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Implementation of the Habitat-agenda - residents' interest and actions in citizen-participation processes – a comparison of residential areas in Sweden and Russia.

Abstract

Within the politics of sustainable development citizens are expected to play an active and direct role in the implementation process. The potential for citizens to actually assume this role remains, however, unclear. This paper explores the prerequisites for *citizen participation* in accordance with the UN document *the Habitat-agenda*. In the paper we discuss the actual requirements for democratic participation in local urban communities, emphasising the level of the individual, in both the Swedish and the Russian context. Do residents have the interest, time and will to work as local actors toward sustainable habitation? Is there a difference in collective action in Swedish and the Russian residential areas? This has been studied in the context of four cases: the small-house area *Kungsgärdet* and the multi-family house area *Gottsunda* in Sweden, and the small-house area *Perevalka* and multi-family house area *Drjevlanka* in Russia. The results indicate that the conditions cannot be considered optimal in any of the cases, as local participation is generally not prioritised by the citizens. Some differences emerged in terms of attitudes concerning general participation in local matters between the four residential areas, though a clear exception here was the question of citizen participation in *actual planning or implementation processes*, which afforded relatively similar results in all four cases. Few people actively participated or wanted to participate. In one of the Russian areas, however, a few of the respondents expressed an *interest* in participating for change in the area, which is the first prerequisite for implementing the Habitat agenda. An initial assumption of the study was that participation would be greater in Swedish residential areas, due to Sweden's relatively long tradition of democratic practice, as compared to Russia. That assumption can now, in general, be dismissed even if there was slightly higher *citizen participation for change* in the Swedish cases.

Contact details of the authors:

Madeleine Granvik, Per G. Berg & Ulla Berglund

Department of Urban and Rural Development, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, P.O Box 7012, 750 07 Uppsala, Sweden; e-mail: Madeleine.Granvik@sol.slu.se, Per.Berg@sol.slu.se, Ulla.Berglund@sol.slu.se

Introduction

The following paper proceeds from the intentions of the Habitat- agenda (UNCHS, 1998) and *Agenda 21* (UNCED 1992). These global policy programmes seek to encourage engagement in local sustainable development. They stress the importance of lifestyle changes and citizen participation in the process of implementing sustainable development. What is required to bring about such policies in reality? In the following paper we discuss the actual prerequisites for citizen participation on a local community scale. We emphasise the level of the individual in residential areas in both the Swedish and the Russian context.

The theoretical part of the paper takes up the discourse on sustainable development coupled with planning and residential politics and then elaborates on theories concerning citizen participation. The results of four case studies are then presented, two carried out in Uppsala, Sweden and two in Petrozavodsk, Russia, focussing on the conditions for residents' participation in local sustainable development work. In conclusion, the four studies are then compared and citizen participation related to sustainable community development¹.

Starting points for the studies

The Habitat-agenda (UNCHS, 1998), the action plan resulting from the UN-conference on human settlements 1996 in Istanbul (Habitat II), emphasises the importance of *citizen participation* and *local work* to achieve a sustainable habitation. These issues were generally implied four years earlier in the *Agenda 21* action plan from the conference on environmental and development issues held in Rio de Janeiro (UNCED, 1992). This paper takes as its main starting point the basic intentions stipulated in the Habitat-agenda.

A central principle, according to the Habitat-agenda, is that every country has committed itself to the decentralisation of power: to have local authorities elected by the people (within the framework of judicial principles present in each country). The following quotation indicates the importance of the local level and of citizens' participation in the outline of community development in accordance with the Habitat-agenda:

Sustainable human settlements' development requires the active engagement of civil society organizations, as well as the broad-based participation of all people. It equally requires responsive, transparent and accountable government at the local level. Civic engagement and responsible government both necessitate the establishment

¹ The study is a part of the research project *The Local Community as an Arena for Sustainable Urban Development in the Baltic Sea Region*, being carried out at the Department of Urban and Rural Development, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in Uppsala, Sweden, where similar types of residential areas are studied in Poland, Latvia, Russia, Denmark and Sweden (Berg, 2004b).

and strengthening of participatory mechanisms, including access to justice and community-based action planning, which will ensure that all voices are heard in identifying problems and priorities, setting goals, exercising legal rights, determining service standards, mobilizing resources and implementing policies, programmes and projects (UNCHS, 1998, The Habitat-agenda, chapter IV, section D.3, § 181).

The path towards sustainability should furthermore – as the citation below shows - be adapted to the specific economic, environmental, and organisational (spatial), cultural, aesthetic and social characteristics of the different communities:

The quality of life of all people depends, among other economic, social, environmental and cultural factors, on the physical conditions and spatial characteristics of our villages, towns and cities. City layout and aesthetics, land use patterns, population and building densities, transportation and ease of access for all, to basic goods, services and public amenities have a crucial bearing on the liveability of settlements. [...] (UNCHS, 1998, Habitat-agenda, chapter II, section IV: 30).

