What Kind of Transit-Oriented Development? Using Planning History to Differentiate a Model for Sustainable Development

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ABSTRACT Transit-oriented development (TOD) is frequently cited as a planning strategy which facilitates sustainability transitions on urban and regional levels. Its supporters emphasize its innovative nature, but this tends to downplay the importance of the long history of transit-oriented strategies. This study examined whether scrutinizing planning history, particularly regarding rural–urban interplay, can differentiate TOD strategies and facilitate a discussion on desirable kinds of future TOD. The analysis used the case of the town Skurup in Sweden, tracing its partial dependencies on past planning and urban development through archival studies, maps, interviews and field studies. Particular attention was paid to the establishment of the rural village in the late 19th century and to modern planning in the 1960s. It was concluded that the “divergence” from the TOD strategy of the former period and the “similarities” with modern planning need to be critically discussed in developing future TOD strategies. Based on the case, strategies for going beyond modern planning and referring more clearly to earlier TOD approaches are suggested, not least in order to maintain the cultural heritage of the town and its hinterland.

Keywords: planning history; relational thinking; rural–urban interplay; landscape; cultural heritage; Sweden

Introduction

Transit-oriented development (TOD) is frequently cited as an option providing the potential for urban and regional sustainability transitions (Calthorpe, 1993; Cervero & Sullivan, 2010; Dorsey & Mulder, 2013). In his seminal book on the subject, Calthorpe (1993, p. 56) defines TOD as

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a mixed-use community within an average 2000-foot [approximately 600 m] walking distance of a transit stop and core commercial area. TODs mix residential, retail, office, open space, and public uses in a walkable environment, making it convenient for residents and employees to travel by transit, bicycle, foot, or car.

While Calthorpe mentions the car, the main focus is clearly on improving the conditions for pedestrians, cyclists and use of public transportation, by offering pedestrian-friendly and densely built urban enclaves with railway (or bus) stops at their centre. While Calthorpe discusses urban morphology and place-making, current research on TOD largely focuses on its implementation in planning practice (e.g. Dorsey & Mulder, 2013; Switzer et al., 2013) and on accessibility measures as a way to assess potential development sites (for a review, see Curtis & Scheurer, 2010; Kamruzzaman et al., 2014). Despite Bertolini’s call to acknowledge the node qualities “and” place qualities of TOD (Bertolini, 1996), studies focusing on place-based qualities are marginalized in the research discourse on TOD (e.g. Kamruzzaman et al., 2014). Yet, as Beauregard (2012) emphasizes, the places drawn into planning projects, the planner’s representations of the sites and the place dependency of planning practice need to be taken seriously within research aiming to inform planning practice. In line with his argumentation, the aim of this study was to examine whether a study of planning history, particularly regarding rural–urban interplay, can differentiate TOD strategies and facilitate a place-specific discussion on future TOD.

While history is rarely a key feature of papers on TOD (with Knowles (2012) as an exception), arguments supported by brief references to history proliferate in the literature. Commenting upon TOD principles, Calthorpe (1993, p. 53) notes that:

The principles may seem radical and familiar at the same time. Making such changes would reverse forty years of planning that put cars ahead of pedestrians, put private space before public, put segregation and isolation of uses before integrated diversity.

References to pre-Second World War towns (and streetcar suburbs) as the model and modern planning as the problem that needs to be surmounted recur in that source and in other more recent publications on TOD (e.g. Dittmar et al., 2004; Knowles, 2012; see Hirt, 2009, for an analysis). As Tunström (2009) illustrates, a similar narrative which celebrates historical, dense and pedestrian-friendly urban cores plays a prominent role in the current debate on urban planning in Sweden. Since the proponents of TOD aim to provide an alternative to modern (or modernist) planning, an emphasis on history (rather than abstract and utopian models) makes sense. A historical approach could provide a basis for development where the specific history and character of the site, for instance its cultural heritage, are clearly acknowledged. However, the frequent references to a general (rather than place-related) historiography might conceal more than they reveal.

