

Planning Theory & Practice

ISSN: 1464-9357 (Print) 1470-000X (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/rptp20

Populism, Planning, and the Politics of Discontent

Harriet Dunn

To cite this article: Harriet Dunn (2024) Populism, Planning, and the Politics of Discontent, Planning Theory & Practice, 25:5, 615-631, DOI: [10.1080/14649357.2024.2437987](https://doi.org/10.1080/14649357.2024.2437987)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649357.2024.2437987>



© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.



Published online: 20 Dec 2024.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 3594



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 2 View citing articles [↗](#)

Populism, Planning, and the Politics of Discontent

Harriet Dunn 

Division of Urban and Regional Studies, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, Sweden

ABSTRACT

The article provides an analysis of contemporary localist-populist movements' understanding of, and approach towards, spatial planning and urban development. This is achieved through an in-depth case study of populist mobilization in one rural-urban municipality in Sweden. Central components of the localist-populist planning agenda are identified, including core values and planning roles. The results demonstrate how localist-populists mobilise political discontent and fear of change into political programmes prioritising protectionism and preservation, blending anti-urbanist and anti-entrepreneurialist sentiment with traditional conservatism. Localist-populism works to rearticulate the public interest justification of planning in pursuit of new purposes and legitimacies.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 9 April 2024
Accepted 2 December 2024



KEYWORDS

Localism; populism;
public interest;
resistance; urban politics

Introduction

Swedish Elections, 11 September 2022. While most eyes are focussed on the national results, a small municipality north of Stockholm is about to experience a historical political shift. In Knivsta, the local independent party Knivsta.nu (Knivsta.now) has just gained the highest percentage of votes, usurping the incumbent Moderates party. Knivsta.nu builds a coalition government with the Christian Democrat (KD) party, supported by the Sweden Democrats (SD). The coalition's political programme promises to overhaul the planning agenda, including a dramatic reduction in land development. The new council immediately halts ongoing planning activities, scraps the Urban Development Strategy, and reorients the planning agenda to a pro-countryside and automobile-friendly approach, designed to protect Knivsta's idyllic small-town character.

My central point of departure here is that Knivsta's political uprising can be understood as an illustration of localist-populist resistance, where a brewing politics of discontent has been effectively mobilised into political action. This story is not unique to Knivsta. Planning theorists and practitioners will be familiar with the rhetoric adopted by right-wing, populist and/or NIMBY resistance movements around the world, for example, the North American Tea Party movement (Filion, 2011; Trapenberg Frick, 2013), local house building opposition (Davison et al., 2016; Inch et al., 2020), or recent low-emission zone (ULEZ) protests, the 'war on motorists,' and 'petrol uproars' emerging in the UK, Sweden, and beyond (Gössling et al., 2024; Portinson Hylander et al., 2024; Walker, 2023). The Knivsta case provides an opportunity for in-depth analysis of the electorally successful mobilisation of discontent and the subsequent

CONTACT Harriet Dunn  harrieted@kth.se  KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Department of Urban Planning and Environment, Teknikringen 10A, 10044 Stockholm, Sweden

© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

transformation into a dramatically different local programme for planning and land development. To this end, I add to the emerging literature exploring the implications of right-wing populism for planning theory and practice (Fainstein & Novy, 2023; Sager, 2020; Trapenberg Frick, 2013). The article responds to a recent localist turn in the geographies of populism and the politics of discontent, exploring the relationship between ideational politics of place and populist resistance at the rural-urban fridge (Chou, 2020; Zaslove, 2008).

Much of the literature focuses on localist-populism as movements *against* something: e.g., NIMBYism, or protests against a specific mobility intervention. Far less research attention has been paid to these movements' positive imaginaries of planning: what they regard to be 'good' planning visions and practice, or what happens when movements manage to gain power and confront the demand to apply such visions in practice. Considering the growing political influence of such movements, it comes across as a timely and important research task to study these phenomena and the values embedded in them. In these pages, I therefore seek to answer the following research question: what forms do localist-populist visions of planning take? In doing so, I illuminate not only the driving forces of localist-populist resistance, but also the ideological commitments that underpin the movements' visions of what constitutes good urban development, as well as the roles and values they ascribe to planning practice. The findings reveal the way in which localist-populist planning agendas work to rearticulate the public interest in new ways as a core justification for intervention, combining the policies and rhetoric of both left-wing urban resistance and traditional conservatism, thus working to confront and deconstruct some hegemonies whilst simultaneously reshaping and reaffirming others.

Conceptualising Localist-Populism

Whilst not an entirely new phenomenon, populism has come to characterise our current political era (Hochuli et al., 2021; Moffitt, 2016; Müller, 2017). Populism is centrally constituted by a divide between 'the elite' on one side, and the 'people' on the other, with the people positioned as a homogenous group of common volition (Moffitt, 2016; Wodak, 2015). By claiming to represent the will of the people, populists position themselves against the alleged elite or political establishment, confronting the consolidation of power within the existing political framework (Müller, 2017). Populism can therefore be understood as expression of the "growing dissatisfaction with democracy...when citizens believe that elites, parties, and governments are unwilling or unable to respond to their needs and demands" (Berman, 2019, p. 657). Populism serves as a reactionary force (Förtner et al., 2021) or a politics of discontent against the depoliticised reality under the neoliberal hegemonic order (Cayla, 2021; Hochuli et al., 2021).

The article responds to a recent localist turn in the study of populism and the politics of discontent (Chou, 2020; Chou et al., 2022). Here, localism is broadly defined as a collection of practices and discourses that elevate the political relevance of the local (Malpas, 1999). Localism encapsulates an "ideational politics of place," emphasizing locally-scaled political action and self-sufficiency, as well as feelings of attachment and belonging within a community (Chou et al., 2022, p. 131). A common thread between populism and localism is a shared goal of restoring political authority to the community. When established 'out of touch' governments fail to adequately consider the needs or desires of residents, independent local parties often arise to fill the void (Åberg & Ahlberger, 2015). Local populist parties brand themselves as "'of, by and for' the people of their locality" (Chou et al., 2022, p. 132). Populist movements operating at the local scale often employ an idealisation of the rural community life (Mamonova

& Franquesa, 2020; Tait & Inch, 2016). The social characteristics embedded in depictions of the rural (such as authenticity, stability, and harmony) unmistakably exhibit characteristics indicative of ideology (Dünckmann, 2021). By reclaiming power from central and distant government elites, localist-populists pursue the preservation of a prescribed local identity based on a romanticised image (Chou et al., 2022).