There are then good reasons to determine the prerequisites for implementing these political visions on citizen participation in practice. Over the last fifteen years, a number of researchers have studied “best practices” within the context of *Agenda 21* and in accordance with the intentions of the Habitat-agenda. Particular measures have often been taken in these projects in order to support sustainable development and these projects have all clearly relied substantially upon citizen participation (Berg, 2004a; Pløger, 2002; Falkheden, 1999; Alfredsson & Cars, 1996; Gilman & Gilman, 1991; McCamant, 1993). In this work we study residential areas in both Sweden and Russia. The areas studied were, however, all examples of *common types* of residential area. No particular sustainable development programmes were followed in any of them. This is particularly important to highlight, as residents’ commitment and participation can be influenced “from the outside” as a consequence of the introduction of such sustainability programmes. A special focus on sustainable development in the residential area, may also affect the residents differently dependent upon *who* launches such an initiative: a person living in the area, a group of residents, the municipality or a housing area manager (Berg, 2004a).

From collective movements to local action?

Earlier investigations show that there is a sharper division today between the individual and the broader community (Giddens, 1991; Berman, 1987; Lash, 1994; Laessø, 1992). The tendency is for increasing numbers of people to retreat into the *private*, the *family* and the *local* (Laessø, 1992) to a greater extent than in the period of mid 1960’s to the mid 1980’s. At that time engagement in popular movements (e.g. solidarity-, women-, energy-, environmental-, community-, peace-movements) and *collective matters* in general were much more prominent. Today individualism and freedom of choice are the main issues. Furthermore, individuals increasingly relate to, act in, and identify themselves with their own *local neighbourhood*, *residential area*, *living – to create their own lifestyle* (Laessø, 1992). One could argue that such a situation would be a good basis for one of the intentions in the Habitat-agenda, namely, that the state of the local environment and its inhabitants’ participation play a significant role in a

sustainable city development. But, do citizens actually *participate* in the process of changes in their local environment? The overarching question for the study is: *How interested are residents in acting to develop their residential area?* Do residents have the interest, time, and will to work locally as actors towards a more sustainable habitation? Moreover, is there a difference between participating in collective interests in the Swedish residential areas and in the Russian ones? In addition, is it reasonable to assume that participation is greater in Swedish as compared to Russian residential areas, because of Sweden's longer tradition and experience of democracy via historical decentralization processes, popular movements, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, the principle of public access to official records, and tenants' alliances, etc?

Democracy, citizen participation and sustainable development

International documents such as *Agenda 21* and The Habitat-agenda emphasize the importance of a democratic initiative and citizen participation, for local sustainable community development. *Citizen participation* in planning and decision-making processes is even brought to the fore as a fundamental requirement of sustainable urban development (Healey, 1997; Hallsmith, 2003). In Swedish policy texts concerning sustainable development both the terms *citizen participation* and *bottom-up* perspective are often used (SOU 2003:31). The term *bottom-up* emphasises a power hierarchy: from the bottom – the people, up to the top – the state. Another term – *people's initiative* (*folkinitiativ* in Swedish) has been discussed as a substitute to *bottom-up*, both to avoid the hierarchical colouring, and to clearly define one basic meaning of the idea – people who take initiative (Granvik, 2002). Other terms commonly used in this context include *citizen involvement* or *user participation* (Leach *et al.* 2005). Montin (1998) defines users as “persons in the vicinity who are personally influenced by a community activity and who, as a rule, utilize it continually over a relatively long time”.

In this study we use the term *citizen participation*, since it combines the notions of citizenship *and* governance. In the past, citizens ‘had to be governed’. But, *citizen participation* suggests that citizens can govern themselves. This occurs by influencing the decision-making processes which affect them, their e.g. livelihoods, communities and environments. We understand *citizen participation* in the context of *local work* in residential areas, where the *initiative* emerges from the residents, who play an active role in *identifying problems and priorities, setting goals, exercising legal rights, determining service standards, mobilizing resources and implementing policies, programmes and projects*. In practice we investigate whether the residents in our cases are directly or indirectly involved in the further planning and implementation of their habitats’ environmental, economic, organisational, social, cultural and aesthetic development in accordance with the Habitat agenda (Habitat,1998).

Preconditions for participatory processes in Russia

To understand *citizen participation* in Russia, it is necessary to review some of its history, politics, economy and culture. When reviewing Russian history, we find no real basis for an effective civilian sector since the Russian revolution 1917. Before that time, local democracy was relatively well developed in *Russian villages* in accordance with the so-called *zemstvo* system². Today's Russian society however still faces the challenge of democratic reformation and the need to re-build the civilian sector (Åberg, 2003; Evans Jr. 2002). Since the fall of the Soviet Union, attempts to initiate a democratization process have primarily been made from *within* the ruling regime (Ibid). During Gorbachev's reign, with "*glasnost*" and "*perestroika*", a basis for a civilian sector emerged and a number of organizations were put in place. The democratic forces – which in effect were channelled through *Demrossija*³ (Democratic Russia) were, however, not sufficiently strong and united to bring about changes of decisive importance (Weigle, 2000). A survey with 1,919 respondents was carried out between 1999 and 2000 concerning Russian citizens' attitudes to democratic institutions (Colton & McFaul, 2002). Only 20% of the respondents viewed Russia as a democratic country while 73% felt that the Soviet Union should never have been dissolved. However, 60% thought that democracy was beneficial to Russia. Only 12% however were content with the process of democratic development as it then was while 85% thought that decision-makers were unconcerned with the opinions of the people.