Historical studies are of particular importance when discussing TOD at places that have a long history of railway-based development, which is frequently the case in European towns and villages. In these cases, TOD needs to be interpreted as a revival and reinterpretation of the (diverse) schemes used when introducing the railway in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Furthermore, the history needs to be handled with care so as not to downplay seeds of sustainable development planted a long time ago. For instance, Haywood and Hebbert (2008) mention the long history of attempts to integrate rail and
land use development, citing Arturo Soria’s linear city and Raymond Unwin’s garden city as two century-old examples: “garden city and suburb promoters around the world saw their settlements as beads on strings, dignifying stations as the focal points for community design” (Haywood & Hebbert, 2008, p. 281). What those authors fail to mention is that the garden city aimed for a marriage between town and “country” (Howard, 1902/2010). While Calthorpe (1993, p. 33) acknowledges the garden city as a model and notes that it aimed to combine “the best of city and country”, he nevertheless focuses on its divide between a dense town with a railway station and the surrounding greenbelt, bringing the metaphor back to urban beads on a string. To describe railway settlements as beads on a string is to underestimate the intricate interplay between urban and rural, or the hybrid landscape, which characterized the railway corridor in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as Stilgoe (1983), Möller (1987), Cronon (1991), De Block and Polasky (2011) and De Block (2014) have illustrated (see also Palmqvist (1986), and Vikström (1991) for a planning history of Swedish townships and towns with a rural–urban character). Stilgoe (1983, p. 3) captures the “rurban” (i.e. rural–urban hybrid) character of the railway settlements when arguing that:

No traditional spatial term, not urban, suburban, or rural, not cityscape or landscape, adequately identifies the space that perplexed so many turn-of-the-century observers. Reaching from the very hearts of the great cities across industrial zones, suburbs, small towns, and into mountain wilderness, the metropolitan corridor objectified in its unprecedented arrangement of space and structure a wholly new lifestyle.

Examining the urban–rural interplay in which the previous railway corridors formed part can provide a nuanced understanding of the identity and cultural heritage of current transit-oriented places and can also give rise to a discussion about which narratives should inform future planning.

Following a methodological discussion, this paper presents a case study of Skurup, a Swedish town in a region with ambitious plans for TOD (Länsstyrelsen i Skåne et al., 2010; Region Skåne, 2013). The analysis focused on rural–urban linkages and on reinterpretation of the railway and its role in the town, as revealed by the strategic planning of the municipality and its materialization in the terrain. Particular attention was paid to the importance of planning in Skurup in the 1960s, which not only diverged substantially from a TOD approach but would also become very influential for the development of the town in decades to come—and for its current TOD strategy. In addition, the early history of the town was examined in order to determine how it diverges from the present strategy. The historical study informed a discussion on the cultural heritage of Skurup and on how sustainable development could integrate and use this heritage. It also informed a discussion on alternative strategies for urban development and on bringing rural–urban relations into the TOD debate.

**Shadows of Planning**

The study took its point of departure in a rather wide field of landscape and urban studies which, inspired by actor–network theory (or relational ontology more generally), attempts to trace the shadows of past planning and everyday practice in order to understand the present character and obduracy of the urban landscape (e.g. Hommels, 2005; Qviström,
The European Landscape Convention defines landscape as: “an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors” (Council of Europe, 2000). The definition hints at the relational character of landscape, as the concept is not limited to the perception of an area, or the morphology of that area, or the everyday activities or laws which shape the land, but rather their “interplay”, embedded in matter, practices and representations. The inclusive focus on an area and its constant making offers a base for studies beyond city–country divides (e.g. Germundsson, 2004; Qviström, 2010). Furthermore, following such a conceptualization of landscape, the cultural heritage of a landscape would be expected to show the same heterogeneous character; cultural heritage consists not only of built artefacts, but also of functional relations, maintenance of customs and representations (see Harvey, 2013 for a discussion). While the morphology of the landscape and functional interdependencies between city and country are primarily emphasized in the present study, other aspects are also mentioned and their importance acknowledged.

To introduce the theoretical approach to planning history and landscape change adopted in the study, a discussion on time and law is useful. The time perspective claimed by law, and thus by legal documents, is crystal clear; a plan is either in force or not, a claim which diminishes the role of planning history to being of anecdotal importance. However, the inertia of the everyday performance of planning makes another case; previous decisions, ideas, investigations and practices linger and inform the coming planning. The obduracy of the landscape adds to the importance of the shadows of former plans and planning (Mitchell, 1994; Hommels, 2005; Qviström, 2010, 2013; Edensor, 2011).

