly, economic growth is a phenomenon that has received a lot of critical attention in the social scientific literature (Anderson & Bows, 2011; Daly, 1990; Fridman, 2002; Goulden et al., 2014; Hickel, 2019; Hickel & Kallis, 2019; Jackson, 2017; Latouche, 2009; Meadows et al., 2004; Næss, 2016a; Schneider et al., 2010; Spangenberg, 2010; Xue, 2016). Some of the most noteworthy alternatives to a society based on economic growth proposed are *degrowth* (Latouche, 2009), *steady-state* (Daly, 1991), and *eco-socialism* (Löwy, 2018).

legitimised by claims at improving the local environment. Moreover, the example demonstrates how prognoses of future growth (i.e., naturalisation) restrict the course of actions available, silencing alternatives that reduce overall mobility. The second example from Umeå concerns promoted growth and how the population goal of Umeå governs the willingness to pursue alternative directions that might hamper this growth, although they might be preferable from a social and environmental perspective.

The two examples illustrate that empirically and normatively naturalised growth is foundational in connection to local transport politics and how they are alluded to as justifications for measures leading to adverse environmental consequences, simultaneously silencing alternatives.

### *No Alternative: Motorway Expansion as Sustainable Mobility*

Umeå is a metropolitan city in northern Sweden/Sápmi with approximately 130,000 inhabitants (Statistics Sweden, 2023). The city has clear growth ambitions and has set a population growth goal of 200,000 inhabitants by 2050 (Umeå, 2018, p. 13), which equals a growth of around 54 per cent. At the same time, the ambition is that the central city should be climate neutral by the year 2030 and the whole municipality by the year 2040<sup>175</sup> (Umeå, 2020, p. 3), and it has five approved applications within the UEA (The Swedish Transport Administration, 2022)<sup>176</sup>.

Currently, a major road connecting two motorways runs through Umeå. The road is troubled with congestion, and the amount of traffic (together with the city's geographic position and topography) is causing poor air quality with high levels of nitrogen dioxide. At first glance, it appears to be a problem with a straightforward solution: the road needs to be moved, which also is how the municipality has argued:

Umeå municipality is planning for sustainable growth to improve air quality. Within the scope of the planning process, a strategic work that aims to reduce car travel in favour of more sustainable modes such as walking, cycling and public transport is included. An essential part of the strategy is to plan for a dense 'mixed-city' with short distances. Furthermore, to allow for reduced traffic in the areas with the most significant air quality problems, it is critical to have alternative roads that can unburden the road network in central Umeå. For that reason, completing Umeå's new ring road is crucial to achieving the air quality norms. The east and north links are now in their places, but the last, and for air quality purposes, the most important piece of the puzzle, the west link, is still missing. (Umeå, 2015, p. 7)

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<sup>175</sup> This is 15 and five years earlier than the national climate neutrality goal (SEPA, 2021b).

<sup>176</sup> Only one of these agreements (Umeå, 2016) was approved during the period analysed in this thesis (2015-2016).

In the quote, several different representations form a seemingly convincing argument. The municipality wants to reduce car use, favouring walking, cycling and public transport; poor air quality has to be addressed; the city is promoting sustainable growth with densification. In the environmental impact assessment for this new ring road, the Swedish Transport Administration (2015b) writes concerning the so-called 'zero alternative' (i.e., not to build the road):

The traffic on the existing road network is expected to increase due to the city's growth. If there is no extension of the transport system, the transport work and the level of service in the central city will worsen. Both these factors contribute to increasing emissions. The zero alternative entails adverse consequences for air quality in central Umeå and unaffected air quality in the areas alongside the west link. (p. 46)

In this quote, the norms and assumptions about population growth and how it translates to increased travel (also by car, it might be added) illustrate how they function as underlying premises for the road construction argument. Still, the tendency for road constructions to result in increased car travel, so-called induced travel (Goodwin, 1997; Goodwin & Noland, 2003; Litman, 2001), is known by the Transport Administration, which is evident in the discussion of whether the construction fulfils the target of reduced effect on the climate:

The goal is affected in many ways. New and better roads commonly lead to increased transport work because it becomes easier to travel by car, which counteracts the goal. (The Swedish Transport Administration, 2015b, p. 61)

However, in the following sentences, they attempt to justify the new motorway on environmental grounds:

Conversely, the west link enables a transition to more travel with public transport and bicycle within Umeå, which support the goal. The E12 will be shorter with the west link for travellers going in the east-west direction. This also supports the goal. (p. 61)

The rhetoric strategy is to emphasise the city centre, where cars are expected to become fewer, redirecting the focus from total traffic volumes and emissions<sup>177</sup>.

Interestingly, the cost-benefit analysis made for the project is clear about the adverse effects on the climate that come from the estimated yearly growth of motorised traffic by 0.66 per cent until 2030 and 0.58 per cent after 2030, an additional 1,311 kilotons each year (The Swedish Transport Administration, 2015g).

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<sup>177</sup> This tendency is also found in one of the interviews (Interview 2018-12-11).

In sum, the argumentation proposes that expanding motorways constitutes a sustainable mobility investment or, at the very least, that the motorways are a precondition for the realisation of a transition to sustainable mobility. In that sense, it shows how naturalised constructions of growth govern the options available. Consequently, alternatives, such as measures to reduce travel in line with the global goals of cutting emissions, are silenced. Simultaneously, if traffic growth is accepted as an assumption, it demonstrates the fragility of the promised win-win situation. In this case, the local city environment conflicts with the transboundary emission reduction targets. In addition, there are conflicts between, on one hand, city expansion and the preservation of natural environments and, on the other hand, between the centre and periphery (as traffic costs are relocated).

### *No Alternative: Population Growth on Top of the Value Hierarchy*

The second example from Umeå is about the city's population growth goal. Although population growth is only part of the sustainable mobility discourse insofar as it is connected to sustainable mobility, its regulative effects can be illustrated regardless. Thus, similar to the motorway expansion discussed above, the example demonstrates the conflicts between naturalised growth and other planning concerns, silencing the latter.

My argument is that the dominant position of growth limits and constrains which alternatives are considered viable. When set as a goal, growth tends to strongly restrict the political space and limit the possibility of going against the goal. In a sense, growth goals function like a fundamental law that always trumps regular law. In other words, the growth goal is positioned on top of the political value hierarchy, above competing concerns such as environmental and social.

As mentioned, Umeå has adopted a goal of 200,000 inhabitants by 2050 (Umeå, 2018, p. 13). This goal heavily affects the kind of city development constructed as possible. For example, when the Swedish Transport Administration suggested speed adjustments on dangerous roads around Umeå, many of the leading politicians in the city and region strongly opposed it (Forsgren, 2019; Lindberg, 2019). The reasons for this fierce opposition to minor speed adjustments to reduce traffic casualties can be found in the municipality's statement made in the consultative procedure:

Umeå municipality has adopted a goal of 200,000 inhabitants by the year 2050. The most significant population increase is planned within central Umeå, but an important part of the growth is also planned in other population centres within the municipality and along public transport corridors (of which several are affected by lowered speeds). This [reduced speed] hampers the possibilities for development in accordance with the general plan's ambition. Thus, the Transport Administration

must acknowledge and investigate its effects before implementing speed adjustments. (Umeå, 2019, p. 3)

Consequently, the municipality argues that speed limitations on primarily cars are threatening its population growth goal. However, when a civil servant reflects on these things, it becomes clear that both planners and politicians are aware of the conflicts that follow from the growth goals:

The politicians have been quite clear in their decision to face these conflicts of interest that come with the growth since it is the only way, in the long term, to fulfil the vision [of the population growth] that has been adopted. (Interview 2018-12-11)

Thus, the conflicts between growth and other concerns are recognised by some actors, but it is not a realisation reflected in the overall discourse and, importantly, not acted upon.

Although transport is a particularly good example of these effects, they can also be found in other policy fields. For example, when taken to court for planning to build on protected river banks, Umeå municipality again brought up the population goals as an argument in their favour (Svea Court of Appeal, 2020).

These examples illustrate how population growth is normatively naturalised, acting as a self-evident goal for the municipality and motivating strong opposition if challenged by external actors. Moreover, this naturalisation silences alternative ways to envision the city, with implications on which policies and plans are recognised as desirable.

### *The Transport-Efficient Society as a Way Forward?*

In this final part on silenced alternatives to growth, I discuss a representation potentially constituting an alternative to the high-mobile society based on continuous mobility growth. Although alternatives to a high-mobile society is an underdeveloped area of research, several contributions have discussed it or closely related issues (Adams, 1981; Bertolini, 2020; Essebo & Baeten, 2012; Ferreira et al., 2017; Goulden et al., 2014; Moriarty & Honnery, 2008, 2013a). While these alternatives are silenced in the UEA policy, traces of representations pointing in other directions are present. The most important is the notion of a transport-efficient or low-transport society<sup>178</sup>.

The origin can be traced to the report on a vehicle fleet free from fossil fuels (SOU, 2013:84). This report distinguished between *transport efficiency* and a *low-transport*

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<sup>178</sup> In the method chapter (Part 4.2.), I argue that silences can be identified through so-called ‘detached statements’. A ‘low-transport society’ can be interpreted as such a ‘detached statement’.

*society*<sup>179</sup>. The former term was used to point to the efficiency difference between transport modes, while the latter was saved for the larger societal perspective. Thus, the *low-transport society* was frequently used as a label for a proposed change in the direction of Swedish transport planning. The report states that:

The development of traffic in the prognosis is inconsistent with the climate objectives. To reach the climate objectives, a move towards a more low-transport society is necessary. According to the Transport Administration's interpretation, the low-transport society entails reduced car traffic whilst public transport and travel by foot or bicycle will double by 2030. (ibid., p. 371)

The quote points to the need for societal trends to involve less car traffic to reach climate objectives. Yet, paradoxically, the low-transport society is defined as doubling the amount of travel by public transport, bicycle, and foot (ibid., p. 371). Thus, it appears that general mobility levels ought to remain constant or even higher in the low-transport society.

In subsequent reports and documents, *a transport-efficient society* has become the preferred term. Responding to a question about this conceptual shift, a civil servant answered:

A dear child has many names [Swedish proverb]. We used to speak about a low-transport society, I think. The Transport Administration used that concept earlier, and it sounds a bit negative. Something that is low [sparse] doesn't sound so positive. (Interview 2020-05-11)

As the negative implications have led actors to adopt a concept that emphasises 'efficient' rather than 'low' or 'sparse', the question is if the change of concepts represents a discursive shift. A transport-efficient society is defined as 'a society with high levels of accessibility but with a relatively low degree of road transport work' (The Swedish Transport Administration, 2020, p. 18). Still, during a presentation of this thesis' preliminary results, a civil servant also concluded that the ideas about a transport-efficient society, as well as the Transport Administration's climate-scenario, are built upon continuous growth and that it would have been easier to achieve the necessary transition if they had not been so governed by growth (Field notes, 2021).

Undoubtedly, there are discursive uncertainties about the terms 'transport-efficient' and 'low-transport' society, which may indicate a political struggle over how to define them. However, and more importantly, the definitions provided in the related material

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<sup>179</sup> The Swedish term *transportsnålt samhälle* literally translates to 'a transport-sparse society'. However, 'low-transport society' or 'low-mobility society' is more commonly used in the academic literature (e.g., Moriarty & Honnery, 2008).

mostly align with the dominant view on sustainable mobility constructed in the UEA policy. That is, there is no real alternative to high levels of mobility and continuous mobility growth. Therefore, the best alternative to the present unsustainable transport system is one which shifts the emphasis from cars to ‘sustainable modes of transport’, presumably those with high capacities such as busses, trams, and trains. In summary, the ‘detached statement’ of ‘a low transport society’ in the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy and the continuous emphasis on high levels of mobility found in the broader material demonstrate the lack of alternatives to mobility growth and silencing of the ‘sustainable mobility as restriction’ line of reasoning.

### The Silenced Social Consequences of Growth

In this section, I identify three additional silences in the discourse against the background of assumptions made in my theoretical framework. First, based on the silenced social consequences of mobility growth, the concept of hypermobility describes the idea that there can be such a thing as too much mobility and that this has adverse (social) consequences. Second, the silenced conflicts between so-called sustainable modes of transport are investigated. This silence reoccurs later in the chapter when the silenced environmental consequences of growth are discussed. Third, the final silence involves omitted subject positions and, more specifically, how social class and ethnicity are silenced subject positions in the discourse.

#### *Hypermobility*

Although the environmental impact of car traffic is recognised in the discourse, mobility growth in general, and public transport growth in particular, are naturalised. Consequently, their adverse effects are silenced. However, my theoretical framework provides leverage to question the *hypermobility* of present societies. The term was coined to capture that in the case of mobility, ‘it is possible to have too much of a good thing’ (Adams, 2001, p. 2) and is otherwise used in medicine to describe unusual joint mobility. Hypermobility in the human body causes stress on joints and muscles and risks creating long-term damage. A hypermobile society equally experiences adverse consequences and risks contracting permanent damage to its environment.

Travel has increased exponentially in recent decades, but the social consequences are seldom recognised. These effects, referred to as the ‘darker side’ of hypermobility (Cohen & Gössling, 2015), is silenced when mobility growth is naturalised. Cohen and Gössling (2015) describe several physiological and psychological adverse consequences for hypermobile individuals. Most of these impacts on individuals are related to long-distance travelling. Since sustainable mobility, generally, tends to be more local, it



presumably leads to fewer of these adverse effects. However, there are increasing efforts to replace traditional long-distance travel with (what is argued to be) sustainable alternatives. If high-speed rail and electrical aeroplanes replace the conventional modes, but the mobility patterns remain, the same physiological and psychological consequences caused by hypermobility can be expected to persist.

On a more aggregated level, other impacts of high levels of mobility are apparent; for example, the associated health risks (Moriarty & Honnery, 2008). More traffic leads to more accidents, all else being equal. Although a shift from cars to public transport tends to increase the overall traffic safety of the system, paradoxically, it decreases the safety of these new transit users (Holmberg, 2013, p. 27). A shift to public transport, in connection to overall increasing mobility, will have distributional effects regarding traffic accidents that must be considered.

On a global level, geopolitical conflicts arise from the traffic sector's increasing demand for natural resources (Moriarty & Honnery, 2008). Several reports indicate that the global and local conflicts will change in character rather than disappear with the shift to biofuels and electricity as sources of vehicle propulsion (Dauvergne & Neville, 2010; Koh & Ghazoul, 2008; Müller, 2019). The increasing need for rare minerals in the batteries of electric vehicles, such as cobalt and lithium, is leading to new mines with environmental degradation and land conflicts that follow (Lebre et al., 2020). In the Nordic context, the indigenous population has been particularly vulnerable when the exploitation of natural and cultural environments increases (Nacher et al., 2022).

Finally, the high levels of mobility in the present transport system increase its vulnerability to disruptive events (Ferreira et al., 2017). Still, the transport system's problems are often solved by increasing complexity, thus reducing its resilience. Consequently, the likelihood of crisis is amplified in a system founded on mobility growth, with the socially adverse effects this brings.

### *The Conflicting Modes of Sustainable Mobility*

The second silence within this section concerns the conflicts between 'sustainable modes of transport'. While I analyse the assumption of public transport improvements leading to a modal shift from walking and cycling to public transport in the section on silenced environmental consequences, this section is about the silenced social consequences relating to conflicting modes of transport.

Chapter 2 describes how conflicts between planning goals have been thoroughly discussed in the critical planning literature (Campbell, 1996; Campbell, 2016; Foglesong, 2016 [1986]). Furthermore, specifically regarding transport, several related aspects have been investigated, such as spatial distribution among transport modes (Gössling, Schröder, et al., 2016), conflicts between bicycles and cars (Gössling &

Choi, 2015) and how high mobility of specific individuals and groups limits the mobility of others (Cresswell, 2010; Whitzman, 2013). However, the potential conflict between the transport modes is silenced in the UEA policy in the eagerness to promote sustainable mobility. By collectively treating public transport, cycling, and walking, sustainable modes of transport are constructed as a concept without internal contradictions and conflicts. On a rare occasion, a civil servant reflected upon the conflict between the modes:

We won't be able to have a high level of service everywhere. We have to choose where to have a high level of service for buses. There is a conflict associated with a high level of service for the bus because we want a high level of service for the bicycle and high traffic safety. If we are to have traffic safety, we need to secure low speeds. They go against each other. (2018-12-11)

Thus, regarding traffic safety, there are intrinsic conflicts between public transport and bicycles, according to this public servant<sup>180</sup>. Additionally, public transport requires a road network adapted for large, heavy, and fast vehicles. These demands are amplified by the increasing popularity of BRT (bus rapid transit) systems, which necessitates the prioritisation of buses. Therefore, the distribution of city space between the different sustainable modes of transport is not a win-win situation. The impending risks are that public transport improvements lead to worse conditions for pedestrians and cyclists.

Of course, there might be a greater awareness of these conflicts than what is officially mentioned. However, the discourse's representation remains critical as it will affect the topics raised, goal formulations, and assumptions. Questioning the friction-free relationship between sustainable modes of transport involves acknowledging that increasing public transport travel might not be a universal solution to the many problems facing urban areas.

### *Social Class and Ethnicity*

As argued in Chapter 6, generally, the discourse contains few statements on subjects. Of the subjects-positions present, women, children, and people with norm-breaking functionality (including the elderly) were the most frequent. Notably, given the extensive academic literature on transport justice and equity (Adams, 2001; Baeten, 2000; Beyazit, 2013; Cresswell, 2010; Feitelson, 2002; Gössling, 2016; Illich, 1973; Litman, 2021; Low & O'Connor, 2013; Lucas, 2012; Markovich, 2013; Martens,

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<sup>180</sup> As with the previously discussed representation of a 'low-transport society', the statement from the above-quoted civil servant can also be interpreted as a 'detached statement', which illuminates a silence within the policy.

2006; McKenzie, 2003; Melin, 2020), the discourse shows little awareness of social exclusion based on class or ethnicity.

One explanation for this silence can be found in the effort to create an attractive city. An attractive city is one that attracts businesses and people, and this construction is primarily based on the aim of increasing the municipalities' tax base. Hence, specific segments of the population are targeted before others. There is a dual process in the discourse; on one hand, investing in major infrastructure strengthens the picture of the municipality as progressive (trams, electric busses, cable railways, etc.), thus attracting taxpayers. On the other hand, there is an ambition to change the perception of public transport from an outdated and low-income mode of transport to something modern, urban and 'for everyone' (i.e. not only disadvantaged groups). In many contexts, public transport has been seen as a 'welfare option' for those without access to a car (Glover et al., 2013, p. 135). Crucially, whereas the subject positions addressed in the discourse, such as women, children, people with norm-breaking functionality, and the elderly, may belong to high-income segments of the population<sup>181</sup>, but per definition, low-income cannot<sup>182</sup>.

However, although some subject positions are missing from the material's manifest parts, an argument can be made that they are indirectly addressed by the kind of investments proposed. Therefore, by investigating if any particular group benefits from a policy or discourse, they may be treated as the implicit subjects of the discourse. For example, it might be argued that public transport investments implicitly acknowledge low-income groups, relating to the fact that this mode of transport is used to a greater extent by disadvantaged groups. Some proposed investments appear to back this up, such as the BRT line Malmö Expressen which connects several low-income neighbourhoods with the central parts of the city (cf. Melin, 2020). However, other examples point in different directions.

Of the analysed agreements, Lund received the most extensive financial support from the UEA (SEK 298 million) to construct a central tramway. The tramway goes from the central station via the hospital, a technical and medical business district, and the university, and ends at the exclusive, newly-built district of Brunnshög. The line is described as an 'artery through a very strong knowledge corridor with high density' (Jacobsson et al., 2013, p. 25) in a report commissioned by the municipality. A critical

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<sup>181</sup> Obviously, children are dependent on the income level of their caregiver(s).

<sup>182</sup> Contextually, this silence in the discourse can be linked to how low-income and social class was omitted when formalising the 'grounds of discrimination' (Government Bill, 2007/08:95). Consequently, when sustainability goals were introduced in transport politics (see Chapter 5), gender equality and 'disability' were explicitly included (Government Bill, 2001/02:20, pp. 20, 75). Yet, other than in vague formulations about social sustainability (Government Bill, 1997/98:56), social class did not become part of the goals.

economic motif for the tramway (in contrast to a bus line) was the increasing land value along the line (Kuprijanko, 2017). Consequently, low-income social groups in the south and east of Lund will likely not directly benefit from this investment. Instead, the explicit group that the tramway investment aims to reach is the commuters going to the major workplaces mentioned above (Lund, 2015, p. 2); put frankly by a local civil servant: 'It is like this, the tramway will be used by commuters to and from Lund, not by people living in Lund, they will continue to use the cycle' (Interview 2017-03-29). Thus, the targeted group, often with high incomes, is to be persuaded into changing their mode of transport by the further improvements to their mobility that the tramway entails.