The interplay between populism and spatial planning is a nascent area of inquiry. Sager (2020) and Faludi (2021) have theorised the risks posed by right-wing populist ideologies to liberal democratic principles of pluralism, inclusion, and diversity in the context of planning practice. A similar line of reasoning is taken up by Fainstein and Novy (2023), who assert that right-wing populism poses a real threat to liberal democracy, diversity, and justice, owing to its exclusive and xenophobic underpinnings. They elaborate:

the right-wing populist slogan ‘we are the people’ assumes that government should be of the people, by the people, and for the people and is based on a concept of democratic legitimacy. ‘The people,’ however, consist of those with like-minded views and, usually, shared ethnicity, social status, religion, or some combination of these commonalities. (2023, p. 6)

The literature showcases instances of the advancement of right-wing populist local governing regimes and the potential consequences for land-use and mobility planning. Filion (2011) and Walks (2015) examine shifting political regimes in Toronto through the advancement of a populist party with a charismatic leader. Mayor Rob Ford’s new planning agenda focussed primarily on halting densification attempts and promoting automobility, abandoning Toronto’s ambitious transit city plans. Bergen offers a similar story, where a new populist governing regime has succeeded on a pro-automobility narrative (Remme et al., 2022; Wanvik & Haarstad, 2021). This form of “infrastructural populism” (Beveridge et al., 2024) questions the legitimacy of progressive planners working toward ecological sustainability, in line with scepticism towards climate and transition politics (Lockwood, 2018; Remme et al., 2022). Nevertheless, the types of conflicts and ruptures posed by populist local movements may open space for debate and deliberation that depart from post-political consensus (Wanvik & Haarstad, 2021). The question is to what extent such ruptures disrupt hegemonic structures or simply “reinforce elite narratives” and interests (Remme et al., 2022, p. 7).

In seeking to extend the literature, I attempt to define the core characteristics of localist-populist planning agendas to show how they work to reshape planning values. In pursuit of this goal, I consider the notion of ‘planning in the public interest’. Fundamentally, the public interest concerns the purpose of planning and professional ethics: the term has traditionally served as a justification of the legitimacy of planning activities (Campbell & Marshall, 2002; Maidment, 2016). In applying the term, I do not ask whether the public interest *should* be used to guide or justify planning interventions, but rather how the understanding of what constitutes the public interest is being re-articulated by contemporary localist-populist movements to build new legitimacies and purposes for planning.

Despite continued use of the concept in practice there is no agreed definition of what interests (collective or individual) or who the ‘public’ might actually be (Tait, 2016, p. 336). In a valiant attempt to pin-down the concept, Dadashpoor and Sheydayi (2021) identify three classifications, positioned in relation to shifting governing rationales. Each presents a framework for identifying core values, sources of legitimacy, and the role of the professional planner. Under welfare political discourses, the legitimacy of planners is underscored by the assertion that public interest is the unified interest of the entire populace, which is to be determined by

governing elites. Liberal democracy definitions instead draw on ideas of utilitarianism and Benthamite pluralism, defining the public interest as an aggregate of individual interests, promoting the maximisation of individual choice through democratic debate (Campbell & Marshall, 2002). Finally, neoliberal conceptions of the public interest focus on balancing competing interests through stakeholder bargaining, with the planner acting not as a regulatory force but a policy broker (Dadashpoor & Sheydayi, 2021; Murphy & Fox-Rogers, 2015). The latter approach focuses on commercial market logics, where planning is reconceptualised as “a mode of ‘delivery’” constituting “a narrowly economic reframing of ‘value’” (Slade et al., 2022, p. 399).

Ultimately, the public interest continues to serve as a “pivot around which debates about the nature of planning and its purposes turn” (Campbell & Marshall, 2002, p. 181). Not only does the concept provide a why (a justification for planning activity), but also infers a what, how, and for whom (Maidment, 2016). Thus, it provides useful heuristic device in examining the varied assumptions and values guiding specific planning agendas, as well as the imagined role of the planner.

Case Study and Methods

My research aims are addressed through a single case study: Knivsta, Sweden. Knivsta is a small municipality with around 20,000 inhabitants, located in the rural-urban fridge of mid-east Sweden on the rail line between the large urban conurbations of Stockholm and Uppsala. Knivsta is one of 290 Swedish municipalities, situated in the broader administrative unit of Uppsala Region and County council. Knivsta has not always been independent. In 1972, municipal restructurings saw Knivsta incorporated into Uppsala municipality. Under Uppsala’s rule, Knivsta was subjected to an ambitious development programme, aiming to transform the former industrial village into a commuter suburb. Knivsta’s position on the train line meant an increasing need for station-proximate single-family housing. This era saw the automobility dream take hold with transformation of the urban fabric in accordance with car transport. The late 1990s saw the emergence of a local independence movement lobbying to move the locus of decision-making back to Knivsta. This led to a referendum in 1999, with 57% of local residents voting for municipal independence (SVT Nyheter, 2019). On 1 January 2003, Knivsta once again became its own municipality.

Today, Knivsta is a predominantly middle-class small town, with a median income of 373,304 SEK (approximately €33,000), noticeably higher than the national average of 314,116 SEK (Ekonomifakta, 2016). Knivsta boasts a high percentage of highly educated individuals (38.2%) and a rate of unemployment significantly lower than the national average (2022 figures).

Knivsta serves as an illustrative case study: a typical example of contemporary populist resistance at the local scale. Knivsta is not a unique case, but rather is chosen precisely because it reflects broader political trends towards right-wing populism taking place at local, national and international scales (e.g. Demker, 2014; Hochuli et al., 2021). What makes Knivsta so well-suited to current debates in planning theory is the way in which the political mobilisation has been specifically related to planning and land development issues. Moreover, Knivsta is not just an example of populist resistance, but also of successful political mobilisation through existing channels of representative democracy. It therefore offers a valuable example of what can happen when a right-wing populist coalition gains an opportunity to fundamentally reform the planning agenda.

I collected data for this study through various qualitative methods, including ethnographic participant observation, document and media studies, and 50 semi-structured interviews. I conducted part-time participant observation in Knivsta's planning department for one year, during the period of political transition, following planners as they navigated the new political regime. I interviewed municipal officers in Knivsta municipality (KN), as well as representatives from Uppsala municipality (UP), Uppsala region (UR), the Swedish government (ST), and national transport authority (STA), who worked with Knivsta during this period. Additionally, I sent a request to all local elected politicians in Knivsta requesting their participation. The response was somewhat disappointing, with few responding to repeated invitations. Nevertheless, I supplemented interview data with a vast bank of media sources, which documented in great detail the various political debates. One further limitation of the research design is the lack of engagement with Knivsta's residents, who may have provided a more nuanced picture on voter motivations: this limitation reflected a decision to limit the focus of the study to investigating the characteristics of populist planning agendas, rather than voting patterns.

All interviews were conducted with informed consent and were recorded, transcribed, pseudo-anonymised, and coded by municipality and title, e.g. KNOFxx (Knivsta municipality, civil servant/official, Interview number).