New plans and investigations are normally based on older documents and plans, not only for reasons of legitimacy, but also for practical reasons: it takes an unreasonable amount of time and energy to produce new material, maps, investigations and text for every new plan. Due to this dependence on old investigations and previous plans, new and supposedly “innovative” attempts within planning can in fact be framed by decades of planning (Filion, 2010; Qviström, 2013). In a study examining a previous investigation on potential sites for nuclear waste disposal, Bickerstaff (2012) illustrates how shadows of past planning obstruct a new initiative, partly due to the poor experiences of the local population in the previous initiative, but also to the re-use of “Geological surveys, maps, site plans, reports, evidence, ‘facts’, promises of benefits, campaign slogans, and protagonists from the past” (p. 2619). Based on this study, she argued the need for further examinations of the “diversity of objects (past and present, distant and close) that are implicated in the public politics” (p. 2624). Furthermore, Valverde (2011) illustrates how conceptualizations of nuisance are still part of contemporary zoning legislations, despite being perceived as an earlier form of legislation. Following the argumentation in Valverde (2011), it could be concluded that the genealogy and obduracy of planning documents and landscapes are insufficiently theorized, in particular when considering the lack of studies in which the complex and messy character of the landscape is included as a factor that stabilizes or “naturalizes” laws and customs (Mitchell, 1994). Attempts at sustainability transitions need to take this messy heritage into consideration in order to be successful.

Drawing on Latour (1992, 1999), this study argues that a plan that has made a difference has done so by assembling a heterogeneous network. Therefore, the importance (and endurance) of the plan can be traced by following the references to the plan made in other documents, the investigations and ordering of knowledge carried out as a result of
the plan, the knowledge of the plan amongst local landowners and the landscape changes which have been made according to the plan. By tracing the entanglements and shadows of a plan rather than focusing on its legal status, the intricate influence of old (and/or informal) documents and of planning practices can be detected, for instance the reuse of its representations or investigations (i.e. its way of systematizing data, and the data as such), ways of framing the character and potential future of the site, personal bonds to previous investigations, the inertia of the professional discourse, etc. Such alignments with other documents, inventories, administrative structures, personal agendas, actual construction works and management can linger in the urban pattern as sources of information and in everyday planning practice for a long time (Qviström, 2012, 2013; cf. Filion, 2010). If the importance of shadows of planning is considered when studying the history of TOD, the “partial” dependence on previous patterns and plans becomes evident, while it also permits an examination of what has been partially lost or embedded in a new context. It can thus identify the parts of previous TOD strategies that have been weakened or forgotten over the years and whether these strategies, if restored, could contribute to a more sustainable town. Such a historical study can, in short, provoke the crucial question of which version of TOD we are aiming for and facilitate a discussion on a few historically situated versions.

Skurup and the Shadows of Former TODs

The case study of the town of Skurup was used here to illustrate the shifts in TOD strategies and in urban–rural relationships over the past century. Skurup (pop. around 7000) is the main centre of the wider municipality of Skurup (pop. around 15 000) in southern Scania, the most southerly region in Sweden (Figure 1). The Malmö–Ystad Railway passes through Skurup town, with Malmö (the regional centre) a 30-minute train
journey away. While the history and current character of Skurup are unique, it nevertheless shares common traits with many other small “railway towns” in the region and elsewhere in Sweden, notably concerning its rural history, historical interdependence with the railway and recent development into a commuting town (cf. Palmqvist, 1986). Furthermore, the current discussion on TOD and densification in the municipality make it a typical representative of the present Swedish planning discourse (e.g. Tunström, 2009). Finally, several land use conflicts in Skurup (see below) make it especially useful as an information-rich case for illustrating the challenges to sustainable TOD (see Flyvbjerg, 2006, on the selection of cases).