Enhanced protection for civil groups was placed into *federal* law during Boris Jeltsin's presidential mandate period 1993-1999, giving these groups the legal right to act in opposition to the state (McFaul, 2002). All civil coalitions which have arisen since Jeltsin's time have, in turn, influenced and contributed to the reformation and development of Russian local democracy. Another change is occurring on the *local level* - where contact and co-operation between civil groups, politicians and civil servants is becoming more common (Weigle, 2002). The federal, regional and local administrations tend, however, to show greater interest in organizations which work with *direct social problems* than those which attend to environmental, rebuilding or human rights issues – for instance in relation to local community development. This is often because the social-interest organizations deal with practical issues which the state itself cannot economically prioritise. It is also the case that environmental and development questions are inherently sensitive and complex issues (Pursiainen, 2000). The weak development of the civilian sector during Vladimir Putin's Presidency has been attributed

² *Zemstvo* was a form of local government instituted during the great liberal reforms undertaken in Imperial Russia by Alexander II. The first *zemstvo* laws were promulgated in 1864.

³ *Demrossija* was an independent coalition for democratic development in Russia comparable with *Solidarity* in Poland. They did not however put forward candidates for national elections.

to the reality of weak parliamentary power within a strong presidential system, thus obstructing progressive attempts from the civilian sector, but also to economic hardship and the existence of only a very small middle class – itself a weak financial and participatory basis for the emergence of a new civilian sector (McFaul, 2002).

The pre-conditions for implementing the Habitat-agenda and *Agenda 21* in Russia could not in any way then be considered optimal. History permeates everyday life and is tightly integrated into people's value sets. The Russian people's experiences of citizen participation as such then remain limited. Still, the current Russian political situation – in spite of many obstacles that continue to exist – nevertheless provides better opportunities for citizen participation in the development of local democracy than under the previous Soviet reign. The question however remains whether this will be sufficient for the Russian people to create more sustainable local communities.

Preconditions for participatory processes in Sweden

The Swedish case is somewhat different, as Sweden has a long tradition of representative democracy and popular movements (SOU 1996). The first act outlining the powers and duties of the local authorities, the *Local Act*, dates back to the year 1862. Even hundreds of years earlier, in medieval society, the roots of local self-governance were found in village communities, counties, landscapes and towns. Since modern local authorities were created in the early 1970s, the policy has been to decentralize decision-making even further. Swedish *municipalities* have been given more and more responsibility for the planning and management of land and water resources and for the outline of community organisation, taxation and local rules. To make it possible for local authorities to take full responsibility for their own land area, the parliament has passed laws guaranteeing the decentralization of planning powers to the local level (in which *local* practically always refers to municipalities and seldom to local communities, city districts or neighbourhoods), far-reaching participation of the public in land-use planning and the protection of areas of national interest. This has been regulated in the *Planning and Building Act* (PBL) since 1987. *The Planning and Building Act* has clear ambitions in respect of participatory democracy, providing citizens with the opportunity to engage in early and continuous participation in the planning process (Henecke & Khan, 2002). Sweden has also a long tradition of basic public education and popular movements and organisations with their roots in the 19th century, a time of great social and economic inequality (SOU, 1996:48).

Since the end of the 20th Century a trend has however emerged towards declining participation rates in such associations, while a general reduction in the level of engagement in collective matters has taken place, simultaneous with a growing disdain for politicians (Petersson, 1998). Widespread experience of increasing stress levels and feelings of having a constant lack of time among citizens can be viewed in conjunction with the above trends (Statistics Sweden, 2001; Jergeby, 1998), as can the fact that an increasing number of people in Sweden, due to

illness, no longer actively participate in working life (Statistics Sweden, 2006). So, the same question is also appropriate concerning the Swedish population's potential for citizen participation, namely, how well equipped are the Swedish people to take local initiatives?

City planning and housing politics in Sweden and Russia

The two main periods which have formed the types of residential areas addressed in the current study are 1930's (small house areas) and 1960/70's-1980's (apartment blocks). Even if the ideology and theoretical orientation among planners may have been similar in the two countries, the practical outcomes of planning – especially with regard to design of residential areas, their architecture and their maintenance - were quite different in Russia and Sweden. In Russia cataclysmic social changes occurred during the **1930's**, when Stalin was dictator, with the sacrifice of human lives and the reconstruction of Russian society from an agricultural- to an industrial-character. Industry was prioritized, and in 1935 a master plan was accepted in Moscow which was to become the prototype for the rest of the Soviet Union (Lavrov, 2003). A centre was prioritized in the plan, dedicated to political and cultural activities, with great squares, boulevards, and imposing monuments. No real residential policy was developed during Stalin's time (ibid). By the end of the **1960's**, large-scale residential areas of 9-story houses were being built a little further out from the city centres (ibid). These areas became the most common type of residency in Russian cities. During the 15 years between 1960 and 1975, 66 per cent of the residents in Russian cities improved their habitation situation as a result of this effort (Bater, 1996).