Results and Analysis

Knivsta: Where the Future Lives

Since municipal independence in 2003, Knivsta's politics has been dominated by a single party, the liberal-conservative Moderates, who governed both independently and in coalitions with other parties. The local chapter of the Moderates was self-proclaimed "pro-free market" (KNPOL01, KNPOL07), and worked to facilitate market-led urban development. Under its leadership, between 2003–2022, Knivsta's local council had pursued an assertive and "aggressive" urbanisation strategy (KNOF03), aiming to "transform Knivsta from a village to a thriving town" (KNPOL01). In 2002, the year the contemporary independent municipality was established, the population was 12,586, a figure that rose rapidly to almost double in 2022 (to 20,133). Leaders imagined that by "putting Knivsta on the map" (KNOF05), the municipality would attract significant private investment (KNOF03, KNPOL01), expand the local tax base (KNPOL01, KNOF15), and facilitate the monetary realisation of public land assets (KNPOL01, KNPOL03). Planning and land development therefore focussed on developing cosmopolitan "urban qualities" including commercial service, culture and a "customer base to support a city core" (KNCON03). Knivsta's expansionist urbanisation leant on a particular idea of regional attractivity, and the establishment of a common-sense discourse surrounding growth opportunities. As one ex-councillor put it, "the location of such a municipality, it is right in the middle of the most expansive region. To say no to that development opportunity, I think that's idiotic" (KNPOL01).

In 2017, Knivsta municipality entered into a contract for territorial development (Negotiated Development Agreement) with national and regional governments. The Four-track Agreement, as it is locally known, stipulates provisions for extensive urban development and national rail investment, including two new tracks and a new station in north Knivsta (Alsike). The quid-pro-quo arrangement made transport investment conditional on the construction of 15,000 homes in Knivsta up to the year 2057, spread across two sustainable 'New Towns': Alsike and West Knivsta. The Four-track Agreement constitutes a binding legal arrangement to meet the

hefty growth targets, and to ensure that development is concentrated within designated zones surrounding the train stations, adopting the principles of transit-oriented development.

While Knivsta's governing party was occupied with agreement negotiations, a small, yet vocal resistance was beginning to take root, both in the public discourse and among opposition parties. These voices expressed distaste at the rapid transformation of Knivsta, fearing for the future of the municipality. Specific discontent was directed at the distinctly dense urban morphology emerging in many recent development projects. The new high-density architecture in Knivsta was described as "grey" (KNOF02), "ugly" (KNOF03), "cheap" and "nothing to be proud of" (KNOF04). The form was attributed not only to an explicit attempt to promote urban qualities through densification, but as a result of the entrepreneurial land economy practices of the prevailing governing regime. Since the early-2010s, Knivsta had been selling off significant parcels of public land to generate revenue (KNOF13). The profits were incorporated into the municipal budget and used to finance investments as well as boost budgets for schools, social services, and elder-care (KNOF15). The expectation of significant land revenue resulted in prioritising projects with a high profit margin and thus higher density, and motivated the expedient approval of projects (KNOF09; KNOF06).

The signing of the Four-track Agreement compounded the growing discontent with the ongoing development regime. This document was seen as lacking in legitimacy: an opaque decision made "behind closed doors" (KNPOL01, KNPOL02). Residents felt they had intentionally been left out of the decision and criticised the agreement for not reflecting the interests or needs of the local population (KNPOL06). In essence, the agreement signified the long-term and obligatory continuation of the urban development regime that had materialised under the incumbent local government (UPOF04; KNOF03; KNOF01). As one civil servant put it, "the 4-track agreement is perceived as standing for a continuation of something that people don't like" (KNOF14).

Mobilising Discontent

The 2022 election campaign saw the strategic mobilisation of growing discontent into a fully-fledged political programme. Ahead of the elections, most local political parties came to support the idea that that Knivsta was growing too fast. As the local newspaper reported, "the big election issue in Knivsta is the pace of expansion" (Hällström, 2022, para. 6). Several opposition parties, including Knivsta.nu, Christian Democrats, and Sweden Democrats organised specifically around an anti-development campaign, adopting a similar vision of Knivsta's future and a complementary set of affective narratives concerning the municipality's development over the past decade. Their campaign focussed primarily on two key elements. First, the threat of continued urban development to Knivsta's fundamental identity and the everyday lived realities of residents. Second, the positioning of past and planned urban development as representing elite interests, as opposed to the public interest.

Successfully characterising the development regime as a threat depended first on the construction of a particular 'Knivsta' identity. Knivsta's traditional urban aesthetic, featuring low-rise housing and individual villas near nature, plays on an idealisation of the "idyllic little villa community" (STOF03). As one public official and Knivsta resident explained:

It feels like Knivsta is the last piece of the countryside that remains between Stockholm and Uppsala... And maybe you are a little worried because of the identity or personality that Knivsta has.

Many say that it is personal, that it is like a small community where you always say hi in town. You recognize each other's children... And that we also have a vibrant countryside with a very strong community... And you don't want it to become a big city (KNOF01).

Here, the image of the rural idyll is underpinned by a particular set of values ascribed to the community, including stability and social harmony (Dünckmann, 2021). This follows a similar theme to UK visions of localism, which draw on fictional examples of rural communities to portray the idealistic self-contained village life (Tait & Inch, 2016). Another populist coalition councillor elaborated: "Knivsta is also such a small community that if you have lived here for a while you know quite a few people – it takes a long time to go to [the local grocer] and shop!" (KNPOL06). Here, the *Knivstabo* (Knivsta Resident) is imagined not only as a caring and sociable contributor to the community, but as a member of a relatively well-off, villa-dwelling family (KNPOL05, KNPOL06).

The construction of a need to protect the imagined *Knivstabo* is most clearly demonstrated in the demonization of residents who have moved into the new rental apartments in the town centre (KNOF05). The 'new resident' is associated with a perceived change to Knivsta's socio-economic structure (KNPOL05, KNPOL06), and the source of multiple social and safety issues:

Knivsta had a very good social atmosphere, but now... kids are robbed at knifepoint... There are security issues here (*gestures at a new apartment block*) that we saw from the beginning... we have ladies who sell services behind here in the apartment on the weekend. We have drug sales.... So Knivsta's qualities rapidly deteriorate through what they are doing... Security/safety is extremely important. If we lose it, we lose the entire value of living in Knivsta (KNPOL02).

With such high demands being placed on many homes within a small area, as the agreement is written, people are worried about what the social consequences will be in the long term in Knivsta (KNOF07).

The previous planning agenda that focussed on producing distinctly urban and cosmopolitan neighbourhoods has been re-interpreted by its opponents as a *suburbanising* agenda. 'The suburb' has a distinct connotation in the contemporary Swedish context, similar to the connotation of French *banlieues*, associated with crime and low socio-economic status, and characterised by the image of high-density concrete blocks. From the outset, the Four-track Agreement and the national New Towns Inquiry were compared to the Million Homes scheme of the 70/80s – a specific programme instigated by the Social Democratic government to provide one million homes in new suburbs to tackle the housing crisis (UPPOL01, KNPOL05, KNPOL03). Today, the million-homes suburbs are often labelled vulnerable or problem-areas, a national symbol of extreme socio-spatial segregation regarded by many as a failure of welfare-state comprehensive planning (Klaassen & De Block, 2024). The comparison to the Million Home programme has triggered a negative discourse concerning the type of resident that the new dwellings are designed for. As one populist coalition councillor noted, "the problem with being a suburb is what kind of character you become in society" (KNPOL06).