In recent years, the Region of Scania has identified TOD as the main strategy for regional development (Länstyrelsen i Skåne län et al., 2010; Region Skåne, 2013). Thus, policy reports from the regional authority and the County Administrative Board argue the potential for densification along the railway lines (in order to curb urban sprawl, protect farmland and develop attractive and creative cities). However, Skurup illustrates some of the challenges such a strategy will have to face. First, the town and its surroundings have cultural heritage values which have been acknowledged on regional and national levels. In 1999, a new tool for landscape preservation was introduced into Swedish law: the creation of “cultural reserve areas”, aiming to protect typical or unique places of importance for regional or national culture, with management guidelines, information and (economic) support to landowners (Riksantikvarieämbetet, 2005). In Scania, the County Administrative Board quickly focused on the iconic landscape of the estate “Svaneholm” with its vast land holdings (including Skurup town and surrounding hamlets) as the prime object for such a designation, due to its national importance as a model for the agrarian reforms in the eighteenth and nineteenth century (e.g. Riksantikvarieämbetet, 2003). This national heritage would merit close attention in strategic planning for the town and how it relates to the surrounding landscape. Second, the Malmö–Ystad railway has been designated a corridor of regional importance for cultural heritage, not least due to the preserved (visual) connections between the railway and the landed estates which once played a key role in funding the railway (Möller, 1987; Bengtsson, 2013). Finally, in addition to the cultural heritage values, contemporary land use, especially farming, poses obstacles for the strategy, as the town is surrounded by the most productive farmland in Sweden, preservation of which is thus of national importance. Sustainable development requires not only economically and ecologically viable solutions, but also considerations of social and cultural values, such as cultural heritage. Therefore, a successful strategy needs to provide a multifunctional approach where the historical values are managed, farmland protected and the potential of the railway realized.

Methodologically, the study shuttled between plan and place; it aimed for triangulation in the analysis, by combining examinations of archival material and interviews (to capture the everyday process within planning), document analysis (to analyse the spatial and conceptual models for the planning) and field studies (tracing the partially materialized planning). The study was based on minutes and planning documents from the municipal archive, historical maps and secondary literature, combined with field studies. In addition, five semi-structured interviews were conducted during spring 2014 with local politicians, planners and the municipal lawyer in Skurup, and with three employees at the County Administrative Board (eight individuals in total). The interviews concerned the current strategies for urban development in general and the importance of the railway and
urban–rural relations (e.g. in relation to cultural heritage values) in particular. The interviews lasted for 40–60 min and were recorded and partially transcribed.

**Urban Dreams**

The railway between Malmö and Ystad was opened in 1874, connecting the rich farmland with the cities and, no less important, with two of the most important ports in the region (Ystad and Malmö) and with the regional and national railway networks. The interest in mobilizing the capital of the great estates was a major driving force behind the privately funded project; the producers and exporters of farm products were the main drivers who initiated and funded the railway (Möller, 1987). Those individuals believed that the railway would open up a market for farming products, forestry, brick factories, etc.

One of the railway stations was Skurup, a small hamlet dominated by farming (Edvardsson, 1969). Almost a century earlier, in 1785, Skurup and four other hamlets had been the subject of a radical land division, in which each farm was given one (equally large) piece of land and the farmhouse was placed in the middle of the farm. The division, led by the owner of the Svaneholm estate, was driven by liberal ideals, aiming to increase production and turn farming into a capitalistic venture. Following the land division, the relationship between the estate and the farmers was set in pecuniary measures rather than in days of working for the estate (Germundsson, 2004). This land reform would play a key role as a model for land enclosure in Sweden, with Scania being the target for the most radical land reform. The results of the reform in Skurup, with scattered farms, open fields and straight farm roads, can still be identified on the map (Figure 2). However, not only was farming capitalized, but the land as such was turned into a commodity, resulting in independent farmers but also land parceling and increased population, partly due to immigration from other shires (Edvardsson, 1969; Länsstyrelsen i Skåne län, 2006). Therefore, after the enclosure of the village Skurup the population increased rapidly and with the arrival of the railway station this trend was to continue.