In Sweden a residential policy was developed during the **1930's** when *residence-social* questions dominated. The goal was to create healthy and functional housing areas for low-income citizens. Reformists from this period indicated that a solution to the residential problem was necessary in order to create a good society (Franzén & Sandstedt, 1993). In the **1960's** *large-scale* solutions became popular. A policy was adopted to build a million homes between the years 1965 and 1974, in order to solve the residential shortage, the so-called *Million Homes Programme* (ibid).

Selection of cases and interview procedure

A strategic selection of areas was made in the cities Uppsala in Sweden and Petrozavodsk in Russia, since we have previous knowledge of each from earlier studies. Petrozavodsk is the capital city of the Russian republic of Karelia. The city has approximately 280,000 inhabitants and houses two universities and a university college. Karelia is that part of Russia which has the longest boundary with Europe, and thus has great strategic significance in Russian international politics (Dimitri Kislov, personal communication). Four years after the UN conference concerning environment- and developmental in Rio de Janeiro (UNCED, 1992) Russia's president at that time, Boris Yeltsin, declared his political strategies as regards

sustainable development. During the same period Karelia became a pilot region for sustainability issues (Zhurkin, 1997). Uppsala is the fourth largest city in Sweden, with a population of around 190,000 inhabitants. It is situated on the Uppsala plain 70 km north of Stockholm. It is a centre for high technology companies, has a large academic hospital and two universities (Uppsala municipality, 2003). Uppsala municipality has, since the mid 1990's, actively worked with issues of sustainable development e.g. the local *Agenda 21* programme.

Choice of residential areas

Two types of residential areas were chosen for the study: single-family dwellings from the 1930's and multi-family housing - from the 1970's in Uppsala, and the 1980's in Petrozavodsk (figure 1). These areas are typical of the sorts of residential areas where a great part of Swedes live (Statistics Sweden, 1993; Boverket, 2005:p14-28) and in Russia the multi-family residences built between the 1960's and 1990's make up a clear majority of dwellings in which most Russians live (Lavrov, 2003). Single-family houses in Petrozavodsk are, however, rare. This type of area was chosen to correspond as closely as possible to the single-family area in Uppsala when it comes to history and built form. Each area of this type is located close to the city centre, was built in the 1930's, and is comprised of small-houses, built by the owners. At the time of their construction, both areas were situated close to large workplaces: in Uppsala, a brick-works (Bergold, 1989) and in Petrozavodsk, a forest industry and the railway line (Solovjova, 2004). Today however the areas differ markedly in terms of socio-economic matters. The Swedish area *Kungsgärdet* – which was initially built for low-income dwellers - is today an attractive high-income area, whereas the Russian area *Perevalka* is considered as a less attractive low-income area. Most of the houses retain the same standard today as when they were built - wood heating, outhouse, and water is fetched from water pumps (*kolonka*) situated in the streets. The multi-family house areas in both cases were built at a greater distance from the city centre as large-scale, top-down planned complete projects. The Swedish area *Gottsunda* is considered to be a less attractive habitat for low-income dwellers, whereas the Russian area *Drjevlanka* has a diversity of low- and high-income dwellers.



Figure 1. Selected sites in Uppsala: *Kungsgärdet* small house area (A); *Gottsunda* multi-family-house area (B). Selected sites in Petrozavodsk: *Perevalka* small house area (C); *Drjevlanka* multi-family house area (D)

Interviews in four residential areas

Residents were interviewed on citizen participation in the development of the four local areas in question and on the conditions for sustainable housing. The results were paired together with the political intentions in the Habitat-agenda, in order to illuminate the question of citizen participation. Semi-structured interviews were carried out during the spring and autumn of 2003, with a total of 80 residents in Uppsala and Petrozavodsk (twenty interviews were carried out in each of the four residential areas). The overarching question for the study was: *How interested are residents in becoming actively involved in making changes to their residential areas?* The ambition here is primarily to qualitatively assess the degree of citizen participation *among individuals* in local communities. Issues in focus here include whether respondents were active in local work, potentially active in local work or a member in a local association. General questions on politics and social issues were asked to illuminate the respondents' general interest in social matters. The current study has, however, no strong ambition to probe different *groups* of respondents (*e.g.* by gender, age or education), as this was not the focus of the research carried out.

Respondents from the four housing areas were selected from each geographically delimited case. Table 1 shows the gender distribution of the respondents in each residential area. Residents in the chosen geographical areas constituted the total population of the study's respondents. A randomizer was used to select 20 respondents for the Swedish case studies. All of the residents in each residential type were coded and assigned a number (cf. Rosengren & Arvidson, 1992). The interviews were scheduled in advance with the respondents in Uppsala. A letter of inquiry was first sent to their home. The letter was then followed-up by telephone contact, where the respondent said either yes or no to the interview. Only about half of the contacted persons agreed to the interview in the first phase. The procedure was, however, repeated until we reached the desired number of respondents (20). Times were then scheduled for the interviews with those who accepted. Most of the interviews were carried out in the respondents' homes.