Knivsta's ongoing urban development regime was also portrayed as threatening the material realities of the *Knivstabo*. This issue has been most visible in debates surrounding the freedom of (auto)mobility in Knivsta. One condition built into the Four-track Agreement is reducing the parking quota for all new developments to 0.3 (cars per household) by 2057. Between 2018 and 2020, Knivsta developed a new Transport Plan for Sustainable Mobility (Knivsta Kommun, 2020), which was promoted by the municipal organization as the most ambitious, sustainable and future-forward transport plan in Sweden (STOF02, KNOF07). This document

and associated parking provision commitments have been subject to significant criticism (KNOF07). During political debates, opposition councillors argued that plans to reduce parking were a direct threat to the material lived realities of the *Knivstabo*, who depend on the car to solve their “life-puzzle” – a term referring to the challenge of trying to coordinate all the elements of one’s life (Field notes: Municipal Full Council 23/03/2022, Housing policy debate, 29/9/2022).

Future construction is being planned with the aim of making it more difficult to get around by car ... but we do not want people’s decision to own a car to be steered by political decisions (Knivsta.nu representative. In: Knivstanu, 2021).

There were investments in a car-free society and things like that, and then you’ve gone from a residential society that is very car-driven to a society where there aren’t enough parking spaces for those who have cars. And then you are interfering in people’s everyday life (KNPOL07).

Here, mobility policy is discussed in an exaggerated manner – the ‘car-free society’ characterises a vision of the future perceived as ludicrously utopian, and hence out-of-touch with the everyday realities of the *Knivstabo*. This echoes a rhetoric seen in other populist governments, which campaign on a message to “end the war on cars” (Filion, 2011; Remme et al., 2022; Walks, 2015). The construction of an archetype of the ecologically-moralistic planner, who attempts to control and limit residents’ mobility, also emerged during participant observation. In one meeting of the Community Development Board, one planner remarked that it would be unwise to “build in a car-dependency” in new neighbourhoods. The comment received immediate angry reactions from opposed councillors, who rejected the negative insinuation that cars were like drugs: an addiction that needed to be cured (Field notes: 20/05/22).

Overall, the growing localist-populist opinion portrayed Knivsta’s developmental trajectory as representing the interests of the elite, whilst ignoring the needs of residents. The Four-track Agreement was vehemently criticised for not reflecting the interests of the public, thus “a serious problem for democracy” (Lundberg & Janson, 2020, para. 13). As one populist councillor elaborated, “I don’t know if it was a bad negotiation... but I don’t understand how you can act that way at all because it hasn’t happened in the interest of the taxpayers, that is for sure” (KNPOL06). The Agreement and associated development plans were rather regarded as an attempt for state and regional politicians to control the municipality in accordance with their own political desires, in collusion with corrupt local politicians (KNOF03, KNPOL02). Consequently, the incumbent councillors responsible for making these planning decisions were accused of prioritising their own needs and careers, at the expense of Knivsta’s residents (KNPOL02, KNPOL05). This is aptly illustrated by how the incumbent chairperson was described by a leading proponent of the localist-populist opposition: “he ran a solo race... He wanted to make his name known in order to be able to move on to the Parliament. That was where he was aiming. And it showed in every decision he made. He did not have Knivsta/Alsike in his heart” (KNPOL05).

The politics of discontent would prove popular. In the 2022 elections, Knivsta.nu, the “100% local party” won the highest proportion of votes (28%), a 12% increase from the previous cycle (Knivsta.nu, 2022, para. 1). Whilst Knivsta.nu had not gained sufficient votes to rule autonomously, it quickly built a right-wing coalition with the conservative Christian Democrats, with support from the far-right Sweden Democrats, who together had enough seats on the local council to form a slim majority.

A New Planning Agenda

The background to the new approach is dissatisfaction with the housing policy of recent years, and therefore we are now moving forward with a new planning concept for the municipality's development... we want to move from suburb-style buildings to a more human scale. We see the principles of the garden city as the main orientation (Knivsta.nu, 2023).

Now I move to the period post-September 2022 to investigate the emerging planning agenda of Knivsta's new coalition. In the above quotation, the localist-populist coalition presents its new strategy for planning and urban development, which is positioned as a direct reaction to the planning agenda of the previous governing regime.

Planning Values

In the new planning agenda, two dominant themes emerge: preservation and protection. The value in need of protection is Knivsta's small-town identity and the material realities of current residents. The perceived threat consists of two components: an imagined new resident and a coalition of elite interests (a union of national governmental entities, politicians, profit-driven real estate developers, and the municipal technocrats obediently advancing those interests).

Driven by the core values of protectionism and preservation, the coalition commits to a dramatic reduction in land development, encouraging a renewed focus on scale, safety, and freedom of (auto)mobility (KNPOL05, KNPOL02, KNPOL04). The political programme includes an immediate halting of densification in the station areas and setting no-net-land-take targets for the rural areas of the municipality (Knivsta.nu, 2022) (KNOF13).

Rather than seeking to construct transit-oriented developments, the planning agenda is inspired by the principles of the 'garden-city'. Any new developments should be pleasantly small-scale, with a focus on low-density construction away from the immediate station areas (Knivsta Kommun, 2023). The protection of green spaces, local natural areas, and agriculture is seen as essential for promoting social and ecological sustainability, and for protecting biological diversity (UNT, 2022). Significant focus is placed on of the promotion of *trygghet*: the sense of physical and psychological comfort, safety and security. *Trygghet* is an essentially emotive and political term deployed in national political discourse of recent years to invoke a romanticised territorial image of the strong welfare-state *Folkhem* (people's home) (Airas & Truedsson, 2023). In seeking to promote *trygghet*, Knivsta's populists mobilise the notion of social sustainability. 'The socially sustainable environment' is represented as a low-density neighbourhood that promotes physiological comfort, built at the "human-scale" (Opposition councillor/late populist coalition, field notes: Municipal Council Meeting 23/03/2021).

In promoting freedom of mobility, the coalition has committed to increase parking spaces across the municipality, including residential, long-term, and commuter parking in proximity to the train station (Knivsta.nu et al., 2023). Here the focus is on supporting resident's "freedom of choice" where mobility is concerned (Knivsta.nu, 2022, para. 8). Whilst parking is the central focus, the election manifesto also commits to "working for more cycle lanes" (Knivsta.nu, 2022, para. 12), although policy action has yet to materialise.

