Contested Suburban Mobilities – Towards a Sustainable Urbanism of Justice and Difference[1]

Abstract: Mainstream understandings of sustainability are dominated by post-political discourses that tend to favour technological solutions while overlooking social justice. This paper draws attention to the different and often uneven ways in which sustainable urban environments, and their associated practices of citizenship and mobility, are produced and contested. By combining critical approaches to sustainable urbanism, ecological citizenship and mobility with social practice theory, this paper highlights the social justice dimensions of 'green' transitions through the case of a cycling-promoting initiative within a sustainable regeneration project ('Sustainable Järva') in Järva, an ethnically diverse suburb outside Stockholm, Sweden. The results reveal divergent understandings of suburban regeneration and ecological citizenship among different groups, and the deeply political nature of cycling. In 'Sustainable Järva', the practices of ecological citizenship promoted have overlapped with norms and values linked to a 'Swedish' identity associated with environmental responsibility, familiarity with nature, and active outdoor mobility, thus normatively reproducing power structures of class and race in the public opinion on desired forms of ecological citizenship and mobility. The results challenge post-political understandings of 'sustainability', affirming that just transitions to sustainable futures that ensure both the 'green' and the 'just' require environmentally progressive ontologies of sustainability, urbanism, ecological citizenship and mobility, promoting ecologically sound transitions while accommodating difference, and addressing the joint environmental and social justice implications for diverse communities.

Keywords: sustainable urbanism, eco-city, suburban regeneration, ecological citizenship, gentrification, practice, cycling, difference, Sweden.

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1. Introduction

A place of many places, the city folds over on itself in so many layers and relationships that it is incomprehensible.

– Iris Young (1990: 240)

Rapid urbanisation and rising energy consumption levels have made urban responses to climate change an urgent agenda (Bulkeley et al., 2015). Commonly regarded as a set of politically neutral technological solutions, mainstream practices of sustainable urbanism are often expressed through 'best practice' models. Similarly, *ecological citizenship* is often seen as a value-free practice in which all are free to partake (Lister, 1997; Marson and Mitchell, 2004; MacGregor, 2006). Conscientious automobility practices, such as cycling, are increasingly framed as the citizen's responsibility to the city (Green et al., 2012).

Mainstream practices of sustainable urbanism are influenced by the discourses of sustainable development (SD) – characterised by attempts to dissolve the conflict between environmental and economic values (Dryzek, 2005; Rydin, 2010) – and ecological modernisation (EM), which has a sharper focus on reform solutions for the capitalist political economy. As a discourse of 'reassurance' that removes 'tough choices' for affluent citizens (Dryzek, 2005), EM seeks to 'green' the capitalist political economy rather than rebuild it altogether (Hajer, 1995; Fisher and Freudenberg, 2001; Dryzek, 2005; Hult, 2015).

Understandings of sustainability policies as neutral 'win-win' solutions reflect a post-political condition where tacit consensus eliminates contestation (Swyngedouw, 2007, 2010, 2011). SD is in fact a deeply political affair (Dobson, 2003), but because it is easy to 'hijack', mainstream culture's embracement of 'sustainability' has also advanced the profit-maximising values of corporate capitalism (Parr, 2009; Hult, 2015). By contrast, political ecology focuses on socioeconomic arrangements, power relations and social (in)justice, highlighting the hypocrisy of advocating environmentalism while polluting elsewhere, and the need to democratise the power to shape environmentalism and urban experience (Harvey, 1996, 2008). An *urban political ecology* urges a re-evaluation of norms, values and social equity in sustainable urban development (Keil, 2007; Kreuger and Gibbs, 2007).

This paper offers a critical analysis of sustainable urbanism and ecological citizenship within 'Sustainable Järva[2]', a sustainable suburban regeneration project (2010-2014) in Järva,

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[2] Swedish: *Hållbara Järva*.

an ethnically diverse suburb outside Stockholm, Sweden. Attempts at nurturing ecological citizenship through reconfigurations of the physical and socio-cultural landscape, and the promotion of associated practices, are useful lenses for understanding the inclusionary *and* exclusionary mechanisms of citizenship (Lister, 1997). Sustainable Järva's promotion of *cycling* highlights this aspect; as an embodied practice that requires a set of physical skills, cycling links to Bourdieu's (1977, 1980/1990) understanding of routinized practices and bodily movement as re-enacting of social norms and values. Contrasting different understandings of suburban regeneration, ecological citizenship and cycling reveal gaps between mainstream narratives and lived experience.