The procedure in Petrozavodsk was not the same, since the circumstances differed from those in Uppsala. A number of residents were without telephones, names of residents were not publicly available, and names of the residents were not shown on the mail boxes or in the stairwells. Contact with the respondents was thus taken directly on site in the residential areas by randomly knocking on doors and asking for permission to carry out an interview with the parties concerned - (adults, over 18 years of age living in the area). Most interviews in single-family dwellings were carried out in the respondents' homes, while those of the multi-family dwellings were undertaken outside in the courtyard or by the area's popular walkway.

Table 1 Number of respondents in gender categories for each studied residential area. The selection method used in the Russian cases probably contributed to the female bias in the *Perevalka* case.

Residential area	Women	Men
<i>Kungsgärdet (Sw)</i>	10	10
<i>Gottsunda (Sw)</i>	12	8
<i>Perevalka (Ru)</i>	17	3
<i>Drjevlanka (Ru)</i>	11	9

Each interview was tape-recorded. Categorisations of questions had been formulated in advance. The questions/conversations concerned the positive and negative sides of the residential area, what to change, what to preserve etc., and aspects of participation in local work. The conversation was based upon these questions, but a number of respondents spoke relatively freely without the need for prompting. The introductory request was: *Please describe your residence area*. Leading the conversation as little as possible, the researcher allowed the respondent to choose the direction of conversation, and observed which questions the respondent wished to pursue. A number of respondents had little to say in response to the introductory request. For those who were more talkative, the introductory respondent narrative functioned as an entry point so that the respondents gradually answered a number of other questions that the interviewer had planned to bring up later in the interview. The majority of the other questions were covered in these respondents' own narratives. Spontaneous follow-up questions were also posed by the researchers throughout the conversation with the respondent.

Residents views on local work for change

Kungsgärdet

A large majority of respondents were dissatisfied with the traffic situation in *Kungsgärdet*. They felt that the speed limit - 50 km/h - was too high, considering the narrowness of the streets, the presence of children playing in the streets, and the many cats in the area. They would prefer to have the speed limit reduced to 30 km/h. - *The corner of Hagunda Street is very dangerous. People drive too fast there* (Female, 51-65 years old). The issue has been under discussion between the local small-house association and the local authorities for 15 years, unfortunately without success. Despite that, a majority of the respondents still felt that changing processes should best be handled through the local and influential small-house association. A majority of the respondents were members of the local small-house association, yet, only four of the respondents, said that they themselves took an active role in common residential area issues. Other aspects that were stressed were that they miss both the public bus and the grocery store that they used to have within the residential area.

Interest in politics and social issues was generally low among the respondents (4 out of 20). Four individuals (out of 20) expressed their interest in politics. A majority said that they were passive members of one or more associations. Four stated that they were active members in an association.

Gottsunda

The respondents here had many ideas about what to change in the area, but few ideas about how to realize them. The dominant issue was the need for the renovation of the housing stock. Many respondents found the houses ugly and in poor condition. The facades and balconies needed painting. - *Across the street they have done a lot of renovation. We heard that they were also going to start renovation of our houses - but it never happened. It's so disappointing* (Female, 24-35 years old). Many also experienced problems with the garbage stations in the dwelling area. The garbage storage room was often full, and people did not sort the garbage properly. Other issues mentioned were problems with crime, conflicts between immigrants, fear of going out in the evenings, the large turnover of residents and cold apartments in winter time. - *I do not dare go out in the evenings. Several attacks have occurred lately* (Female, 24-35 years old). - *It is frightening in the garage these days. It feels very unsafe indoors in the dark.* (Female, 51-65 years old). - *As soon as I find an apartment in another living area I will move. I don't like this area with all the crime and violence* (Man, 36-50 years old).

Few interviewees had anything to say about a process for change. Some expressed a sense of hopelessness in respect of influencing the landlord company *Uppsalahem*, because of the company's declining economic resources. - *It doesn't seem that we who live here can exert much influence. The problem is economic. Despite what we say, they answer that there is no money for changes* (Female, 51-65 years old). Three people said that they believe it is possible to influence things through the local tenants' association, and that they themselves try to influence things in one way or another. Interest in politics and social issues was generally low among the respondents. Three persons expressed interest in politics. One person held membership in an association.

Perevalka

A majority of the interviewed *Perevalka* residents indicated that the most desired changes in the area would be an improvement of the road standard, and removal of the garbage. - *The Government does not control our area, so we have to solve all problems by ourselves. We have the problem with garbage and sometimes with lighting. The roads are awful here* (Female, 24-35 years old). - *This area is very dirty. That's why many people don't like this area. I dislike having so many dogs here. I like when it is orderly, but it's impossible in this area* (Female, 66-80 years old). Touring the development, one was struck by the enormous piles of rubbish located here and there, spread throughout the area, especially on the street corners. The streets were in poor shape, as most were filled with potholes. Many mentioned that they thought the area was generally filthy. Other desired items mentioned in the interviews concerned the

availability of running water in the homes, the lack of warm water and telephone connections, loose and barking dogs, the lack of public areas where children can play, and a general lack of order in the area.