In summary, the social categories of class and ethnicity are largely silenced in the discourse, presumably relating to the construction of the attractive city and the willingness to attract inhabitants and capital. In this construction, some disadvantaged segments of the population (women, children, people with norm-breaking functionality, including the elderly) are better aligned with the vision of the attractive city, whereas others (low-income and non-majority ethnicities) are left outside.

### The Silenced Environmental Consequences of Growth

This last section investigates the silenced environmental consequences of growth. It does so by analysing the silenced conflicts between, on one hand, public transport and the environment and, on the other hand, public transport and active modes of transport. These two silences are connected to central causal assumptions in the discourse that increased public transport travelling will reduce car traffic and emissions. As the *raison d'être* of the sustainable mobility discourse lies in its promise to decouple carbon emissions from transport, this issue justifies a thorough review.

To understand the assumptions fully, I will explore several related scenarios. These scenarios are developed for the purpose of illuminating the assumptions and are, importantly, not found in the discourse in this form.

Multiple factors affect the total amount of emissions from transport, such as fuel types, vehicle efficiency, traveller behaviours, etc. However, the fundamental assumption of the discourse is not about these technological improvements but concerns the presumed decrease in car traffic generated by increased public transport travelling. Therefore, it is pivotal to consider whether *increasing public transport travel reduces car traffic*.

From this point of departure, I will analyse three scenarios of increase and decrease in public transport and car traffic:

*Scenario A.* Public transport and car travel increases.

*Scenario B.* Public transport travel increases, and car travel decreases in relative terms.

*Scenario C.* Public transport travel increases, and car travel decreases in absolute terms.

If no technical improvements are made, there is no question that emissions will rise in scenario A. Thus, to provide insights into the assumptions in the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy, this first scenario is less fruitful. However, it should be noted that this represents a prevalent forecasted future in traditional transport planning (e.g. The Swedish Transport Administration, 2017).

In the following analysis of scenarios B and C, I exclude technical improvements from the discussion as they are generally not part of the assumptions and silences in the discourse<sup>183</sup>.

### *The Relative Decrease in Car Traffic*

Scenario B involves increasing public transport and a relative decrease in car traffic. The term *relative* is key, as it is the ratio between the modes of transport that it signifies. Therefore, emissions may rise if either public transport increases faster than car traffic (affecting the ratio between the transport modes but not necessarily lowering emissions) or the emissions produced by the additional public transport trips are greater than the reduction from cars.

In short, if car usage increases, the emissions from transport will also increase, no matter how much the share of travel made by public transport increases, but it is important to remember that public transport also causes GHG emissions, although to a lesser degree than cars. Consequently, there are good reasons to doubt that policies that only increase so-called sustainable modes of transport will solve the environmental problem alone.

As demonstrated in Chapter 5, Norway's zero car traffic growth target has been put forward as a role model. Yet, although it appears far-reaching, if car traffic (and thus emissions from car traffic) is constant, emissions will increase due to increased public transport travelling. Of course, emissions will not rise as fast as if car travelling also increased, but there would still be an increase in emissions.

When increasing public transport travelling is discussed, there is the elephant in the room: the likely scenario is that a majority of the additional trips will come from trips made by foot or bicycle or previously not made at all. This is one of the major silences

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<sup>183</sup> Even if so-called green technologies are implemented, the increase in traffic will eat up most of the benefits, thus failing to meet the environmental targets (SEPA, 2021a; Swedish Climate Policy Council, 2019, pp. 47-56). Also, it is mainly GHG emissions that are affected by these technical changes. In contrast, local environmental problems, such as emissions from wear and tear, barrier effects, accidents, etc., tend to be less affected by, for example, changing from petrol to electricity.

of the discourse, which silences the fact that this modal shift drastically reduces the environmental benefits of public transport improvements. As Bengt Holmberg (2013) notes:

All motorised travelling, including by public transport, entails increased energy consumption and emissions. If the increased travelling on public transport does not lead to reduced travelling by car, these adverse effects will increase. (pp. 23-24, my translation)

Holmberg cites several studies, suggesting that approximately 25 per cent of the increased public transport trips generally result from a transition from cars, although as much as 40 per cent has been found in some studies (ibid., pp. 23-24). However, there are significant difficulties in generalising these types of results as a variety of methods is used to promote public transport, and the results for the entire transport system are usually unclear. Still, a possible window allowing insights into the general effects of increased public transport on other modes is fare-free public transport, a measure that has been substantially studied. Thus, how travel behaviour changes when fares are removed might indicate a general relationship between the transport modes.

Empirical studies suggest that most of the additional public transport trips originate from either active modes or trips that would not otherwise have been made (Alm & Hultén, 2020; Holmberg, 2013; van Goeverden et al., 2006). Although this fact is unproblematic within the ‘sustainable mobility as progress’ line of reasoning (as described earlier in this chapter), from an environmental perspective, it is unsatisfying. Notably, a recent publication from the Swedish Transport Administration (2020) explicitly states that general improvements in public transport have a questionable impact on reduced road traffic and, thus, emissions:

However, the question is to what degree climate reasons give ground for additional measures of this type [sustainable mobility improvements], apart from what is already motivated by the measures’ direct utilities [...]. The empirical foundation is rather thin when it comes to determining how great the effects of the measures in the second group [of sustainable mobility improvements] might be. When quantitative studies exist, they indicate that the contribution to reduced road traffic is very small. (p. 18)

In summary, scenario B concerns a relative decrease in car traffic, which several patterns in the discourse rely upon. For example, the environmental benefits from public transport growth is often justified as due to the relative decrease in car traffic. However, focusing on a relative decrease in car traffic silences the potentially adverse environmental consequences of this scenario. The success of scenario B with a relative decrease in car traffic depends on whether the relative reduction is due to an increase

in public transport, how much each transport mode increases and decreases, and where the public transport trips originated.

### *The Absolute Decrease in Car Traffic*

In scenario C, car traffic decreases in absolute terms and, as was possible in the second scenario, emissions will drop as long as public transport does not increase too rapidly. Therefore, the third scenario is the most interesting as it represents the ideal situation when promoting public transport growth. If a relative decrease in car travelling is a questionable scenario, presumably an absolute reduction in car travelling is unproblematic.

Both scenarios B and C (concerning relative and absolute decreases in car traffic) can be contrasted with more general growth analyses. In his seminal work on economic growth, Tim Jackson (2017) explores relative and absolute decoupling between growth and adverse environmental consequences:

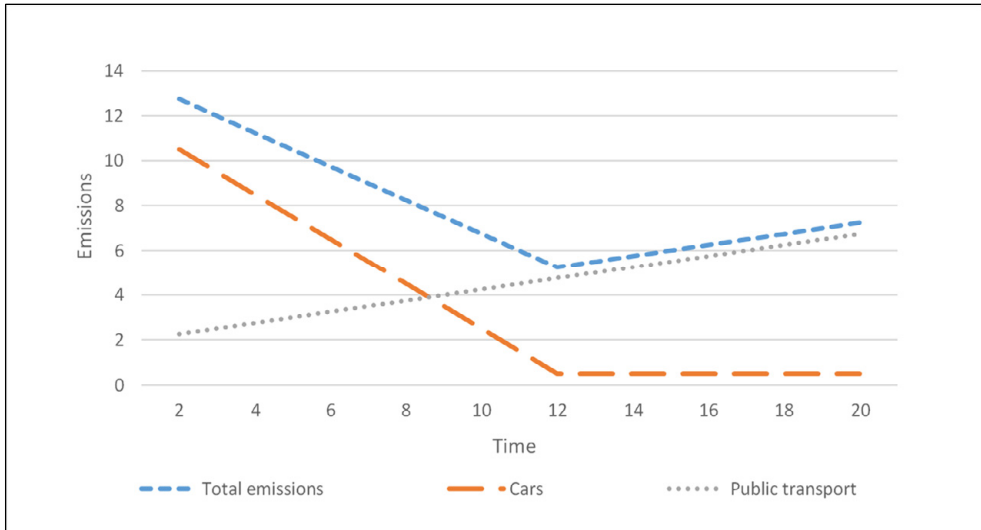
For as long as the intensity factor is declining, then we are safe in the knowledge that we have relative decoupling. But for absolute decoupling, we need overall impact to go down as well. And that can only happen if the intensity goes down fast enough to outrun the pace at which population and income per capita go up. (p. 97)

These ideas are directly translatable to the issue of public transport and car traffic, as the ‘intensity factor’ can be understood as the ratio between public transport and car traffic. Thus, as long as public transport’s share of the total amount of travel is growing, there is a relative decrease in car traffic.

Since public transport involves energy consumption, the only way increased public transport travel will lead to an absolute decrease in emissions is if, all else being equal, it enables a reduction of car travel. If it is assumed that public transport growth is proportional to car traffic decrease<sup>184</sup>, it follows that emissions will go down as public transport is at least two or three times more energy efficient (Holmberg, 2013, p. 27; Moriarty & Honnery, 2013a, p. 50; The Odyssee-Mure project, 2021; Åkerman & Höjer, 2006). However, what happens if the scenario is extrapolated? With continuous growth, public transport will replace cars as the driver of emissions rates in the long run.

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<sup>184</sup> Leaving aside the previously discussed risk that public transport replaces active travel.



**Figure 7.1. The emissions from transport when car traffic decreases in absolute terms and public transport increases.** The numbers for emissions and time are unrelated to actual numbers but only demonstrate the relationships between the emissions rates.

This figure represents the hypothetical development with an initial rapid decrease in emissions due to a rapid reduction in car travel. However, when car travel emissions are near zero, the emission curve rises again because of a steady increase in public transport travel.

Of course, the figure is simplified as many factors can influence the result. For example, technological changes may reduce the emissions of both cars and public transport (although a shortage of non-fossil fuels, such as biofuels and electricity, risks negating the benefits). In addition, increased attention to comfort and safety and, as in the case of electric cars, heavy batteries often result in increased vehicle size and weight, making them less energy-efficient<sup>185</sup>.

All of the above assumptions share the imperative of mobility growth. However, only under ideal conditions can continuous mobility growth be combined with reduced emissions and only for a limited time.

Finally, it is important to note that the above silences are not complete in the discourse. In contrast to defining discourse as limits in thinking, I do not presume any such limits. Hence, it must be acknowledged that people may think and reflect in ways opposing or beyond a dominant discourse. For example, in one interview, a civil servant expressed doubts about the strategy of merely promoting sustainable alternatives (the logic of provision and the logic of patronage):

<sup>185</sup> Studies suggest that electric vehicles, due to generally being heavier, increase non-exhaust particulate matter emissions (Kole et al., 2017; Timmers & Achten, 2016).



It's not enough to only increase public transport. We also need to reduce something. We need to reduce car traffic, the number of vehicle kilometres. We could increase public transport, but continue to have just as much car traffic, which wouldn't make any difference. So, we need to change the relationship between active modes of transport and public transport and car traffic. (Interview 2020-05-07)

Similarly, in another interview, concerns were raised about the goal of increasing the share of public transport:

I would instead like to move from the announcement to the government we have made in the parliament that the share of public transport amongst motorised transport should be doubled, to a goal of reduced car traffic, which would be better from a climate and economic perspective. (Interview 2017-04-13)

Yet, rather than invalidate my results, these examples of awareness among actors of the discourse make the silence in most of the material even more apparent. Thus, they demonstrate how the discourse governs communication in this particular context and excludes alternative constructions of sustainable mobility<sup>186</sup>.

Overall, the environmental consequences of mobility and public transport growth are silenced despite the complexity of factors determining success in reducing emissions and the negative environmental impact of uncontrolled growth.

### Concluding Remarks

In this final part of the chapter, seven silences in the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy have been reconstructed into a third, arguably silenced, constitutive line of reasoning: 'sustainable mobility as restriction'. Although diverse and heterogeneous, the different silences have highlighted the simplifications characterising the policy discourse's naturalising representations.

I have linked the silenced representations to the dominant positions of growth forms put forth in the previous chapter. Although other interpretations are possible, I argue that growth represents the most suitable lens to understand why these representations have been omitted from the discourse. Moreover, as mentioned, silences are linked to the naturalisations discussed earlier, and thus, these sections also provide a theoretical justification for the identification of the silences in the first place.

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<sup>186</sup> Similar to the previous section, these quotes are 'detached statements' (see Part 4.2.), enabling the identification of silences through their isolation.

## Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, I have reconstructed constitutive lines of reasoning based on the identified patterns in the thematic analysis (Chapter 6). Thus, the chapter answers the thesis' second research sub-question on identifying the dominant constitutive lines of reasoning in the UEA policy and which constitutive lines that are silenced.

The chapter revolves around three constitutive lines of reasoning; two that dominate the policy discourse and one that is silenced. These have been reconstructed by applying the typology from growth management theory (presented in the analytical framework) to the patterns, tensions, and silences identified in Chapter 6.

'Sustainable mobility as necessity' is based on the idea that sustainable mobility is necessary to achieve sustainability goals. Although the foundation of this line of reasoning is the problems associated with the growing city, such as emissions, congestion, and poor air quality, several forms of growth (population, property, and economic) are naturalised; that is, constructed as inevitable. As a result, mobility growth is also constructed as unavoidable because other growth forms are assumed to lead to increased mobility. However, while increasing mobility is portrayed as inevitable, its current configuration creates adverse consequences for the local and global environment. Consequently, providing the 'right kind of mobility' is believed necessary in order to achieve the dual tasks of accommodating growth while reaching environmental objectives. The critical measures involve enabling a modal shift from cars to sustainable mobility. By implementing both restrictions on car traffic and improvements in public transport, the emphasis is put on the relative position of these traffic modes, clearly exemplified by the focus on the travel time ratio. I have reconstructed the core of the line of reasoning in the form of an argument:

**Table 7.7. Reconstruction of the first line of reasoning.** Reconstruction of the the central argument in the 'sustainable mobility as necessity' line of reasoning, with premises (P) and conclusions (C).

<b>P1</b>	Growth (population, property, economy) is inevitable
<b>P2</b>	Growth leads to mobility growth
<b>C1/P3</b>	Mobility growth is inevitable
<b>P4</b>	Mobility growth in its current form is unsustainable
<b>C2</b>	To be sustainable, the current form of mobility has to change

In contrast, the constitutive line of reasoning that I label 'sustainable mobility as progress' fundamentally concerns the progressive nature of sustainable mobility, specifically in terms of promoting the growing city. It implicitly relates to the threat of declining growth rates and argues for the role of sustainable mobility in enabling a progressive city that attracts people and businesses. While it involves normative

naturalisation of several growth forms such as population, property development, and economic growth, progression is also understood in broader terms, including sustainable mobility measures to benefit disadvantaged societal groups. In this line of reasoning, sustainable mobility is valued as a means to achieve other ends (economic and social) and is a goal in itself, as increased sustainable mobility is often described as intrinsically desirable. Relatedly, measures creating public transport growth, in terms of increased patronage, are central. These transport measures are often decoupled from other modes, evident from goals of travel time minimisation. The fundamental ideas in this line of reasoning can also be reconstructed as an argument:

**Table 7.8. Reconstruction of the second line of reasoning.** Reconstruction of the central argument in the 'sustainable mobility as progress' line of reasoning, with premises (P) and conclusions (C).

<b>P1</b>	If not promoted, growth (population, property, economy) risks declining
<b>P2</b>	Declining growth is undesirable
<b>C1/P3</b>	Growth should be promoted
<b>P4</b>	Sustainable mobility enables growth
<b>C2</b>	Sustainable mobility should be promoted

Undoubtedly, there are many ways to summarise the two constitutive lines of reasoning present in the discourse. For example, abstractly, the difference between the two can be summarised into four overarching distinctions.

**Table 7.9. Overarching distinctions between 'sustainable mobility as necessity' and 'sustainable mobility as progress'.**

	<b>Sustainable mobility as necessity</b>	<b>Sustainable mobility as progress</b>
<i>Approach</i>	Management	Promotion
<i>Naturalisation</i>	Empirical	Normative
<i>Value</i>	Instrumental	Instrumental and intrinsic
<i>Emphasis</i>	Environment	Economy and equity

How the two lines of reasoning connect to parts of the sustainability triad (economic, social, and environmental) can provide a brief example of one of these distinctions. Whereas 'sustainable mobility as necessity' primarily concerns environmental aspects, 'sustainable mobility as progress' emphasises economic and social dimensions. Growth is central for both lines of reasoning, albeit in quite different ways. In that respect, it is clear that the initial ideas of sustainable development, such as how the Brundtland commission formulated them (WCED, 1987), continue to be important, where environmental, economic, and social sustainability were described as interconnecting ambitions. Still, from a planning-historic perspective, another interpretation is that the sustainable development discourse more directly influences the emphasis on the

assumed environment-growth synergy. At the same time, promoting growth through infrastructure investments is partially a remnant of traditional transport planning.

In the introduction to this chapter, I quoted a passage from a report by the Swedish Transport Administration, illustrating how the two constitutive lines of reasoning are distinct yet intertwined in the material. To end this chapter, I would like to provide a final example to illustrate my conclusion that two principal ways of understanding sustainable mobility run through the discourse. In one of the first interviews I conducted for this thesis (long before any ideas about growth management theory had surfaced), a civil servant made the following points:

Interviewer: You speak about sustainable transport and growth and housing construction. What do you feel has been the main point?

Civil servant: I think it has two parts. The first is the city development that we can redirect due to the tramway; that is to say, we can build differently, because, with the tramway, we can build denser, have more interested developers, and it can be done faster. Probably, that is the municipality's strongest incentive. But it is also the case that the tramway will be used by commuters, not people in the municipality who will continue to cycle. [...] to take care of commuters in a sustainable way is also a strong driving force (Interview 2017-03-29)

On one hand, the municipality is motivated by the possibility of building more, building faster, and attracting property capital, which comes from investing in public transport infrastructure. Rather than environmental rationality, this is linked to an ambition to develop the city and promote growth. On the other hand, reducing car traffic by improving public transport is evident in the quote and is presented as a critical way to achieve urban sustainability. Consequently, although they can be held apart analytically, 'sustainable mobility as necessity' and progress often function as two sides of the same growth-centred coin. I will develop this argument in the next chapter.

The final line of reasoning, 'sustainable mobility as restriction', was identified by analysing silences that were found with the help of theoretical guidance on growth, hypermobility, and social stratifications. These silences are alternative and conflicting representations omitted by the naturalisations of the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy. The silences were structured into three general sections relating to the dominance of growth in the discourse. The first two concerned silenced alternatives to growth, using Umeå municipality as an example where alternatives to mobility and population growth were silenced and, in the third, the notion of a transport-efficient society was investigated.

The subsequent section concerned the silenced social consequences of growth, building on the silences of the consequences of public transport growth, the conflicts

between 'sustainable modes of transport', and the silencing of social class as a subject position. Concretely, hypermobility entails several social consequences, such as health problems, accidents, and psychological aspects. Additionally, social conflicts may arise between so-called sustainable modes when public transport accessibility and speed are prioritised. Finally, a last social consequence is related to the silence of subject positions based on social class and ethnicity in the discourse, potentially leading to adverse distributional effects.

The final section revolved around the silenced environmental consequences of growth, analysing a silence on the environmental aspects and another on conflicts between 'sustainable modes of transport'. Two main scenarios were scrutinised where, first, public transport improvements result in a relative decrease in car traffic and, second, where they lead to an absolute decrease in car traffic. Although decreasing emissions is possible in both of these scenarios, I argue that they can only combine mobility growth and environmental objectives for a limited time under ideal circumstances. Thus, risk of adverse environmental consequences from public transport growth is silenced in the discourse.

To conclude this chapter, as I have indicated several times, the two dominant constitutive lines of reasoning are not necessarily in opposition. On the contrary, the centrality of growth, sustainability, and several other representations are common denominators. Thus, if the discursive patterns of the UEA policy are analysed, emphasising naturalisations rather than tensions, a more coherent collection of representations can be identified, constituting fundamental ideas, norms, and assumptions permeating the discourse. The next chapter synthesises these naturalisations and conceptualises how they interlink. It also contrasts the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy with the traditional transport discourse, providing answers to the final research question.

# Situating the UEA Policy Discourse within the Transport Field

A dominant theme of transport planning and policy has been to achieve and manage quantitative growth through forecasting demand and accommodating present and future growth in the transport system [...] ‘More transport’ is, in other words, usually seen as a good thing – also outside the transport industry – due to its classification as facilitator of other activities in many economic theories and models. This appreciation is deeply rooted also in the political sphere, making any attempt to restrain transport activities the more difficult. - Martin Schiefelbusch<sup>187</sup>

In this final analytical chapter<sup>188</sup>, I situate the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy within the transport policy field. This analysis provides the most general answer to my overarching research question on how sustainable mobility is constructed in the Swedish Urban Environment Agreement. Additionally, it answers the third research sub-question of how the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy relates to the traditional discourse in the transport policy field<sup>189</sup> in two parts.