Edvardsson (1969) describes the efforts from 1886 onwards to separate the expanding village of Skurup at the railway station from the rest of the municipality in order to gain the status of township. It would take almost 30 years before the supporters of separation managed to convince the County Administrative Board, which decided on the matter, that the differences between the countryside and the “village” were sufficiently well pronounced and Skurup became a köping (town) in 1914. However, in 1924, 50 years after the opening of the railway, the town with its 1400 inhabitants was still “rurban” in character, with 86 of the 136 hectares within the town limit still used for farming and supporting 31 cows, 99 hogs, 16 beehives and so on (Jönsson & Tufvesson, 1924). More importantly, several of the companies and industries in Skurup had a rurban character, developing tools for farming and refining farm products (Edvardsson, 1969). The railway was equally rurban in character, with income from transportation of farming products, timber, bricks, gravel and peat as its main source of income, although sales of tickets also made a substantial contribution to balancing the books (Nihlén, 1924). The parcels created by the old land reform largely set the pattern for the urban development, thereby preserving the shadows of the town’s rural history. Overall, the establishment of the railway station and the expanding village did not cause a definite transition from a rural hamlet to an urban environment; the rural character of the settlement lingered and an intense interplay with farming and the countryside remained crucial for the
development of the town. Nevertheless, ambitions for urban expansion and a thrust for town administration (and urban appearance) are evident.

Planning for a Car-Based Society

The Building Law of 1947 opened the way for municipal master planning (generalplanering) in order to coordinate local development and facilitate dialogue with government bodies on regional and state levels (Vikstrand, 2005). Following the possibilities offered by the new law, the Municipal Board of Skurup decided in 1960 to develop its first master plan in order to overcome recent stagnation in growth (minutes of the Building Committee; Skurups kommun & VBB, 1982).

The master plan was developed by the leading consultancy of the time, Vattenbyggnadsbyrån (later abbreviated to VBB), which by 1960 had prepared more than 25% of the comprehensive plans in Sweden (Rudberg, 1981). In 1963, the consultants presented a complete version of the plan to the Municipal Board. In April 1964, the Building Board for the municipality endorsed the plan. In the following, the planning document with appendices (110 pages including 38 maps) from 1963 is analysed.

Figure 2. Cadastral map from 1917, with the town plan for Skurup (dotted lines), the built-up area (grey) and the size of the built-up area in the early 2000s (added line). The map illustrates both the rural–urban hybrid character of the village and its explicit urban ambitions. © Lantmäteriet.
The master plan for Skurup was the product of an assembly line at VBB: the layout, the thematic focus and in some cases, even the actual text were similar to those in other plans in the region produced at the same time (e.g. Vattenbyggnadsbyrå, 1959). These plans closely followed the rational and modernistic planning ideology of the time and thereby paved the way for a car-based society and functionally segregated towns (e.g. Lundin, 2008). Accordingly, the railway was given very weak status. The master plan stated that with “the building of a road network adjusted to the ongoing expansion of car traffic, and the related increase of jobs and demands for service, Skurup should be able to keep its position as a regional centre” (Vattenbyggnadsbyrå, 1963, p. 11). While the prognosis for the future population was kept at a moderate level, the expansion of the road network, parking spaces, industrial areas and an expected substantial increase in housing in terms of square metres per inhabitant resulted in a plan for marked spatial expansion of the town (see Figures 3 and 4). Following a few years of unprecedented increases in car traffic and a prognosis suggesting that the traffic would more than double in the period 1960–1980, the private car played a key role in the strategy, with spatial divides between work, shops and living, an improved road to Malmö and a bypass road west of the city. The town as such was described as being located along the main road between Malmö and Ystad, and investigations relating to car traffic dominated the document. In contrast, the importance of the railway was phrased in the past tense and although it was believed that its eight trains per day in each direction would continue, its role was depicted as being of decreasing importance. While every industrial area at the time was located along the railway, its role for these industries was not emphasized in the 1963 master plan and two new industrial areas with no (or poor) connection to rail, but close to the planned road north of the town, were proposed. The only investigation directly related to the railway concerned railway crossings and the waiting times for cars, and the only investment proposed for the railway was to separate rail and car traffic. Thus, the train was reinterpreted from being the main pulse of the town to being a major obstacle (see e.g. Andersson-Skog & Ottosson, 2005, on the devaluation of the railways within politics after the Second World War).

While statistics provided in the plan show the crucial importance of farming and related business for employment, the authors of the master plan emphasized its decreasing importance, thus rhetorically placing farming (together with the railway) in the past. The main plan describing the spatial development of the town offered an abstract illustration with vague limits between town and country; the countryside was treated as a blank sheet of paper, available for urban expansion (Figure 3).