The new coalition has adopted a clear stance on the sale of public land and the associated revenue incentive, specifically the practice of accounting for land profits in the operational budget (KNOF09, KNPOL02, KNPOL06). Land revenue is seen as a volatile income stream and an unsustainable approach to the financing of essential municipal functions (Lundberg, 2020).

The coalition favours maintaining municipal land stock to protect the longevity of essential public assets (KNPOL04). One populist coalition councillor described the land realization practices of the previous government: “it’s like selling off your valuable silverware to finance Christmas, at some point the silverware will run out” (KNPOL02).

Finally, the new governing coalition aims to radically embolden local decision-making capacities to promote the public interest in strategic policymaking. Their political programme articulates frustration with the prioritisation of elite interests, campaigning under a message of redemocratisation, openness, and citizen influence (Knivsta.nu, 2022). The new coalition envisions a stronger role for direct democracy and substantive citizen participation in local decisions (KNOF11, KNOF12). As a party “of, by and for the people,” Knivsta.nu was driven by a desire to bring “power back to the people,” reclaiming local political control in pursuit of the public interest (KNPOL04). Renegotiation of the Four-track Agreement has been central to this message. The cancellation or substantial renegotiation of what was perceived as an elitist and undemocratic agreement is seen as the most tangible way to reclaim public control over Knivsta’s future, or “return Knivsta’s future to the residents” (Rye-Danjensen & Hübinette, 2022, para. 9). The coalition has committed to scrapping the Urban Development Strategy, which concretised the municipality’s plans for meeting the conditions of the Four-track Agreement and construction of the new, dense transit-oriented station-communities, claiming it will no longer attempt to “lure residents into thinking this type of development benefits them” (Opposition councillor/ later populist coalition, field notes: Council Meeting 23/03/2021).

The Role of the Planner

Three archetypes of the role of the planner appear in the Knivsta case. The first conceives the planner as the Handmaiden: a servant of elite interests. This archetype is associated with those planning practitioners and land development engineers who under the previous governing regime worked to facilitate the prioritisation of the profit-motive. This is the planner who not only actively encouraged high densities and intensive land exploitation to generate maximum revenue for public assets. These civil servants are not awarded blame for what was ultimately seen as a political agenda (KNPOL04). Interviewees suggested that planners were mindlessly doing the bidding of elite actors, such as career politicians and real-estate companies. As one previous-majority councillor expressed it, “there may not have been the sharpest knives in the box in the right positions” (KNPOL05). To some extent, the Handmaiden is articulated as a naive character who lacks the skills, competence or will to ensure quality in urban development schemes. The Handmaiden role resembles other depictions of planners as co-opted by elite interests, including Hillier’s market-facilitating Missionaries (Hillier, 2003, pp. 204–206).

The second discernible archetype paints the planner as an Eco-moralist, pushing an environmental agenda on an unwilling populace. Plans to limit car-use in both the Four-track Agreement and Sustainable Urban Strategy were perceived to prioritize ecological sustainability over other important values in planning. The Eco-moralist is seen as out of touch with the needs of the *Knivstabo*, instead representing their own personal or professional commitments as an unrealistic and unwelcome vision of society.

Both planning archetypes are considered undesirable in a future Knivsta that prioritises ‘the public interest’. In the populist-localist vision, a singular alternative ideal-type emerges: the Guardian of the public interest. Planners are expected to play a key role in ensuring that future developments strive for quality over quantity. By relating Knivsta’s urban form directly to the identity of Knivsta itself, the style and architecture of future development is positioned in the

direct interest of the *Knivstabo*. As the leader of Knivsta.nu and new chairperson of Knivsta municipality explained in an interview, “we must place greater demands on what is built, and where” (Interview with Hübnette, in: Leijonhufvud, 2023). Thus, the “building of capacity” in the municipality’s planning department is of utmost importance (KNPOL04). As one populist councillor elaborated:

As you learn more, you realize that things obviously have to be regulated, more so than you expect. It is of course a shame that you have to go in and be very detailed...But when companies come in and want to have maximum return... then the councillors must react in the only way they can. And that is by making more detailed plans (KNPOL07).

This vision imagines the planner in a regulatory capacity, with the detailed plan for new development areas as their central tool. Only through a more detailed steering and increased planning capacity can planners promote the values associated with good urban form (KNPOL03). The Guardian is imagined as the protector of the public interest, a figure who no longer does the bidding of the elite but works to defend the interests and values of the *Knivstabo* in the face of profit-driven urbanising forces. As part of their work in protecting and promoting the public interest, the Guardian is imagined as playing a crucial role in the (re)democratisation of planning decisions. For example, as part of the development work for the new General Comprehensive Plan 2025, planners have engaged residents in early dialogues designed to capture residents’ perspective on Knivsta’s identity, as well as discussing how and where Knivsta should develop, to “reset the planning agenda... to start from zero” (Conversation with planner, field notes, 23/02/2023). The new agenda places specific emphasis on capturing the insights of rural residents, who are considered to be more politically marginalised (KNOF12). It is, however, unclear to what extent the participatory efforts will substantively affect the broader planning agenda. The new governing coalition has already constructed a clear imaginary of Knivsta’s ‘true’ identity. The question thus remains whether the public interest is predefined, or if there is any space for modification based on public engagement efforts.

Concluding Discussion

In this article I have examined the justifications, motivations, and agendas of localist-populism using Knivsta, Sweden as an illustrative case study of contemporary local populist resistance in planning. Knivsta is a microcosm of the type of contestation taking place across the world at multiple scales, bound up in anti-urbanist, anti-development, and anti-sustainability rhetoric (Förtner et al., 2021; Gössling et al., 2024; Marquet et al., 2024). Moreover, the political upheaval witnessed in Knivsta resonates with national political shifts in Sweden and beyond, as right-wing parties gain significant ground, mobilising isolationist sentiments and protectionist policies in defence of the idealised ‘homeland’ or *folkhem* (Airas & Truedsson, 2023; Demker, 2014; Förtner et al., 2021). Anti-urbanism fears surrounding the influx of undesirable residents in idyllic Knivsta are essentially local manifestations of similar concerns of crime and migration at the national level.

As well as reflecting broader political developments, the pushback witnessed in Knivsta should be understood in the context of multiple contemporary planning trends. Knivsta’s politics of discontent is related to previous planning regimes promoting rapid urbanisation, municipal entrepreneurialism through strategic land asset management, and smart growth, including the popularisation of sustainable land-use and transport models, such as Transit-oriented Development. Further, Knivsta’s political shifts are, in part, a product of deal-based territorial

contractualism, where the logics of regional boosterism and hefty growth targets are enforced through binding contractual agreements, made under opaque and altogether depoliticised decision conditions (Dunn, 2023; O'Brien & Pike, 2019). Thus, the study contributes to the continued development of a research paradigm which situates contemporary political resistance in the context of wider structural and institutional forces in planning.

