

Responsibility for sustainable development in Europe: what does it mean for planning theory and practice?

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Abstract

Responsibility in planning for sustainable development (SD) is little conceptualised in the planning literature. This paper sets up a theoretical framework to extend understanding of this by drawing on ethics (*duty* versus *care*) and political (*communitarian* versus *cosmopolitan*) constructions of responsibility at their intersection with planning studies and SD debates. The framework is then applied to explore responsibility outlooks in planning practice in two examples of planning for SD in Sweden and England. Three main claims are made: *duty* and *care* responsibility exist side-by-side, but it is *care* responsibility that drives planning for SD; *cosmopolitan* and *communitarian* responsibilities do not coexist, but they shape responsibility outlooks and further our understanding about differences in planning practice for SD; and municipal planning sits at the centre of responsibility in planning and increasingly works with other stakeholders. This has wider implications for planning theory and practice: planning theory needs to further engage with the *care* dimension of responsibility in planning, but also with its politics (*communitarian* and *cosmopolitan*); while planning practice suggests a variety of models of responsibility and calls for a re-examination of responsibilities in planning for SD.

Keywords: planning, responsibility, sustainable development, ethics and politics,

Sweden and England

1. Introduction

Most policy sectors have been permeated by the urgency of environmental change, and planning makes no exception. Planning is concerned with spatial development and land use, causing a number of direct and indirect impacts on the environment. As such, planning is under considerable societal and political pressure to make the right decisions, protect ‘the greater good’ and ensure the sustainable development of our cities and communities (Polk, 2010). Planning has a well-established role today to contribute to a ‘vision of sustainable future’ and deliver sustainable development on the ground (Rydin, 2011).

Sustainable development (SD thereafter) remains a challenge for planning theory and practice as it can only be achieved indirectly via a sustained ‘period of confronting and resolving conflicts’ (Campbell, 2000) (p.296). It is not a legally binding requirement at the European level and, despite being mainstreamed into planning policy and guidance in many European countries, it still relies de facto on moral commitments and political resolve. It is argued that there is a significant gap between the planning rhetoric and planning practice of SD, despite the concept’s ‘visibility’ in current academic and policy debates (Owens and Cowell, 2011, Turcu, 2018).

However, governments are increasingly looking at how to make the delivery of SD more accountable at the national level. One such example is the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) initiative (UN, 2016). Sweden, for example, has already streamlined this into national legislation and regulation, and is committed to implement SDGs, through decisions and measures, into day-to-day activities and existing governance processes (OECD, 2017, Weitz et al., 2015). Moreover, planning is under growing pressure to assume responsibility for delivering relevant SDGs such as the

urban goal SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and communities). This cannot be done, however, without understanding what this responsibility may entail. The paper seeks to explore responsibility in planning for SD by asking two questions which aim to unpick both normative and empirical manifestations of responsibility in planning for SD:

- *How is responsibility in planning for SD conceptualised in planning theory?*
and
- *What does responsibility in planning for SD mean in planning practice?*

The paper argues for an ethical-political understanding of such responsibility, which is new in the planning literature and adds to our understanding of why a diversity of planning for SD occurs in practice. This is a wider framing than the current framing of responsibility in planning which has traditionally focussed on the micro-scale of planning or planners' duties and values. It is a framing that builds on an idea that planning and SD are social and political constructs. Thus, related responsibilities are shaped at the macro-scale of the planning system by predominant societal norms and morals, but also the politics of an increasingly diverse and interconnected world associated with SD.

The paper develops over five sections. Following this introduction, Section 2 conceptualises responsibility in planning by drawing on ethics and political theory at their intersection with planning studies. This results in a taxonomy of responsibility across the *duty-care* and *communitarian-cosmopolitan* axes of responsibility. Section 3 applies this taxonomy to two cases of planning for SD in Sweden and England: the Stockholm Royal Seaport, Stockholm's largest eco-district; and North West Bicester, England's first eco-town. Section 4 critically reflects on the outlook of responsibility in planning across the two cases and puts forward main findings. Finally, Section 5 sets

forth conclusions and wider implications for planning theory and practice.

2. Problematizing responsibility in planning

Before embarking on a discussion of responsibility in planning for SD from a theoretical perspective, three important starting points for this paper need to be made. They clarify the paper's position on who is responsible in planning and how SD is defined; and briefly review how responsibility is currently framed in the planning literature.

Who is responsible in planning? Is it the planning system/institution (the structure) or the planners/individuals (the agency)? The planning system/institution is understood as a relatively enduring ensemble of structural constraints and opportunities shaping planning activities (Moulaert et al., 2016) and includes formal regulations and procedures as well as informal norms and routines defining appropriate behaviour in planning (Raitio, 2012). Planning agency is the capacity of planning agents as individuals and/or collective actors (e.g. politicians, civil servants, technicians) to pursue and achieve planning related outcomes (Hay, 2002, Connelly, 2010). Dobson (2006) argues that, where responsibility is concerned, the most popular answer to the question above is the system/institution. This paper takes a similar line and looks at responsibility in the planning structure. However, this is not to say that the role of planning agency in shaping the planning structure is not important, but it is not the focus in this paper, a point I shall return to in the concluding section of the paper.

