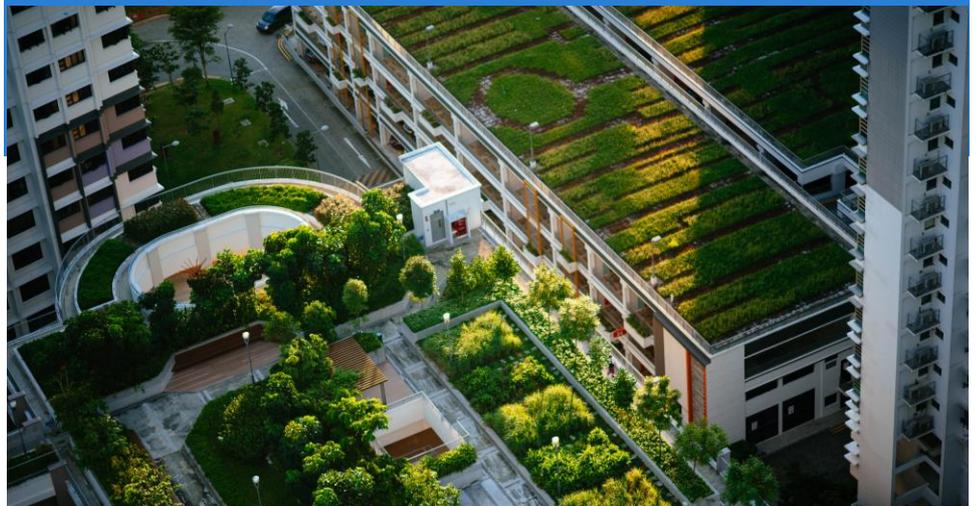


In Context

A project newsletter

Issue 2, September 2018

Current topic:
**Civil Society and the Governance of
Urban Green Areas**



Across Europe, urban green areas are valued and often managed by public bodies that allocate public resources for their maintenance and management. However, pressing environmental and social issues, as well as of the economic crisis, have led to budget cuts and questions about how to best manage green areas. The role of citizens and social movements that engage with these green areas and contribute to their maintenance, has thus become of political and academic interest. There is increasing reporting on initiatives led by associations, dedicated individuals, or social entrepreneurs, who engage with these green spaces in novel ways, contributing to new opportunities to the governance of urban green areas.

In result of having selected two empirical cases located in an urban context (Taranto, Trieste) our project team began to consider questions around green areas and governance models in an urban context. In result to this, over the past year, our project team has been engaged on a number of activities and has strengthened collaborations with researchers and practitioners on this subject.

This second issue of the In Context Newsletter will present activities and the work done in the past period on the topic of civil society engagement in an urban context with special focus on the governance of green areas.



SÖDERTÖRN UNIVERSITY | STOCKHOLM
sh.se

Södertörn University

School of Natural Sciences,
Technology and Environmental
Studies
SE-141 89 Huddinge

<http://www.envgovcontext.net/>



Media Discourse Framing by Social Movement Organisations: the Taranto Case Study

*A Master thesis by
Camille Emma RINALDI*

An case study of civil society communication strategies on environmental health in an urban context

The area surrounding Taranto has a history of social movements opposing a local steel plant that for decades has emitted toxins in the surrounding environment. Headaches, polluted potable water and air pollution has tormented the citizens and created a strong ground for the mobilization of a larger movement pursuing environmental and social justice. The social movement that formed over the years is made of different actors from formally organized associations, ENGOs, to more fluid groups of individuals that take action when a need arises. Each of these groups has its own perspective and frame the environmental problems in given ways. The former interested Camille Emma Rinaldi who in 2018 has successfully defended a [master thesis](#) at Södertörn University about media discourse framing by the social movements in Taranto.

Camille undertook her thesis research as part to the project Environmental Governance in Context and in 2018 joined our team on field work in Taranto. By conducting interviews with 21 representatives of different organizations, Camille has conducted a comprehensive study of how emotions influence the framing process of environmental issues. She combined theories on emotion with theories on framing, and investigated the emotional aspects involved in how groups frame problems.

She continues collaborating with the project and is currently involved in the development of a Working Paper focused on the Taranto Case.