In answering the research question (*what forms do localist-populist visions of planning take?*), I present two novel ideas. First, localist-populist planning agendas work to rearticulate the notion of the public interest, translating a fear of loss and powerlessness into the pursuit of control, primarily through protection and preservation of the status quo. In positioning protectionism and preservation as the core values of the planning agenda, localist-populism constitutes a desire for the proper *Knivstabo* to regain control over local political spaces and thus the local planning and development agenda, following a period of perceived submission. Any risk of value-destruction is controlled by the ultimate means: through preventing change altogether.

The localist-populist understanding of the public interest employs traditional localist rhetoric focussing on the preservation of community identity and the imagined rural idyll (Chou et al., 2022; Dünckmann, 2021; Tait & Inch, 2016). Here, the coalition have embraced the 'garden city' as a guiding vision. Not only does this indicate the durability of past utopian planning ideas, but also their adaptability, as the garden city is reformed to suit new political agendas. Knivsta's localist-populist coalition adopts some of the original principles of the garden city, aiming to foster cooperative community spirit by combining public accessibility with low population density, in harmony with nature (Fishman, 1982). Nevertheless, this version of the garden city focuses primarily on urban design. Howard's commitment to radical social transformation is conspicuously absent. Rather than embodying a utopian future, the garden city is envisaged as a way to return to an idealised past. Moreover, in Knivsta the public or community is understood as a singular homogenous group of established residents, whose interests must be protected from the imagined and undesirable future resident. Prioritising this reconceptualised public interest serves as an antidote to past planning regimes designed to serve 'elite interests'. Accordingly, the localist-populist agenda imagines a reformed role for planners as protectors of a redefined public interest, with additional powers to regulate urban development, and promote particular place characteristics, namely rurality, automobility, and small-town character. Localist-populism thus constitutes both a repositioning of the planner in the articulation of the new public interest, and a re-legitimisation of planning activity, with planning reclaimed as a tool of the people in defence of local autonomy.

Second, localist-populist movements weave together policies commonly associated with progressive urban resistance with traditional reactionary conservatism. This calls into question the usefulness of left/right-wing binaries in discussing contemporary populism. Knivsta's new localist-populist regime disputes taken-for-granted elements of contemporary neoliberal spatial planning (Orenstein & Bugarič, 2022): specifically the how, where, why and for whom of urban development. On land economics, this agenda is anti-entrepreneurial and anti-privatisation: Knivsta's populist coalition favours retaining public land ownership and stricter controls of the market-purchase of public land, as well as rejecting the exploitation of municipal land assets to generate additional revenue (Zetterlund, 2022). The coalition promotes reengagement with non-financial value, and the fundamentals of local community engagement, privileging local needs and voices, echoing past radical anti-capitalist and right-to-the-city movements (Castells, 1983; Harvey, 2012). Further, envisioning planners as Guardians of public interest and facilitators

of a rejuvenated local politics, seized from elite interests, mirrors the ideals of 1960/70s radical participatory and advocacy planning (e.g. Arnstein, 1969; Davidoff, 1965). However, localist-populists clearly adopt the hallmarks of right-wing conservatism: a commitment to uphold tradition, the denunciation of national state power, and staunch opposition to any form of change. Knivsta's local populist government is hostile to any form of rental or public housing, which critics associate with undesirable residents. To this end, the new agenda stands to reproduce existing socio-spatial inequalities in access to housing. Here, the systematic injustices commonplace under neoliberal urbanisation regimes are reformed and reshaped by emerging populist hegemonies of exclusion and enclaving, that work to preserve Knivsta for the *Knivstabo*, echoing nationalist sentiments such as 'Sweden for Swedes' (Demker, 2014) or Trump's 'build the wall!'. At heart, the new public interest is inherently exclusionary and anti-pluralist. Knivsta not for all but for the homogenous *Knivstabo*.

The form of localist-populism exhibited in Knivsta questions the value of binary right-wing or left-wing classifications in conceptualising forms of localised populism and their implications for planning theory and practice. What is witnessed in Knivsta could perhaps be an example of the kind of "diagonalism" (Klein, 2024) employed by recent populist movements, such as Germany's Querdenken, which reject right/left political markers to articulate a cynicism towards parliamentary politics (Plümper et al., 2021). Or perhaps the case represents a strategic blending of right- and left-wing policies and rhetoric, as Knivsta's new politicians focus on addressing local grievances through whatever political means necessary. This question warrants further inquiry.

Not only do my findings further conceptual understanding of localist-populist understandings of planning issues but pose conundrums for planning practice. Whilst planners may welcome the opportunity to align their work with residents' needs and desires, emboldened through a shared commitment to increased participation and local planning capacities, caution is warranted where one political faction claims to represent *the* public, to have identified *the* singular public interest. In Knivsta it is currently unclear to what extent the governing coalition's commitment to redistributing substantive power to the people will extend to residents with alternative needs or interests to the prescribed public interest. To all intents and purposes, the new planning values have already been determined by those claiming to fully comprehend the essential identity of Knivsta.

Moreover, there are clear tensions between idealistic plans to strengthen planning capacities and democratic engagement, and the financial politics of the localist-populist coalition which favours tax-cuts, and austerity measures, including reducing spending on municipal operations. Following a year of rising interest rates, limited land sales, and a low building rate, substantial job cuts in the planning department are possible, as council directs funds towards obligatory municipal functions (Hällström, 2023). How planners will navigate reduced capacities alongside a renewed commitment to guardianship remains to be seen.

Finally, as a Guardian of the public interest, the municipality is not imagined as a proactive planning agent, who would, for example, build new public housing. They are rather envisioned in a restrictive capacity. This may conflict with planners' professional understandings of their roles as transformative change-agents, including their responsibilities to future generations (Lauria & Long, 2017). Future research should investigate how localist-populist agendas play out in practice. Of particular interest is how planners react to, accept, or resist prescribed roles, and how they navigate the potentially conflicting ideological positions embedded within localist-populist agendas in practice.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the Jonathan Metzger, Stijn Oosterlynck, Martin Emanuel, and Oscar Billing for their various comments on and support with the text. An additional thank you to all of the TOD-IS-RUR research network for their support with idea development over the course of this research project. Finally, I wish to thank the three anonymous reviewers and journal editors for their time and invaluable suggestions.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was supported by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 956030.

Notes on Contributor

Harriet Dunn is employed as a doctoral candidate at the Division of Urban and Regional Studies, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, Sweden. She is an early-career researcher in the TOD-IS-RUR innovative training network, which explores the potential of Transit-oriented Development as a concept for the planning of sustainable and inclusive rural-urban regions. Her research interests include politics and decision-making in planning, and the intersection between land-use and transport governance.