How is SD defined? SD is a long contested concept (Turcu, 2018, Turcu, 2012). Hajer (1995) calls SD a 'discourse coalition' rather than a shared meaning of the actual content, while others argue that SD can be understood as a specific kind of problem

framing (Kemp and Martens, 2007, p.13). There is, however, consensus among scholars that SD represents the intersection of three societal sectors (economic, environmental and social), which need to be balanced over time (to ensure intergenerational equity) and across scales (to consider planetary boundaries). SD builds on ethical ideas and assumes an interconnected world of chains of responsibilities towards the others (i.e. the environment) (Ravetz, 2001). Planning is an important platform, albeit an imperfect one, for institutional learning about SD and contestation of the various definitions of SD (Owens and Cowell, 2011). ‘Sustainable planning’ has been associated with sustainable-, eco-, green- or low-carbon urbanism; and smart-, circular- or healthy-cities, among others (Turcu, 2018). While there is no algorithmic response to ‘what is SD in planning’, this paper understands ‘planning for SD’ as planning with economic, social and environmental goals at heart which takes into consideration the interconnected and cross-boundary nature of responsibility for development and the time and scale consequences of this on both the human and non-human realms.

How is responsibility currently framed in the planning literature? Responsibility in planning is at the centre of two dominant interpretations. First, it is understood as *duties* or *obligations*. These are written in planning legislation, policy and guidance, planning codes of conduct and concern clear questions of authority and accountability such as: who is responsible; for what is responsible; to whom is responsible. Second, responsibility in planning is discussed as a *duty-of-care* towards a common and greater good. This draws on what is perceived to be morally right or wrong, good or bad in a particular society (Campbell and Marshall, 1998) p.117) and is also mentioned in planning policy and guidance, but rarely operationalised via clear questions. The duty-of-care of planning is a direct reference to ethical dimensions and reflects concerns

about what triggers responsibility and whether one should be responsible beyond its actions (Dobson, 2006).

This duty-care twofold interpretation of responsibility in planning is also reflected by debates on perfect vs. imperfect obligations and practical vs. relational responsibilities. For Dobson (2006) *perfect* obligations are duties where legal obligations are in place to trigger sanctions; while *imperfect* obligations are shaped by morals which make them difficult to sanction. Gunder and Hillier (2007) define *practical* responsibilities as responsibilities that can be equated to duties such as ‘responsibility for’, locating blame and fulfilling a set of rules, usually set by planning policy and professional codes of conduct but also performance indicators to gauge planning accountability. In contrast, *relational* responsibilities refer to moral judgements and involve more than the ‘mere application of rules’ (Campbell and Marshall, 2005) p.199.

The classification of European planning models offers another view on the dual nature of responsibility in planning. On the one hand, planning responsibilities are shaped by a country’s legal system and regulations (Newman and Thornley, 1996). For example, the Swedish planning system is seen as imperative and offering clear rules for planning decision-making, while by comparison the English planning system is more laissez-faire and indicative, fewer rules are spelt out and decision-making is discretionary (Davies et al., 1989, Faludi, 2013). On the other hand, planning responsibilities are influenced by unwritten rules grounded in the wider context of a country’s traditions, norms and historical developments (CEC, 1997). For example, the integrated planning system in Sweden involves co-operation or co-ordination between different actors, sectors and levels of government, with horizontal and vertical responsibilities across jurisdictions.

In contrast, in English planning the focus is on land-use and boundaries, but also on inviting community and public participation as part of the ‘communicative/collaborative turn’ in English planning (Healey, 2008).

To sum up, current debates on the dual nature of responsibility in planning are informative, however, they fail to unpick at least three aspects, which are explored in detail in the remaining part of this section. First, the planning literature does not engage enough with the changing circumstances of responsibility brought forward by the emergence of the SD concept in planning. Second, current understanding of responsibility in planning takes very little of the political nature of planning into account. In fact, both planning and SD are politicised concepts where “a struggle over meaning and morality takes place” (p.43) and “age-old dilemmas [like ethics and politics] are never far below the surface in land-use planning and contribute to its intensity” (Owens and Cowell, 2011) (p.47). Deciding in planning what is ‘sustainable’ is inseparable from ethical choices of the highest order, where “rival moral judgements contend for supremacy” (Ibid, p.47). In other words, when planning adjudicates among various judgements that carry moral weight, it engages with power. Third, it is not clear how responsibility for SD manifests in practice and can be framed by theory. Despite SD resulting in some common principles across different contexts or some kind of ‘belief system’ (Alexander and Faludi, 1996), the praxis of SD represents a struggle to interpret SD in relation to the politics of land-use change which leads to “variation rather than convergence” (Krueger and Gibbs, 2007, p.3)(Turcu, 2018, Owens and Cowell, 2011).

The ethics of responsibility: duty versus care

One important debate at the heart of normative ethics is that of *deontological* versus *consequential* interpretations of responsibility. Deontological or duty-based responsibility, called thereafter *duty responsibility*, is concerned with people's present doings and actions according to certain rules. It draws on Kant's *deontic duty* (i.e. one must only act in respect to duty and not for personal self-interest) and Greek philosophers' *delineation of the common good* (i.e. one must attain good ends for the greater good). Duty responsibility relies on what is done now, rational thinking and bounded rationality.

Responsibility in planning is mainly framed as duty responsibility and firmly rooted in deontological ethics. It answers questions such as who is responsible and to whom, what is planning responsible to do and how is that monitored, clearly written down in planning policy and guidance (Gunder and Hillier, 2004). The planning literature has focussed on the understanding of this type of responsibility, and especially focussed on the micro-scale of planners' responsibilities (Howe, 1990, Marcuse, 1976, Wachs, 1990). For example, Stein and Harper (2004) articulate responsibility in planning as the planner's duty to be neutral to personal views and always consider wider public values (Stein and Harper, 2004a, Stein and Harper, 2004b). Discourses of duty responsibility are also dominated by studies from the 1980s and 1990s, and the remit of planning has changed significantly since - the mainstreaming of SD into planning policy being one such change (Owens & Cowell, 2011; Turcu, 2018). Hence, some argue that understanding responsibility in planning for SD from a duty perspective is limiting, as SD is concerned with action in the future and consequences of such action on both

humans and the environment (Gunder and Hillier, 2004). This is where a consequential understanding of responsibility adds value.