A clear majority of the residents indicated that it is the responsibility of the local authorities to carry out any activities to improve the area. Most of the interviewees typically did not see that they had any part to play in such an effort. - *I pay money for all changes. What can I do personally? It's useless* (Male, 51-65 years old). However, many commented on the question by imagining what they personally could contribute to: - *I even can't imagine! Maybe I could clean something* (Female, 24-35 years old). Some described what they already do: - *We clear away rubbish. I address the Government to solve our problems* (Female, 24-35 years old). Some also indicated that they thought the question was important: - *No, (I am not active but) it's important to change awareness of people* (Female, 66-80 years old). The interest expressed in community issues (and politics in general) was weak. No-one mentioned any membership or engagement in local associations or organizations. Primary interests mentioned were rather reading, watching television and visiting the countryside.

Drjevlanka

A majority of the respondents stated that the most desired changes are related to improvements in the *transport system* and a need for *green public outdoor spaces*. - *It's very dirty on the streets and near the houses. Another problem is transport* (Female, 24-35 years old). - *These streets are too wide. There is no public transport here, and it's too expensive for young people to pay the fare. This area also needs more trees and parks* (Male, 15-23 years old). Mini-buses were the main public transport system in Drjevlanka. In other parts of Petrozavodsk there were also ordinary buses and trolley buses, which provided a cheaper means of travel. Public transport was problematic. - *I live on a pension, and it's difficult for me to pay for mini buses* (Female, 66-80 years old). The respondents also wanted more playgrounds for the children, and more green areas.- *There are almost no places for children to play, no sports fields, and a lack of green areas in general* (Male, 51-65 years old). Today there is an alley in the middle of the area where people walk, sit on benches, and play with their children. This alley was the only public, accessible green area outside of the block courtyards (see figure 1 D). This single green area was shared by 55,000 inhabitants, and it was well-utilized.

Slightly less than half of the respondents said that they do not see a role for the individual in the process of creating change in the area. Responsibility should instead rest with the local authorities. - *The government should carry out its duties better* (Male, 36-50 years old). - *I would like better service from public transport, more pubs and clubs. The (local) Government should make all of the changes* (Male, 15-23 years old). - *I would like more playgrounds. I think it would also be an improvement with fewer cars and other kinds of transport. I think the (local) Government should act on these questions,* (Female, 24-35 years old).

Five of the respondents, however, felt that they do have a role; some were already trying to contribute to change, and others could imagine participating in a process of change: - *I'm a builder and can help – for example (to help improve) this playground* (Male, 15-23 years old). - *I don't know what I am able to do. I have repaired benches in my yard* (Male, 36-50 years old). - *All changes come from our initiative. We have sent the letter to our deputies, in which we wrote about our problems* (Male, 66-80 years old). - *I suppose individuals should be active, but with the help of the authorities* (Female, 24-35 years old). Interest in politics was generally low among the respondents (3 out of 20). Nobody mentioned membership of or commitment to any association or organization. - *I don't have the free time for involvement in social life. I think there are social aspects in every phase of our life, but I do have an interest in politics* (Female, 51-65 years old).

Table 2. Number of respondents in each residential area that were active/potentially active in local work and/or a member in a local association devoted to the development of the site. The last category - “interest in politics and social issues in general” – was included to illuminate the results in the former categories and may also give an idea of the respondents’ general interest in social matters. The total number of respondents was 20 in each residential area. Note that the same respondents could appear in different categories (e.g. “Active in local work” and “Interest in Politics”).

Residential area	<i>Active in local work</i>	<i>Potentially active in local work</i>	<i>Member in a local association</i>	<i>Interest in politics & social issues in general</i>
<i>Kungsgärdet</i> (Sw)	4	1	15	4
<i>Gottsunda</i> (Sw)	3	0	1	3
<i>Perevalka</i> (Ru)	1	2	0	1
<i>Drjevlanka</i> (Ru)	1	4	0	3

Comparison and interpretation

The main questions here concerned whether residents in the four areas in the two cities studied were actively involved in local work - in the context of the Habitat agenda – and the differences between sites and cities. Although some differences in *attitudes* between the areas (table 2) did emerge, really *active participation* in the planning and development of these areas seemed to be low and the differences seemed to be small between sites. This is discussed further in the next section.

The different types of residential areas in Uppsala and Petrozavodsk show both differences and similarities. Major differences were related to the standard of living. In absolute terms, the Swedish areas have a higher standard than the Russian areas. The small-house area *Kungsgärdet* in Uppsala is popular for mid-income residents, the house prices there are

relatively high, and the houses themselves are of a high Swedish standard. The small-house area *Perevalka* in Petrozavodsk has a low standard, and most of the residents are low-incomers. The multi-family area in *Gottsunda* in Uppsala is a low-status area for residents with relatively low incomes. The multi-family area in *Drjevlanka* in Petrozavodsk is popular and renowned for its modernity and, in a Russian context, is considered to be a high standard site.