ORCID

Harriet Dunn  <http://orcid.org/0009-0001-9219-2382>

References

- Åberg, M., & Ahlberger, C. (2015). Local candidate lists: Historical artefacts or a novel phenomenon? A research note. *Party Politics*, 21(5), 813–820. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068813499870>
- Airas, I., & Truedsson, C. (2023). Contesting and envisioning 'trygghet': The Sweden Democrats, Social Democrats, and the 2018 Swedish general election. *Area*, 55(1), 26–37. <https://doi.org/10.1111/area.12689>
- Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 35(4), 216–224. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944366908977225>
- Berman, S. (2019). Populism is a symptom rather than a cause: Democratic disconnect, the decline of the center-left, and the rise of populism in Western Europe. *Polity*, 51(4), 654–667. <https://doi.org/10.1086/705378>
- Beveridge, R., Naumann, M., & Rudolph, D. (2024). The rise of 'infrastructural populism': Urban infrastructure and right-wing politics. *Geography Compass*, 18(2), e12738. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12738>
- Campbell, H., & Marshall, R. (2002). Utilitarianism's bad breath? A re-evaluation of the public interest justification for planning. *Planning Theory*, 1(2), 163–187. <https://doi.org/10.1177/147309520200100205>
- Castells, M. (1983). *The city and the grassroots: A cross-cultural theory of urban social movements*. University of California Press.
- Cayla, D. (2021). *Populism and neoliberalism*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367855598>
- Chou, M. (2020). Populism and localism: A new research agenda. *Democratization*, 27(6), 1102–1109. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2020.1755265>
- Chou, M., Moffitt, B., & Busbridge, R. (2022). The localist turn in populism studies. *Swiss Political Science Review*, 28(1), 129–141. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spsr.12490>

- Dadashpoor, H., & Sheydayi, A. (2021). Defining public interest in planning: A review. *Journal of Planning Literature*, 36(4), 543–561. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08854122211018379>
- Davidoff, P. (1965). Advocacy and pluralism in planning. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 31(4), 331–338. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944366508978187>
- Davison, G., Legacy, C., Liu, E., & Darcy, M. (2016). The factors driving the escalation of community opposition to affordable housing development. *Urban Policy and Research*, 34(4), 386–400. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08111146.2015.1118377>
- Demker, M. (2014). *Sverige åt svenskarna: Motstånd och mobilisering mot invandring och invandrare i Sverige* [Sweden for the Swedes: Resistance and mobilization against immigration and immigrants in Sweden]. Bokförlaget Atlas.
- Dünckmann, F. (2021). Idyllic politics and politics of the idyll. In P. Pospěch, E. M. Fuglestad, & E. Figueiredo (Eds.), *Politics and policies of rural authenticity* (pp. 129–140). Routledge.
- Dunn, H. (2023). Governing by quid pro quo: Negotiating the development of sustainable new towns in Sweden. *Nordic Journal of Urban Studies*, 3(2), 38–53. <https://doi.org/10.18261/njus.3.2.3>
- Ekonomifakta. (n.d). Din kommun i siffror [Your municipality in numbers]. *Ekonomifakta*. <https://www.ekonomifakta.se/Fakta/Regional-statistik/Din-kommun-i-siffror/>
- Fainstein, S., & Novy, J. (2023). Right-wing populism and urban planning. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 0(0), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07352166.2023.2200950>
- Faludi, A. (2021). Populism and spatial planning meta-theory. *DisP – The Planning Review*, 57(4), 68–76. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02513625.2021.2060580>
- Filion, P. (2011). Toronto's tea party: Right-wing populism and planning agendas. *Planning Theory & Practice*, 12(3), 464–469. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649357.2011.617504>
- Fishman, R. (1982). *Urban utopias in the twentieth century: Ebenezer Howard, Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier*. MIT Press.
- Förtner, M., Belina, B., & Naumann, M. (2021). The revenge of the village? The geography of right-wing populist electoral success, anti-politics, and austerity in Germany. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, 39(3), 574–596. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2399654420951803>
- Gössling, S., Schweiggart, N., Nieuwenhuijsen, M., McEachan, R. R. C., & Khreis, H. (2024). Urban transport system changes in the UK: In danger of populism? *Cities*, 153, 105273. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2024.105273>
- Hällström, J. (2022, September 11). 2018 skilde endast tre röster – Soffliggarna kan avgöra valrysen [In 2018, only three votes separated – The couch potatoes can decide the winner]. *Upsala Nya Tidning Premium*. <https://unt.se/kronika/knivsta/artikel/2018-skilde-endast-tre-roster-soffliggarna-kan-avgora-valrysen/rg5v3m0l>
- Hällström, J. (2023, August 28). Anställda kan förlora jobbet – När kommunen räddar lärartjänster [Employees may lose their jobs – When the municipality saves teaching positions]. *Upsala Nya Tidning Premium*. <https://unt.se/nyheter/knivsta/artikel/anstallda-kan-forlora-jobbet-nar-kommunen-raddar-larartjanster/r9ok21zr>
- Harvey, D. (2012). *Rebel cities: From the right to the city to the urban revolution*. Verso Books.
- Hillier, J. (2003). *Shadows of power: An allegory of prudence in land-use planning*. Routledge.
- Hochuli, A., Hoare, G., & Cunliffe, P. (2021). *The end of the end of history: Politics in the twenty-first century*. John Hunt Publishing.
- Inch, A., Dunning, R., While, A., Hickman, H., & Payne, S. (2020). 'The object is to change the heart and soul': Financial incentives, planning and opposition to new housebuilding in England. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, 38(4), 713–732. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2399654420902149>
- Klaassen, A., & De Block, G. (2024, Forthcoming). Beyond 'bad density' and territorial stigma: An infrastructure access lens on welfare legacies and (Sub)urban exclusion. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*.
- Klein, N. (2024). *Doppelgänger: A trip into the mirror world*. Random House.
- Kommun, K. (2020). Transportplan för hållbar mobilitet [Transport plan for sustainable mobility] (p. 8). Document requested May 2021
- Kommun, K. (2023, November). Framtagande av ny vision – Vad ska vara Knivstas identitet? [Developing a new vision – What should Knivsta's identity be?] [Presentation via Social media post]. <https://www.>