Consequential or care-based responsibility, called thereafter *care responsibility*, understands responsibility as responsibility for the consequences of human action. This is discussed in the work of two post-structuralist philosophers, Emmanuel Levinas and Jacque Derrida. They argue that our desires, values and attitudes are socially shaped by the *Other*, hence one's responsibility goes beyond self, the present and the rational. Levinas (1979) defines responsibility in relation to 'care for the Other', which transcends economic and political realms because of our intrinsic humanity (Levinas, 1979). Derrida (1992, 2002) takes this one step further and describes responsibility as capacity to respond and accept risk responsibly in the face of ambiguity and uncertainty, for both humans and non-humans (Derrida, 1992, Derrida and Rottenberg, 2002).

Care responsibility is little discussed in the planning literature with the exception of a few studies which frame it as relational responsibility (Gunder, 2006, Gunder and Hillier, 2004). However, it is a useful concept in environmental ethics and environmental planning, which have evolved from longstanding concerns about the impact of planning on the environment voiced at the interface between land-use planning and an emerging SD agenda (While et al., 2010); and are seen as a locus for shaping SD and catalysing environmental responsibility and action (Jensen et al., 2013, Rydin, 2003). Neither duty responsibility nor care responsibility engage with power dynamics and the social interaction in everyday life that affect both planning and SD. SD 'is interpreted on the basis of different interests, values and beliefs' (p.52) and 'the positions taken in planning can often be attributed to the identifiable interests of the protagonists at different scales' (Owens and Cowell, 2011) (p. 52).

The politics of responsibility: communitarian versus cosmopolitan

The different interests and scales in power structures are framed in political theory by the *communitarianism vs. cosmopolitanism* dichotomy which broadly identifies two types of responsibilities at the intersection with power dynamics: ‘in nearness’ (or communitarian responsibility) and ‘in distance’ (or cosmopolitan responsibility) (Dobson, 2005, Dobson, 2006). This dichotomy, however, resonates with two other long-standing debates in sociology: *Gemeinschaft vs. Gesellschaft* and local vs. global, both employed to explain societal change at the dawn of modernity (i.e. the industrial revolution, the former, and globalisation, the latter.) There is an implicit assumption that *Gesellschaft/global* forces tend to alienate, dominate and/or pose some kind of threat to *Gemeinschaft/local* forces; and they are criticised for not being fully emerged in the politics of modern culture and society (Brooker and Thacker, 2007). On the contrary, the communitarianism vs. cosmopolitanism binary is a political model, hence engaging with the dynamics of power, and does not assume one is better than the other. This makes it into a useful lens for looking at responsibility in planning for SD.

Communitarianism argues that communities (and states, for that matter, as the ultimate level of community organisation) only have limited responsibilities towards the outsider communities (and states), thus offering moral justifications for community boundaries and control. Political thinking on communitarian responsibilities can be traced back to Max Weber’s work on power and authority, heavily influenced by the deontological ethics of duty responsibility (Beetham, 2013), but also other prominent communitarian ideas such as an emphasis on the commons and bounded goods (Etzioni, 2014), which reinforce a rational and hierarchical conceptualisation of power dynamics.

This has been criticised by later political thinkers such as Hannah Arendt and Iris

Marion Young who argue that community boundaries are not morally legitimate when framing responsibilities, because communities can be exclusive on diversity and democracy counts (Young, 2006, Young, 2010, Arendt, 1987, Arendt, 2005). These ideas are associated with *cosmopolitanism*, defined as ‘belonging to the world’ and practices of cultural pluralism that involve crossing physical and symbolic boundaries (Jeffrey and McFarlane, 2008). However cosmopolitanism does not come without its criticism, which Dobson (2006) summarises neatly: it is not easy to take or account for responsibilities on distant issues or, indeed, a distant common humanity. Disbanding boundaries and taking supra-national action is only viable when there is cultural convergence which is not an easy goal to achieve (Miller, 2002).

Communitarian ideas are underlying land-use and participatory planning models such as community planning and neighbourhood planning. Such models appeal to the responsibility of community for social wellbeing, and advocate localised and community-led responses to local challenges, under the promise of community autonomy to shape planning from the bottom (Scerri and Magee, 2012). Campbell and Marshall (2000), however, question the ability of individuals to work for community interests, and so engage in community planning as they tend to favour self-interests in decision making because of differences in opinion and conflicting needs. Similarly, it is argued that neighbourhood planning does not necessarily lead to better local decisions in SD because “the few may not wish to pay the price of the collectivist policies which SD implies” (Robbins and Rowe, 2002) (p. 41) (Brandt and Svendsen, 2013). One may argue here that planning anchored in communitarianism and SD may be uneasy bedfellows.

Cosmopolitan ideas such as cross boundary thinking have instead influenced the more

recent shift to the paradigm of ‘new spatial planning’ (Healey, 2006), seen in models of integrated planning and comprehensive planning. These models recognise the interconnected nature of responsibilities and planning’s need to work across administrative boundaries and with other stakeholders (Kidd, 2007). They integrate planning horizontally with other policies in order to avoid conflicting interests, and generate win-win situations, but also vertically between the different tiers of planning as a means to more effective governance. SD is considered an ideal test-bed in integrated and comprehensive planning because it embraces holistically social, economic and environmental concerns and engages with causal chains of responsibilities (Vigar, 2009, Dobson, 2006). These models, however, are challenged on assumed and new ‘governance lines’, which it is argued do not exist yet in planning (Vigar, 2009, Healey, 2006).