Views concerning what was problematic and what should be remedied in the housing areas, varied with the residents themselves, and with the type of residential area concerned. In the small-house area *Perevalka* in Petrozavodsk physical/organisational resource issues dominated such as the removal of garbage piles from the area, improving the standard of the roads, drawing water into the houses, and getting access to hot water. The most serious challenge for Swedish *Kungsgärdet's* small-house- residents was to achieve a reduction in the speed limit in the area to 30 km/h. Respondents in the multi-family area *Drjevlanka* in Petrozavodsk stated that organisational aspects *e.g.* concerning the collective transport system was unsatisfactory, as it only offered mini-buses to and from the area. Problems in the Swedish multi-family area *Gottsunda*, in Uppsala, concerned aesthetic and social aspects, *e.g.* ugly buildings in need of renovation, disorderly garbage rooms, criminality, culture clashes between minorities and between generations, and a sense of insecurity in the area during the evenings.

There were desires in all of the residential areas for some type of change. Motives (and motivation) among dwellers to act for change could therefore be expected. Results showed some small but clear differences in participation in local actions for change: In *Kungsgärdet* a small group of respondents (four persons) were actively engaged in local work for change - this was not the case in any of the other areas. A majority of the respondents in *Kungsgärdet* were also members – however mostly passively - in the local small-house association. In the other areas the situation was rather different. In *Perevalka* and *Drjevlanka* a similar housing association did not even exist. None of the *Perevalka* residents mentioned membership in any local association, in contrast with the *Kungsgärdes* residents. Five of the respondents in *Drjevlanka* were *positive to the idea* of actively working to create change. Some indicated that they were already somehow active, but not in an organised way. In *Gottsunda*, there were few who expressed views about work for change. Three of the residents thought it was possible and also tried to influence things through the local tenants' association. Few of either the Russian or Swedish respondents expressed an interest, or a willingness to become engaged, in *direct local work for change*.

Comparison between small-houses and multi-family houses in Petrozavodsk

Despite the differences between Russian and Swedish small-house standards – some of the general advantages associated with small-houses are still obvious in the Russian case. Residents typically mention the value of a garden near the house, representing not only an economic resource but also biological and aesthetic values (Granvik, 2005a). The long-term values are further illustrated by the substantial time the residents have lived in the houses – a

great majority of the residents are old – many built their houses 30-50 years ago. In multi-family housing areas like *Drjevlanka* attitudes to valuable resources are changing with the evolution of Russian society. The outdoor environment is slowly improving and common green space and cultural and commercial meeting points are being developed, reflecting new economic and aesthetic values for the inhabitants. This value shift may mobilise a growing number of residents in the future to become involved in local environmental issues.

Comparison between small-houses and multi-family houses in Uppsala

In the Swedish case studies, small-houses were preferred. This preference appears also in the statistics – there is a higher turnover rate of residents in the multi-family house area. Multi-family rental apartments in multiple-storey buildings are commonly viewed as temporary housing (Boverket, 2005:p 28-45). The desirability of small-house-living is confirmed by low turnover-rates and a high proportion of elderly people retaining the same home/garden for most of their life. Residents in the million programme's multi-family housing areas dislike the simplified forms, spaces and colours characteristic of its architecture. These shortcomings are, however, now being addressed through government and housing-company investments – which in turn are preconditions for citizen participation according to *Agenda 21* and the Habitat-agenda.

Reasons for inactivity in local work

The residents of the investigated Swedish and Russian housing areas generally did not reflect on their immediate environment very much - though a few proffered some explanations for their relative inactivity in local work. In all the areas residents generally referred back to the lack of time – due to work, interests or everyday life activities. Some of the respondents expressed a kind of hopelessness:

What can I do? Nothing! Who will listen to me? (Female, 66-80 years old, *Perevalka*.)

It doesn't seem to be the case that we who live here can influence much. It is this issue of money. No matter what we say, they say that there is no money for changes. (Female, 51-65 years old, *Gottsunda*).

In both Russian cases, a common attitude among the respondents was that the local authorities have the responsibility to solve problems in the residential areas. Two voices from *Drjevlanka* illustrate this point:

I address the Government to solve our problems (Female, 24-35 years old).

The (local) Government should make all of the changes (Male, 15-23 years old).

Discussion

The results of all investigated cases indicate that citizen participation in local work was generally *not* prioritized by the citizens. Other empirical research (Borén, 2003; Berglund, 2002; Colton, 2002; Pløger, 2002; Shupulis, 2002; Granvik, 2000; Petersson, 1998) also shows peoples' inexperience and generally low level of interest in committing themselves to collective matters at the local level.

There were numerous differences in economic development and attractiveness between the four residential areas, but with regard to the question of citizen participation in local work, the results were similar in all four cases: *only few people participated actively*. The most active respondents were to be found in the small-house area in Sweden (four). While in the multi-family house area in Russia some of the respondents (four) were *interested* in participating for change in the area, which of course is a prerequisite for implementing the Habitat agenda.