2. Theoretical points of departure

2.1. Sustainable urbanism and the 'eco-city'

Concentrating wealth, carbon emissions and social deprivation, urban areas are central to all aspects of sustainable development (Dunham-Jones and Williamson, 2011; Dixon et al., 2014). The influence of mainstream sustainability discourse on urban planning is expressed through 'eco-cities', or 'eco-districts' (Hult, 2015). Combining modern technologies with environmental concern, eco-cities are designed as responses to 'crises', such as climate change and demographic shifts (Caprotti, 2015). Stemming from the 1960s/1970s counterculture that was concerned with ecological limits and social equity, contemporary eco-city projects are more likely to be large-scale and technology-driven (Porter, 2009; Pearsall et al., 2012; Hult, 2015). Cities are more than neoliberal marketplaces for 'green' products (Caprotti, 2015), yet eco-city projects tend to disproportionately favour technological issues while disregarding social equity and alternative visions for the city (Joss, 2011; Rapoport and Vernay, 2011; Blok, 2012; Caprotti, 2014; Hult, 2015).

Sweden is often seen as a forerunner in sustainability (Baker and Eckerberg, 2007). The Swedish Social Democratic Party's EM project in the 1990s/2000s sought to make Sweden a 'world champion' in sustainability (Anshelm, 2002; Lövgren, 2002; Bradley, 2009). Under the 'best practice' banner, a certain form of Swedish 'eco-city' has become increasingly commodified, exemplified by government-supported exports of Swedish eco-city models (Hult, 2013, 2015). Eco-cities are made by their *branding* as 'eco-', 'sustainable' or 'green' (Hult, 2015). They are in this sense *performative*, requiring the repetition of certain practices to

(re)produce what has been named (the 'eco-city') by the dominant discourse (EM) (Butler, 1993; Hult, 2015).

Urban regeneration (or retrofitting) is the spatial economic restructuring of neighbourhoods through reinvesting in disinvested spaces (Porter, 2009). While retrofitting has been suggested as an alternative to constructing privileged 'eco-enclaves' (Hodson and Marvin, 2010), planning frequently reflects how the culturally dominant majority uses space (Sandercock, 2003), creating a form of environmental gentrification linked to a neoliberal vision of the city that seeks to attract business and cultural elites (Checker, 2011; Sandberg, 2014). Gentrification can therefore be sustainability-led as well as culture-led or tourism-led (Porter, 2009). While regeneration seeks to correct the environmental justice problems caused by past planning, rising costs and changing landscapes risk displacing the very residents that regeneration is purported to benefit, thus necessitating 'just green enough' strategies (Wolch et al., 2014: abstract). Even where gentrification has not (yet) resulted in *physical* displacement, the reshaping of social practices can engender a sense of *socio-cultural* displacement (Paton, 2014; Flemsæter et al., 2014).

(Urban) societal futures are therefore deeply political. Who decides what the ideal 'green urban future' looks like? By whom, and through what practices, are these futures performed? Can environmental remediation be achieved without environmental gentrification? (Curran and Hamilton, 2012; Caprotti, 2015)

2.2. A practice theory approach

2.2.1. Practicing sustainable mobility

Efforts to foster sustainable practices are often based on limited understandings of agency, choice and change (Shove, 2010). With social theories of practice as a common foundation, a range of social science disciplines have offered more nuanced insights by asking how social practices and material elements circulate and intersect, and how the reproduction of social practices sustain related patterns of inequality (Shove and Spurling, 2013). Practice theory sees social phenomena as bundles of practices and material arrangements (Schatzki, 2013). Doing is never reducible to individual attitudes or choices, but rather a *performance* of a *practice*. While practice is often associated with what people do, practice theory is also concerned with what *practices* do, re-orienting analysis from individuals toward practice and doing as carriers

of identity (Staeheli, 2010; Watson, 2012; Hui, 2013). Practice theory understands people as carriers of practice, and journeys and destinations as the outcomes of specific organisations of practices - never as arbitrary expressions of individual choice. Promoting resource-efficient ways of life therefore requires the reconfiguration of key practices (Shove et al., 2012; Hui, 2013).

2.2.2. Practicing citizenship

Recent geographical research has conceived of citizenship as a practice, deviating from traditional approaches that view citizenship as a set of civil, social, and political rights (Marshall, 1950). Here, citizenship is understood as a set of 'processual, performative and everyday relations between spaces, objects, citizens and non-citizens that ebbs and flows' (Lewis, 2004: 3; Spinney et al., 2015: 1), based on continual (sometimes conflicting) negotiation (Massey, 2004, in Desforges et al., 2005: 443), and more accurately constituted in relation to the city than the nation-state (Cresswell, 2013). Instead of asking, 'who is a citizen?', it asks how people do things *as citizens* (Luque, 2006), and how practices *do and make citizens* (Isin, 2009). Citizenship and identity are therefore produced in ways of *doing* (Bourdieu, 1990).