Framing responsibility in planning for SD

Ethics and political theory offer important insights into how responsibility in planning for SD can be framed. On the one hand, ethics can be employed to unpick *duty responsibilities* (the rules), which are inherently embedded in the prescriptive and regulatory nature of any planning system; and *care responsibilities* (the morals) that one may associate with SD concerns for ‘future generations’ and the environment. On the other hand, the political lens brings to life *communitarian responsibilities* (bounded) associated with clear boundaries and hierarchies of power; and *cosmopolitan responsibilities* (interconnected) which reach beyond boundaries both horizontally and vertically, and involve multi-scalar lines of power.

These four kinds of responsibility are not competing, but rather complementary as they all exhibit some elements deeply embedded in planning for SD for good reason. Duty

and care responsibility can coexist to a certain degree in planning for SD: planning is prescriptive and regulatory and SD implies a planning stand on morals. At the same time, communitarian and cosmopolitan responsibilities capture important aspects about the politics of responsibility in planning for SD and neither represent a satisfactory integration or balance of personal-near-present and impersonal-distant-future claims (Gibney, 1999). In fact, planning as any other public policy making area is caught between cosmopolitan (i.e. the strive towards a ‘greater common good’) and communitarian (i.e. the challenge of implementation on the ground) interests to respond to real life dilemmas such as the delivery of SD (Weiner, 1996).

This points to complex relationships between the four dimensions of responsibility, with no self-evident combinations for understanding responsibility in planning for SD.

Overall four models are possible: communitarian duty, cosmopolitan duty, cosmopolitan care and communitarian care. The models are represented in Figure1 and further summarised in Table1. Table1 briefly describes the four types in terms of key concepts in the literature, planning specific concepts and manifestations in planning practice.

[Insert Figure 1]

[Insert Table 1]

Communitarian duty describes responsibility in traditional land-use planning, where planning rules and accountability mechanisms are spelt out and planning operates within clearly delimited boundaries and hierarchical power structures. This model seems to be in tension with the moral values and cross-boundary and interconnected nature of SD. *Communitarian care* is defined as responsibility framed by strong

communitarian ideas, such as in community planning and neighbourhood planning, but also encompassing wider moral concerns for the others, in both human and non-human form. This model can be relevant to planning for SD and examples in practice may include Transition Towns and Low-carbon Communities initiatives in the UK.

Cosmopolitan care is seen as an ideal model for framing responsibility in planning for SD, with integrated planning and comprehensive planning as potential manifestations in practice. It brings together a preoccupation for the others and cosmopolitan ideas of causal and cross-boundary chains of responsibilities, values very much embedded in conceptualisations of SD. Finally, *cosmopolitan duty* describes a responsibility in planning which is interconnected and transgresses physical boundaries but remains highly prescriptive in planning rules and guidance. While I find it hard to imagine how this model may look in practice, one could think of disaster planning or post-conflict planning, where knock-on causal and cross-boundary effects and responsibilities of natural disasters or war are ascribed to clear boundaries and hard rules.

3. The praxis of responsibility in planning

The previous section frames responsibility in planning for SD from an ethical-political perspective into a four-partite taxonomy of responsibility. The question asked now is how this taxonomy applies in practice and whether different examples of planning practice for SD have similar responsibility outlooks or not. I now turn to look at two such examples: the Stockholm Royal Seaport (SRS thereafter), Stockholm's latest large-scale eco-district; and North West Bicester (NWB thereafter), England's first eco-town.

Approach and methods

The two cases are classified as planning for SD according to three criteria. First, they both strive to meet a number of economic, social and environmental goals via various interventions, with strong ambitions for environmental sustainability and interconnected cross-boundary thinking to align with ‘one planet living’ (at NWB) and ‘close-loop’ principles (at SRS). Second, this is formalised in their particular planning contexts via various planning policy and guidance. Third, they are classified in the literature as eco-district, close-loop, sustainable and smart development (SRS) and eco- and healthy-town (NWB). It is important to note here that the main purpose of this paper is not to examine cases similar in terms of size and planning context, but rather different cases to allow for conceptual testing. Thus, the two cases are selected to offer variation across planning contexts, hence different ethical and political dimensions, and to test whether planning for SD means similar responsibility outlooks or not.

The cases are different in a number of ways. They are located within contrasting geographies, political-administrative and planning systems. The SRS is an example of city-core ex-industrial brownfield development, while NWB is development on the outskirts of a medium-sized English town built on greenfield land. NWB is almost double in size when compared to SRS, which is also more advanced in implementation than NWB. SRS is substantially denser and more mix-use than NWB, while NWB has a strong residential component. The two cases also share some communalities. They both are large scale developments: SRS develops over 240ha and NWB over 400ha, and considered sustainability ‘flagship’ or ‘exemplar’ projects in their specific contexts. They are also ‘second generation’ of sustainable development, building on lessons from Hammarby Sjostad in Stockholm and Beddington Zero Development (BedZed) in the

South-East of England, respectively - the latter case being intensively discussed in the literature and acknowledged as ‘first generation’ of sustainable development projects. The cases are responses to demographic growth in the Stockholm metropolitan area and South-East of England, which fuels a need for urban densification and significant housing development in both Sweden and England.