The first part builds on the previous analyses of the UEA policy discourse to investigate the overarching sustainable mobility discourse. The two dominant lines of reasoning reconstructed in the previous chapter are distinct constructions of sustainable mobility but not necessarily in opposition. Thus, in this part of the chapter, I synthesise the fundamental representations of the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy, investigating what these may tell us about the overarching sustainable mobility

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<sup>187</sup> Schiefelbusch (2010, p. 208).

<sup>188</sup> Some of the conclusions drawn in this chapter (mainly Sections 8.1.3. and 8.1.4.) have, in adapted form, been published in E. Isaksson (2023).

<sup>189</sup> For clarity, in this chapter, I analyse (with abbreviations) *the sustainable mobility discourse of the Urban Environment Agreement policy* (i.e., the UEA policy discourse), *the overarching sustainable mobility discourse* (i.e., the sustainable mobility discourse) and *the traditional transport discourse* (i.e., the traditional discourse). I expand on their relationships in Section 3.1.1.

discourse. Specifically, I emphasise the naturalising discursive patterns of the UEA policy and investigate how these relate to each other. I also develop several theoretical concepts to capture the UEA policy discourse's fundamental relationships and assumptions. Most notably, I construct the wheel of growth metaphor and the *logics of sustainable mobility*. Situating the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy within the overarching sustainable mobility discourse is a dual endeavour where, on one hand, the UEA policy discourse is interpreted as a particular manifestation of this overarching sustainable mobility discourse and, on the other hand, also provides insights into the current nature of the same discourse.

The second part of the chapter answers the research question by contrasting the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy to the historically dominant discourse in the transport policy field, namely the traditional transport discourse (described in Chapters 2 and 5). In short, the analysis compares several central norms<sup>190</sup> and assumptions of the traditional transport discourse with those in the UEA policy discourse. This endeavour results in a deeper understanding of how the two discourses relate to each other and whether the traditional transport discourse's central elements are challenged or reproduced by the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy.

This chapter marks the end of the empirical investigation and provides the remaining answers to the primary research question of how sustainable mobility is constructed in the Swedish Urban Environment Agreement policy.

## The UEA Policy Discourse and the Overarching Sustainable Mobility Discourse

In Chapter 6, I used three concepts (discursive tension, silence, and naturalisation) to capture the dynamics in and between discursive patterns. In Chapter 7, I then reconstructed three constitutive lines of reasoning permeating the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy. However, whereas the constitutive lines of reasoning mainly aimed to capture the differences, tensions, and silences, in this first part of the chapter I turn to what unites the analysed discourse, i.e., the representations on which there is no disagreement. Consequently, I return to the partly unexplored analytical concept of naturalisation to synthesise and develop theoretical insights on the fundamental representations of the discourse within the UEA policy. In essence, it is a

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<sup>190</sup> These norms reinforce and are reinforced by practices and underlying assumptions. However, for simplicity, I use the term norms.

theoretical exploration; of how the particularities of the UEA policy discourse may be developed to help gain insights into sustainable mobility discourse more generally.

In Chapter 3, I defined naturalisation as a statement or pattern that constructs contingent circumstances and phenomena as inevitable and natural (see Section 3.1.3.). However, patterns comprised of naturalising statements can also be described as naturalisations, albeit on different levels of generality. Continuing this process of synthesising the specific into the general, I conduct a final synthesis in this part, investigating the fundamental representations naturalised in the UEA policy discourse. Therefore, concretely, this part of the chapter aims to answer the following analytical question: *How do the naturalised patterns interrelate?*

This part gives the most general answer to my main research question of how sustainable mobility is constructed in the Swedish Urban Environment Agreement policy.

I argue that three fundamental representations are naturalised in the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy. First, as the last chapter demonstrated, growth is one of the essential representations; arguably, the same goes for environmental sustainability. The third category concerns the connection between the two. Below, I develop them in turn.

Here I move away from the strictly empirical and towards the theoretically explorative. I do this by developing a metaphor and three related logics to capture the relationships between the fundamental representations in the UEA policy discourse and the overarching sustainable mobility discourse. In this endeavour, the need to include political conflicts will be apparent as the logics described below are ways to justify the critical link between growth and sustainability. In contrast, justifications would not have been required if that link had been without tension. The struggle over central representations is essential to a discourse's wider context. I identified many tensions within and amongst the discursive patterns in the thematic analysis. These tensions were specific but, as naturalisations, tensions might be found at different levels of abstraction. These fundamental tensions within a discourse constitute political conflicts<sup>191</sup>.

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<sup>191</sup> In the discourse analysed in this thesis, the position of automobility and cars is one such general tension. Although, in Chapter 6, I described the relation to automobility as a specific tension between a critical and a neutral view of cars (Section 6.2.3.), contrasting it with the policy background of Chapter 5, it is apparent that the view on cars is of more general significance. For example, looking at the changed goal formulations of the UEA, from reduce car usage to goals of increased public transport travelling, the underlying tension of car traffic is evident (Section 5.2.1.). Importantly, this fundamental tension affects the discourse's other main representations. Here the policy context plays a pivotal role since neutral or positive representations of cars are very conventional outside the sustainable mobility discourse. Although the tension with car restrictions is less apparent in the discursive patterns, there is a perception amongst planners and politicians that a substantial part of the general public strongly



## Growth Processes: The Inevitability of Growth

I argue that growth is naturalised in the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy. As a result of the almost complete lack of alternative representations and the presence of empirical and normative naturalisation, several growth forms constitute fundamental representations in this discourse. The analysed material repeatedly confirmed the undisputable status of various growth forms.

Although some parts of the UEA policy discourse demonstrate an awareness of the problems that certain growth forms entail, the proposed solutions are often formulated as the quantitative increase of something else. For example, the unsustainability of current mobility growth is proposed to be solved by changing the character of this growth by replacing cars with so-called sustainable modes of transport. An interviewed civil servant formulates these ideas straightforwardly:

The question you always get is, 'why are you reducing car traffic?' to which I usually answer, 'no, we are increasing the flows' because we are a growth-promoting municipality, and the growth goals are very clear. It is just that the flows need to happen differently for many reasons: both congestion and also, long term, the environment. (Interview 2018-12-11)

There are clear parallels to the formulation in the Brundtland Commission report, quoted in the previous chapter, stating that sustainable development requires growth, but this growth needs to be less material and energy intensive (WCED, 1987, p. 48). Thus, although the qualitative dimension is debatable, the quantitative is not, i.e., growth needs to continue, albeit in different forms.

The above quote from the civil servant touches upon an important issue, the distinction between normative and empirical naturalisation, which has surfaced repeatedly throughout the previous analyses. It is central within the constitutive lines of reasoning developed in Chapter 7. However, from a transport planning perspective, both growth constructed as inevitable and as desirable tend to result in the same thing: the need to plan for growth. Thus, they can be generalised as representations of growth processes, including normative and empirical dimensions (both explicit and implicit). The idea is that growth is happening, either as an inevitable phenomenon or through political efforts, and that politicians and planners need to accommodate this growth<sup>192</sup>.

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opposes car traffic limitations (Interview 2017-04-13). This perception might explain why the pattern constitutes a political conflict, influencing the broader configuration of the discourse.

<sup>192</sup> A critical question is why distinctly different views of growth result in the same perceived need to accommodate it. I propose that one reason can be found in the different rationalities within the representations. First, if growth is constructed as inevitable, it has to be accommodated. Otherwise, the assumptions about its inevitability and the forecasts these are based on are recognised as flawed. Consequently, there is a technical rationality at work, dominated by planners, economists, statisticians,

As I have demonstrated in Chapter 6, four growth processes are specified in the UEA policy discourse: population, economic, property, and mobility. These representations are discursively interconnected and function as a whole (although not all parts of the material emphasise all growth forms). The following table illustrates the individual patterns constituting these four fundamental representations.

**Table 8.1. Patterns included in the naturalisation of growth.** Frequency (F\*) can vary between four and 31, where four is the minimum number of agreements containing the statements for the regularity to be characterised as a pattern, and 31 is the total amount of agreements. Centrality is determined according to a three-fold distinction: Central, Ambiguous, and Peripheral.

Naturalisations	Included patterns	F*	Centrality
<i>Population growth</i>	Promoting population growth	5	Central
	Managing population growth	17	Central
	Attractive city	6	Central
<i>Property growth</i>	Housing construction	8	Ambiguous
	Densification	9	Central
<i>Economic growth</i>	Improving work opportunities	4	Peripheral
	Economic growth	10	Peripheral
<i>Mobility growth</i>	Public transport growth	25	Central
	Mobility growth	N/D <sup>193</sup>	Central

As in the previous chapter, contextualisation becomes important because the dominance of two of these patterns is unclear. First, neither one of the patterns concerning property growth is particularly frequent in the agreements. However, I have already contextualised property development, arguing that it can be viewed as an issue of housing shortage and that it constitutes a significant representation in the UEA policy (Section 7.2.1.). Crucially, property growth is central and frequent when contrasted with the broader material<sup>194</sup>. Moreover, property growth is arguably normatively naturalised as its assumed desirability is unquestioned in the material.

Second, in thematic analysis, I argued that economic growth is naturalised even though it is neither frequent nor central in the agreements (Section 6.1.1.). Then, when reconstructing constitutive lines of reasoning, I indicated that there was more to the pattern (Section 7.3.2.). Reviewing its interlinkages with other patterns and relating it to the broader policy material, economic growth is a more significant representation

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and other professionals working with infrastructure planning. Second, if growth is constructed as desirable, it also has to be accommodated. If not, the growth goals are not implemented. In this case, a political rationality dominates, where credibility and the ability to take action are pivotal.

<sup>193</sup> As described in the contextualisation of *the inevitable mobility growth* (Section 7.2.2.), general mobility growth was not investigated in the thematic analysis. As a result, there is no frequency number available but only a general description and discussion on its prevalence and centrality.

<sup>194</sup> Although this conclusion is made without counting all the documents in which the pattern is found, it is evident simply from looking at the press releases and parliamentary records (e.g., Johansson & Kaplan, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c; Johansson et al., 2015; Kaplan, 2015; Parliamentary Record, 2014/15:57, 2014/15:73, 2014/15:86, 2014/15:112).

than initially stated. For example, economic growth is assumed to be highly interrelated to other growth forms at the municipal level. A civil servant elaborated on these different forms of growth:

We talk about growth in general, but the focus is on housing construction in connection to the Urban Environment Agreements. Nevertheless, the investments along the transit corridor, and the agreements with property owners ready to contribute to the tramway voluntarily to make it happen, are undoubtedly crucial for the entire question of growth (Interview 2017-03-29).

Thus, multiple growth forms are considered simultaneously and actively promoted. Another example relates to one of the aims of the UEA, as expressed by its advocates (Johansson & Kaplan, 2015b; Parliamentary Record, 2014/15:57, pp. 32-33; 2014/15:73, p. 62). As the policy was officially motivated by an ambition to increase land values in peripheral municipal locations, this relies on the expanding nature of private businesses (i.e., economic growth). Moreover, the population growth goals adopted by many municipalities implicitly refer to economic benefits in the form of an increased tax base and a growing business sector (cf. SAGPA, 2014). In short, growth is a critical concern in the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy, constituted of four fundamental, naturalised representations: property, economic, population and mobility growth.

### Sustainable Urban Environment: The Imperative of Sustainability

In Chapter 5, I characterised the UEA as a part of the sustainable transport intervention in transport policy. The initial rationale behind the UEA was to tackle the environmental consequences of the current transport system. It is, therefore, unsurprising that the thematic analysis identified a sustainable environment as an essential representation in the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy (Section 6.1.4.).

However, although a sustainable urban environment appears to be an unquestionable fundament of the UEA policy discourse, it is a vague representation (see Section 6.1.4.). Although sometimes denoting a local, but at other times a global, environment, a sustainable urban environment is seldom specified further. Nevertheless (or perhaps, as a result), such an environment is constructed as essential. Analogous to the unsustainability of car traffic (see Section 7.2.3.), the contextualisation of a sustainable urban environment demonstrates how it is an assumed reference point within the UEA policy. For example, in the government directive that initiated the UEA, the secondary legislation that regulates it and the early press releases, there are frequent references to sustainability, sustainable urban environment, and climate

change (Government Directive, 2015; Johansson et al., 2015; SFS 2015:579). Moreover, the preparatory reports by the Swedish Transport Administration are permeated by a normative naturalisation of sustainability, particularly the report where the agency presented its climate scenario (2015b). Table 8.2 presents the included patterns from the thematic analysis.

**Table 8.2. Patterns included in the naturalisation of sustainability.** Frequency (F\*) can vary between four and 31, where four is the minimum number of agreements containing the statements for the regularity to be characterised as a pattern, and 31 is the total amount of agreements. Centrality is determined according to a three-fold distinction: Central, Ambiguous, and Peripheral.

Naturalisation	Included patterns	Frequency	Centrality
<i>Sustainable urban environment</i>	Sustainable urban environment	17	Central
	Global environment	14	Ambiguous
	Local environment	18	Ambiguous
	Attractive city	12	Central

A sustainable urban environment represents a central representation in the UEA policy discourse. Moreover, as it is connected to the current environmental problems caused by transport, a sustainable urban environment is linked to car traffic. Yet, as I have demonstrated in Chapter 5, explicit car reduction ambitions remain controversial and a point of political conflict in the policy context. Both the assumed nature of sustainability and the conflict over car traffic illustrate how broader political and social developments are essential to understanding how sustainability is constructed in the UEA policy and the overarching sustainable mobility discourse. Sustainability has become a critical concern to address and, as a result, it has challenged dominant ideas in fields historically adhering to other priorities. Transport represents one of the clearest examples of how sustainability has come to influence policy fields, with its traditional dominance of economic and safety concerns. Today, few question the normative proposition that mobility should align with sustainability targets. Nevertheless, tension continues to exist about unsustainable mobility (i.e., car traffic). As I indicated above, this conflict concerning car traffic is critical for the overarching constructions in the UEA policy and how growth and sustainability are discursively bridged.

Sustainability is a fundamental representation naturalised in the UEA policy. However, this naturalisation is not empirical (i.e., development towards sustainability is natural and inevitable) but normative (i.e., sustainability is a natural and assumed societal goal).

## The Logics of Sustainable Mobility: The Salvation of Transition

What are the solutions if growth is inevitable and sustainability is imperative? The general answer is sustainable mobility and the prioritisation of so-called sustainable modes of transport. The analytical questions I have posed to the material have assumed that sustainable mobility is central, and my spotlight has rather been on how it is constructed. Consequently, no single pattern analysed in the thematic analysis concerns sustainable mobility *per se*. However, many patterns may provide adequate support for the conclusion that sustainable mobility is a fundamental representation. For example, public transport, cycling, and walking as the ‘sustainable modes of transport’ are naturalised in the UEA policy (Section 6.2.1.). Moreover, the pattern mentioned above on prioritisation of ‘sustainable modes of transport’ also points to the axiomatic position of sustainable mobility in the UEA policy discourse because even if it involves a tension (whether to promote sustainable modes of transport or combat unsustainable modes), this tension does not question the centrality of sustainable mobility.

Still, the prioritisation of sustainable mobility is far too vague and needs to be further investigated. Below, I discuss several prevailing logics<sup>195</sup> discursively used to justify sustainable mobility as a solution to the dilemma of mobility (see Chapter 1). These logics can be considered the transport-specific responses to the conflict between growth and sustainability, representing the critical relationship in the UEA policy discourse and the overarching sustainable mobility discourse. In some sense, they are a repertoire of growth-determined ways to legitimate and justify the central rationale of sustainable mobility. In the wheel of growth metaphor developed below, I illustrate how these logics relate to the other fundamental representations naturalised in the sustainable mobility discourse.

Of course, the logic emphasised may vary in different contexts. Yet together, they represent the concrete solutions formulated in the sustainable mobility discourse. I suggest that the following three general logics of sustainable mobility are essential for the discursive attempt to bridge sustainability and the multiple forms of growth:

- the logic of provision;
- the logic of patronage;
- the logic of technological change.

It is worth stating that these logics are derived through ideal-type reasoning, where the solutions and assumptions of sustainable mobility are abstracted into a coherent way of

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<sup>195</sup> I see *logic* as a particular way of thinking, especially one perceived as reasonable and based on good judgment (cf. Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). Importantly, I do not engage with some of the more specific usages of the concept, such as that of Glynos and Howarth (2007), but rely on the broader use found in social science works (e.g., Bourdieu, 1992; Fred, 2018; Schwanen et al., 2011; Wuisman, 2005).

thinking. Consequently, there is greater complexity and ambiguity within the material than I allow in this presentation; not all logics are present in every part of the material<sup>196</sup>. To simplify and make the ideal type of reasoning clear, I present the logics as ‘sufficient to’-statements, where a logic concludes that *it is sufficient to do x to solve the dilemma of mobility* (i.e., bridge growth and sustainability)<sup>197</sup>. The patterns that constitute the fundamental representations are presented in Table 8.3 below.

**Table 8.3. Patterns included in the naturalisation of the logics of sustainable mobility.** Frequency (F\*) can vary between four and 31, where four is the minimum number of agreements containing the statements for the regularity to be characterised as a pattern, and 31 is the total amount of agreements. Centrality is determined according to a three-fold distinction: Central, Ambiguous, and Peripheral.

Naturalisations	Included patterns	F*	Centrality
<i>Logic of provision</i>	Improved public transport → reduced car traffic → reduced emissions	18	Central
	Shorter travel times → increased travel	16	Central
	Car users	10	Peripheral
	Sustainable modes of transport	13	Central
<i>Logic of patronage</i>	Increased public transport travel → reduced car traffic → reduced emissions	6	Peripheral
	Public transport travellers	8	Peripheral
	Shortcomings of public transport	16	Ambiguous
	Sustainable modes of transport	13	Central
<i>Logic of technological change</i>	Electric public transport → increasing travel	7	Peripheral
	Shortcomings of cars	17	Ambiguous
	Sustainable modes of transport	13	Central

Underlying all the logics is an assumption of ‘sustainable modes of transport’. I have elaborated on this assumption several times, but it is critical to acknowledge how it informs the logics. The representation of ‘sustainable modes of transport’, naturalised in the UEA policy discourse, consists of two parts. First, it defines ‘sustainable modes of transport’ as walking, cycling, and public transport. Second, it constructs the relationship between these modes as mutually reinforcing and free from friction. The centrality of this assumption becomes apparent when the logics are analysed, as most of them assume that improvements in public transport will lead to decreased car traffic without any negative side effects such as a transition from active modes. Moreover, when public transport is constructed as sustainable, the growth of public transport

<sup>196</sup> It is crucial to note that similar (albeit slightly differently formulated) logics can be found outside of sustainable mobility discourse.

<sup>197</sup> This can be contrasted with somewhat weaker formulations using terms such as *preferable* or *necessary*.

travelling is assumed to be free from environmental consequences (see Part 7.4. for a critical examination of this assumption).

### *The Logic of Provision*

The first solution regarding sustainable mobility is captured by the logic of sustainable infrastructure provision, assuming that it is sufficient to provide sustainable mobility infrastructure to solve the dilemma of mobility.

Three concrete patterns form the basis of the logic. First, it is generally assumed that various infrastructural improvements in public transport will translate to reduced car travel and, thus, decreased emissions. Second, relatedly, shorter travel times for 'sustainable modes of transport' (i.e., public transport) are expected to increase the travel made with these modes. This increase in public transport travel is considered an adequate method to achieve lower car usage and emissions. Finally, as the transition from car traffic is central, the overarching logic also relies on car users as the main subject of change, i.e., the idea is that the provision of sustainable infrastructure will lead to a transition from cars to sustainable modes of transport.

The logic of provision has been discussed extensively in the sustainable transport literature (although not always using this terminology). Solving transport problems, such as congestion, by providing new infrastructure has been assessed as a central element of traditional transport planning (Owens, 1995). Banister et al. explain that it is:

[W]idely taken for granted that the most effective way of intervening in a mobility and transport system is through the provision of transport infrastructure, and that the key decisions in policy-making concern the question of what type of infrastructure to provide and where. (Banister et al., 2013, p. 269)

Importantly, this logic of provision transgresses traditional transport discourse and, slightly modified, constitutes an essential part of sustainable mobility discourse: the environmental problems caused by transport can sufficiently be tackled by providing the *right kind of infrastructure*. This 'right kind of infrastructure' is that which increases so-called sustainable modes of transport, thus enabling a transition from automobility and reducing the adverse effects on the environment by cars.