2.2.3. Practicing ecological citizenship

Ecological citizenship – a normative account of how citizens ought to live in order to reduce their environmental impact (Wolf et al., 2009) – is practiced through *acts of* ecological citizenship (Hobson, 2013). More than just a label, an 'ecological citizen' masters certain forms of conduct deemed appropriate to attain insider status (Isin, 2009).

Mobility practices contribute to certain forms of citizenship (e.g. the 'ecological citizen'), and constitute cultural identities (e.g. the 'cyclist') (Spinney et al., 2015). Global ecological citizenship is frequently linked to locally situated practices. While some contexts portray urban cyclists as 'ecological citizens' (Green et al., 2012), other places regard walking and cycling as 'unbecoming' of the citizen compared to driving and flying (Spinney et al., 2015).

2.2.3.1 Practicing 'Swedishness'

The refurbishment of post-war buildings in Sweden has been shrouded in a 'discourse of normalisation', whereby physical planning can solve social problems and foster 'active, ecologically interested and engaged groups' (Lövgren, 2002: abstract; Bradley, 2009). Practicing active ecological citizenship – of which cycling forms an integral part – links to how relationships with nature tie into ideas about 'Swedishness' (Bradley, 2009). 'The love of nature is deeply rooted in our people' (Sundbärg, 1911, in Sörlin, 1992: 381), expressing the historic idea of how barren conditions have shaped the durable 'Swedish' character (Hedrén, 2002). 'Nature' has therefore been a source of unification as well as nationalism (Bradley, 2009).

Any central unit of identity, citizenship and belonging (e.g. the nation-state) is reproduced through beliefs, assumptions, habits and practices in everyday life (Billig, 1995; Shove et al., 2012). Belonging touches on aspects of citizenship that enable or prevent membership in the polity and social body. Understanding citizenship as a dynamic process, where meanings change over time and between groups, exposes its including and excluding mechanisms (Lewis, 2004).

2.2.4. Practice and inequality

The repetition of practices, routines and bodily movement – the *habitus* – enact societal norms and values (Bourdieu, 1977, 1980/1990). Power relations are sustained through the reproduction of dominant practices, orienting how people prioritise their time (Pred, 1981). Connections between elements and practices are rooted in past inequalities and constitutive of similar patterns in the future (Shove et al., 2012: 135-6). Those with the means to engage in valued social practices can steer the direction of their development (Bourdieu, 1984), while socially marginalised groups lack the means to become carriers of practices deemed necessary for societal participation (Shove, et al., 2012: 135-6).

Within these uneven landscapes of opportunity and access, new forms of ecological citizenship involve moral responsibilities to *enact* this citizen; for instance, the cycling citizen needs to be a 'knowledgeable and alert risk-assessor competent to travel in ways that maximize independence, efficiency and health', potentially reinforcing the marginal citizenship of less mobile individuals (Cass et al., 2005; Green et al., 2012: abstract; Shove et al., 2012; Spinney et al., 2015).

Seemingly apolitical sustainable practices like cycling are perceived differently by culturally diverse persons (Fang Law and Karnilowicz, 2014). Feminist scholarship has shown how 'ecological citizenship' lacks attention to structural barriers such as gender, class and race, asking *what kind of subject one would have to be* to practice this citizenship, and highlighting the exclusionary underpinnings for the liberal formulation of a universal, gender-neutral agent-citizen (Marson and Mitchell, 2004; MacGregor, 2006). When citizenship becomes solely about individual responsibility – as if everyone had an equal ability to accept it – the conditions under which citizenship may be *meaningfully practiced* are disregarded, and 'uneducated' and 'irresponsible' individuals become framed as the root cause of environmental degradation (MacGregor, 2006). Citizenship can therefore create non- or partial citizens, and the practice of cycling can expose 'the two sides of citizenship's membership coin' (Lister, 1997: 43).

2.3. Research questions

From these theoretical points of departure, questions explored include: How have sustainable suburban regeneration, ecological citizenship, and cycling been understood in official documents and strategies for 'Sustainable Järva' – a sustainable suburban regeneration project in the Järva suburb outside Stockholm, Sweden – and what sort of initiatives have followed? How have initiatives to promote sustainable suburban regeneration, ecological citizenship, and cycling within 'Sustainable Järva' been understood and experienced by cyclists, residents, and other local actors in Järva? To what extent are there differences between these understandings?