The paper draws on a qualitative research design which involved documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews. Documentary analysis included analysis of secondary literature such as existing national and local planning policy and guidance in Sweden and England. This allowed for a good understanding of duty responsibilities as outlined by questions such as who/ to whom/ for what is planning responsible/ accountable, but also an indication of more general moral and cultural norms around SD which shape care responsibilities. Eleven interviews with planners, other municipal representatives and developers were carried out in 2016-2017: 6 in Stockholm (coded IntervieweeSRS01-06) and 5 in Bicester (coded IntervieweeNWB01-05). These were useful to further unpick care responsibilities, especially in relation to how planning in these particular contexts understands the consequences of its actions. The interviews were also instrumental in exploring the political dimensions of responsibility i.e. whether responsibility was associated with boundaries and accountability to a specific community or with casual chains and cross boundary thinking. The questions that structured the interviews are provided in the last column of Table 1.

The cases

The SRS (or Norra Djurgårdsstaden) is Stockholm’s former port area, and perhaps the largest eco-district in Europe. It is anchored in Stockholm’s comprehensive plan and

aims to become a world-class innovative model for SD across five sectors: energy, climate adaptation, lifestyle, transport and eco-cycles (Stockholms stad, 2013, Stockholms stad, 2012, Stockholms stad, 2010). The SRS aims to capture a greater share of the global trade that builds on Stockholm's world leadership in environmental technology and know-how (Ranhagen, 2013). It is also an active partner in international city networks such as C40 and the Clinton Climate Initiative (Carlsson-Mard, 2013). The SRS plans to build some 12,000 homes, create 35,000 new jobs and become fossil fuel free by 2030, whilst creating a mixed-use community and retaining existing port functions (Stockholms stad, 2015). Sustainability performance at SRS is measured by a number of stringent sustainability indicators which are reported every year. Indicators monitor SRS's performance on energy, green space, waste, transport, materials and indoor environment (Healey, 2008). The SRS started on site in 2011 and is currently developing its 5th phase.

NWB is an extension to the market town of Bicester, located in Cherwell District Council, county of Oxfordshire. Bicester is a 'growth town' with large housing targets in the South-East of England, ten miles from Oxford. In 2007, a government initiative was set up to develop eco-towns in England as a response to the UK's wider housing shortage but also as an opportunity to achieve exemplary SD (DCLG, 2007). NWB plans to provide some 6,000 zero carbon homes and 4,600 new jobs (Cherwell, 2016:3). Sustainability performance at NWB is measured via One Planet Living Indicators and reported annually (BioRegional, 2015). Indicators measure CO₂, construction waste, car usage, green space, biodiversity gain etc. NWB started on site in 2012 and has currently finished its 1st phase (Elmsbrook) which includes some 400 housing units; one energy centre; a nursery, community centre, eco-business centre, eco-pub and primary school; and some 1,500 sq. m. of commercial space (BioRegional, 2016).

Responsibility at the Stockholm Royal Seaport (SRS)

The classification of European planning models discussed at the beginning of this paper notes that the Swedish planning system is both imperative and integrated (Newman and Thornley, 1996, Davies et al., 1989, Faludi, 2013, CEC, 1997). At the same time, SD is ingrained in Swedish society and has been an overarching political objective since 2003, acting across scales and closely monitored at the national level (Ahlberg, 2009). This would indicate relatively prescriptive duty responsibilities, but also the presence of cosmopolitan responsibilities that shape planning for SD in Sweden. Is this the case at the SRS?

The Swedish planning system is strong at the national and local level, and weak at the regional level. Planning is regulated at the national level by the Planning and Building Act (SwedenGov, 2010) and the Environmental Code (SwedenGov, 1998). Legal requirements for SD are systematically and explicitly included in national and local planning guidance and budgets early on (EC, 2000, Lundström et al., 2013) and the delivery of planning for SD is the responsibility of local planning authorities which hold the ‘planning monopoly’ (Lundström et al., 2013). Municipal planning prepares two types of plans: *comprehensive plans*, over 10-20 years, which are not legally binding and represent the major instrument to deliver planning for SD (Persson, 2013); and *development plans*, over a shorter time span, which are legally binding and determine land-use. SD requirements appear to be clearly streamlined through national guidance to municipal planning via these two types of plans. However, this does not seem to be the case in practice. “Swedish planning legislation is clear at the general level but in practice it is open to interpretation at the municipal level” (IntervieweeSRS01), says one of the interviewees.

Despite being seen as relatively prescriptive, the design and content of municipal plans is left to local discretion (Persson, 2013, Lundström et al., 2013), meaning that “sustainability can feature in planning documentation in some municipalities more than in others, depending on local circumstances and priorities” (IntervieweeSRS01). In addition, the *building permit*, which is also legally binding and the last and most detailed type of plan required for development in Sweden, is the responsibility of the landowner. Here, additional interpretation of SD can take place. The building permit can specify further SD requirements; and when the municipality owns the land, it “becomes a-carrot-and-stick for sustainability because it can place even more demands on the developer” (IntervieweeSRS01).

At SRS, “the municipality owns 90% of land and so, it has introduced ambitious sustainability requirements via building permits” (IntervieweeSRS04) and “developed specific visions, goals and strategies, with more requirements on various sustainability issues than they do in other urban development projects” (IntervieweeSRS02). These requirements are clearly stated in SRS’s building permits and annually monitored by indicators which make planning accountable, feeding back into SRS’s planning process and “reporting progress to city politicians, developers and construction firms, and the public” (IntervieweeSRS04).

The SRS is an example of planning practice where planning duties, traditionally seen as prescriptive, interact with the SD agenda and ‘prescribe’ further the values associated with it, ‘duty-ing care’ for SD. This is the result of “favourable conditions such as the project’s flagship sustainability status and municipality’s drive to push forward SD via building permits” (IntervieweeSRS03), but also a wider sustainability culture embedded in the individual Swedish psyche. “Environmental norms and values are rooted in

Swedish culture... most Swedes are quite rural and have a summer house by the lake. So, things like daylight, walking, parks and access to nature are important to them and, of course, this will be reflected in everything planners do” (IntervieweeSRS05).