Whereas the provision of infrastructure may be contradictory to sustainability objectives, policymakers tend to see it as a 'technological silver bullet' which could be used to enable a 'shift to sustainable travel behaviours' (Hickman et al., 2012, p. 561). Or, as Schwanen et al. (2011) explain, 'is expected to trigger at least some shift towards low-carbon mobility' (p. 996). In short, the unsustainability of current mobility patterns is to be solved by increasing the alternatives, thus changing the composition of growth instead of challenging it (I critically investigated the related assumptions in the

previous chapter, see Section 7.4.3.). However, there is a considerable risk that the provision of sustainable mobility infrastructure creates additional mobility demand (Banister et al., 2013, p. 271). Thus, as Banister et al. (2013) argue:

It is not enough to argue, on the one hand, that low carbon mobility needs to be promoted while, on the other hand, continue to insist on investments in transport infrastructure to promote economic growth. (p. 276)

Although the limitation of the logic of provision is apparent when considering the effects of growth on environmental degradation, it is widely assumed in transport discourses (the traditional and the sustainable version). More importantly, it is a growth-centred approach to solving transport problems, where problems associated with ‘too much’ of something are tackled by increasing something else. As a logic that aims to solve the dilemma of mobility and to bridge the gap between naturalised growth and sustainability, it is compatible with the demands of growth in its different forms. However, to what degree it aligns with sustainability is more questionable.

#### *The Logic of Patronage*

The second solution of sustainable mobility, *the logic of patronage*, is, in essence, about increasing public transport patronage. Moreover, it is assumed *sufficient to increase public transport patronage to solve the dilemma of mobility*. Naturally, this logic is related and similar to the previous logic, but some key differences make them worth keeping apart. In contrast to the logic of provision, increasing patronage is not necessarily linked to the provision of new infrastructure. In other words, there are multiple ways of improving public transport patronage, such as behaviour or ‘soft’ measures (Söderberg, 2021). Therefore, the logic emphasises the aggregated behaviours of transport users rather than the physical structures of the transport system. The aim of doubling public transport travelling discussed earlier (Section 6.2.2; also, Holmberg, 2013) is a prime example of this logic, building on assumptions about how increasing public transport travel may reduce car traffic and emissions. Furthermore, another key difference between the two logics is that while the former highlights car users as the main subjects, the logic of patronage is more inclined to focus on public transport users. Thus, it revolves around ideas about solving the shortcomings of public transport to increase its attractiveness and, consequently, the number of trips made by this mode of transport.

In short, the logic of public transport patronage is formed by the straightforward proposition that since public transport is better than cars, the former is desirable and should increase. Importantly, as with the logic of provision, this proposition assumes continuous growth. However, from a purely environmental standpoint, the logic is insufficient as neither an absolute nor a relative increase in public transport travelling



will automatically lead to reduced car traffic and emissions. The main method to achieve emission reductions in the present transport system is by lowering car usage, which is not a necessary result of increasing public transport travel. One reason for the uncertainties of this method is that increasing public transport trips may be generated from other sources than cars, most notably, active modes of transport and trips not otherwise made (see Sections 7.4.2 and 7.4.3. for extended investigations of this).

As a solution to the dilemma of mobility, the logic of public patronage is growth-centred and, like the logic of provision, based on the idea that mobility will continue to increase. Furthermore, it similarly assumes that increasing public transport travel will decrease car usage and emissions, albeit focusing more on aggregated behaviours of transport users than on the physical structures of the transport system. However, the assumed causal relationships between increasing public transport trips and decreasing car traffic are far-reaching, and there is an imminent risk of induced travel demand (Banister et al., 2013, p. 271; Goodwin, 1996; Litman, 2001) leading to increased overall transport work.

### *The Logic of Technological Change*

The third and final logic is *the logic of technological change*<sup>198</sup>. Whereas the previous two were about the amount of travel on different modes of transport, this logic concerns the technological characteristic of these modes. In short, the underlying proposition is that *it is sufficient to change technologies to solve the dilemma of mobility*.

Relating to the logic of patronage, non-fossil fuels are assumed to improve the attractiveness of the modes of transport using them. For example, electricity is increasingly connected to ideas about modernity, environmental friendliness, and progress, and by switching to electric-powered public transport, changed attitudes towards public transport are expected. As with the other logics, the improved public transport's attractiveness is assumed to translate to reduced car travel.

Still, the logic is mainly about the direct effects of changed technologies, often in terms of fuels: the logic assumes that changing from one fuel type to a less harmful one will lead to environmental benefits. Or, generalised to the entire transport system, emissions are expected to drop due to fossil fuels being replaced by renewable energy sources. These assumptions result in transport-related emissions being the dominant aspect to be solved, marginalising the many other problems with the configuration of the current transport system. Furthermore, several factors determine the result of fuel

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<sup>198</sup> The logic of technological change is here connected to public transport, but generally, in the transport field, it is commonly used to legitimise continuing reliance on automobility, illustrated by the increasing emphasis on electric cars. Additionally, outside of transport, transitioning to electrical solutions is considered the principal way to solve environmental problems in sectors such as steel production.

change, such as mobility growth, which fuel types are used, how these are produced, and whether so-called rebound effects lead to increased emissions in other sectors. Consequently, the reliance on technology to solve the adverse effects of transport is not as straightforward as often described.

Yet, resolving the dilemma of mobility through technological change is appealing as it proposedly avoids the conflicts connected to restricting certain transport modes, i.e., it is possible to achieve emission reductions without limiting car traffic. However, the silenced friction between all motorised and active transport modes persists as space distribution remains the same. Moreover, as technological development is not only compatible with several growth forms but also crucial to increasing them, the present tensions in the transport system are likely to be amplified when more people, houses, trips, and a growing economy have to coexist in the same environment.

### Developing a Metaphor: The Wheel of Growth

In this section, I synthesise the above elements and thereby reach an improved understanding of the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy. It is also the step that provides the most explicit generalisation to the overarching sustainable mobility discourse. Here, the aim is to connect the fundamental representations naturalised and conceptualise their relationships. It represents the culmination of this chapter's first part and provides the most comprehensive conclusions in the thesis. Its empirical foundation is found earlier in the thesis as I here focus on a more abstract level when developing a metaphor to capture the core of the sustainable mobility discourse (within and beyond the UEA policy).

As mentioned, four growth forms constitute fundamental representations in the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy: mobility growth, population growth, property growth, and economic growth. As I demonstrated throughout the thesis, these representations are highly interconnected. For example, property growth is constructed as a function of population growth, which is thought to be promoted by growing mobility (see Sections 6.1.2 and 6.1.3). Conversely, the causal relationship is also assumed to go in the other direction: from mobility growth to population growth and property growth. Additionally, economic growth is recognised as a fundamental aspect of the other growth forms and as something which is promoted by increased (sustainable) mobility (see Sections 6.1.1. and 7.3.2.). Albeit not every possible connection between the growth forms is equally developed or frequent in the UEA policy, they are still explicitly or implicitly there. Their interrelations can be illustrated as a wheel (Figure 8.1.).

The wheel's structural integrity is a central aspect (i.e., the constructed relationships between the growth forms), but as important is its dynamic character (i.e., the

implications of these relationships). Mobility growth is mainly seen as resulting from the other growth forms and, thus, outside control. Moreover, the metaphor captures the assumption that the wheel is in motion. Accordingly, I propose that a core element of sustainable mobility discourse is the idea that this *wheel of growth is rolling*, either by intentional efforts (normative naturalisation) or by uncontrollable societal forces (empirical naturalisation). The metaphor of a rolling wheel of growth thus builds upon ideas about the inevitability of growing mobility, population, economy, and property developments.

However, the dilemma of mobility (Bertolini, 2017; Low & O'Connor, 2013), where mobility growth and environmental concerns conflict, needs to be tackled in light of sustainability's increased dominance. In the metaphor, the wheel of growth is singularly connected, via mobility, to environmental sustainability. However, as growth is naturalised and beyond influence, its inevitability dictates how to meet the demand for sustainability. Thus, sustainable mobility is constructed in this discursive space between growth and sustainability.

The wheel of growth metaphor can be presented as an analytical argument capturing that the central elements of the sustainable mobility discourse operate as a wheel, seen to be rolling. The argument goes as follows:

1. Several growth forms are discursively inter-linked and constructed as a unity.
2. Single growth forms are constructed as inevitable/desirable due to their relation to the other growth forms.
3. The wheel of growth is naturalised, limiting the political possibility for alternative representations opposing growth.
4. The wheel of growth is linked to the imperative of sustainability.
5. Several growth-determined logics aim to justify how growth and sustainability can be combined (the dilemma of mobility):
  - the logic of provision;
  - the logic of patronage;
  - the logic of technological change.

I have developed the discursive relationships between the growth forms at length in Chapters 6 and 7 and will not repeat this analysis but instead focus on the implications for my argument. The key point is how the relationships govern the available political space, thus restricting action.

The naturalisation of mobility growth is at the core of the wheel of growth, as the solutions to environmental problems are limited if mobility growth is inevitable. The naturalisation of mobility growth is based on the normative and empirical naturalisation of the other growth forms. Thus, regardless of whether population,

property, and economic growth are constructed as inevitable or desirable, they create an unstoppable increase in mobility demand. However, this mobility growth leads to unsustainable outcomes, needing solutions as sustainability has become imperative. In this sphere of political struggle, sustainable mobility is a bridge between growth and sustainability, and several growth-centred logics justify this promise of sustainable mobility.

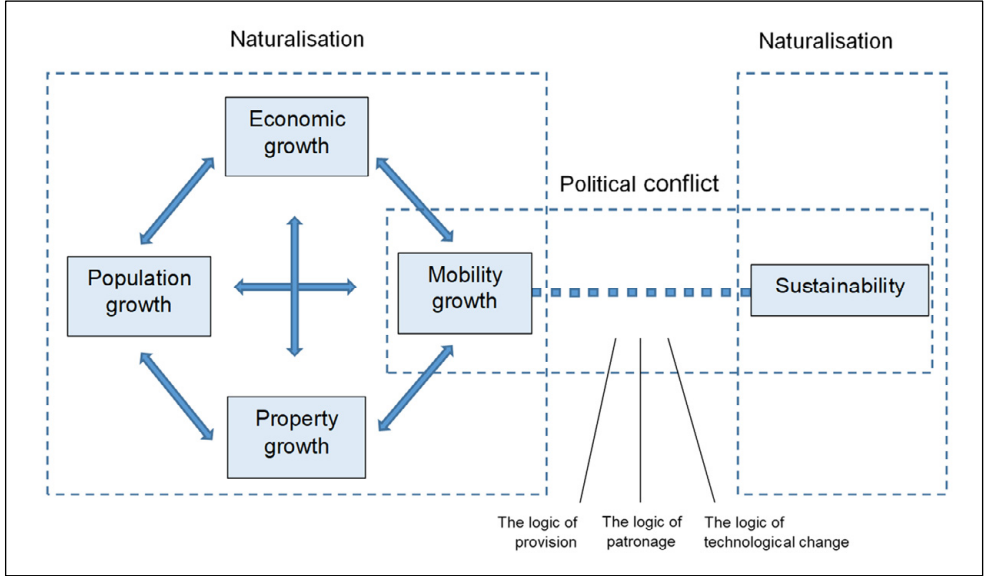


Figure 8.1. The wheel of growth and the logics of sustainable mobility.

The wheel of growth can be seen as a concrete response to the dilemma of mobility, raising the question of how an increasingly important discourse in a policy field formed by the dominance of growth responds to the challenge brought by sustainability. Notably, the actual and perceived interlinkages between several growth forms constitute the central elements of an unstoppable force, or rolling wheel of growth to use the metaphor, that somehow has to be managed or accommodated. In this context, transitioning to sustainable mobility becomes the solution that appears to resolve the dilemma. Thus, according to the sustainable mobility discourse, if growth and traditional mobility patterns equal unsustainability, sustainable mobility allows growth to be combined with sustainability. The logics of provision, patronage, and technological change function as justifications for this proposition and the transition from unsustainability to sustainability within growth societies.

Importantly, the wheel of growth metaphor brings some implications to light. For example, it reveals the assumption that there is such a thing as long-term sustainable

growth of mobility. Moreover, it also demonstrates that while the compatibility of mobility and sustainability necessitates justifications, the environmental implications of growth in population, property, and the economy are black-boxed. Finally, the wheel of growth demonstrates that although efforts must be made to combine mobility and sustainability, the non-environmental adverse effects of mobility growth are left without consideration.

In the concluding chapter, I explore how the wheel of growth metaphor can provide insights beyond the transport field.

## Contrasting the UEA Policy Discourse with the Traditional Transport Discourse

In this second part of the chapter, I contrast the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy with the traditional transport discourse.

A critical concern in analysing political discourses is their impact on society. One way to conceptualise this impact is by investigating whether the discourse reproduces or challenges the dominant discourse(s) in the policy field in which they operate. In Chapter 4, I discussed the methodological issues pertaining to this analytical step (see Part 4.3). In short, I adopt a comparative approach that contrasts the dominant norms of the traditional transport discourse with the discursive patterns of the UEA policy. However, before I delve into the specific points of comparison between the discourses, the traditional transport discourse's general characteristics must be developed. Here, I build upon the literature review (Chapter 2) and policy background (Chapter 5) but deepen the investigation of several fundamental aspects of the traditional transport discourse.

I have proposed that the same evaluative criteria that sustainable transport scholars use to criticise the traditional transport discourse should be used to assess the current sustainable mobility discourse (Chapter 2). Therefore, I begin by reiterating dominant norms of the traditional discourse described in sustainable transport research. Phil Goodwin and Carey Curtis, two of the most prominent scholars in the field, describe the norms of the traditional discourse:

The old one essentially saw cars as the near-universal transport mode of the future, and it was the task of planners and engineers to design transport networks and land uses which would accommodate those cars. The central analytical tool was the traffic forecast, and the central transport policy was the provision of road capacity. (Goodwin & Curtis, 2020, p. 436)

Thus, they describe three significant aspects of the traditional transport discourse. The first is the discourse's reliance on *forecasts* and planning according to prognosticated growth (Hult et al., 2017; Johansson et al., 2016; Pettersson et al., 2021). Second, and relatedly, the discourse is viewed to emphasise the *provision of infrastructure* based on these forecasts to combat congestion (Givoni & Banister, 2013a; Goodwin, 1996, 1997; Hickman et al., 2012; Litman, 2001; Pettersson et al., 2021; Schwanen et al., 2011). These two aspects represent the *predict and provide* approach that Owens (1995) famously described. Third, the discourse is strongly linked to automobility and accommodating cars (Falkemark, 2006; Lundin, 2008; Paterson, 2007; Tengström, 1990; Urry & Dennis, 2009).

David Banister and Moshe Givoni, two other leading sustainable transport scholars, concisely state that the 'car is central to the current mobility and transport system' (2013a, p. 8). They continue, claiming that:

Current norms, centred very much around the meaning, and perceived value, of time, and the central tenet of transport policy thinking that travel is a derived demand. This is the current transport planning paradigm. (ibid., p. 8)

Hence, they link the traditional transport discourse to an overvaluation of travel time and the idea of travel as derived demand. These two aspects are connected, as considering travel only as an instrument to achieve other goals (i.e., a cost) leads to a travel time minimisation ambition (Banister, 2008; Root, 2003b).

Finally, the traditional discourse is criticised for how *economic growth* is positioned as the principal motif for infrastructure investments (Root, 2003b). The centrality of economic growth is connected to all of the above aspects (Givoni & Banister, 2013a) but should be seen as a distinct feature of the discourse, deserving particular attention.

Although other elements of the traditional transport discourse may be suggested, I delimit this part of the analysis to the above-presented norms or assumptions: predict and provide, travel time minimisation, automobility, and economic growth.

### Predict and Provide

The predict and provide-character of the traditional transport discourse has been a central point of criticism launched by sustainable transport scholars (Curtis & Low, 2012; Owens, 1995; Schiefelbusch, 2010; Vigar, 2002). As mentioned, it describes how transport policy and planning aim to provide infrastructure to accommodate predicted traffic growth. To reframe it through the concepts of this thesis, predict and provide is about the empirical naturalisation of forecasted mobility growth and the normative naturalisation of the proposition that this growth should be met by providing additional

infrastructure. The central rationale behind the approach is the fear of worsened congestion and the economic cost this would entail (Givoni & Banister, 2013a).

Forecasts are crucial in current planning practices, as planning, per definition, is future-oriented and necessitates an idea of what the future holds. However, the criticism of predict and provide is not about the forecast *per se* but the naturalisation of these forecasts and, more importantly, the normative ideas that the prognosticated mobility growth should be accommodated by providing more infrastructure. For historical reasons, predict and provide is closely tied to car traffic in the traditional transport discourse. This relationship is also one of the bases of the criticism directed at it by sustainable mobility advocates, as increasing traffic infrastructure produces adverse environmental consequences. However, the core ideas of predict and provide can be detached from car traffic and applied to mobility generally.

Abstracting the predict and provide idea from its connection to automobility and emphasising its underlying naturalisations, it is clear that the UEA policy discourse reproduces this norm and assumption. The growth-centred perspective and the efforts to accommodate this growth in the traditional discourse also dominate the UEA policy discourse. For example, capacity shortage and congestion are central representations, mainly connected to population growth (Sections 6.1.3. and 7.2.1.). These issues are sometimes recognised, while at other times described as future problems. Both in the agreements and the broader policy material, mobility is presumed to grow. The provision of sustainable transport infrastructure is constructed as necessary to avoid adverse environmental consequences. Generally, anticipated growth is implicitly based on traffic and population forecasts. In connection to the described problems of capacity shortage and congestion, they make up the standard predict and provide combination. And, when environmental concerns are added, the sustainable version of predict and provide is evident.

Another example is from the reconstruction of the constitutive lines of reasoning. In this analysis, I demonstrated how several patterns related to predict and provide are linked and constitute parts of a more overarching construction of sustainable mobility. For example, in the 'sustainable mobility as necessity' line of reasoning (see Part 7.2.), mobility growth is naturalised due to its presumed relation to naturalised population growth. This growth is based on forecasts, sometimes explicitly (e.g., Stockholm, 2016, p. 5) and at other times implicitly in the UEA policy discourse. Furthermore, in the first part of this chapter, I developed the wheel of growth metaphor to capture how a normatively naturalised (promoted) growth functions similarly, necessitating growth-centred responses. One of these responses is the logic of provision, where the central assumption is that the provision of the right kind of infrastructure can solve transport problems. Thus, the environmental consequences, including congestion, are thought to be alleviated by constructing infrastructure for high-capacity and clean public

transport services. Again, the logic constitutes a sustainable version of predict and provide with the idea that the right kind of infrastructure provision will solve the adverse consequences caused by increasing traffic.

There are, of course, some differences between how predict and provide is constructed in the UEA policy discourse and how it has been described as an element of the traditional discourse. The main difference lies in the UEA policy discourse's emphasis on public transport, partly justified on environmental grounds. However, the promotion of public transport is also connected to the problems of congestion and capacity shortage, which are central foci of the traditional discourse. Goulden et al. (2014) come to a similar conclusion when analysing UK sustainable transport projects. They argue that although, for example, high-speed rail 'marks a break with the road-building of earlier decades, it remains a predict and provide project: responding to anticipated market demand rather than seeking to shape it' (p. 143). Thus, projects and policies framed as sustainable may also conform to the crucial aspects of predict and provide.

What are the implications of this reproduction of the predict and provide logic by the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy? Most of all, it constitutes a lock-in where the available options are severely limited. It forces growth-centred responses to traffic problems (see the logics of sustainable mobility above). If growth is inevitable, technological and modal changes become the only solutions to reach sustainability targets. These solutions have to outweigh increasing traffic, which will become more challenging over time. In concrete terms, the central question becomes whether the shift from automobile to sustainable modes of transport is sufficient to tackle the damaging effects of traffic (increase) in light of the continued reliance on predict and provide. Following critical scholars, such as John Adams (1981), who argues that growth processes always come with, often adverse, consequences for their environments (p. 149), and in line with the normative standpoint developed in the analytical framework (Section 3.2.1.), there are good reasons to be critical of growth. Hence, predict and provide can be questioned even if cars are replaced by public transport.

### Travel Time Minimisation

The assumption that time is money is dominant in the traditional discourse where travel time minimisation is central (Whitelegg, 1993). From this perspective, transport's benefits can be measured in economic terms, with low travel times equating to improved mobility and enhanced economic activity. Thus, from a traditional viewpoint, transport is mainly a derived demand (Root, 2003b), and it follows that travel times should be minimised.



In the sustainable transport literature, the traditional discourse's emphasis on travel time minimisation has been problematised and seen to cause adverse side effects. First, it ignores travelling made for its own sake and consequently provides an inadequate understanding of real-world travel (Banister, 2008). Second, it leads to the overvaluation of short travel times (Whitelegg, 1993). This problem is evident in how cost-benefit analyses are used in the transport sector, where the value attributed to transport infrastructure projects often depends on by how many minutes or even seconds travel times are reduced (Næss, 2016b).

Still, travel time minimisation is a frequent and central pattern in the UEA policy (see Sections 6.1.1., 6.1.4., 6.2.3. and 6.4.2.). However, it is not uniformly addressed but constructed, on one hand, as a travel time ratio and, on the other hand, as travel time reduction. Whereas the former is linked to the relative travel time compared to cars, the latter is more ambiguous, partly connected to presumed non-environmental benefits from shorter travel times. Thus, travel time is also given a value independent of car traffic as it is not always specified that the increase in travel will be achieved at the cost of cars. This aspect of the pattern is, in fact, much more common than the previous one.