“It is well known that a news or events can be described differently by different actors”

Meet the author; Camille Emma Rinaldi; personal impressions from field work

We took the chance to get to ask Camille a few quick questions about her experience during field work conducted, in 2018, in Taranto (Italy).

Congratulations on your finished thesis Camille! Your thesis has recently been defended and published in DIVA, have there been any reactions on it?

Not yet, no. But I hope it can help other students researching the Taranto environmental dispute, or for it to be a useful reference for those interested in the communication strategies activists use.

You have worked on the preparation of the project field-work and then also joined on data collection in Taranto – what was the most challenging aspect of these tasks?

Different things were challenging, it was my first appointment on a project of this kind and it was my first time being a research assistant on the field. The most challenging part of the data collection was to direct the interviewees to answer more directly our questions. The Taranto case is complicated and very present in the lives of the activists we talked to, so collecting information without taking sides in the dispute was a challenge. Objectivity for a researcher is crucial, yet it was hard for me to conduct the interview on a detached emotional level.

What have you enjoyed most during the data collection in Taranto?

This project was eye opening for many different reasons. I was my first time as a research assistant so I was introduced by Romina to all the different tasks. I loved the scooping study to find the most prominent stakeholders in the case. I felt a bit like a private detective, who needed to discover all the actors implicated! I also liked being able to prioritise and organise the different stakeholders in relation to their role in the Taranto social movement. Finally, the field work itself was very exciting, because I could take an active role into the finalisation of the project.

What lies ahead for you now?

I am now working as a communication associate in a start up in Stockholm. Thanks to this project, I have taken interest into Environmental Communication and will try to work with social activist groups in this field.

Camille Emma Rinaldi

*Master in Media,
Communication and Cultural
Analysis*

Södertörn University

Has studied the role and use of emotions in the communication campaigns of non-governmental organizations in Taranto, southern Italy.

Taranto is inhabited by approximately 70.000 people and a steel plant rises high over the city horizon. Since 1980 the steel plant offered employment to the local community, but also has been the major source of heavy pollution and toxic waste. This has left enduring negative effects on human, and environmental health in the area that only in recent years have become a topic of concern and border attention. The increasing awareness of the negative effects resulted in a growing grass-roots movement pursuing, and fighting for environmental justice.

Reference:

Rinaldi (2018). *Media Discourse Framing by Social Movement Organisations: the Taranto Case Study*.
Master's dissertation at Södertörn University.

Introducing ...

A short introduction of the research collaboration between our team with the research project *“Exploring Residents’ Home Gardening Experiences”*

Research focusing on urban green areas most often focuses on the governance of these with the attempt to identify and address barriers and issues. On the other hand, little is known about the personal experiences of urban gardeners and what motivates them to contribute at the conservation of native flora and fauna (biodiversity) in their own yard. Also, research about the effects of these hands-on activities have on learning, attitudes and behaviours is still in progress.

Prof. Dr **Christopher Raymond** (Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences) and prof. dr. **Alan Diduck** (University of Winnipeg) have joined forces on a project titled *“Exploring Residents’ Home Gardening Experiences in Winnipeg, Canada”* that has received support from the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry (KSLA) and the University of Winnipeg in partnership with FortWhyte Alive.

We have collaborated on questions pertaining to the effect community programs have on learning and how that affects the individual and the community.

In April and May 2017 data collection was undertaken with gardeners who participate to the FortWhyte’s Naturescape program and with a control group of gardeners who do not participate.

Naturescape is a certification and training program prepared and run by [FortWhyte](#) – that is an organization encouraging home gardeners



to transform their yards and outdoor space into a habitat for Manitoba flora and fauna by incorporating elements that enhance biodiversity: food, water, and shelter

Field work resulted in a total of 50 interviews of which the majority (n = 35) was conducted with individual gardeners, other interviews were done with couples (n = 6) or families (n =1). The data collected was analysed and presented in September 2017 at FortWhytebeen. We are currently continuing the collaborative work by focusing on the insights that emerged and are preparing a summary of the outcomes as part to manuscripts to be made available on-line upon completion.