Sweden has been a sustainability leader since the 1970s and is renowned for highly-held sustainability values (Werner, 2017). These have a long tradition in Swedish society and sustainability officially entered the political arena in 1996 when the government put it on its political manifesto (Eckerberg and Nilsson, 2013). “The SRS sits within this culture of environmental legislation, the development of monitoring systems and SD embedded in planning policy and politics” (IntervieweeSRS06). Interviewees talked about planning being concerned with consequences beyond immediate action such as “the future governance of the area and how to achieve social cohesion and equality for all” (IntervieweeSRS02); “whether people’s present and future local needs are balanced across city’s needs” (IntervieweeSRS06); and “how the SRS model can be replicated elsewhere” (Interviewee SRS03).

At SRS planning is integrated and works horizontally and vertically across boundaries and lines of governance. “Planners and politicians work closely with developers and other stakeholders” (IntervieweeSRS02) and “SRS is governed with the help of two types of partnerships: one high-level partnership that governs strategic issues, jointly run by the municipality, major companies (e.g. ABB, Fortum, Envac, Electrolux, Ericsson etc) and academic institutions such as KTH; and one lower-level partnership which deals with specific issues such as energy, housing, transport etc, bringing together the municipality and other relevant parties” (IntervieweeSRS03). This indicates governance landscapes across stakeholders and sectors, and the recognition of causal chains of actions and responsibilities in the planning of SRS.

The interviewees also talked about how “planning goes beyond the boundaries of SRS, because of more strategic goals which have to align with the city and wider region” (IntervieweeSRS05). Even when spatial boundaries were important for indicator measuring, the interviewees pointed to “the need for boundary transgression such as in the case of meaningfully measuring biodiversity and transportation” (IntervieweeSRS05) and how “boundaries have to be blurred because the eco-cycle model has to be connected to the rest of the city” (IntervieweeSRS04). The planning of SRS was described as “of global importance, a world-class eco-district with an ambition to become a world-leading stepping stone for innovation” (IntervieweeSRS02).

Responsibility at North West Bicester (NWB)

The English planning system is seen as laissez-faire, whereby fewer rules are spelt out and discretionary decision making is possible (Davies et al., 1989, Faludi, 2013). It is driven by land-use principles and, more recently, framed by neighbourhood planning which takes on strong communitarian ideas and is anchored in a belief that communities “should have genuine opportunities to influence the future of the places where they live” (HMGov, 2011) (p.11). At the same time, the SD agenda is weakened by dwindling political interest, poorly defined in planning policy and guidance, and little operationalised at the local level. This is paralleled by wider austerity measures which have seen municipalities cutting sustainability capacity and resources at the local level (Turcu, 2018, Jane, 2013).

The government has significant powers to shape planning at the national level in the UK. However, this has not been employed to create a strong planning system, but to foster pro-market deregulation and devolution which have seen regional planning dissolved and left municipal planning weak (Ref, Jess & John Intro, Rydin 2013).

Planning is legislated in the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act and, until 2012, was written into 25 different Planning Policy Statements (or PPSs), many regulating different aspects of SD such as PPS1 (Delivering Sustainable Development), PPS1 Supplement (Eco-towns) and PPS22 (Renewable Energy). The PPSs were replaced in 2012 by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – a single document, seen to integrate planning with other policy sectors in England (Vigar, 2009). The NPPF “underpins sustainable development and planning in England” (HMGov, 2016) (p.3) and puts forward a vision of development which presumes SD and is deliverable via the tripartite (i.e. economic, social and environmental) roles of planning. The NPPF, however, does not offer a clear definition of SD, lacks operationalization and relies too heavily on communities at the local level (Parker et al., 2015, Bradley, 2015, Davoudi and Cowie, 2013, TCPA, 2018, Turcu, 2018).

English planning is administrated by municipalities which develop and adopt 15-20 year *local plans*, outlining the municipality’s vision and land-use for future development and similar to comprehensive plans in Sweden. While the Swedish counterpart is not legally binding, the English local plan is and forms the starting point in planning decisions about individual planning applications, which are the responsibility of land developers. Sometimes, municipalities develop and adopt Supplementary Planning Guidance to complement the Local Plan, which can be thematic (i.e. housing, green/ blue infrastructure etc.) or specific to certain developments. Local plans can also be complemented by *neighbourhood plans*, introduced since 2012 under the Localism Bill and neighbourhood planning. Neighbourhood plans are developed by communities and sit under but carry the same legal weight in decision making as local plans. However, the discretionary nature of English planning means that development permissions are not granted just because they are in conformity with the NPPF, Local Plan and/or

Supplementary Planning Guidance and Neighbourhood Plan.

NWB “has caused controversy from the very beginning by evading normal planning control routes to ensure high sustainability standards” (IntervieweeNWB01). “NWB is a neighbourhood unlike any other... a development that demonstrates the highest levels of sustainability” (IntervieweeNWB03) and is defined by “a comprehensive set of eco credentials drawing on pre-NPPF planning guidance” (IntervieweeNWB02). NWP was announced in 2008, in PPS1 Supplement (Eco-towns) as an ‘exemplar’ of SD. In 2010, the municipality developed *Eco-Bicester: One Shared Vision* in partnership with a social housing developer (A2Dominion) and sustainability think-tank (Bioregional). The vision was anchored in an existing sustainability framework, Bioregional’s One Living Planet (OLP) (BioRegional, 2015) and operationalized the characteristics of an eco-town. The vision was adopted later that year in the Local Plan as *Policy Bicester 1* (Cherwell, 2016).