Nevertheless, travel time is often implicitly related to an overall ambition to achieve a modal shift, where faster public transport is assumed to increase attractiveness. This construction positions travel time minimisation at the centre of the UEA policy discourse, and it is paramount for its dominant representations, describing the necessary measures for reducing car traffic without restricting cars. Thus, although travel time minimisation is central in both the traditional and the UEA policy discourse, it is so in different ways. Generally, *time is money* in the traditional discourse, but in sustainable mobility discourse (within the UEA policy and beyond), *time is carbon*. The feasibility of this assumption was disentangled in the previous chapter (see Section 7.4.3.).

A core idea of travel time minimisation is that more trips can be made on present infrastructure by reducing travel time. However, the time spent travelling tends to be constant as increased speed translates to further distances travelled. Thus, John Whitelegg categorically claims that:

A sustainable transport policy [...] cannot be founded on economic principles which, through their monetarisation of time, orientate society towards higher levels of motorisation, faster speeds and greater consumption of space. (Whitelegg, 1993, p. 3)

Therefore, many critics of the traditional discourse argue that society should not strive toward faster transport but slow them down (e.g. Banister, 2008). Increasing the speeds (i.e., reducing travel time) is linked to the growth imperative, where travel time

minimisation translates to different forms of growth. In the traditional discourse, this growth is measured in economic terms, whereas in the UEA policy discourse, it is also measured as increasing sustainable travelling. Thus, travel time minimisation in the UEA policy discourse is based on assumptions about continuous mobility growth, where public transport should shoulder the increase in transport. Although the rationale behind travel time minimisation is different (money vs. carbon), the core assumptions and norms remain the same and are consequently reproduced.

Even though faster public transport speeds might reduce car traffic in favourable circumstances, reproducing the norm of travel time minimisation is a doubtful strategy as increasing speeds is generally opposed to reducing emissions. This is because travelling faster requires more energy, and improved speeds release latent demand, thus increasing the total amount of travelling. Conversely, another way to improve public transport travel time ratio is by slowing car traffic. Of course, this method goes against the dominant ideas on growth that permeate the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy.

### Automobility

Although many critical points have been raised against the traditional transport discourse, the most important is its connection to automobility. It has even been labelled the ‘car-based paradigm’ (Whitelegg, 2020).

Cars have been one of the most important expressions of progress and freedom in the western world during the 1900s (Lundin, 2008; Urry & Dennis, 2009), and in the traditional discourse, high accessibility to cars is generally seen to bring economic benefits (Low & O’Connor, 2013). However, cars come with several adverse side effects, which have been increasingly evident during the past decades: traffic accidents, poor air quality, and restricted movement of active travellers (Gössling & Choi, 2015; Whitzman, 2013). As of late, their contribution to climate change has been the focal point (Banister et al., 2011; Givoni & Banister, 2013a; Low, 2013a).

Although the UEA policy contains minor patterns that indicate neutral attitudes towards cars, the vast majority problematise automobility; for example, several described attributes of public transport, such as high capacity and environmental friendliness, directly relate to cars’ shortcomings. Furthermore, as I argued in Chapter 7, it is clear that the unsustainability of cars runs as an implicit assumption throughout the discourse (Section 7.2.3.). Still, car reduction is controversial in the broader policy material<sup>199</sup>, and there is evidence that it has been downplayed in the UEA’s formation process. Thus, the relation to automobility is ambiguous when studying the formation

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<sup>199</sup> See Part 4.6. for a presentation of the material included in the broader policy material.

of the UEA (see Chapter 5). Furthermore, cars represent the only tension in the UEA policy discourse where patterns are in direct opposition (with a minor pattern highlighting the continuous need for cars, see Section 6.2.3.). However, compared to the centrality of car traffic in the traditional discourse, the UEA policy discourse represents a break. Also, as I argued in the reconstruction of the constitutive lines of reasoning (Section 7.2.3.), the problems with automobility are very much an underlying assumption.

In addition, throughout the UEA policy discourse, tensions exist between emphasising the problematic aspects of car traffic and promoting public transport as an alternative, thus avoiding political conflicts. The latter strategy hopes to achieve the same thing as the former but without negative publicity (Interview 2015-06-24). Generally, politicians and planners presume a significant opposition to car restrictions by the public (Interview 2017-04-13). As I have tried to show in the previous chapters, several tensions in the UEA policy discourse revolve around, in essence, versions of the carrot and stick. This distinction is present in the difference between the two constitutive lines of reasoning, emphasising either management or promotion of growth. Thus, rather than criticising cars, sustainable mobility is instead embraced. Similarly, the three logics of sustainable mobility (provision, patronage, and technological change) are growth-centred and are mostly compatible with automobility. The assumption is that they will lead to mode change, which is possible without restrictions on car traffic.

Finally, the interpretation of subjects recognised by the UEA policy discourse is ambiguous. On one hand, sustainable transport users, particularly disadvantaged groups, constitute central representations. On the other hand, as transport mode change is considered pivotal and restrictions are down-prioritised, the needs and behaviours of car users become a benchmark to define desirable public transport improvements. Consequently, car users remain important in the discourse as a reference point. In summary, the extent to which automobility is reproduced or challenged leans more toward the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy challenging the automobility norm of the traditional transport discourse.

What are the implications of this ambiguous relation to automobility? First, the failure to provide a forceful critique of automobility comes with the danger of emphasising increasing public transport rather than decreasing cars (which may increase emissions, as expanded on in Chapter 7). Moreover, political trends point towards electromobility being constructed as the main solution in the transport policy field. However, disregarding all adverse consequences of producing electricity and electric cars, electromobility is only a partial solution as the negative impact of cars, such as local pollution, barrier effects, health, and accidents, will continue.

## Economic Growth

Economic growth is a key concern in most policy areas, and historically, it has been predominant in transport planning. As I describe in Chapter 2, the question of whether infrastructure investments promote economic growth has been central in transport research (Ansar et al., 2016; Yu et al., 2012). Although few conclusive answers have been provided (Akyelken, 2013; Banister & Berechman, 2001), policymakers generally assume that there are economic benefits from more transport. David Bannister and Moshe Givoni (2013a) explain how economic growth is central to the three overarching elements which the traditional discourse builds upon:

First, it is often argued that economic growth [...] is paramount and therefore a major political concern, especially in times of economic crisis. Second, transport is seen not only as enabling economic growth but also as facilitator of it. The transport system therefore must allow the smooth flow of people and goods and at increasing volume, 'bottlenecks' in transport system must be eliminated. When this is not the case, and congestion arises, it is a cost to the economy. This cost is high since in the current mobility system 'time is money' and therefore faster is better [...]. This is the third element, and this value of time is closely related to notions of consumerism and materialism, where more and faster are assumed better. (p. 8)

Thus, economic growth is highly connected to the travel time minimisation analysed above. Moreover, Goulded et al. (2014) also argue that the predict and provide nature of traditional planning is connected to economic growth, namely that it can be seen as a 'transport-specific manifestation of the neo-liberal model adopted in pursuit of the growth paradigm' (p. 143). Undoubtedly, economic growth is an essential element of the traditional discourse in its own right and through its relation to the other dominant assumptions and norms.

Economic growth is not the most frequent reason for sustainable mobility in the UEA policy. Still, it is a crucial representation in many regards. First, in the thematic analysis (see 6.1.1.), I argued that economic growth is naturalised as it is constructed as an inherently positive phenomenon despite the critical attention it has gained in academia and elsewhere. Second, conflicting representations are silenced. Third, several other representations are directly connected to economic growth. For example, attractiveness is partly constructed in terms of growth, related to the ambition of attracting businesses to the area and thus increasing economic growth (see Section 6.1.5.). Also, an increasing population is closely related to economic growth; for example, when employment rates are connected to population growth (Interview 2018-12-11). Moreover, in the two dominant constitutive lines of reasoning reconstructed in Chapter 7, economic growth is, on one hand, seen as something naturally occurring

which will increase mobility growth and, on the other hand, as something desirable that can be promoted by increasing sustainable mobility. Both of these ways of constructing economic growth emphasise its centrality. Concluding the comparison, the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy reproduces economic growth as a central norm of the traditional transport discourse in all significant aspects.

When economic growth becomes naturalised in a discourse, it often outweighs most competing concerns. However, critical scholars are increasingly re-evaluating economic growth (Giannetti et al., 2015; Hagbert et al., 2018). One of the major difficulties is that economic growth tends to correlate directly and indirectly to higher emissions levels directly and indirectly through increased mobility (Givoni, 2013, p. 211), particularly because transport infrastructure investments to promote economic growth create induced demand (Akyelken, 2013, p. 134). Banister et al. (2011) summarise the critical aspects of sustainable mobility and economic growth:

Thus, in the transport sector, the United Nations Environment Programme's notion of green economy (138) is taken to mean larger investment in transport infrastructure (to facilitate economic growth) for sustainable transport modes, especially public transport [...] However, there is neither convincing evidence nor any general agreement that such investments affect and/or facilitate economic growth. Even if there were, based on lessons from the past [...] caution should be exercised about the net impact in terms of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of large-scale investments in new transport infrastructures or technological systems. There is a real risk that overall emissions will grow because of increased total transport volumes (as substitution of CO<sub>2</sub>-intensive transport modes is often limited). (p. 263)

Hence, where economic growth motivates so-called sustainable transport investments, the environmental concerns risk being compromised, particularly when these investments come in the form of large-scale construction of new infrastructure.

### Concluding Remarks

This part has revolved around a four-point comparison between the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy and the central norms of the traditional transport discourse (as identified by sustainable transport scholars).

One conclusion is that although the central elements of the traditional discourse have been thoroughly criticised in the sustainable transport literature, only one element (automobility) is challenged by the UEA policy discourse and only partly so. This is noteworthy as policymakers emphasised the UEA's transformative nature (see Chapter 5). However, while the traditional discourse is found to be reproduced by the UEA policy discourse with regard to three of the points of comparison, how it specifically

constructs these representations differs slightly. Thus, while travel time minimisation is emphasised in the UEA policy discourse, it is partly based on environmental arguments (albeit questionable ones). Therefore, the famous aphorism ‘time is money’ is replaced by ‘time is carbon’. Similarly, predict and provide ideas are disconnected from cars in the UEA policy discourse and instead linked to public transport. However, although different values are emphasised, the key assumption remains growth-centred. For that reason, many of the problems accompanying growth continue to be present in the UEA policy discourse and potentially in the overarching sustainable mobility discourse. The following table summarises the comparison.

**Table 8.4. Comparison between the traditional transport discourse and the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy.**

<b>The traditional transport discourse</b>	<b>The sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy</b>	<b>Implication</b>
Predict and provide	Forecast and provision of public transport	Reproduction
Travel time minimisation	Public transport travel time ('time is carbon')	Reproduction
Automobility	Mostly critical towards automobility, however, mainly promoting alternatives	Ambiguity/ challenge
Economic growth	Promoting economic growth, but more often, other growth forms	Reproduction

## Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy has been situated within the sustainable transport policy field. I have explored how the overarching sustainable mobility discourse can be understood through the fundamental representations naturalised in the UEA policy discourse, providing the most general answer to my primary research question. I have also compared the UEA policy discourse with the central norms of the traditional transport discourse. This second part has answered the thesis’ third research question on how the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy relates to the traditional discourse in the transport policy field.

The first answer in this chapter concerns the common denominators in the thesis’ empirical material; the dominant and taken-for-granted representations that constitute the core of the UEA policy discourse. I argued that three representations are fundamental: growth, sustainable urban environment, and the logics of sustainable mobility. Growth and a sustainable urban environment are common concerns for many policy fields but, in contrast, the logics of sustainable mobility is more specific to the transport policy field. I propose that these logics are pivotal in the UEA policy discourse and the overarching sustainable mobility discourse, acting as justification for the compatibility of growth and

sustainability. First, the logic of provision claims that the conflict between growth and sustainability can be solved by providing the right (sustainable) infrastructure, creating a transition from car traffic to sustainable modes of transport. Second, the logic of patronage constructs increasing travel with public transport as a sufficient solution. Finally, the logic of technological change places changing technologies, particularly electrification, as the main answer to the dilemma of mobility.

How these fundamental representations interlink, and the implications of these interlinkages, is critical for providing a comprehensive understanding of the UEA policy discourse and the overarching sustainable mobility discourse. Therefore, I developed the wheel of growth metaphor to illustrate how population, property, economy, and mobility growth are discursively interlinked and considered necessary to accommodate. The representations of these processes are naturalised (either empirically or normatively), leading to the need to plan for growth. I propose that a critical assumption is that the wheel is rolling and that planning processes must handle this. Besides growth, sustainability is naturalised and constructed as imperative. In the transport policy field, mobility is the central arena where these dominant but contradictory demands are mediated. As growth is inevitable, the configuration of mobility has to change. Consequently, sustainable mobility becomes the only viable solution. In the concluding chapter, I will sketch how the wheel of growth metaphor may illuminate the analysis of other policy fields too.

The chapter's second part concerns the UEA policy's implications, exploring whether the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy challenges or reproduces the central norms of the traditional transport discourse. Four aspects were discussed, and four corresponding implications were identified: predict and provide, time travel minimisation, automobility, and economic growth. Except for automobility, which was found more ambiguous, the UEA policy discourse reproduces all the elements of the traditional discourse. However, these norms are not identical; the UEA policy discourse highlights environmental dimensions whereas the traditional discourse focusses on economic aspects of travel time minimisation, and predict and provide. Still, the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy remains growth-centred regarding all of these aspects, emphasising the need for increasing travel. As for automobility, the UEA policy discourse is more ambivalent, with some parts pointing to the continuous need for cars and a reluctance to restrict car traffic. Nevertheless, several patterns express a more critical view of car traffic. This perspective could also be seen as a fundamental representation in the discourse, indicating that the UEA policy discourse at least partly challenges automobility.

With this chapter, the three analytical steps of the thesis end. In the next chapter, I summarise and develop the conclusions of the thesis.

# Conclusions

Public transport is not the answer. It will of course have its part to play, but if we are to move on from the individuated, socially divisive and environmentally damaging way of life that accompanies car dependence, then we are simply going to have to travel less. - Kerry Hamilton<sup>200</sup>

All growth processes encroach on their environments. If the environment is finite, the growth of one thing implies the destruction or the pushing out of the way of something else. - John Adams<sup>201</sup>

In this thesis, I have set out to explore sustainable mobility through an analysis of the Swedish Urban Environment Agreement policy. The purpose has been to understand how sustainable mobility is constructed discursively in this policy and to provide insights into Swedish and Western European sustainable mobility discourse more generally. The purpose might appear abstract, but my methodological approach has been very concrete: mapping the patterns of statements regarding sustainable mobility, determining how they relate, and interpreting the broader implications of these patterns and relationships. The analytical process has had a clear direction: from the particular and complex to the general and uniform, and the analytical steps allow conclusions to be drawn from different levels of abstraction.

This chapter summarises the main conclusions of the thesis. Additionally, it reconnects with the scientific literatures and debates within which I position my work, including expanding on venues for further research. Finally, the chapter reflects on political implications of the results and whether any policy recommendations can be drawn from these.

However, before I begin reiterating the findings, I will try to formulate the main point of this thesis as concisely as possible. If forced to provide one sentence that

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<sup>200</sup> Hamilton (2003, p. 59).

<sup>201</sup> Adams (1981, p. 149).



captures the essence of the thesis, it would be as follows: the discursive construction of sustainable mobility needs to be understood as a product of naturalised representations of growth. This chapter will argue for the validity of this conclusion but, in short, I argue that sustainable mobility, a central societal goal and an idea that guides collective action, has no fixed definition or naturally occurring properties. Understandings of sustainable mobility are affected by historical power processes. Therefore, when I claim that sustainable mobility needs to be understood as a product of naturalised representations of growth, I argue that societal norms and assumptions about growth govern how sustainable mobility is conceived and acted upon in policymaking. Importantly, these norms and assumptions exclude alternatives to the high-mobility society. Why is this main argument of the thesis important? It is because high mobility levels lead to high emissions (and several additional adverse effects). Moreover, if mobility increases, environmental targets will become increasingly difficult to achieve despite technological advances. Hence, the naturalisation of growth that puts it beyond political influence, and constructs growth as inevitable, should be critically investigated and challenged.

## The Construction of Sustainable Mobility: A Summary of the Results

In this part, I summarise the results of the thesis. As the thesis title indicates, I argue that sustainable mobility is constructed as a specific configuration of the relationship between growth and sustainability.

I have divided my main research question into three sub-questions answered in one analytical chapter each:

- What are the discursive patterns of sustainable mobility in the UEA policy?
- Which are the dominant constitutive lines of reasoning in UEA policy, and which ones are silenced?
- How does the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy relate to the traditional discourse in the transport policy field? Additionally, more specific questions have been posed and answered in the three analytical chapters, as illustrated in Table 4.2 in Chapter 4.

The main conclusions can be summarised in the following points:

- The main ways of constructing sustainable mobility in the UEA policy are: a) as necessity (relating to the management of growth), and b) as progress (relating to the promotion of growth).
- A third possible way of constructing sustainable mobility, namely as restriction (relating to limiting growth), is silenced in the UEA policy.
- The sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy involves three fundamental representations that are naturalised: the inevitability of growth, the imperative of sustainability, and the salvation of transition (including the logics of provision, patronage, and technological change). The wheel of growth metaphor is developed to capture the relationships between these fundamental representations.
- The sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy promotes what is constructed as desirable mobility instead of limiting environmentally and socially adverse modes of transport.
- The sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy reproduces three central norms of the traditional transport discourse: predict and provide, travel time minimisation, and the emphasis on economic growth.
- The sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy is more ambiguous concerning automobility than the traditional discourse, partly challenging it.
- The sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy provides insights into Western European sustainable mobility discourse more generally. The UEA policy discourse indicates that this overarching discourse is also centred on growth and reproduces growth-centred norms and practices from the traditional transport discourse.

The six subsequent sections expand on these points. While the first two sections correspond to my first two research sub-questions, the third sub-question is answered in the three later sections.

### The Discursive Patterns of the UEA Policy

The first specific research question posed in the introduction concerned the identification of discursive patterns. I used thematic analysis to conduct this inquiry, specifying the frequency of the statements making up each pattern and determining their centrality within the analysed texts. In doing so, the aim was to provide a persuasive account of the wide range of patterns related to sustainable mobility in the UEA policy and indicate their relative importance. In Table 9.1, all the identified patterns are listed. Additionally, the implications of the patterns were interpreted using the theoretical concepts of naturalisation, discursive tension, and silence. However, to delimit the empirical scope and in order to structure the analysis, I used four abductively constructed categories: the reasons for sustainable mobility, the norms of sustainable mobility, the subjects of sustainable mobility, and the causal assumptions of sustainable mobility.

**Table 9.1. The identified discursive patterns.** The identified discursive patterns of the UEA policy, divided into four theoretical categories of sustainable mobility.

The reasons for sustainable mobility	The norms of sustainable mobility
Economic growth Improving work opportunities Housing Densification Managing population growth Promoting population growth Sustainable urban environment Global environment Local environment	The shortcomings of public transport The shortcomings of cars Sustainable modes of transport Public transport growth Prioritisation of sustainable modes of transport The continuing need for cars
	<b>The subjects of sustainable mobility</b>
	Car users Active transport users Public transport users Disadvantaged groups
The causal assumptions of sustainable mobility	
Electric public transport → increased travel Shorter travel times → increased travel Improved public transport → reduced car traffic → reduced emissions Increased public transport travel → reduced car traffic → reduced emissions	

This first analytical step of mapping and identifying discursive patterns primarily acted as a basis for subsequent steps. Nonetheless, a few conclusions can be drawn from this step.

First, the category of reasons for sustainable mobility resulted in many patterns. Thus, although environmental reasons are expected to be dominant, many different reasons are considered essential in the UEA policy. For example, managing population growth and creating attractive cities are patterns approximately as frequent and central as promoting a sustainable urban environment. Moreover, several additional growth-centred and social reasons are important to justify sustainable mobility. Second, one aspect that stood out was how different qualitative attributes of public transport related to the shortcomings of either public transport or cars. For instance, it only makes sense to improve comfort and noise levels if public transport is considered uncomfortable and noisy in the first place. Likewise, highlighting the capacity and environmental friendliness of public transport is a direct response to the perceived shortcomings of cars. Third, the comparably low prominence of subjects of sustainable mobility represented an intriguing feature of this penultimate category. For example, none of the identified discursive patterns is central. Thus, the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy appears to be a discourse where abstract concepts are more important than descriptions of subjects, in line with Krzyżanowski’s (2016) argument about the increasing conceptual nature of discourse.