3. Case study: Sustainable Järva

The suburban area of Järva is located northwest of central Stockholm. Järva is composed of six residential areas across two city districts (Spånga-Tensta and Rinkeby-Kista) under the governance of the City of Stockholm[3]: Akalla, Husby and Kista to the north, separated from Hjulsta, Rinkeby and Tensta by Järva Field[4], a large greenspace (figure 2). Järva's population is ca 65,000, compared to Stockholm's total population of ca 912,000. About 80% of residents are of foreign origin, many of which are of African or Asian origin. The same figure for Stockholm is 30% (SORS, 2015).

Figure 1. Järva and Stockholm. Source: Eniro.se
A. Järva
B. Central Stockholm

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[3] Swedish: *Stockholms stad*.
[4] Swedish: *Järvafältet*.

Figure 2. Järva suburban area. Source: Eniro.se
A. Järva Field
B. Akalla by
C. Husby gård
D. Rinkebysvängen 22

Most buildings in Järva were built 1965-1975 as part of the *Million Homes Programme*[5] (MHP), the Social Democratic Government's plan to combat housing shortage by creating one million new homes over the course of ten years (Hall and Vidén, 2005). 25,000 apartments were built in Järva alone (Stockholms stad, 2015). The MHP buildings are physical expressions of the political and economic sentiments of the time, marked by the rise of the Swedish welfare state, and a strong belief in how science-based 'social engineering' could 'put life in order'. Similar neighbourhoods - uniform apartment blocks in peripheral locations surrounding the capitals – were constructed in many European cities around the same time (Hall and Vidén, 2005). MHP buildings are now associated with monotonous suburban landscapes and ethnic and social segregation (Hall and Vidén, 2005). In May 2013, riots in Husby made headlines as it tested Sweden's 'reputation for tolerance' (Freeman, 2013).

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[5] Swedish: *Miljonprogrammet*.

Contemporary Swedish urban planning tends to favour ecological lifestyles (Bradley, 2009). The sustainable suburban regeneration project of **'Sustainable Järva'** – led by the City of Stockholm between 2010 and 2014 – involved both technological refurbishments (e.g. energy-efficiency renovations, the instalment of solar cell panels) and the promotion of sustainable lifestyles. Government funding was provided by the Delegation for Sustainable Cities[6], which facilitates 'the spread of best practices and promotes environmental technology exports' (Stockholms stad, 2010b).

Situated within the wider ambition to eco-profile the MHP residential stock, Sustainable Järva was also part of the *Järva-Lift Initiative*[7], a government-led commitment to 'upgrade' Järva launched in 2007 (Stockholms stad, 2015), and the first "serious effort" to refurbish Järva after a long history of regeneration (Gustaf, former resident/academic).

Signposts, bicycle stands, and cycling lanes were installed (Stockholms stad, 2014b), and bicycle rental stations were set up at three locations (figure 1-3). After the project's completion in December 2014, bicycle maintenance at Akalla by and Husby gård was transferred from the City to Akalla by and Husby gård themselves (Roger, intermediary; Olof, intermediary).

Efforts to encourage sustainable mobility included free cycling courses for adult residents, running between 2011 and 2014 with 140 participants in total (Kerstin, official; Stockholms stad, 2010a, 2014a, 2014b; Sweco, 2014). The courses, run by the City in collaboration with Kista Sports Club and The National Society for Road Safety[8], were held at Akalla by and promoted via posters, advertisements and word-of-mouth (Asmeret, former resident/cyclist). Most participants were women of foreign origin (Kerstin, official). Each course had ca 10 participants – former participants were welcome to join for self-practice, and family members were often present (Ingrid, cycling trainer; Roger, intermediary). Cycling excursions were organized a year later, but attendance was low (Kerstin, official). 'Lack of bicycle access' was a likely explanation to why 82% had *not* cycled regularly since taking the course (Sweco, 2014). While there is a continued demand for cycling courses, it is unclear who would bear funding and administrative responsibilities (Kerstin, official; Roger, intermediary; Ingrid, cycling trainer).

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[6] Swedish: *Delegationen för Hållbara städer*.
[7] Swedish: *Järvalyftet*.
[8] Swedish: *Nationalföreningen för trafiksäkerhetens främjande*.