“When NPPF came into force in 2012, NWB was already tied into previous planning guidance and the municipality has continued to adopt planning documentation under PPS1 Supplement, despite the NPPF. So, in a way, NWB is an exception because it has always been sitting outside the NPPF and has a legally binding vision for SD” (IntervieweeNWB04). This refers to NWB’s Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) adopted in 2015, again drawing heavily on pre-NPPF planning policy and the OLP framework, and operationalizing further sustainability requirements at NWB (Turcu, 2018). NWB’s sustainability performance against the Local Plan and SPD is monitored through a set of indicators which offer a “framework for accountability to the community and follow through wider planning concerns about the current and future health and overall wellbeing of people living there” (IntervieweeNWB02).

This concern about the ‘future’ indicates that responsibilities in planning at NWB are associated with the consequences of planning action and so, of a ‘care’ nature. “NWB is an exemplar in planning for SD and commitment towards protecting initial promises has been kept...and it will be kept! We know this and work within this unspoken understanding despite the wider challenges of austerity cuts and the lack of interest in sustainable issues at the national level” (IntervieweeNWB02). The ‘writing’ of care, triggered by sustainability concerns, into planning policy and guidance at NWB was possibly due to the discretionary nature of English planning, which in this case made planning duties with care responsibilities possible to permeate and to bypass the current national planning framework.

Boundaries are important in the land-use English planning model. English planning also has a long history of community involvement and participation (Gallent and Ciaffi, 2014) and, today, operates within the context of neighbourhood planning. This indicates that communitarian ideas and principles lay at the heart of English planning, and so they frame (in rhetoric) and shape (in practice) responsibility in planning for SD.

Communities have been involved in planning at NWB via charrettes and building capacity initiatives such as the Bicester Green where “people from all walks of life came together to share and engaged in the art of repair; a Community Hub for residents’ use and enjoyment” (IntervieweeNWB01); demonstration homes and self-built programmes where “the community could see but also work alongside each other” (IntervieweeNWB03).

Communities at NWB are also important for “taking ownership and ensuring good governance over time” (IntervieweeNWB01) and “for having on board so they can use their powers to challenge planning decisions in the future via neighbourhood planning’

(IntervieweeNWB02). “We are not sure about what is going to happen in the future. NWB will take at least 20 years to complete and planning may be reshuffled again or the Local Plan revised to incorporate community-led Neighbourhood Plans. That can change everything and we can end up delivering again bog standard development with no sustainability values if we don’t work with the community” (IntervieweeNWB04).

Accountability to the community plays an important role in the delivery of NWB:

“boundaries are important because we have to measure the OLP indicators and make sure we deliver what we have promised to the community” (IntervieweeNWB01).

Despite working with two other partners (A2Dominion and Bioregional) under a ‘gentleman’s agreement’, the municipality is ‘in charge’ for the delivery of NWB on the ground because “responsibilities in planning cannot be shared with others because they cannot be held accountable” (IntervieweeNWB02).

4. Discussion

Drawing on evidence across the two cases, three main findings emerge. They refer to the ethics and politics of planning for SD and their intersection, and the role that stakeholders beyond local planning play in the delivery of SD in practice. These findings cannot be generalised across planning practice, however, they represent new insights into how responsibility in planning for SD can be framed in theory and is shaped in practice. They also further understanding on differences in planning for SD outcomes that are noted in practice.

Duty and care (ethical) responsibilities in planning for SD exist side-by-side. While duty responsibility can be seen as a default responsibility of planning, it is care responsibility which drives planning for SD. A duty dimension of responsibility is

embedded in planning practice for SD across the two contexts and is recognisable in the sets of written rules that regulate planning in the two countries. This entails an association with spatial boundaries and clear lines of authority and accountability, closely related to a country's legal system and regulations, and described in classifications of planning models (Newman and Thornley, 1996). In both examples, the municipality 'holds' the authority and responsibility for the delivery of SD, undertakes further operationalization of national planning policy, and is accountable for the delivery of SD via sets of indicators.

At the same time, duty responsibility is complemented by care responsibility in both cases. Care responsibility is derived from SD values, delineated by 'care for the Other' (Levinas, 1979) and extended beyond human action to the consequences of human action on the environment (Derrida, 1992, Derrida and Rottenberg, 2002). This is nurtured by long standing political support, strong municipal planning and society-wide sustainability values at SRS, and made possible by the laissez-faire nature of English planning and locally-held sustainability values at NWB. While the ethics of care seem to drive planning for SD, the balance between the ethics of duty and those of care differ in the two case studies. This is influenced by their particular planning contexts and can be summarised as 'dutiful care' at SRS and 'careful duty' at NWB. That is to say care is 'written' into planning guidance at SRS due to the prescriptive and strong nature of municipal Swedish planning, while at NWB, care 'infuses' planning duties, a result of the discretionary English planning.

Communitarian and cosmopolitan (political) responsibilities in planning for SD do not coexist. They shape responsibility outlooks and further our understanding on differences in planning for SD outcome in practice. Planning's association with clear

spatial boundaries is an important communitarian dimension. However, a political perspective on responsibility can understand boundaries either “in nearness” or “in distance” (Dobson, 2006). This is determined by a country’s political, legislative and administrative context, but also by its wider social and cultural norms, which in turn determine a country’s planning context (Newman and Thornley, 1996, CEC, 1997). Responsibility in planning at SRS is about responsibility ‘in distance’ and of cosmopolitan nature linking across horizontal and vertical landscapes of actors and power (Vigar, 2009, Kidd, 2007, Ravetz, 2001). This is as well as thinking across physical and symbolical boundaries (Jeffrey and McFarlane, 2008), the result of causal chains of responsibilities and the interconnected nature of SD (Kleingeld, 2013). Conversely, responsibility in planning at NWB is communitarian and sees responsibility ‘in nearness’, where planning is responsible for and accountable to the authority and bounded geography of NWB’s community (Etzioni, 2014, Beetham, 2013).