Project title: Exploring Residents’ Home Gardening Experiences

Principal Investigators: Christopher Raymond (Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences) & Alan Diduck (University of Winnipeg)

Funders: Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry (KSLA) and the University of Winnipeg

Period: 2016-17

The Interview:

Meet Natalie Gulsrud
from Copenhagen University

Sept 2018

by Laura Linnala

Thanks Natalie for taking time for talking to us! You have been engaged in work and research in the field of urban green governance, what do you think are currently the major challenges cities in Europe are facing in that regard?

There are several major issues that cities are dealing with for instance extreme weather such as drought, storm water management and extreme heat. This has impact on decision making and public health. Public health is a huge issue as more people in cities are stressed, obese and are moving less. The overall quality of life is challenged in urban areas. Another issue is immigration which in recent times has become a political breaking point (also in Sweden). Urban green areas are interesting in relation to these two issues as you can think of them as solutions to challenges of immigration and public health.

Yet there are many barriers facing the integration of urban green areas into environmental decision-making and other nature-based approaches to climate resilience. First, technocratic solutions tend to ignore pluralistic ideas that users have around what an urban green space is. People value and have different ideas of green spaces - technocratic approaches do not connect well to these. Second, wellness; we know people feel better in nature, but we lack medical research on this. Additionally, nature-based therapy is gaining traction in medical circles, but many hurdles remain to integrate nature into health care systems. Third, immigration and social cohesion: there is potential for use of urban green spaces as sites of social cohesion and integration. Research shows that communities with high levels of social capital are successful in gardening and so new approaches are needed to promote and foster initiatives able to bring communities together.

We can view green spaces as places of opportunity, but we must think of other ways of governing them over longer periods of time.

There is also a need to reconsider the time scales now used in politics, where 2 to 4 years programming periods are used while ecosystems need longer time periods.

Natalie Gulsrud

Assistant professor at
Copenhagen University.

She has a PhD in
Landscape Architecture
and Planning. Currently
focusing on several
topics, most recently
mapping volunteerism in
nature in Denmark.

More information about
Natalie can be found
[here](#).

Do you have questions
for Natalie? Contact her
at E-Mail.
nagu@ign.ku.dk



There are many initiatives promoting participation and partnerships made of multiple and different actors for the governance of urban green areas - what role can civil society have in that? In which ways can organizations, associations, movements and other informal groups contribute?

There is no one-fit-all solution. The roles are very community-specific and local. We should think of participatory ideas in a multi-governance scale and understand that there are different “rules of the game” and different languages for these processes in every country, region, city and even neighbourhood. There is a need for poly-form partnerships and governing models that engage bottom-up ideas in closed and top-down decision-making processes.

An example of this is seen in Melbourne (Australia), where in 2009 dying urban trees had a significant impact on citizens occurring at a time when deaths of citizens due to heat and raging forest fires was high. Fires and heat led policymakers to prioritize shade and temperature regulating ecosystems in the city. They created new channels of participatory governance that were open to people that don't normally get a voice, such as children and elderly.

Creative ideas were encouraged. Publicly owned trees received an email address, so people could file specific complaints e.g. fallen branches, leaves etc. What happened was that the trees were overwhelmed with love letters; this in turn gave researchers soft data of what citizens want and appreciate about trees. This info helped in understanding what trees need to be preserved, how to plan future urban green areas and strengthen citizens connections to place.

Are civil society organizations (e.g. are associations, movements and other informal groups) active and engaged in urban green governance in Denmark? Do you see differences between these and those based elsewhere in Europe?

Yes, it is a tradition in Denmark. Groups of “active citizens” are increasing, wielding more power and coming up with ideas for urban green spaces. We see more groups of citizens volunteering and gardening and a strong urban gardening movement is forming. Green entrepreneurs are setting the stage and discourse of what is important.

Initiatives such as **Bybi** are engaging people outside the workforce and placing beehives on roofs all around the city. **TagTomat** is growing veggies in the courtyards of housing associations for a small fee. They have also created beautiful green anti-terror blockades in Copenhagen around the touristic Nyhavn and City Hall. The idea that these green spaces can produce multiple benefits adds social value.

To read more about how automation and urban green areas, download Natalies latest publication:

Gulsrud, N., Raymond, C., Rutt, R., Olafsson, A., Plieninger, T., Sandberg, M., Beery, T. and Jönsson, K. (2018). ‘Rage against the machine’? The opportunities and risks concerning the automation of urban green infrastructure. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 180, pp.85-92.