Name of rental station	Number of bicycles	Fees before December 2014	Fees after December 2014
Akalla by[9]	~14	Free	20 SEK/day (~1.5 GBP), plus 300 SEK (~23 GBP) deposit
Husby gård[10]	5	Free	20 SEK/day (~1.5 GBP), plus 300 SEK (~23 GBP) deposit
Rinkebysvängen 22[11]	5	Free	20 SEK/day (~1.5 GBP), plus 300 SEK (~23 GBP) deposit

Figure 3. Sustainable Järva bicycle rental stations. (Kerstin, official; Ingrid, cycling trainer; figure 2).

4. Method and material[12]

Having been promoted as a blueprint for a comprehensive environmental renovation of Europe's suburbs built in the 1960s/1970s (WWF, 2012), Sustainable Järva is typical in being the outcome of a vision of society whose shortcomings retrofitting initiatives are now seeking to correct.

Data consists of official documents and strategies (digital and printed), semi-structured interviews (30-90 minutes each), and a workshop presentation for future Sustainable Järva tour guides. Securing interviews with residents and cyclists relied on snowballing and chain-referrals. Interviews were translated from Swedish to English, with broken Swedish kept in the English version. To ensure anonymity, interviewees have been given fictional names.

Document analysis of official documents and strategies reveals the values underpinning the rhetoric of suburban regeneration, and discourse analysis is applied to semi-structured interviews and workshop presentations. The results from a multi-methods approach allow for gaps and silences often disregarded in EM's pursuit of consensus.

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[9] A community centre.

[10] An arts and crafts organisation.

[11] Managed by the City of Stockholm.

[12] For a more detailed account, see Zhou, S. (2015). *Contested Suburban Mobilities – Towards a Sustainable Urbanism of Justice and Difference* (Unpublished master's dissertation). University of Oxford, Oxford.

Name	Gender, age	Role
'Kerstin'	Female, 50s	Official
'Erik'	Male, 40s	Official
'Asad'	Male, 20s	Resident; Local actor in the non-profit sector
'Olof'	Male, 50s	Intermediary[13]
'Lena'	Female, 60s	Intermediary; Cyclist
'Roger'	Male, 40s	Intermediary
'Thomas'	Male, 50s	Resident; Cyclist
'Linnéa'	Female, 20s	Local actor in the creative sector
'Asmeret'	Female, 30s	Former resident; Cyclist
'Sahal'	Male, 20s	Resident; Local actor in the non-profit sector
'Mariam'	Female, 50s	Resident; Cyclist
'Kojo'	Male, 20s	Former resident; Cyclist
'Ingrid'	Female, 40s	Cycling trainer
'Shirin'	Female, 20s	Resident; Local actor in the non-profit sector
'Gustaf'	Male, 40s	Former resident; Academic
'Susanne'[14]	Female, 40s	Official

Figure 4. Interview participants.

5. Results and analysis

5.1. Disseminating the Swedish eco-city – or projectification?

Sustainable Järva was advertised as an investment in ecologically, socially and economically sustainable development (Stockholms stad, 2010a, 2015). The emphasis on '[cutting] carbon emissions while boosting employment with green jobs' (WWF, 2012) reflects EM principles.

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[13] Cycling trainers or employees at bicycle rental stations.
[14] Workshop presentation.

The focus on 'attract[ing] technology and science' (SymbioCity, 2015a) was manifested in the instalment of solar PVs, solar water heaters and a local wind turbine (WWF, 2012; Stockholms stad, 2015).

As a case of the commodified Swedish eco-city, Sustainable Järva falls under 'SymbioCity', a government-initiated brand that summarises the 'Swedish' approach to sustainable urbanism. Overseen by Business Sweden, which promotes exports on behalf of the Swedish government and industry, SymbioCity is advertised as a Swedish sustainability 'trademark' that can be applied to any context (Delegationen för Hållbara städer, 2012; SymbioCity, 2015b). The usage of 'transferable standard' (WWF, 2012) is common, and Järva is receiving international study visits (Susanne, official).

> Sustainable Järva fits into the Järva-Lift Initiative, and other investments made by the City of Stockholm in eco-profiled areas. They strengthen Stockholm's position as a leading city in climate policy; contribute to the marketing of Swedish environmental technology; act as a model and developer of new technology that can benefit subsequent building projects in Stockholm (…) Our hope is that the outcome of this project will guide how other parts of Järva – and similar MHP areas – can develop with reduced carbon emissions, improved living environments, and social and economic upgrading. (Stockholms stad, 2010b)

The emphasis on 'eco-profiling' (Kerstin, official; Erik, official) speaks to the performativity of the 'eco-city', and Järva has been dubbed 'The City of Sun[15]' because of its solar panels (Stockholms stad, 2015).