In the final category, dealing with causal assumptions of sustainable mobility, many specific assumptions are worth mentioning. Although none is frequent enough to be considered a pattern, when combined, they are significant for several overall assumptions. For example, almost 20 different kinds of improvements relating to public transport are assumed to increase travelling. Similarly, as for the effects of improved public transport, about 10 different types of positive outcomes are specified. However, these causal assumptions are never explained or justified but provide an overarching picture of the virtues of public transport, and the assumed means of promoting it.

### Constitutive Lines of Reasoning: Necessity, Progress, and Restriction

Within the UEA policy, many discursive patterns involve tensions (i.e., potentially conflicting statements or patterns that conclude substantially different things on the same issue, see Section 3.1.3.). Moreover, many tensions are linked, forming discursive meta-structures conceptualised as constitutive lines of reasoning (see Section 3.1.2.). In Chapter 7, I used a typology from growth management theory to identify two dominant constitutive lines of reasoning permeating the discourse: ‘sustainable mobility as a necessity’, and ‘sustainable mobility as progress’. These two constructions represent the main ways sustainable mobility is understood in the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy and is one of the central conclusions of the thesis.

Without being too repetitive of Chapter 7, ‘sustainable mobility as necessity’ aligns with the idea of managing growth. It is based on empirical naturalisations of several growth forms, particularly of population, leading to a construction of mobility growth as inevitable. Conversely, ‘sustainable mobility as progress’ connects to growth promotion and involves normative naturalisation. It constructs sustainable mobility and several growth forms as progressive. Table 9.2 summarises the differences between the two lines of reasoning.

**Table 9.2. Overarching distinctions between sustainable mobility as a necessity and sustainable mobility as progress.**

	<b>Sustainable mobility as necessity</b>	<b>Sustainable mobility as progress</b>
<i>Approach</i>	Management	Promotion
<i>Naturalisation</i>	Empirical	Normative
<i>Value</i>	Instrumental	Instrumental and Intrinsic
<i>Emphasis</i>	Environment	Economy and Equity

A critical issue is understanding the relationship between the two lines of reasoning. Are they conflicting or complementary? I argue that the two lines of reasoning are not in direct opposition. For instance, certain growth forms are also promoted in approaches to managing growth. Importantly, the centrality of sustainable mobility

growth is a common denominator, particularly evident in parts of the empirical material (i.e., certain agreements) where population growth promotion is linked to a need for increasing sustainable travelling (Section 6.1.3.).

The difference between empirical and normative naturalisation in the two lines of reasoning is mainly analytical. It seems as though they are mutually exclusive, since promoting something is unnecessary if it increases regardless. Nevertheless, these kinds of naturalisations exist simultaneously in the discourse, indicating a logical inconsistency. Although the normative and empirical naturalisations of growth tend to lead to the same conclusion (i.e., the need to accommodate this growth), I argue that there is a point in acknowledging their differences. For example, different material circumstances appear to explain which form of naturalisation is relied upon in different contexts. In Chapter 6, I developed how municipalities' size and geographic position partly explained how they constructed population growth (as something to promote or manage).

Moreover, while both dominant constructions of sustainable mobility in the UEA policy assume growth, they emphasise slightly different values. For instance, 'sustainable mobility as necessity' has mainly an environmental focus, while 'sustainable mobility as progress' highlights social and economic aspects to a greater extent.

Finally, returning to the typology of approaches to growth developed in growth management theory and used to develop the two lines of reasoning, it is evident that the limits to growth approach is missing in the UEA policy discourse. However, the representations being silenced can be reconstructed into a third, silenced line of reasoning: 'sustainable mobility as restriction'. This line of reasoning revolves around three categories of silences: the silenced alternatives to growth, the silenced social consequences of growth, and the silenced environmental consequences of growth. 'Sustainable mobility as restriction' further illustrates the dominance of growth in the UEA policy discourse but is also used as a point of departure for critically investigating the implications of its silenced representations. Table 9.3 below lists all these silenced representations.

**Table 9.3. Silenced representations in the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy.**

<b>The silenced social consequences of growth</b>	<b>The silenced alternatives to growth</b>
Hypermobility Social class	Population growth Mobility growth Low-mobility society
<b>The silenced environmental consequences of growth</b>	
The relative decrease in car traffic and emissions The absolute decrease in car traffic and emissions	

## The Wheel of Growth and Logics of Sustainable Mobility

The naturalised patterns in the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy can be abstracted into several fundamental representations. How they interlink represents a crucial construction of sustainable mobility in the UEA policy and, as this analysis generalises the conclusions, to the overarching sustainable mobility discourse. Three fundamental representations are naturalised: the inevitability of growth, the imperative of sustainability, and the salvation of transition. Whereas the first constructs mobility growth as inevitable due to the naturalisation of population, property, and economic growth, sustainability is normatively naturalised in the second. The pivotal function of the sustainable mobility discourse is to align these two contradictory parts as captured in the dilemma of mobility.

The third fundamental representation consists of three logics legitimising the transition from unsustainability to sustainability within the constraints of mobility growth. First, the logic of provision assumes that it is sufficient to provide the right kind of infrastructure to solve the dilemma of mobility. Second, the logic of patronage assumes that it is sufficient to increase public transport patronage to solve the dilemma of mobility. Finally, the logic of technological change assumes that it is sufficient to change technologies, particularly fuels, to solve the dilemma of mobility.

These representations and their relationships were conceptualised through the wheel of growth metaphor developed in Chapter 8.

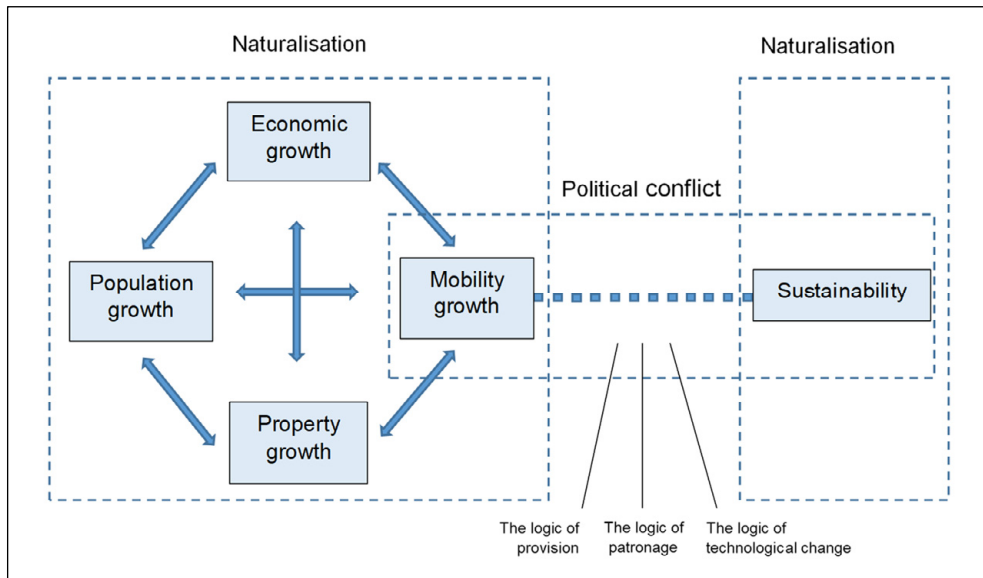


Figure 9.1. The wheel of growth and the logics of sustainable mobility.

Earlier, I claimed that the construction of sustainable mobility needs to be understood as a product of naturalisations of growth. However, I also argue that sustainability is naturalised. Thus, when conceptualising the fundamental and naturalised representations through the wheel of growth metaphor, one critical question is why growth seems to dominate sustainability. First of all, growth does not remain completely unchanged. The character of growth is challenged by sustainability; most notably, cars are increasingly being questioned as the superior mode of transport. Nevertheless, generally, growth is beyond reach in a way that sustainability does not appear to be. There are several reasons why this might be the case. First, in contrast to sustainability, strong interests and structural forces depend on growth, i.e., there are material reasons for continuing growth. Second, growth is generally more straightforward than sustainability. For example, increasing the number of inhabitants or housing production is more concrete than achieving sustainability, which is difficult to measure, particularly when social and economic sustainability is added to pure emission reduction objectives. Finally, for the most part, sustainability is normatively naturalised, i.e., considered a natural or evident societal objective. Contrastingly, growth is often empirically naturalised, seen as a natural or inevitable aspect of modern societies. This second form of naturalisation appears more forceful.

### Shifting the Wheel: Implications Beyond Transport

In this section, I sketch possible implications and the usefulness of the wheel of growth metaphor beyond the transport policy field.

I have presented the metaphor centred on the mobility-sustainability relationship. In this configuration, the other forms of growth (economic, population, and property) predominantly act as unquestioned representations that contribute to the naturalisation of mobility growth. Consequently, when constructed as natural, mobility growth can only be aligned with sustainability if its composition is altered from car-based to public transport-based (or from fossil fuels to electricity). This thesis focuses on the transport field and analyses sustainable mobility discourse. Still, I argue it is possible to extend the metaphor to other policy fields<sup>202</sup>.

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<sup>202</sup> Notably, this section is not based on detailed analyses of the policy fields discussed. Thus, its points should not be seen as conclusions but as thought-provoking explorations of the analytical possibilities that the wheel of growth metaphor might hold beyond transport.

## *Sustainable Economy*

There is a long debate concerning economic growth, stretching back to the industrial revolution and the birth of economics as a separate field of study<sup>203</sup>. Early economists, such as John Stuart Mill (1996 [1849-1873]), used the term *stationary state* in contrast to an ever-increasing economy, similar to the *steady-state* concept adopted by modern ecological economists, most notably Herman Daly (1991). In the 1970s, the Club of Rome launched one of the most influential critiques of growth in their milestone work, *Limits to Growth* (Meadows et al., 2004). Still, the hegemony of economic growth in politics and academia largely proceeded during the century (Fridman, 2002). As with mobility, there is a dilemma with economic growth. The most prominent ecological economist of late, Tim Jackson (2017), has formulated the core of the issue perfectly:

Put in its simplest form, the ‘dilemma of growth’ consists in two diametrically opposed propositions. [I] growth is unsustainable – at least in its current form. Burgeoning resource consumption and rising environmental costs are compounding profound disparities in social wellbeing. [II] ‘De-growth’ is unstable – at least under present conditions. Declining consumer demand leads to rising unemployment, falling competitiveness and a spiral of recession. (pp. 82-83)

Thus, *the dilemma of economic growth* consists of, on one hand, the necessity to achieve growth to provide stability and welfare and, on the other hand, the adverse environmental and social effects of this growth.

If the wheel of growth is altered, the analytical lens can be shifted towards the dilemma of economic growth. Hence, economic growth becomes the representation connected to sustainability, creating a new discursive playing field: economic growth as an inevitable consequence of other growth forms. Of course, an increasing population is the main force affecting economic growth, but it is easy to see how naturalised views on growing land use and increasing travelling contribute to the representation of ever-increasing economic growth rates. Consequently, the naturalisation of economic growth governs the alternatives, discursively dislodging representations opposing it. Similar to the original wheel of growth metaphor, the composition of the central representation (economic growth) has to change in line with the imperative of sustainability. The result is several sustainable (green) economic growth logics, such as the *circular* and *decarbonised economy*.

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<sup>203</sup> At that time, the field was called political economy, arguably a more accurate name.



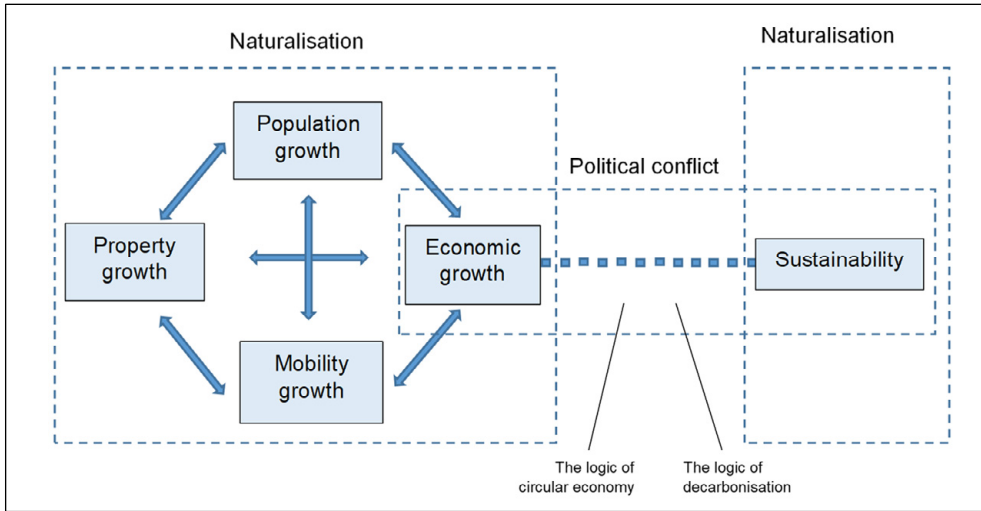


Figure 9.2. The wheel of growth centred on economic growth (sustainable growth).

### *Sustainable Land Use*

Land use has been a central arena of debate, both as a separate policy field and in connection to transport planning. The sprawling cities that during the 20<sup>th</sup> century grew in tandem with automobile expansion created a development that forced extensive land use and transport consumption with severe environmental and social impacts. These development patterns were increasingly questioned during the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (Newman & Kenworthy, 1989). Yet, increasing land use is arguably still a constitutive part of modern societies, creating the *dilemma of land use*: increasing land use (property growth) is an integral part of modern society, but the current land use patterns are fundamentally unsustainable.

In the thesis, property growth is the primary manifestation of land use issues and the concept used in the metaphor. Thus, if the wheel of growth is turned again so that property growth is linked to sustainability, growth in population, mobility, and the economy become the forces discursively naturalising property growth. Several arguments can be provided for the validity of this proposition. First, an increasing number of inhabitants creates pressure to build more housing and services. Second, increased travel demand necessitates more infrastructure (i.e., land use). Finally, increased economic growth creates a need for industrial and commercial development, which requires the exploitation of additional land. Several logics aim to bridge increasing land use and the imperative of sustainability.

The first is *densification*, which has been a dominant solution to the dilemma of land use during the last decades. As sprawling communities are seen as the principal

problem, and as growth is presumed, densification has become a go-to answer for urban planners and politicians (Næss et al., 2011). Another relied-upon logic to solve the dilemma (often pursued simultaneously as the former, see Section 6.1.2.) is *transit-oriented development* (Paulsson, 2020). By connecting new developments with the public transport network (or expanding the network to cover newly developed land), the logic claims to remedy unsustainable mobility patterns resulting from increasing land use.

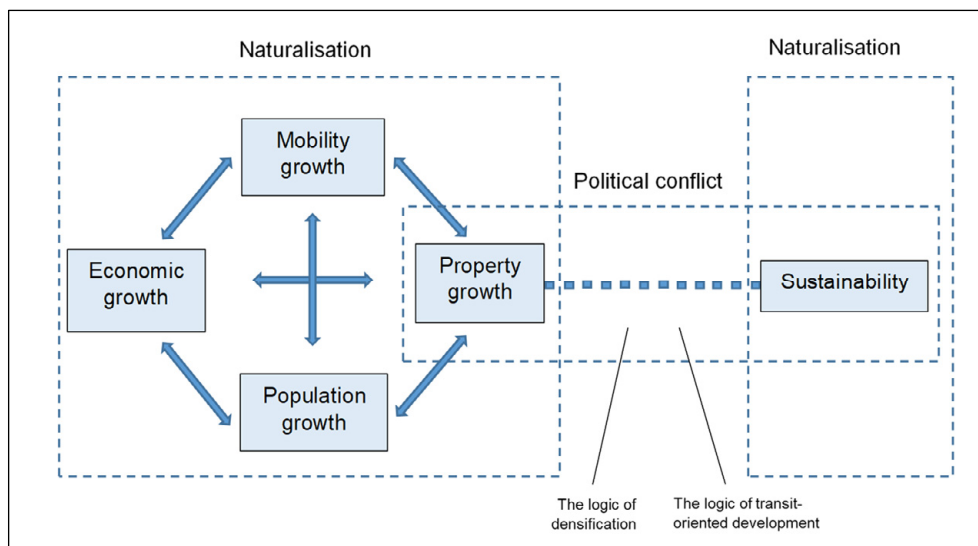


Figure 9.3. The wheel of growth centred on property growth (sustainable land use).

### *Sustainable City Growth*

Population growth has the longest conceptual<sup>204</sup> history in Western societies of the growth forms, famously and controversially discussed by Thomas Malthus (1998 [1798]) in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. However, within the wheel of growth, population growth is constructed as a growing number of city inhabitants, therefore only indirectly and not necessarily tied to overall population numbers.

Urban population growth was central for Harvey Molotch, pioneering the academic discussions on cities and population growth, influentially formulating his ‘the city as a growth machine’ thesis (Molotch, 1976). Molotch argued that the principal political focus of cities is on achieving growth, particularly in the form of increasing inhabitants.

<sup>204</sup> The word ‘conceptual’ is important here as all the forms of growth have been present throughout history.

This normative imperative can be contrasted with the trends of rapid population growth facing many urban areas. Even in megacities, declining growth rates are considered highly problematic (Döringer et al., 2019; Tateishi et al., 2021). At the same time, growing urban populations cause immense challenges and increase demands on the local and global environment. Thus, this *dilemma of population growth* can be characterised by a growing population being imperative for cities whilst having multiple adverse social and environmental consequences.

The connections with the other forms of growth can be seen as causal links. Here, population growth is an inevitable consequence of economic growth (work opportunities leading to people moving to these places), mobility growth (increased travel opportunities causing increased attractiveness), and property growth (the possibility of acquiring a place to live and sufficient services) (cf. Goulden et al., 2014). However, as seen in earlier parts of this thesis (Section 6.1.3.), population growth is also a normative ideal. In these instances, other growth forms motivate the ambition to increase the number of city inhabitants (to achieve public transport travel targets, increase property rates, avoid housing vacancies, and boost tax revenues). Nevertheless, the discursive effect is the same, naturalising the representation of a growing city population. Furthermore, as with the previous versions of the wheel of growth, several logics, such as *climate-neutral* and *viable cities*, can be connected to the discursive task of combining the growing city with sustainability.

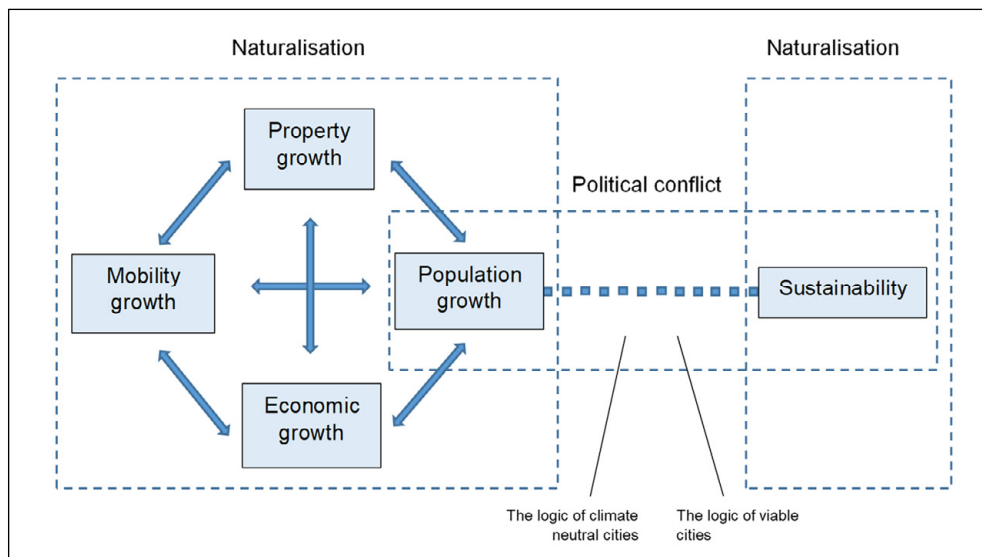


Figure 9.4. The wheel of growth centred on population growth (sustainable city).

### *Final Remarks on Shifting the Wheel of Growth*

I have argued that the wheel of growth metaphor can be applied beyond transport and have sketched its implications for fields concerned with the notions of sustainable economic growth, sustainable land use, and sustainable cities. The crucial effect shared by all of these versions of the metaphor is that its central relationship is governed by the remaining growth representations in the wheel. As I have shown empirically, mobility growth is constructed as inevitable based on the unquestioned and assumed growth in population, property, and economy. When this conclusion is applied to the other forms of growth in the metaphor, their respective policy field exhibits similar discursive constructions. The four versions of the wheel of growth demonstrate that growth is constructed as natural, regardless of the form emphasised.

As I have demonstrated, the wheel may be shifted so that either population, property, or economy are connected to sustainability. Each policy field is centred on a particular growth form and how its compatibility with sustainability is a critical issue in need of justifications. Thus, concepts such as circular economy and decarbonised economy (sustainable economy), transit-oriented development and densification (sustainable land use), and climate-neutral and viable city (sustainable city growth) can be understood as discursive solutions to the overarching conflict between inevitable growth and imperative sustainability. This is similar to how sustainable mobility is constructed in sustainable mobility discourse.