A number of different factors empirically explained the low rate of participation in the local areas: a conceived feeling of powerlessness, unfamiliarity with local work and a lack of responsibility for common property and local development. Another likely reason here is that most of the respondents generally did not seem to have an *interest* in, or were too stressed (Statistics Sweden, 2006) to prioritise their available time to undertake such local work.

The assumption of the study was that participation would be greater in Swedish residential areas, due to Sweden's relatively long tradition of democratic practice, as compared to Russia. That assumption can now, in general, be dismissed due to that few differences were actually found, even if there was a slightly higher activity incidence in the Swedish cases. To what is this due? Our analysis can now proceed from a consideration of the residents' motives and circumstances.

There are certainly differences in motives for change between the residential areas studied. The residents of *Perevalka* undoubtedly have the strongest motive to seek change. Their problems are generally of a completely different magnitude to those in the other residential areas, particularly concerning issues such as access to running/warm water in the houses, garbage dumps in the residential area, and streets in poor condition. Strong motives for change were also prevalent in *Gottsunda*, as many of the questions here concerned the need for renovation and the re-design of the unattractive housing stock. There was also however a need for social upgrading, since the area had problems with criminality. Some of the respondents experienced a feeling of danger/insecurity in their neighbourhood. The motives for change in both *Kungsgärdet* and *Drjevlanka* cannot be regarded as equally pressing, as they primarily concerned "only" traffic issues.

Potential for citizen participation?

The Swedish and the Russian respondents each had the opportunity to use their democratic rights. Differences between the countries remain lodged, primarily, at the historical level. In the practicalities of daily life, the democratic Russian community is still in its infancy. The Russian people have, as noted previously, little experience of actually using their democratic rights.

But how can we explain the weak Swedish interest in participation? It is not possible to argue in the same way, namely, that the democratic Swedish community is still in its infancy. But in a way, perhaps it is? Many Swedes *do* participate in civil society through memberships in diverse associations and organizations, but as *passive members* (see table 2 and Petersson, 1998). They are more willing to donate a coin than a moment of their time. Engagement in collective questions has, in general, decreased. It is not a popular way to use private time, citizens choose rather to buy themselves “free” – in a passive membership or by giving money to organisations within civil society (ibid). The discussion above can be related to the properties of the late modern society in which we live – which is reproduced every day through our daily choices – where freedom, individualism, time, fragmentation, mobility and consumption are key concepts (Giddens, 1991). The meeting between late modern lifestyles and the political desire for sustainable development, when manifested in action plans such as *Agenda 21* and the Habitat-agenda (UNCED, 1992; UNCHS, 1998; SOU, 2002), can be experienced as a (cultural) clash. And the situation in the Russian neighbourhoods displays a double clash: firstly, with an invasion of a Western late modern lifestyle and secondly, with a lack of experience in the practice of democracy.

Both *Agenda 21* and the Habitat-agenda require citizen participation and local action when implementing the political intentions for sustainable development. All citizens have a role to play (UNCHS, 1998, The Habitat Agenda, chapter IV, section D.3, §181). It has been shown moreover that change, in order to attain sustainable habitation, rests upon a social acceptance of such change by the residents (Eriksson, 1998). According to the Habitat-agenda, sustainable housing can only be achieved if the residents themselves are willing to work for it. In practice the residents' own commitment will be needed in the planning process, where they consider themselves as contributors.

From the empirical section of this study, a key conclusion emerges, namely, that the problems mentioned by the residents themselves, such as the issue of rubbish dumps in *Perevalka*, the inadequate public transportation system in *Drjevlanka*, the traffic speed in *Kungsgärdet* and the need for exterior renovation in *Gottsunda* - may also be a potential starting point for broader citizen participation in local work on a diverse range of issues.

In relation to the empirical findings two main questions remain: If commitment to sustainable community development is a matter of the few, how can the majority be motivated? And how is it possible to support, and promote, the residents who are actually interested in local development – such that they are not hindered in their work, but feel appreciated and

welcomed in a partnership between the local authorities and residents for change? Both problems are obviously hard to solve, but may be tackled if the already committed citizens can report on a pleasant work experience to the rest of the community. If they show that it is possible to make a difference, to become respected by decision makers and to form partnerships with the local authorities - perhaps more 'engaged' citizens will follow and support the pioneers. It probably however remains utopian to expect that *all* citizens would commit themselves in such a manner (Granvik, 2005b).

The results of this study strongly imply a clear need for strengthening the neighbourhood itself. Our results also support the need for better stewardship of common properties, whether it concerns buildings and outdoor spaces or, increasingly, natural resources like water, clean air and energy. One method to fostering a better feeling for the common good could be to focus upon those local problems experienced as most pressing. If this is done in such a way that residents gain the feeling that they have the power to change these initial problems – then it may open the door for further solutions for the common good. In this way, one step at a time, an implementation of the intentions of a 'citizen participation perspective' in the Habitat-agenda may better be realized.

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