By contrast, several interviewees mentioned the short-termism of regeneration projects. Järva is perceived as being 'projectified' by 'token' interventions and 'wasteful practices' that 'clear the conscience' of a white middle-class (Thomas, resident/cyclist; Sahal, resident/local actor; Linnéa, local actor). For Asad, watching people from the city centre "profit" on Järva's social problems felt like watching people "take selfies with children in Africa".

> There's no continuity in Järva, unfortunately. Neither environmentally nor socially. Quick measures, quick dialogues, quick pictures. (Asad, resident/local actor)

Kerstin maintained that bicycle rentals and cycling courses are best shaped by local actors, yet when bicycle maintenance was transferred from the City to the facilities housing the rentals, fees necessary to cover costs had "killed almost all demand" (Roger, intermediary). Affordability, and concerns about losing staff and social infrastructure, were real challenges.

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[15] Swedish: *Solstaden*.

> [Maintaining the bicycles] takes work, and you need staff. (…) We used to receive 100 SEK [from the City of Stockholm] per rental, so it was a priority for us too, because we [Kista Sports Club] needed that money. (…) You need continuity to keep things alive. So [the cyclists] can become ambassadors… but they can't be ambassadors for something that doesn't exist. (Roger, intermediary)

> You can't just offer something - and then it's gone. That's something you see a lot in these MHP neighbourhoods. There's a predilection for projects, and in the end, residents lose faith. (…) You need to 'deliver' in some way. And then the project almost becomes more interesting than the outcome. (Ingrid, cycling trainer)

5.2. Normalisation – or gentrification?

Sustainable Järva contributes to the Järva-Lift Initiative (Stockholms stad, 2015), which seeks to transform Järva into 'an area where people want to move and stay, an engine for growth for the entire region' (Stockholms stad, 2012: 16).

> Järva should become just like any neighbourhood. (…) Normalising Järva will solve some of the issues we're facing with integration. Then it becomes a place that anyone will move to, even those who want to climb the 'housing career ladder'. (...) If you make these areas more attractive, they will attract people from other neighbourhoods, which will promote integration. (Erik, official)

This exemplifies the 'discourse of normalisation' that has characterised the regeneration of post-war buildings in Sweden (Lövgren, 2002; Bradley, 2009), where invoking its 'inevitability' normalises mainstream urban development.

> [They say] "Those buildings don't look like Husby, they'll be expensive, they'll be different. You're changing the character and the population of this neighbourhood". Yes, we are. That's how cities have always changed. (…) (Erik, official)

'Normalisation' is believed to solve social problems, yet fosters integration at the expense of difference. For Erik, it was crucial to encourage "eco-friendly lifestyles", perceived by some residents as value imposition.

> Cycling courses are great, but only if they exist everywhere, so it's not some sort of "Paralympics Special Edition" based on your address. (Shirin, resident/local actor)

Cycling becomes associated with 'Swedishness' in the *manner* of promotion, when "a white person comes to instruct you" (Asad, resident/local actor). There are intimate links between environmental gentrification and the hypocrisy of "white middle-class environmentalism" (Sahal, resident/local actor). Valued sustainable practices are not affordable for all, and physical skills are hard to sustain throughout a life marked by instability.

[It's about] the right person saying the right thing. Often, it's the wrong people saying the right things. That's not credible. There's no link between message and messenger. I think it's hypocritical to tell suburban kids to recycle and things, when [the messengers] live in big houses with two cars. (Sahal, resident/local actor)

Environmental issues are important – as they should be – but in the suburbs, they're used as oppression. (…) Fine, maybe people don't get recycling. But do they even need to recycle given how small their carbon footprint is? And if they *do* learn recycling – what should the middle-class do? (Sahal, resident/local actor)

They shouldn't teach us to cycle. You can think of that yourself. (…) And *where* are you going to cycle? To work? You need a job for that. Where can you get a bike? You need money for that. (Sahal, resident/local actor)

You have so many problems in your life that you can't handle more rules… there's enough on your plate. (…) My Dad always says, "I'd love to be eco-friendly, but it's not for me – it's not possible based on my standard of living". (Shirin, resident/local actor)

It's hard to keep up cycling when there is war. (Mariam, resident/cyclist)

Given the discursive production of Järva as 'deprived', ownership was crucial to reclaim the power to define the 'problem'.