Notably, the idea of bridging growth and environmental concerns has been thoroughly scrutinised as the foundation of sustainable development and ecological modernisation (Daly, 1990; Hajer, 1997; Hickel, 2019; Meadowcroft, 2000; Spaiser et al., 2016; Spangenberg, 2010). Nevertheless, the wheel of growth metaphor contributes to conceptualising the relationships between several growth forms and sustainability, and how these relationships involve naturalisations. Moreover, it explains how naturalisation processes govern the discursive attempts to bridge growth and sustainability. Finally, it is also applicable in various contexts and policy fields and, consequently, possible to use as a theoretical tool.

### The UEA Policy Discourse and the Traditional Transport Discourse

Four fundamental norms of traditional transport discourse were identified based on reviewing influential works in the sustainable transport literature. I used these to investigate how the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy (the UEA policy discourse) relates to the traditional transport discourse.

The first element of the traditional discourse is its predict and provide nature, i.e., the naturalisation of forecasted growth and the normative idea that this growth has to

be accommodated (see Section 8.2.2.). This norm and assumption have been a central target of critique of the traditional discourse. However, traffic is assumed to increase in the UEA policy discourse, which is generally not questioned. Moreover, increasing investments in public transport infrastructure are proposed as a necessary method to combat the increasing problems that follow from traffic growth. Thus, predict and provide as a mode-neutral approach is reproduced by the UEA policy discourse studied in this thesis, i.e., transport growth is assumed to continue and should best be met by increasing public transport infrastructure investments.

The second aspect of the comparison concerned travel-time minimisation (see Section 8.2.3.). The emphasis on increasing travel speed is connected to ideas about securing a smooth transport system with increasing economic benefits. Although the traditional discourse has been criticised for its narrow view of travel and overvaluation of travel time, the UEA policy discourse reproduces this norm. The travel time of sustainable modes of transport is constructed as essential for increasing the number of trips made and improving the relative attractiveness of public transport compared to car traffic (reducing the latter). Thus, although the UEA policy discourse reproduces travel time minimisation, it is partly based on environmental arguments of a modal shift.

The third comparison between the traditional discourse and the UEA policy discourse regards automobility (see Section 8.2.4.). As motorised traffic is the primary cause of many adverse consequences of the transport system, it has been a central point of criticism levelled against the traditional discourse. Hence, a crucial question is whether the UEA policy discourse challenges or reproduces automobility. I found the UEA policy discourse to be ambiguous on this point. On one hand, car reduction targets were removed in the policy initiation, and a minor pattern in the UEA policy highlights the continuous need for cars. On the other hand, a critical view of car traffic can be seen as an assumption running through the UEA policy discourse, and several patterns emphasise a modal shift from car traffic to so-called sustainable modes of transport.

Finally, economic growth is a principal reason for transport infrastructure investments in the traditional discourse (see Section 8.2.5.). As economic growth is strongly linked to increasing emissions (both directly and through increasing traffic), it is a problematic norm from an environmental perspective. Although direct economic reasons are not pronounced in the UEA policy discourse, they remain unquestioned. Even more importantly, they are linked to other concerns, such as population growth and creating an attractive city, which are central representations in the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy. Consequently, the UEA discourse policy reproduces the norms of economic growth in the traditional discourse.

**Table 9.4. Comparison between the traditional transport discourse and the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy.**

The traditional transport discourse	The sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy	Implication
Predict and provide	Forecast and provision of public transport	Reproduction
Travel time minimisation	Public transport travel time ('time is carbon')	Reproduction
Automobility	Mostly critical towards automobility, however, mainly promoting alternatives	Ambiguity/ challenge
Economic growth	Promoting economic growth, but more often, other growth forms	Reproduction

Based on the norms being reproduced and challenged, some conclusions can be drawn. First, the main difference between the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy and the traditional transport discourse lies in the emphasis on different modes of transport. While the traditional discourse regards motorised traffic as essential, the UEA policy discourse shifts the focus to walking, cycling and public transport. However, the latter, in which these sustainable modes of transport are emphasised, continues to build on the norms of predict and provide, travel time minimisation, and prioritising economic growth. Thus, although one form of mobility (car traffic) is partly challenged, overall mobility growth remains unquestioned.

### The Generalisability of the Results

In Chapter 4, I promised to return to the question of generalisability and the reach of the conclusions drawn from the case of the Urban Environment Agreement policy. Four clarifications related to generalisation will be made here.

The first clarification concerns whether the sustainable mobility discourse of UEA policy can be generalised to the overarching Swedish sustainable mobility discourse. Arguably, the fact that the UEA policy is situated in the Swedish policy-making context indicates this. However, the material relied upon the most in the thesis is so-called agreements written by municipalities. Although these are heavily affected by developments at the national level, they are locally situated. In my thematic analysis (Chapter 6), I elaborated on different local approaches towards growth. On one hand, some cities experience the problem associated with too little growth and, on the other hand, other cities face the difficulties stemming from too much growth. I argued that the policy responses equally concern accommodating and planning for growth since the first category of cities adopts growth goals (not accepting negative growth), while the second kind of cities produces management plans (not pursuing negative growth)<sup>205</sup>.

<sup>205</sup> Of course, one limitation of this conclusion is the size of the cities. How smaller municipalities address sustainable mobility may differ as the capability to stop declining growth rates is sometimes missing. Additionally, these municipalities might not be forced to work as much with transport-related

Moreover, the material I rely upon also includes documents from the national level. Thus, there are good reasons to presume that the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy applies to the Swedish sustainable mobility discourse more generally.

A related issue concerns the particular character of the UEA policy; namely, that it allows municipalities to apply to receive funding for infrastructure investments. Compared to other policies, such as taxation, the UEA policy could be expected to promote, rather than restrict, mobility. Thus, generalising from the policy might risk overemphasising growth-promoting aspects. However, as alluded to in Section 4.4.1 on case selection, the distinction between different policy instruments is less clear-cut than it appears. Thus, just as the UEA policy also demonstrates discursive patterns about restricting (certain forms) of mobility, most competing policy instruments in the Swedish transport policy field are framed to promote (certain forms of) mobility (for example, the Bonus-Malus reform, incentivising non-fossil fuel cars). In short, the findings likely demonstrate general tendencies within the overarching sustainable mobility discourse rather than being formed by the particular character of the policy instrument it involves. The second clarification related to generalisability concerns the time period of the studied policy. Most materials are from 2015–2016 and, since then, there has been (and continues to be) a global pandemic, a war in Ukraine, and an ensuing energy crisis for many European countries. In Sweden, the election campaign of the political parties winning the 2023 election heavily featured promises of radically lowered fuel prices (Olsson et al., 2022). Consequently, car traffic reductions seem politically more distant today than a few years ago. In this context, arguably, technological solutions promoting alternatives rather than reducing unsustainable mobility become even more attractive. Thus, the thesis' main results have increasing validity. However, the main method for promoting these alternatives might have changed. In times of fiscal restraints, major infrastructure investments are less prominent and replaced by an emphasis on technological solutions. Thus, the Swedish sustainable mobility discourse might be changing due to external shocks and a new political landscape. Yet, institutional inertia may entail less change, as seen when the government had to withdraw the lion's share of its promised fuel price reductions (Olsson, 2023)<sup>206</sup>. Hence, as of early 2023, it is too early to determine the degree of change in the Swedish sustainable mobility discourse.

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problems due to low density and less transport work. My material fails to capture how these smaller municipalities contribute to the overarching Swedish sustainable mobility discourse, and thus generalising from the UEA policy might be limited. Still, when it comes to affecting broader societal discourses, these small municipalities presumably are less powerful and, thus, not equally relevant to Swedish sustainable mobility discourse development.

<sup>206</sup> Whether the present government should be seen as an advocate of sustainable mobility and, hence, contributing to the sustainable mobility discourse is a complicated question. On one hand, the government's emphasis on cars and fuel prices is more in line with the traditional transport discourse.

The third clarification concerns generalisation corresponding to the arguments in Chapter 4, where I described the similarities between the Swedish UEA policy case and other Western European transport policies (see Section 4.4.1.). My method of stepwise abstracting the results has aimed to find an appropriate balance between a narrowly context-dependent analysis and an all-too-general one. The central representations (and the phenomenon they represent) are not exclusive to the Swedish context. Various forms of growth, sustainability, and different ways to bridge these are general concerns for many societies worldwide. In this regard, the wheel of growth metaphor I developed is particularly fruitful for providing general conclusions. Nonetheless, I have delimited my generalising ambitions to Western European sustainable transport policy and its sustainable mobility discourse, which, as demonstrated in Chapter 5, has many similarities to the Swedish context. Therefore, I conclude that the most general results of the thesis (found in Chapters 7 and 8) apply to Western European sustainable mobility discourse.

Fourth and finally, there might be limitations to generalisation posed by the fact that the UEA policy primarily revolves around short-distance travel. For example, in my critical investigation of the discourse, the focus has been on urban travelling. As a result, I have questioned the transformative nature attributed to public transport due to its effects on active modes of travel. However, the potential for public transport improvements to create a radical shift appears to be greater with medium to long-distance travelling, or at least, the risk of adverse modal shifts from active modes of transport is substantially reduced. Arguing along these lines, van Goeverden et al. (2006) claim that promoting public transport is generally a better solution for long- and medium-distance travel as modal shifts ‘in the case of short-distance public transport mainly takes place at the disadvantage of non-motorised transport modes and hence has adverse environmental effects’ (p. 14). Although the actual effects of long- and short-distance travel alone do not necessarily entail problems for generalising the UEA policy, they illustrate the potential limitations of my material regarding distinctions central to the overarching sustainable mobility discourse.

## Contributions to Current Research Debates

In Chapters 1 and 2, I outlined three main contributions of the thesis. Here, I return to these and relate the thesis’ findings to current research debates. First, I expand on

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On the other hand, on paper, the government continues to be guided by the overarching transport goals of achieving sustainable mobility and reducing GHG emissions from transport by 70 per cent before 2030 (Swedish Government, 2023).



the thesis' contributions to critical planning studies by analysing power and conflicts in transport policies, particularly discussing growth as a central representation. In the second section, I develop my views on studying sustainable mobility discourse, contrasting my perspective with one more commonly used in the transport research literature. Finally, I elaborate on the contribution of adopting a discourse-analytical framework in transport research.

### Understanding Planning Through Transport Policies: Analysing Power and Conflicts

Building on critical transport scholars (Cresswell, 2010; Macmillen, 2013; Marsden & Reardon, 2017), I have argued that power and politics need further attention in transport policy studies (Section 2.2.1.). Additionally, I have proposed that transport, located at the centre of modern societies and with its inherently conflictual nature, is a particularly suitable venue for studying power and politics in policy planning. Thus, in this thesis, I contribute to critical planning literature by analysing mobility in terms of power and conflicts.

The thesis demonstrates how conflicts permeate policy and planning attempts to achieve sustainability, despite discursive efforts to downplay such conflicts. This conclusion echoes the works by many critical planning scholars (Baeten, 2012; Campbell, 2016; Gunder, 2006; Kenis & Lievens, 2016; Legacy, 2016; Næss et al., 2011; Tasan-Kok & Baeten, 2012). Moreover, the thesis offers new empirical inquiry into how this type of power plays out in sustainable mobility discourse.

The influence of power can explain why written and spoken communication within given contexts follow certain patterns. In my analysis, the two most concrete illustrations of this discursive power are naturalisations and silences. In other words, what is taken for granted (naturalised or assumed) and omitted (silenced) represent the results of processes of power. I do not argue that a particular actor is responsible for such naturalising and silencing. Instead, the processes are structural consequences of continuous discursive interactions. Although my analysis has mainly been on the discursive level, it is critical to note that the particular configuration of discourses also has material causes. Thus, the urban form of our cities, present technologies, and the interests of powerful societal groups greatly influence transport policies. Therefore, although power is mainly understood as structural in my analysis, actors play a significant role in the broader context. For example, the influence of actors is clearly revealed in the descriptive analysis of the policy background, where changing goal formulations respond directly to overarching societal conflicts when powerful interests are invested in maintaining the status quo.

These insights were strengthened when I compared the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy with the traditional transport discourse. The growth-centred perspectives found in predict and provide, travel time minimisation, and the focus on economic growth are reproduced by the UEA policy discourse (see Part 8.2.). Moreover, this reproduction of the growth imperative is further demonstrated in the constitutive lines of reasoning and the wheel of growth (See Parts 7.2., 7.3. and 8.1.). Powerful structures and actors wish to pursue growth as a central societal objective, and my analysis has shown that the sustainable mobility discourse (manifested in the UEA policy) is aligned with this objective. The emphasis on growth in the sustainable mobility discourse connects to another central contribution in developing the perspective on power and politics in transport to shed light on planning generally. Notably, transport research has often failed to acknowledge limits in total transport volume, and critical approaches toward growth are more common in other fields such as economics, sociology, and geography (Daly, 1991; Jackson, 2017; Meadows et al., 2004; Molotch, 1976). My study has contributed by conceptualising how several growth representations within sustainable mobility discourse are discursively interlinked and naturalise each other. I have also developed a conceptual metaphor (the wheel of growth) that may be used to analyse how the specific dilemma of combining growth and sustainability may be handled in different policy fields. In line with the normative pathos of critical research (see Section 3.2.1.), I have also critically investigated the discursive representations of growth throughout the thesis, scrutinising their implications and opening up closed constructions within the sustainable mobility discourse.

One specific contribution of the thesis relates to Harvey Molotch's 'the city as a growth machine' thesis, claiming that the main political objective of cities concerns promoting population growth. Questions have been raised about his thesis' generalisability and whether it is primarily a North American phenomenon (Cox, 2017). Notably, the conclusions of my study partly confirm Molotch's thesis. In the thematic analysis (Section 6.1.3.), I discussed population growth goals as a major reason for sustainable mobility. In the material, municipalities advocating growth promotion appeared to share similarities. First, they were of medium size. Second, geographically they were at some distance from the metropolitan areas. Although I have not been able to investigate these observations in detail, they seem relevant for investigations of local approaches to growth.

### Critically Analysing and Describing the Sustainable Mobility Discourse

A central concern in research is providing accurate and valuable descriptions of complex phenomena (Gerring, 2012). The sustainable mobility discourse is no exception, and properly giving an account of its main characteristics is of great importance since it

affects how to evaluate the discourse. Consequently, providing such an analysis of the sustainable mobility discourse has been a key purpose of this thesis<sup>207</sup>.

In a recent article (2020), Holden, Banister, Gössling, Gilpin and Linnerud explored several sustainable mobility discourses and narratives. Based on a literature review, they constructed a typology of approaches towards achieving sustainable mobility. As a result, three main narratives emerged: electromobility, collective transport 2.0, and low-mobility societies. These results are highly relevant to this thesis and partly align with my conclusions. For example, the three narratives share similarities with the three constitutive lines of reasoning developed in this thesis, although sustainable mobility as a necessity and sustainable mobility as progress presumably combine elements from electromobility and collective transport 2.0. However, there is a crucial difference, highlighting one of the central points I have tried to make in this thesis. By reviewing transport research, their article, along with most other sustainable transport studies, primarily understands sustainable mobility through a particular normative and conceptual lens.

In Chapter 1, I stated that sustainable mobility is as much a scientific discourse as a policy discourse, and the two are inherently intertwined. Nevertheless, analytically, there is a significant difference regarding the aspect studied. Whereas the study of the discourse's scientific side tends to be general, normative, and conceptually oriented, analysing sustainable mobility in policies is more specific, empirical, and contextually situated. The first approach is principally top-down, relying on normative principles provided by academically acclaimed sources (such as the IPCC or David Banister's 2008 article). Of course, studies with this approach also involve empirical analysis, but they often categorise results contradicting the normative principles of sustainable mobility as anomalies, distortions, or barriers (see Chapter 2 for a presentation of these kinds of studies). Contrastingly, the alternative approach is bottom-up. It begins at the policy level, treating empirically investigated patterns and constructions as descriptions of the discourse.

Both methods are valid, but it is crucial to recognise the different outcomes. As evident from this thesis' analysis, I have adopted the policy approach that empirically investigates how sustainable mobility discourse is constructed (see Rehnlund, 2019 for a similar approach). The main benefit of this way of studying transport, I argue, is a reduced risk of idealism, as conflicts and contradictions are recognised as integral parts

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<sup>207</sup> In contrast to my emphasis on sustainable mobility discourse, many other studies have described sustainable mobility in terms of a paradigm (Aldred, 2014; Banister, 2008; Isaksson, 2020; Johansson et al., 2016; Litman, 1999; Lyons, 2016; Rye, 2020; Sheller & Urry, 2006). Although there can be a significant difference between paradigms and discourses, for many scholars in the transport field, they are the same.

of the discourse and not explained as anomalies to ideals. Furthermore, it allows for understanding the sustainable mobility discourse in development. Finally, it opens up the critique of the representations currently dominating the discourse. Developing normative principles and visions is undoubtedly a significant endeavour, but my point is that normatively guided analyses need to be complemented by more empirically grounded studies on sustainable mobility discourse.

### Discourse Analysis in Transport and Planning Research

The dominance of engineers, economists, and planners in transport research has historically led to somewhat of a methodological monoculture (cf. Macmillen, 2013; Marsden & Reardon, 2017). The perception that transport is mainly about physical phenomena, such as infrastructure and vehicles, has led to interpretative methods being underused to understand transport issues. Although social scientists have increasingly challenged this perception, more advanced critical methodologies are underused in this field (Hickman & Hannigan, 2023). One of the aims of this thesis has been to develop a discourse-analytical framework suitable for analysing discourse within transport policy.

Discourse analysis is pivotal to social science research because it sheds light upon structures in communication commonly taken for granted. In doing so, it foregrounds how dominant and silenced representations are results of power (as argued in Section 9.2.1.). The discursive approach also comes with a critical perspective, which questions norms and assumptions unrecognised by other methodologies. However, by combining the discourse-analytical literature and transport research, the complexity and obscurity of the former are also apparent. Thus, many traditional planning studies' transparent and concrete approaches towards research may inspire discourse analysts. One of the central contributions of this thesis is to adopt and develop a transparent and concrete discourse-analytical approach for studying sustainable mobility discourse in transport policies. I have combined the epistemological and ontological foundation of critical realism and critical discourse analysis with the concrete methods of thematic analysis and case study design. I have also developed how to explore the relationships among the discursive patterns identified in the thematic analysis. Finally, I have proposed ways to investigate the connections between the discourse and its context. Although discourse analyses contain great challenges, my aim has been for the analytical steps of the thesis to provide a transparent direction from the particular to the general, accompanied by empirical grounding and theoretical guidance.

## Further Research

Unfortunately, I have not been able to give several issues the space I would have liked and they need to be tackled in future research. Therefore, in this short section, I describe what I think are issues that deserve more attention.

One of the purposes of this thesis has been to provide general insights into the sustainable mobility discourse in the Western European transport policy field. Naturally, this would be an impossible task without significant delimitations. Although I argue that the Swedish Urban Environment Agreement policy can bring such general insights into the overarching sustainable transport discourse, it would undoubtedly be very fruitful to compare my results to other studies of policy and non-policy manifestations of this overarching discourse. My approach to reaching general conclusions has been to abstract and synthesise the discursive patterns of the policy discourse in order to make them more generally applicable. However, in this analytical process, some of the nuances get lost. Therefore, future research could compare my case study to contrasting cases to provide a more encompassing picture of elements central to the present sustainable mobility discourse and which plays a minor role.

Additionally, aspects of equity and transport justice have not been emphasised in the thesis. Still, these concerns are crucial for disadvantaged groups and, indirectly, for how the general public perceives environmental policies. As several local parties in Sweden and the anti-car-restrictions movement demonstrate, transport interventions' actual and perceived distributional effects are central to how citizens respond to them. Globally, the wealthiest 10 per cent of the population is responsible for 52 per cent of the cumulative carbon emissions (Gore, 2020) and more than 90 per cent of everyday passenger kilometres by car in Sweden are driven by 25 per cent of the population (Hiselius & Smidfelt Rosqvist, 2018, p. 336). Thus, transport inequality is significant and stems from a gap between population segments responsible for emissions and those paying the highest price for traffic-related adverse impacts. This inequality is related to the social expectations connected to mobility. If a certain level of mobility becomes the norm, individuals, regardless of social position, are expected to have access to that same level. Consequently, the general demand for mobility will increase (and with that, adverse environmental effects), and inequalities based on mobility will be reinforced.

Moreover, as I have indicated, the discursive has to be contrasted with non-discursive. How certain representations become dominant and how others are silenced are the result of power struggles. And importantly, these power struggles are not simply discursive but are about material interests, capital, votes, networks, etc. Unfortunately, my thesis has been mainly delimited to the discursive level. Building on the conclusions drawn here and relating them to the material and institutional conditions of transport policy would be a significant venue for future research.