When the ethical and political perspectives on responsibility are merged, two different models of responsibility in planning for SD emerge. They are: *care cosmopolitanism* at SRS, underpinned by care and cosmopolitan responsibilities, and *care communitarianism* at NWB, shaped by care and communitarian responsibilities. This highlights a diversity of responsibility outlooks in practice despite the common overarching goal of planning for SD, which has been noted before (Owens and Cowell, 2011, Bulkeley and Betsill, 2005).

Municipal planning sits at the centre of planning practice for SD. However, other public and private stakeholders are also involved in the delivery of SD on the ground which calls for re-thinking responsibility in planning for SD. The two cases have one aspect in common: municipal planning is the place where responsibility in planning for

SD is 'operationalized.' This is not new and the Local Agenda 21 has already pointed out the instrumental role that local government plays in the delivery of SD at the local level. However, I note above the variation of how this is done at SRS and NWB. At SRS, the municipality holds 'planning monopoly' (Lundström et al., 2013) and acts as one executive actor which has the powers to 'duty care' and, potentially, delegate responsibilities to horizontal and vertical stakeholders. At NWB, the municipality is an operational actor with discretionary powers which instils planning duties with care for SD, while bypassing the current planning framework and drawing on support from other partners (A2Dominion and Bioregional). The existence of public and private stakeholders involved in the planning of SD on the ground indicates the potential for new landscapes of responsibilities extending beyond the traditional remit of planning. In fact, scholars note a gap between the rhetoric and practice planning for SD, paralleled by an ongoing and undocumented expansion of planning responsibilities (Owens and Cowell, 2011, Turcu, 2018).

5. Concluding thoughts

The current literature engages with responsibility in planning mainly from an agency (planner's) angle (Howe, 1990, Marcuse, 1976, Wachs, 1990). With the exception of a few studies (Owens and Cowell, 2011, Gunder, 2006, Gunder and Hillier, 2004), the responsibility implications of bringing SD into planning are not discussed. Thus, this paper looks at what responsibility in planning means at its intersection with SD debates and puts the planning system at the centre of understanding this responsibility. This is not to say that the role of planning agency is not important in shaping the responsibilities of the planning system. In fact, planners and planning actors can resist pressures to understand norms, human motivation, irrational behaviour and 'emotions' because of the nature of their profession which strives for societal order and bounded

rationality (Baum, 2015, Hoch, 2006). Future research should also look at the responsibilities and values of planners in delivering planning for SD and ‘individual-duty-fulfilling institutions’ in planning (Jones 2002, p.69). The Swedish case study offers a glimpse into this: highly held sustainability values shape everything a planner does.

How is responsibility in planning for SD conceptualised in planning theory?

SD is a living concept bereft of fixed meaning. Planning theory, despite offering an important arena for discussion of SD, has failed so far to fully discuss responsibility in planning for SD (Gunder and Hillier, 2007, Owens and Cowell, 2011). Both planning and SD involve ethical and political choices. The ethical-political framework put forward in this paper offers a way to reflect on how these choices are made. However, this theoretical proposition does not explain single-handedly the variation in outlooks of responsibility and outcomes in planning practice for SD. It is the balance between duty and care, against the background of either communitarian or cosmopolitan values in planning, together with a country’s wider legislative, cultural and historical development, that explains why relatively different planning practices and outcomes can be claimed by various groups as ‘planning for SD’. Theory cannot easily frame the challenges that emerge in planning practice for SD because the rapidity of planning practice has outstripped the capacity of planning theory to incorporate new ideas and thinking and develop new models. However, two wider implications for planning theory can be drawn from here. *Care* responsibility seems to drive and somehow overpower *duty* responsibility in the planning for SD at both locations. Hence, planning theory needs to better understand and engage with the ethics of care in planning.

What does responsibility in planning for SD mean in planning practice?

Theoretical categorisation helps understanding but does not offer one single model of responsibility in planning for SD, but rather a variety of models. The outlook of responsibility in planning for SD cannot be generalised across planning models and practice. Models vary in practice and this is the result of distinctive traditions in planning but also a country's specific context. The Swedish and English examples show that, in practice, responsibility in planning for SD goes beyond duties and engages with 'care' but also reinterprets the politics of boundaries. Moreover, a variety of stakeholders, both from the private and public realms, but also at different scales are involved alongside municipal planning in the delivery of SD on the ground. These new lines of governance and power dynamics, which reflect the politicised nature of planning, call for a re-thinking of responsibilities in planning for SD. They go beyond planning, are multi-scalar and could be shared. This entails action on how these stakeholders can be made subject to the responsibilities of SD and raises questions about how these constellations of stakeholders can be governed and made accountable. Could that be through supra-national planning organisations such as an 'United Nations' or the 'European Union of planning for SD'; or decentralised but global planning bodies such as an 'ICLEI' or 'C40 for planning for SD' that contextualise SD, or both? Should planning practice only herald responsibilities for 'locals' but also for the wellbeing of those overseas? These are not easy questions for planning practice, which, ultimately seems to be responsible for the delivery of SD on the ground.

Short biography

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