We wanted to inform the kids about environmental issues… and this should be done by a person who looks like them, can pronounce their names, cares about the environment. (…) We walked around Järva Field and asked, "who are the people jogging?" – once again, the white middle-class! (…) We wanted them to reclaim that space. (Sahal, resident/local actor)

In principle, [cycling] is a good idea. How it's being done is beneath contempt. (…) Just understand people. After you've understood people… if people choose to cycle, because it's practical, because you want stronger calves, that's great. (Sahal, resident/local actor)

I hate the word [integration], but if I must use it, I think it should be a compromise. My traditions should be equally highlighted, so it's not just me adapting to my Swedish classmates – so both parties gain insight into the other's world. (Shirin, resident/local actor)

5.3. Cycling as 'active/outdoor ecological citizenship' – or cycling as 'Swedishness'?

Sustainable Järva was committed to 'inform[ing] and educat[ing] residents on climate and environmental issues' (Stockholms stad, 2010a).

With new technology, information and education, Järva will become a model of sustainability, promoting environmental responsibility and energy efficiency (…). (Stockholms stad, 2010a)

Such statements indicate a wish to foster an ecological citizenship rooted in responsibility and enlightenment. Sustainable Järva established 'The Path of Time'[16], a signposted walk around Järva Field, aiming to 'raise awareness of and pride in living in Järva [*sic*]' (Stockholms stad, 2010a). The emphasis on 'familiarity with nature' is distinctive; in places like London, cycling discourses tend to revolve around public health and obesity (Green et al., 2012).

> It's not just about cycling, it's also about saying, "this is Järva Field, people call it a 'green wedge', it's a nature reserve" (…) A lot of people are afraid of entering the woods, because they don't know what's there. (Kerstin, official)
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> Hansta (…) is a 10-minute bike ride from here… it's like arriving in the 60s in Sweden. Flowers, trees, grazing cows... (…) If only families here realised how pretty it is… you could bring a basket and blanket, the kids could bathe in the lake. (…) Cycling can absolutely create community… just doing something else than sitting by the computer. (Lena, intermediary/cyclist)
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> There are links between cycling and the Swedish welfare state. It was promoted as a 'wholesome' activity that would make us more productive as workers. (Gustaf, former resident/academic)

Given the lack of cycling culture in Järva (Roger, intermediary; Ingrid, cycling trainer), especially "compared to more Swedish areas" (Thomas, resident/cyclist), Kerstin stressed how "understanding the land" can be a "natural" route to integration. 'Being outside' emerges as a way of being *on the inside* of citizenship.

> A lot of residents of foreign origin have never cycled. (…) I can compromise with ice-skating, but cycling and swimming… those everyone should learn. (Kerstin, official)
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> You're probably the first person in your family to ever ski, or anything like that. I don't think doing "Swedish" things should be a requirement, but it should be inviting, if you're interested. (Shirin, resident/local actor)
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> [Cycling] is something they should invest in… so kids, instead of burning cars, can do something else (…) If there was a cycling school… [adults] could go there, instead of wasting their time, sitting on the couch… go to a cycling course, instead of sitting at home. So you use your time, do something important, that can help you in the future… forward. (Kojo, former resident/cyclist)

Here, cycling is framed as an 'active' practice and virtuous 'Swedish' behaviour, opposed to the 'passivity' and 'idleness' of segregation and those who remain indoors, and the fruitlessness of "burning cars".

> Do people think they'll become more employable if they can cycle? Or is it rather, "if I adopt codes of Swedishness, I'll get a job"? Because we've got a huge problem

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[16] Swedish: *Tidens Väg*.

if it's the latter. In my opinion, codes of 'Swedishness' are defined by those who live here – not some external force. (Gustaf, former resident/academic)

Several interviewees made links between cycling, 'Swedish' identity and 'cyclist' identity. Self-image, past experiences and enabling environments all play a part, especially in Järva where many children do not see cycling "as an option" (Ingrid, cycling trainer).

> I'm sure there's a widespread need [for cycling courses] in this neighbourhood. I think almost all Swedes learn to cycle as children. (Thomas, resident/cyclist)
>
> I was born here, but I've never cycled, because my parents had to work day and night. Who was going to teach me? (…) I wouldn't attend a cycling course as an adult… in my mind, it's a white thing. It's not for me. (…) There are white activities that I've always felt excluded from, and that's why they're not attractive for me. (Shirin, resident/local actor)

Failing to master a physical competency makes one feel "unintelligent" (Shirin, resident/local actor), and requiring help as an adult can be "embarrassing" (Asmeret, former resident/cyclist). This contrasts with the 'pride' of finally mastering cycling (Kojo, former resident/cyclist). For some, 'pride' is a problematic expression of the wish to 'integrate'.