Finally, as for the thesis' case study, two interrelated issues remain unexplored from a Swedish transport policy perspective, particularly regarding the UEA policy. First, the UEA has been institutionalised and has become a recurrent way to apply for financial support. What are the implications of this institutionalisation of the UEA? Second, a couple of years after its initiation, the policy changed to include bicycle infrastructure and separate funding for freight infrastructure projects. What do these changes mean for the sustainable mobility discourse of the UEA policy?

## Final Reflections and Brief Policy Recommendations

Throughout this thesis, I have repeatedly discussed how several growth forms are naturalised through the power of discourse. *There is no alternative to mobility growth*, paraphrasing an infamous UK prime minister, or as the European Commission states in their *Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area*, 'Curbing mobility is not an option' (EC, 2011, p. 5). Notably, it is the empirical and normative naturalisation of growth that makes the 'dilemma of mobility' a dilemma. Although academics and activists are increasingly raising concerns about endless growth (Bertolini, 2020; Hickel & Kallis, 2019; Klein, 2015; Latouche, 2009; Thunberg, 2022), it remains central in almost every part of society. Still, restraining consumption represents a universal method for reducing emissions, waste, and environmental degradation.

One of the main points in this thesis is that solutions that increase 'good' mobility are given priority over measures that decrease 'bad' mobility. Although I have discussed this primarily in relation to environmental issues, it also applies to equality and equity concerns. The major solution to injustices in mobility is to increase the mobility of the underprivileged. However, this growth-promoting option of 'solving' inequality by increasing the possibility of the underprivileged to consume more transport holds the same problems as in the environmental sphere. That is, more growth does not address the fundamental problems of inequalities or environmental degradation.

In transport studies, policy recommendations are usually provided at the end. However, I have not written this thesis solely for policymakers but for everyone wanting to transform the transport system with genuine concerns for equality and the environment. Having said that, if there is anything policymakers should learn from the thesis, it is this: the way sustainable mobility is talked and written about in policies is locked into assumptions and norms about ever-increasing growth. While from a short-term strategic viewpoint, it might be preferable to pursue the current pathway of increasing 'good' mobility and hope (assume) that 'bad' mobility will decrease, looking at the rate at which transport-related emissions have decreased in Sweden does not

provide a convincing track record for this approach. In recent years, there has been no significant emission reduction (SEPA, 2021), and achieving a 70 per cent decrease in GHG emissions by 2030 compared to 2010 appears increasingly distant. Globally, the trends are even worse, with growth offsetting technological improvements, leading to increasing emissions (Foster et al., 2021; IEA, 2022). Therefore, increasing something and hoping that something else will decrease appears unreliable. It might not let us reach the commitment of keeping the global average temperature below 2°C and working for a maximum increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, as stated in the Paris Agreement (UN, 2015).

Thus, I propose an alternative policy approach: to decrease ‘bad’ mobility and increase ‘good’ mobility only when necessary, particularly when it benefits the underprivileged. So, how should we distinguish ‘good’ from ‘bad’ mobility? The easiest way is to examine the resources needed for mobility and its subsequent emissions. From that perspective, active modes of transport perform best (cf. Ekblad et al., 2016; Gössling & Choi, 2015; Pucher & Buehler, 2010). Furthermore, a central premise should be that relative improvements are insufficient, in contrast to what is often emphasised in the sustainable mobility discourse. Relying on relative improvements assumes that the predicted future turns out as expected. Yet history is full of examples of forecasts turning out to be misguided. Therefore, emphasising less polluting public transport over more polluting cars is mainly valid within a growth narrative, where growth is seen as inevitable and increasing emissions is legitimised through arguments about increasing utility per ton emitted. However, the lungs of exposed people do not care about relative efficiency, the restricted movement of children does not care that hypothetical alternatives are worse, and the environment is not affected by relative emissions levels. The things most of us value, such as health, freedom, and ecological prosperity, are affected by the absolute consequences of traffic, not the relative ones.

# List of UEA Policy Agreements 2015-2016

## First round (2015)

Gävle Municipality  
Helsingborg Municipality  
Karlstad Municipality  
Linköping Municipality  
Luleå Municipality  
Lund Municipality  
Östersund Municipality

Stockholm Municipality  
(& Stockholm Region)  
Trollhättan Municipality  
Umeå Municipality  
Uppsala Municipality  
Västerås Municipality  
Växjö Municipality  
Örebro Municipality  
(& Region Örebro)

## Second Round (2016)

Borås Municipality  
Eskilstuna Municipality  
Göteborg Municipality  
(& Region Västra Götaland)  
Helsingborg Municipality  
Jönköping Municipality  
Karlskrona Municipality  
Kungsbacka Municipality  
Kungälv Municipality  
(& Region Västra Götaland)  
Linköping Municipality  
Malmö Municipality  
Norrköping Municipality  
Nyköping Municipality

## Third Round (2016)

Hörby Municipality  
Landskrona Municipality  
Skellefteå Municipality  
Stockholm Region  
(& Stockholm Municipality)  
Värnamo Municipality





# The Application Form

This second appendix includes the application form used by the Swedish Transport Administration for handling the Urban Environment Agreement application procedure. This form is central as it constitutes the frame for the so-called agreements between the municipality or region and the Transport Administration. As I describe in Chapter 4, these agreements are the primary empirical of the thesis. The application form is in Swedish, but in Chapter 4, I present the headlines and questions critical for this thesis.

## Ansökningsformulär

Statligt stöd för att främja hållbara stadsmiljöer – Stadsmiljöavtal  
SFS 2015:579

Uppgifter om den sökande

<b>Kommunens eller landstingets namn</b>	
<b>Adress</b>	
<b>Postadress</b>	
<b>Organisationsnummer</b>	
<b>E-postadress</b>	
<b>Telefonnummer</b>	
<b>Plusgiro-/bankgironummer</b>	
<b>Kontaktperson/-er</b>	
<b>Kontaktpersons e-postadress</b>	
<b>Kontaktpersons telefonnummer</b>	

## Typ av åtgärd som stöd söks för

Kryssa i vilken typ av åtgärd som ansökan avse (fler alternativ är möjliga):

- Investeringar i anläggningar för lokal och regional kollektivtrafik (2 §)**
- Investeringar i anläggningar för nya transportlösningar för lokal och regional kollektivtrafik för att demonstrera och prova dessa. (3 §)**

En översiktlig beskrivning av hur åtgärder som stöd söks för och motprestationer passar in i kommunens eller landstingets övergripande arbete med en hållbar stadsmiljö (8 §)

**3a. Hur främjar åtgärderna som stöd söks för och motprestationer en hållbar stadsmiljö?**

**3b. Vilka beslutade planer/program, till exempel översiktsplan, visar detta?**

Ange länk till översiktsplanen inklusive sidhänvisning.

**3c. Ange länk till andra relevanta dokument som ni vill hänvisa till och som är relevanta för ansökan (exempelvis fördjupa översiktsplan, utbyggnadsplaner, trafikstrategi, cykelstrategi etc.). Ange även sidhänvisning.**

## Beskrivning av åtgärden som stöd söks för (8§)

**4a. Beskriv kortfattat den eller de åtgärder som stöd söks för samt, vid komplexa åtgärder, vilka delar som ingår i respektive åtgärd. Lägg till fler rader om ni söker för fler än tre åtgärder.**

Åtgärd 1

Åtgärd 2

Åtgärd 3

**4b. Vilka parter ingår i åtgärden? Om flera parter – vem gör vad?**

Åtgärd 1

Åtgärd 2

Åtgärd 3

**4c. Startpunkt för genomförande av åtgärden (år/månad) Bifoga tidplan eller GANTT-schema.**

Åtgärd 1

Åtgärd 2

Åtgärd 3

**4d. Beskriv mognadsgraden i projektet. (Har alla förberedande studier genomförts, finns budgetmedel avsatt, har erforderliga tillstånd inhämtats, har upphandling påbörjats och har en projektorganisation etablerats?)**

Åtgärd 1

Åtgärd 2

Åtgärd 3

**4e. Beräknad slutpunkt för genomförande av åtgärden (år/månad). Ange även beräknad trafikstart i de fall det är motiverat.**

Åtgärd 1

Åtgärd 2

Åtgärd 3

**4f. Är åtgärden innovativ? Om JA, på vilket sätt? (1 §)**

Åtgärd 1

Åtgärd 2

Åtgärd 3

**4g. Främjar åtgärderna kapacitetsstarka och resurseffektiva lösningar för kollektivtrafik? (1 §)**

Kapacitetsstarka   
 Resurseffektiva   
 Motivera på vilket sätt

Atgärd 1

Atgärd 2

Atgärd 3

Analys av hur åtgärderna leder till att en större andel persontransporter i staden sker med kollektivtrafik samt bidrar till att uppfylla miljökvalitetsmålet God bebyggd miljö (8§)

**5. Redovisa analys för hur åtgärderna leder till att en större andel personresor i staden sker med kollektivtrafik, att de leder till energieffektiva lösningar med låga utsläpp av växthusgaser samt bidrar till att uppfylla miljökvalitetsmålet God bebyggd miljö [Länk](#).**

En redovisning av uppskattade kostnader och finansiering av åtgärderna och uppgift om när kostnaderna planeras att redovisas till Trafikverket (8 §)

**6a. Kostnadsfördelning per åtgärd**

Kostnader för motprestationsåtgärder får inte räknas in i beloppet.

Kostnad (tkr)	Åtgärdens namn	2016	2017	2018	Totalt belopp (tkr)
Kostnad Åtgärd 1					
Kostnad Åtgärd 2					
Kostnad Åtgärd 3					
Total kostnad (tkr)					

**6b. Finansiering****Åtgärd 1**

Åtgärdens namn:

Fördelning per år (tkr)	2016	2017	2018	Totalt belopp (tkr)
Kommunen/landsting				
Regional kollektivtrafikmyndighet				
EU-bidrag				
Annan offentlig finansiering Ange vilken				
Privat finansiering				
Ange sökt belopp*				
Total kostnad (tkr)				

\*Stöd lämnas med högst 50 % av kostnaderna för att genomföra åtgärderna. Vid fastställandet av stödnivå beaktar Trafikverket om kommunen eller landstinget har sökt eller beviljats annan offentlig eller privat finansiering för att genomföra åtgärderna. (6 §)

## Åtgärd 2

Åtgärdens namn:

Fördelning per år (tkr)	2016	2017	2018	Totalt belopp (tkr)
Kommunen/landsting				
Regional kollektivtrafikmyndighet				
EU-bidrag				
Annan offentlig finansiering <i>Ange vilken</i>				
Privat finansiering				
Ange sökt belopp*				
Total kostnad (tkr)				

## Åtgärd 3

Åtgärdens namn:

Fördelning per år (tkr)	2016	2017	2018	Totalt belopp (tkr)
Kommunen/landsting				
Regional kollektivtrafikmyndighet				
EU-bidrag				
Annan offentlig finansiering <i>Ange vilken</i>				
Privat finansiering				
Ange sökt belopp*				
Total kostnad (tkr)				

Kopiera och klipp in fler finansieringstabeller om ni söker till fler än tre åtgärder.

## Beskrivning av motprestationer som kommunen åtar sig att genomföra (8 §)

### 7a. Beskriv kortfattat de motprestationer som kommunen eller landstinget åtar sig att genomföra.

Planer för bebyggelse centralt, kollektivtrafikhärla och funktionsblandat inklusive en målsättning om att detaljplanerna huvudsakligen ska följa översiktsplanen.

*Beskriv (beskriv även hur det bidrar till ökat bostadsbyggande, antal bostäder):*

Utbyggnad av gång- och cykelvägar och kollektivtrafik utöver det som medfinansiering söks för.

*Beskriv:*

Uiformning av och hastighet på gator i staden anpassade för gående, cyklister och kollektivtrafik.

*Beskriv:*

Parkeringsstrategi, parkeringstal och avgifter för minskat antal bilar och biltrafik i staden.

*Beskriv:*

Övrigt

*Beskriv:*

### 7b. Beskriv mognadsgraden i motprestationerna.

*(Har alla förberedande studier genomförts, finns budgetmedel avsatt, har erforderliga tillstånd inhämtats, har upphandling påbörjats och har en projektorganisation etablerats?)*

### 7c. Startpunkt och beräknad slutpunkt för genomförande av motprestationen (år/månad) Bifoga tidplan eller GANTT-schema

En beskrivning av hur åtgärderna som stöd söks för och motprestationerna samt effekterna av dem kommer att följas upp (8 §)

### 8a. Hur kommer de åtgärder som stöd söks för och motprestationer följas upp?

### 8b. Hur kommer effekterna följas upp?

### 8c. Beskriv förväntade effekter.

## Övriga förutsättningar av vikt för åtgärdernas och motprestationernas genomförande (8 §)

**9a. Finns åtgärder i infrastrukturen i Nationell transportplan och Länstransportplan som är en förutsättning för ovanstående ansökan? Ange länkar om sådana finns.**

**9b. Vilka risker finns att åtgärderna som stöd söks för inte genomförs som planerat (tid/kostnad)?**

**9c. Vilka risker finns att motprestationerna inte genomförs som planerat (tid/kostnad)?**

**9d. Annan information av vikt för ansökan.**

### Rapportering och uppföljning

Vid beslut om stöd ska kommunen eller landstinget inom sex månader inkomma med en plan till Trafikverket om hur uppföljningen kommer läggas upp. Planen ska tas fram i samråd med K2 (Nationellt kunskapscentrum för kollektivtrafik) som fått Trafikverkets uppdrag att utvärdera stadsmiljöavtalen. Kommunen eller landstinget ska utöver detta även vara behjälplig med uppgifter till den utvärdering som görs av stödet. Mätning av resande och resandefördelning (bil, kollektivtrafik, gång och cykel) ska för relevanta områden ske före och efter genomförandet av åtgärder och motprestationer. En kommun eller ett landsting som har fått stöd ska årligen till Trafikverket rapportera hur genomförandet av åtgärderna och motprestationerna fortskrider.

När åtgärderna som stödet avser har genomförts ska en slutrapport ges in till Trafikverket. Rapporten ska ges in inom sex månader från den planerade sluttidpunkt som framgår av beslutet (13 §).

Slutrapporten ska innehålla en ekonomisk slutredovisning av åtgärderna som stödet beviljats för. Av rapporten ska särskilt framgå vilka effekter som åtgärderna har gett. Rapporten ska ange om de motprestationer som kommunen eller landstinget ska genomföra är slutförda. Rapporten ska även innehålla en redogörelse för kommunens eller landstingets arbete för en hållbar stadsmiljö och hur åtgärderna och motprestationerna har bidragit i det arbetet (14 §).

Underskrift	Befattning
Namnförtydligande	

Ansökan ska skrivas under av en person som är behörig att företräda kommunen eller landstinget enligt delegationsordningen.

*Tänk på att bifogade länkar i dokumentet ska vara klickbara.*



# The Interview Guide Template

This appendix consists of a template of the interview guide used. Importantly, the template constitutes only parts of the actual guide for each interview as several questions specific to the interviewee were added. The below version is a translation as the original was in Swedish.

## **Interview guide template**

1. Can you tell me about your work and how you have worked with the Urban Environment Agreement?
2. What is your view on how the Urban Environment Agreement was created?
3. What do you feel was the main reason for having Urban Environment Agreements? Do you think there is a difference between national, regional and local levels?
4. A reoccurring reason for investments in infrastructure is its effects on different forms of growth. What do you believe is the relationship between the urban environment and growth? What do you think about the relationship between growth and sustainability, especially regarding infrastructure?
5. Is there anything you think might interest me that you would like to add?
6. Who would you suggest if I were to interview others important for understanding the Urban Environment Agreement?
7. Do you have any questions?





## Consent Forms

Below are the two versions of the consent forms used. The first one was used for the interview between 2017-03-29 and 2019-01-11. For all the interviews after 2019-01-11, the second form was used.

### Samtyckesformulär (version 1)

Samtycke till deltagande i forskningsprojektet *Utvärdering av stadsmiljöavtalet*

Jag har tagit del av information om forskningsprojektet *Utvärdering av stadsmiljöavtalet* och fått tillfälle att ställa frågor och få dem besvarade vad gäller studien och mitt deltagande i den.

Jag är informerad om att deltagande i studien är frivilligt, att jag kan avbryta min medverkan när jag önskar. Jag är också informerad om att materialet kommer att behandlas konfidentiellt och enbart användas i forskningssyfte.

Jag samtycker till att bli intervjuad inom ramen för forskningsprojektet *Utvärdering av stadsmiljöavtalet*

Ort och datum .....

---

Namnunderskrift

---

Namnförtydligande

## Samtyckesblankett vid intervjuer (version 2)

### Utvärdering av Stadsmiljöavtalet

Du som får detta brev har tackat ja till att bli intervjuad i forskningsprojektet "Utvärdering av Stadsmiljöavtalet" som genomförs av K2 – nationellt kunskapscentrum för kollektivtrafik. I det här brevet får du information om projektet och om vad det innebär att delta.

### Om projektet

Syftet med projektet är att utvärdera Stadsmiljöavtalet. Det genomförs i huvudsakligen genom två doktorandprojekt som till stora delar har en självständig utformning. Det doktorandprojekt som denna intervju ingår i är statsvetenskapligt och har som ambition att förstå makt och språkanvändning i transportpolitiken generellt och stadsmiljöavtalet specifikt. Information om projektet finns även på K2: s hemsida: <http://www.k2centrum.se/utvardering-av-stadsmiljoavtalet>

### Ditt deltagande

Vi vill intervju dig då du är verksam inom forskningsprojektets studieområde och då du har erfarenheter och kunskap som är värdefulla för projektet. Ditt deltagande i studien går ut på att du bidrar med dina erfarenheter och tankar om Stadsmiljöavtalet och Sveriges transportpolitik.

Deltagandet är frivilligt. Om du väljer att delta kommer du att bli intervjuad under ca 20-60 min av en av projektets forskare. Intervjun kommer genomföras på en plats som du själv väljer eller online. Du väljer själv hur mycket du vill berätta under intervjun. Du kan när som helst under intervjun välja att dra tillbaka ditt samtycke till deltagande utan att uppge skäl. Intervjun kommer att spelas in och därefter skrivas ut och tillsammans med övriga intervjuer analyseras utifrån våra frågeställningar.

### Hantering av personuppgifter

Dina personuppgifter (inspelning av intervjun och en anonymiserad transkribering som kommer att användas för analys) kommer att behandlas så att obehöriga inte kan ta del av dem. Materialet kan komma att användas i andra forskningsstudier.

Resultaten av studien kommer att publiceras i en doktorsavhandling, men kan även komma att publiceras i populärvetenskapliga rapporter och vetenskapliga artiklar, samt presenteras muntligt vid konferenser och seminarier. Inga personer kommer att nämnas vid namn. I undantagsfall, då det behövs för analysen, kommer vi att ange organisation och position för källan till en viss ståndpunkt.

Ansvarig för de uppgifter som samlas in är Lunds universitet. Dina personuppgifter kommer att hanteras i enlighet med EU:s dataskyddsförordning (GDPR) och Lunds universitets riktlinjer (<https://www.lu.se/start/behandling-av-personuppgifter-vid-lunds-universitet>). Enligt EU:s dataskyddsförordning har du rätt att kostnadsfritt få ta del av de personuppgifter om dig som behandlas, och vid behov få eventuella fel rättade. Du kan också begära att uppgifter om dig raderas samt att behandlingen av dina personuppgifter begränsas. Under vissa omständigheter medger dataskyddsförordningen undantag från dessa rättigheter. Om du vill återopa rättigheterna, kan du ta kontakt med ansvarig forskare eller dataskyddsombudet (se nedan).

### **Kontaktuppgifter**

Forskningshuvudman och personuppgiftsansvarig för projektet är Lunds universitet. Om du har frågor kring studien eller ditt deltagande, kontakta ansvarig forskare Elias Isaksson, Statsvetenskapliga institutionen, Lunds universitet. E-post: [elias.isaksson@svet.lu.se](mailto:elias.isaksson@svet.lu.se)

Om du vill ta del av dina personuppgifter eller har frågor eller klagomål på hur dina personuppgifter används kan du vända dig till Lunds universitets dataskyddsombud, [dataskyddsombud@lu.se](mailto:dataskyddsombud@lu.se). Om du är missnöjd med hur dina personuppgifter behandlas har du rätt att klaga till Datainspektionen.

### **Samtycke till att delta i studien ”Utvärdering av Stadsmiljöavtalet”**

Jag har fått muntlig och skriftlig information om studien och har haft möjlighet att ställa frågor.

- Jag samtycker till att delta i studien som beskrivs i dokumentet ”Utvärdering av Stadsmiljöavtalet”.
- Jag samtycker till att uppgifter om mig behandlas på det sätt som beskrivs i dokumentet ”Utvärdering av Stadsmiljöavtalet”.

Plats och datum	Underskrift



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