- facebook.com/Knivsta.Nu/posts/pfbid0i2wsg1mCgew5mSuepk5y3LNcduPmbbQWNWAt58tv3uZQepL9Ld BqRuDFjXmACuQTI
- Knivstanu (Director). (2021, August 11). Knivsta.Nu:s informationsfilm om Stadsutvecklingsstrategin [Knivsta.now's information film about the Urban Development Strategy] [Video recording]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gH8eJ2C6Dlo>
- Knivsta.nu. (2022, September 9). Knivsta.Nu – 100% lokalt parti [Knivsta.now – 100% local party] [Election Poster]. *Knivsta.nu*. <https://www.facebook.com/Knivsta.Nu/posts/pfbid0JSyWxaoqVA7bXi3GfTFutXCZAGWp7c7hJ9GpybZpVK63NX33i6N4sfqwDJ49XhGNI>
- Knivsta.Nu, Kristdemokraterna, & Sverigedemokraterna. (2023, June 2). Utökade parkeringar i Knivsta och Alsike inklusive boende-, pendlar- och långtidsparkering [Expanded car parking in Knivsta and Alsike including residential, commuter and long-term parking]. Kristdemokraterna *Knivsta*. <https://wp.kristdemokraterna.se/knivsta/utokade-parkeringar-i-knivsta-och-alsike-inklusive-boende-pendlar-och-langtidsparkering/>
- Lauria, M., & Long, M. (2017). Planning experience and planners' ethics. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 83(2), 202–220. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944363.2017.1286946>
- Leijonhufvud, E. (2023, January 12). Knivsta firar jubileum – Då vill styret dra i handbromsen [Knivsta celebrates its anniversary – Management wants to pull the handbrake]. *SVT Nyheter*. <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/lokalt/upsala/knivsta-kommun-firar-20-ar-och-drar-i-handbromsen>
- Lockwood, M. (2018). Right-wing populism and the climate change agenda: Exploring the linkages. *Environmental Politics*, 27(4), 712–732. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2018.1458411>
- Lundberg, L. (2020, September 23). Dämpa utbyggnadstakten i Knivsta [Slow down expansion rate in Knivsta]. *Upsala Nya Tidning Premium*. <https://unt.se/artikel/dampa-utbyggnadstakten-i-knivsta>
- Lundberg, L., Janson, P. (2020, December 27). DEBATT: Knivstas befolkning kan inte tredubblas [DEBATE: Knivsta's population cannot triple]. *Upsala Nya Tidning Premium*. <https://unt.se/debatt/artikel/knivstas-befolkning-kan-inte-tredubblas/r077e50l>
- Maidment, C. (2016). In the public interest? Planning in the Peak District National Park. *Planning Theory*, 15(4), 366–385. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473095216662093>
- Malpas, J. (1999). *Place and experience: A philosophical topography*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511487606>
- Mamonova, N., & Franquesa, J. (2020). Populism, neoliberalism and agrarian movements in Europe. Understanding rural support for right-wing politics and looking for progressive solutions. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 60(4), 710–731. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soru.12291>
- Marquet, O., Anguelovski, I., Nello-Deakin, S., & Honey-Rosés, J. (2024). Decoding the 15-minute city debate: Conspiracies, backlash, and dissent in planning for proximity. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 0(0), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944363.2024.2346596>
- Moffitt, B. (2016). *The global rise of populism: Performance, political style, and representation*. Stanford University Press.
- Müller, J.-W. (2017). *What is populism?* Penguin.
- Murphy, E., & Fox-Rogers, L. (2015). Perceptions of the common good in planning. *Cities*, 42, 231–241. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2014.07.008>
- O'Brien, P., & Pike, A. (2019). 'Deal or no deal?' Governing urban infrastructure funding and financing in the UK City Deals. *Urban Studies*, 56(7), 1448–1476. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098018757394>
- Orenstein, M. A., & Bugarič, B. (2022). Work, family, Fatherland: The political economy of populism in Central and Eastern Europe. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 29(2), 176–195. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2020.1832557>
- Plümper, T., Neumayer, E., & Pfaff, K. G. (2021). The strategy of protest against Covid-19 containment policies in Germany. *Social Science Quarterly*, 102(5), 2236–2250. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.13066>
- Portinson Hylander, J., Brandstedt, E., Lycke, E., Ramasar, V., & Busch, H. (2024). Fuel for revolt – moral arguments as delegitimation practices in Swedish fuel protests. *Environmental Politics*, 33(6), 1109–1129. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2024.2330294>
- Remme, D., Sareen, S., & Haarstad, H. (2022). Who benefits from sustainable mobility transitions? Social inclusion, populist resistance and elite capture in bergen, Norway. *Journal of Transport Geography*, 105, 103475. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2022.103475>

- Rye-Danjelsen, M., Hübinette, M. (2022, February 23). Dags att lösa staten från avtalet med Knivsta [Time to release the state from the agreement with Knivsta]. *Upsala Nya Tidning Premium*. <https://unt.se/debatt/artikel/dags-att-losa-staten-fran-avtalet-med-knivsta/r19vwzjk>
- Sager, T. (2020). Populists and planners: 'We are the people. Who are you?'. *Planning Theory*, 19(1), 80–103. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473095219864692>
- Slade, J., Tait, M., & Inch, A. (2022). 'We need to put what we do in my dad's language, in pounds, shillings and pence': Commercialisation and the reshaping of public-sector planning in England. *Urban Studies*, 59(2), 397–413. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098021989953>
- SVT Nyheter. (2019, June 13). Skilsmässan mellan Knivsta och Uppsala – Därför gled kommunerna isär [The divorce between Knivsta and Uppsala – That's why the municipalities drifted apart]. *SVT Nyheter*. <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/lokalt/upsala/skilsmassan-mellan-knivsta-och-upsala-darfor-gled-kommunerna-isar>
- Tait, M. (2016). Planning and the public interest: Still a relevant concept for planners? *Planning Theory*, 15(4), 335–343. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473095216660780>
- Tait, M., & Inch, A. (2016). Putting localism in place: Conservative images of the good community and the contradictions of planning reform in England. *Planning Practice & Research*, 31(2), 174–194. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02697459.2015.1104219>
- Trapenberg Frick, K. (2013). The actions of discontent: Tea party and property rights activists pushing back against regional planning. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 79(3), 190–200. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944363.2013.885312>
- UNT. (2022, September 9). Klimatförslaget: Knivstas politiker om vår tids största ödesfråga [The climate proposal: Knivsta's politician on the biggest fate issue of our time]. *Upsala Nya Tidning Premium*. <https://unt.se/nyheter/knivsta/artikel/klimatforslaget-alla-ska-kunna-se-minst-tre-trad-fran-sitt-fonster-knivstas-politiker-om-var-tids-storsta-odesfraga/jo9gdw1j>
- Walker, P. (2023, September 28). The war on motorists: The secret history of a myth as old as cars themselves. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/sep/28/the-war-on-motorists-the-secret-history-of-a-myth-as-old-as-cars-themselves>
- Walks, A. (2015). Stopping the 'war on the car': Neoliberalism, fordism, and the politics of automobility in Toronto. *Mobilities*, 10(3), 402–422. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2014.880563>
- Wanvik, T. I., & Haarstad, H. (2021). Populism, instability, and rupture in sustainability transformations. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 111(7), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2020.1866486>
- Wodak, R. (2015). *The politics of fear: What right-wing populist discourses mean*. SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446270073>
- Zaslove, A. (2008). Exclusion, community, and a populist political economy: The radical right as an anti-globalization movement. *Comparative European Politics*, 6(2), 169–189. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.cep.6110126>
- Zetterlund, H. (2022). *The landed municipality: The underlying rationales for Swedish public landownership and their implications for policy* [Doctoral dissertation]. Uppsala University. DiVA. urn:nbn:se:uu:diva-476502