> A lot of women from different countries were given the opportunity to learn. So I was happy about this opportunity. I'm so grateful for Sweden. (Asmeret, former resident/cyclist)
>
> Immigrants who arrive as adults want to belong. It's like you're missing out on parts of the world you're in, because you don't feel welcomed. And then you work hard to become part of it. But those of us who were born here (…) will notice that the things I'm excluded from… they're not a big deal. I can survive without them. If they exclude me, why should I fight? My world is just as good as theirs. (Shirin, resident/local actor)
>
> If people in Tensta don't want to cycle, you shouldn't try to fix the people - you should examine the bike and the people who use it normally. (Sahal, resident/local actor)

Cycling promotion in Järva was understood as a social sustainability initiative, as 'adult women not able to cycle in their home countries were given the opportunity to learn' (Sweco, 2014). However, several interviewees mentioned the prejudices underpinning the idea of cycling as liberation *from 'other' cultures*.

> She comes to the cycling course, and really struggles. (…) She gets told by her family – they're from another country – that this is a scandal. (…) "No", she said, "I'm going to learn to cycle, I've set up some goals, I want to feel free" (...) So that was a tough girl. (Kerstin, official)

The problem is that they always pick the most controversial topic – women in Järva on bikes. That's when all the cameras come. (Asad, resident/local actor)

Cycling has been used as a flagship to show how you can contribute to 'freedom', but they haven't communicated freedom *from what*. From what oppression? The freedom from not being able to cycle? The freedom from a 'confined' suburb with a bad reputation? The freedom from poverty? (…) You're stepping on the Achilles heel of the MHP neighbourhoods, that they're stigmatized. It's a scab you've picked too much – it bleeds easily. (Gustaf, former resident/academic)

6. Conclusions

Having contrasted different understandings of sustainable suburban regeneration, ecological citizenship and cycling in Järva, what may we conclude about the politics of sustainable urbanism?

Firstly, *the results challenge post-political understandings of sustainable urbanism*, and the framing of best practice models (e.g. the Swedish 'eco-city') as politically neutral solutions. The 'projectification' of Järva raises questions about for whom the 'eco-suburb' is regenerated.

Secondly, *the results challenge post-political understandings of ecological citizenship and cycling citizenship*, which were in this case perceived as 'white', 'middle-class', and attached to a 'Swedish' identity associated with environmental responsibility, familiarity with nature and active outdoor mobility. Achieving community through integration engendered a sense of sustainability-led gentrification. Consequently, tackling the social dimensions of sustainable urbanism needs to address issues such as class, gender, race, and socio-economic inequality, and 'ecological citizenship' must engage with how meanings embedded in citizenship practices link to identity and belonging, asking *who has the means* to perform the (seemingly neutral) 'model ecological citizen' expected to move in the cityscape, and *why* suburbs become sites of intense regeneration while the environmentally harmful practices of affluent communities remain unaddressed. Framing ecological citizenship as 'active', 'outdoors' and 'mobile' - assuming that all citizens are equally capable of practicing this citizenship – also reinforces the marginal citizenship of those facing barriers to 'activeness'.

Thirdly, *the results challenge post-political understandings of sustainable mobility*. Cycling is not just a 'low-carbon' way of getting from A to B, but a practice that constitutes cultural identities and creates both citizens *and non-citizens*. Here, cycling emerged as a deeply political practice where ecological citizenship and 'Swedishness' overlapped. The framing of valued social practices like cycling as routes to cultural integration can generate political resistance

against the *meanings* carried by these practices, and the power relations sustained by their reproduction.

Just approaches to sustainable urbanism, suburban regeneration and ecological citizenship must be just without seeking uniformity, with 'respect for group differences without oppression' (Young, 1990: 47). Planning for environmental regeneration should plan for difference instead of 'normalisation', mindful of structural barriers to practicing sustainability without reinforcing, in this case, the image of Järva as a 'deprived' anomaly. Rather than targeting Järva, cycling could simply be promoted everywhere. Cycling promotion cannot substitute structural change, but can be part of the wider task of rethinking the practices through which 'sustainability', 'urbanism', 'ecological citizenship', 'sustainable mobility', and 'Swedishness' are performed, and of democratising the power to shape these practices.

Sustainable urbanism is more than a set of technological solutions, ecological citizenship is more than a set of attitudes and behaviours, and cycling is more than getting from A to B. Academia *can* and *should* engage in progressive research that invite alternative visions of the city. The results affirm that just transitions to sustainable futures that ensure both the 'green' and the 'just' require environmentally progressive ontologies of sustainability, urbanism, ecological citizenship and mobility, promoting ecologically sound transitions while accommodating difference, and addressing the joint environmental and social justice implications for diverse communities.

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