For a master plan to be legally binding, it had to be approved by the County Administrative Board, which rarely (if ever) happened because a binding plan would trigger claims for economic compensation from landowners whose plan for the future it circumscribed. Instead, it was customary for the plan to be approved by the Municipal Council and anchored with government bodies—or not formally approved at all, with limited dialogue with other administrations (Rudberg, 1999). Thus, the importance of these master plans cannot be assumed and they have frequently been questioned for being utopian and/or investigations of minor importance for everyday planning (Rudberg, 1981, 1999; Berglund, 2008). Therefore, an analysis of the plan needs to be complemented with a consideration of its status, or, to be more precise, the status given to the plan in everyday planning. Studies of the archives revealed that neither the planners at VBB (who were frequently consulted to make new detailed development plans in Skurup) nor the Building
Board (or the public) were entirely clear about the formal status of the plan. In detailed development plans (here: *stadsplaner*) developed by VBB and in the minutes of Building Board meetings (in both cases from 1965–1978), the master plan is variously referred to as the “proposed” plan or the master plan, and is variously said to be from 1963 or 1964. The minutes of a 1968 meeting of the Building Board refer to the “master plan, which has been approved by the Municipal Board”, but someone has annotated that sentence with a question mark in the margin. In June 1965, the chair of the committee for the master plan retired. Although his intention had been to remain in office until the plan had been adopted, by then he had given up hope that this would occur in the near future (minutes of the Municipal Board meeting). Studies of the minutes of Municipal Board meetings

Figure 3. Master plan for Skurup 1963 including minor revisions made in 1964. Dotted areas are designated for industrial use, with open areas as a second-hand (or long-term) choice. The planned motorway to Malmö and Lund is marked in the north. The plan is characterized by an emphasis on the private car and on functionally separated districts, but the proposed development is still within one kilometre from the railway station and relatively dense. The 1964 revisions are probably based on comments from the Building Committee.

*Source:* Illustration reproduced from Skurups kommun & VBB (1982), by Jens Bengtsson.
1964–1967 indicate that there was no discussion on adopting the plan, so it is reasonable to assume that it remained an advisory document.

The practices of the Building Board reveal, however, that the master plan was of key importance for the municipality, despite its weak (or rather: unclear) formal status. When detailed and legally binding development plans were outlined for Skurup, the complementary text referred to the intentions of the master plan and followed, in most cases, these intentions. In one case where the purpose of the master plan was being contested, a clarification was provided by the Building Board concerning how the plan’s status was interpreted and enacted by the Board. In the minutes of a meeting in February 1968, the chair of the Board reminded members they were not allowed to deviate from the master plan and that if any substantial deviations were suggested, they would have to be decided upon by the Municipal Board. Map and field studies confirm the importance of the master plan for the development of the town from the 1960s onwards (Figure 3). Among the few notable deviations was a decision in 1972 to develop yet another industrial area in the north-eastern corner of the town, without access to the railway.

In the late 1970s, the need for a new master plan for the town was raised. By that time the development suggested in the plan from 1963 had been realized “in all essentials” (Skurups kommun & VBB, 1982, section A:2, no page number) (Figures 4 and 5). The results of the previous decades of planning can be clearly seen in the plan from 1982 (Skurups kommun & VBB, 1982). The low status of the railway and the lack of maintenance and new investments had resulted in a “network ruin” of its former glory by the 1980s, with its geography re-inscribed by decades of planning for the private car (cf. Qvistrom, 2012). The railway traffic in 1982 was on the same level as 20 years earlier, confirm-
ing the prognoses of the master plan from 1963. The road infrastructure had been substantially improved, however, and new roads were suggested in the 1982 plan, including a by-pass road in the south.

In the early 1980s, the railway was in a state of limbo; the 1982 plan stated that the future of passenger traffic would be decided in spring 1983, when either the state-owned railway company would reduce traffic to three trains in each direction per day, or the municipalities in the region would take responsibility for passenger traffic. Even if the latter were to happen, however, more regular traffic would have to wait until 1985/1986 and the railway station platforms would still need to be rebuilt for longer trains. The depiction of decay is further supported by a short publication celebrating the centenary of the railway in 1974, in which the poor state of the railway is emphasized. It is described as being poorly maintained and down-prioritized concerning newer and stronger engines, while plans for electrification (first raised and investigated in the early 1920s) were still being awaited (Thomasson & Stenvall, 1974).