To read more about participatory green governance as done in Melbourne:

Gulsrud, N., Hertzog, K. and Shears, I. (2018). Innovative urban forestry governance in Melbourne?: Investigating “green placemaking” as a nature-based solution.

Environmental Research, 161, pp.158-167.

Novel initiatives in Denmark:
www.tagtomat.dk
www.bybi.dk

Events, gatherings and workshops: *Rethinking urban nature to promote human well-being and livelihoods*

*Urban Futures Workshop,
held in Jan 2018, Malmö, Sweden*

How can we use green areas in an urban setting in new ways? How can we visualize this and take the ideas further?

Based on these questions a group of stakeholders, social entrepreneurs, academics and ENGOs gathered in Malmö in January 2018 at an expert workshop to share ideas and discuss case studies about how to use and manage green areas in an urban setting. Of particular interest was the question of what role informal groups, social movements and citizen groups can play to that. The Expert Workshop is an initiative by SLU organized in cooperation with Copenhagen University and Södertörn University.

Green spaces in cities are of growing importance. They play an important role from several perspectives; human health increases as we have green areas to dwell in and enjoy urban nature; green areas contribute to clean air which in an urban setting is often affected by traffic and related pollutants. Green areas have also a role in thermo-regulation and can be used for the production of food. More urban green areas are needed, and new ideas on how to plan, use and manage these with care and consideration so that different actors can benefit from them, is now gaining importance. .

At the workshop we addressed this question. We enjoyed presentations from urban planners from the Copenhagen and Malmö municipality who presented their projects, and from entrepreneurs now actively engaged in novel forms of food production in an urban context as is for example: roof-top bee-keeping and box-mushroom growing. On the basis of the identified key areas and points in need for intervention, we have brainstormed and visualized alternative ways how to use and plan urban green spaces by means of small-scale modelling (Lego prototypes). The prototypes, inspirational essays and thoughts about the planning were documented and published as a report now accessible on DIVA. The event was a very a very successful gathering which serves now as the basis for future cooperation and engagement on further activities and research on the role of citizen groups in the governance and use of urban green spaces.

Raymond, C.M., Gulsrud, N., Rodela, R., Randrup, T. and Hegelund, S. (2018). Rethinking urban nature to promote human well-being and livelihoods. MOVIUM and SLU Urban Futures Workshop Report. Downloadable at: <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:sh:diva-34549>

Södertörn University

School of Natural Sciences,
Technology and Environmental
Studies ,

SE-141 89 Huddinge
<http://www.envgovcontext.net>

Prepared and published with
financial support from the
Foundation for Baltic and East
European Studies
<http://ostersjostiftelsen.se>

Editors:

Laura Linnala & Romina Rodela

Contributors:

Laura Linnala
Camille Emma Rinaldi

Disclaimer:

This publication reflects the views of
the authors, and it should not be
interpreted as a position of the
Foundation, or of the Södertörn
University.

Neither the Foundation, nor
Södertörn University, can be held
responsible for the use of this
document or of the information
contained within.

Pictures: Photo by Jessica Ruscello
and chuttersnap on Unsplash

© 2014 – Södertörn University. All
rights reserved.

This newsletter covers current topics in environmental governance, provides up-dates about the research project Environmental Governance in Context and hosts interviews and commentaries with academics, activists and policy-makers.

Publications

- Rodela, R., Udovč, A., Boström, M., 2017. Developing Environmental NGO Power for Domestic Battles in a Multilevel Context: Lessons from a Slovenian case. *Environmental Policy and Governance*.
- Rodela, R., 2017. How is your intervention doing?: Methodological challenges with delivery and evaluation of learning-based interventions, Alter-Net: Nature and society: synergies, conflicts, trade-offs conference. <http://www.alter-net.info/outputs/conf-2017/programme/session-abstracts>.
- Raymond, C., Gulsrud, N.M., Rodela, R., Randrup, T., Hegelund, S., 2018. Rethinking urban nature to promote human well-being and livelihoods.

Dissertations

- Rinaldi (2018). Media Discourse Framing by Social Movement Organisations: the Taranto Case Study. Master's dissertation at Södertörn University.