Despite decades of disregard of the railway and a successive move of industries towards the north of Skurup, a few companies and industries remained next to the railway in the town centre. Two of the three largest companies, focused on sales of farming machines, built on a proud tradition of farm machinery manufacturing in the town. Furthermore, the impressive buildings of the brick factory still occupied a large area in the city centre, although the industry itself had ceased. The need to acknowledge the railway for the sake of these industries was mentioned (albeit very briefly) in the 1982 master plan. However, the designation of new industrial areas in the north, with access to the road network, illustrates more clearly the kind of future for which the town was planning (Skurups kommun & VBB, 1982).

While a new comprehensive plan (i.e. a master plan covering the entire municipality) was approved in 1992, it did not provide new investigations or development strategies for the town proper, but focused on an overarching land use strategy for the countryside (Skurup, 1992). The vague and general comments in the 1992 plan on the importance of the railway (and of roads) are in accordance with the 1982 plan mentioned above. It would take another 17 years before Skurup developed a comprehensive plan which more clearly acknowledged the importance of the railway, in accordance with national and international discourses on TOD (Skurups kommun, 2009).

Figure 5. Single storey, detached houses from the period of the 1963 master plan characterize large parts of Skurup, as does the crystal clear divide between country and town.

_Source_: Photograph by Mattias Qviström.
In “Our Skurup 2014”, an official document by the Municipal Board aiming to sum up the vision for the municipality (Skurups kommun, 2008), the ambiguous idea of the future of Skurup is apparent. On one hand, the report emphasizes the small-scale character of the town, as “close to nature” and to the farming landscape. On the other hand, its “central location within the expansive Öresund region” is mentioned and the need for improved infrastructure and increased population is argued. The report makes the case that people will move to the municipality to be close to nature and still experience “pulsating city life”. A call for improved infrastructure illustrates that the latter probably refers to other cities within reach (Malmö and Copenhagen) rather than to the town of Skurup (Skurups kommun, 2008; see also Skurups kommun, 2009).

In our interview with planners, the shift in emphasis from Skurup being a countryside municipality to becoming a commuter hub and part of the “greater Malmö area” was noted:

... it is a fairly big change, we are more of a commuter town than a countryside municipality [in marketing applications], so, OK, we do have this landscape but what we highlight in our marketing is that we are close to Malmö, close to the big city. (see also Skurups kommun, 2009)

This position was confirmed by the interviews with the politicians and the lawyer.

The current comprehensive plan shows the ambition to densify the town centre, and new houses have already been developed close to the railway station (Figure 6). Furthermore, the plan acknowledges the need to invest in environmentally friendly transportation, that is, bicycle lanes and the railway (Skurups kommun, 2009). In the plan, the railway is...
clearly set in the context of regional commuting. The number of passengers in Skurup had almost doubled in 2013 compared with 2000. Today, there are more than 40 trains in each direction on a weekday. However, the railway in Skurup has changed character and function; it has been stripped of its sidetracks to the few industries still situated along the line, and the new industrial areas are only suited to road-based transport. Furthermore, the recent opening of shopping facilities close to the motorway exit in the north has been accompanied by an increase in empty premises in the town centre. Combined with a new bypass road west of the town and an eastern bypass suggested in the comprehensive plan, the car-based planning ideal from the 1960s clearly still plays an important role in urban development, with TOD as a complementary strategy for the town centre.

An urban-centred historiography is employed to support the comprehensive plan. This emphasizes its history as an urban node along the railway, with plenty of brick architecture from the nineteenth century in need of protection (Skurup kommun, 2009, p. 8, 27–28; see also Lännsstyrelsen i Skåne et al., 2010). The importance of farming, for example, of refining farm products and the construction of machines for agriculture, is not mentioned. It is only when the countryside is being discussed that the key role of farming in the identity of the municipality is mentioned. Thus, a clear divide is made between the town (with a cultural heritage captured in its brick architecture and railway station) and the countryside (with farming as its main character). This divide was further emphasized in the interviews conducted in the present study. One politician discussed the “natural” right of Skurup and Rydsgård (another railway station and township in Skurup municipality) to grow, leaning on this historiography:

This is not about, so to say, the new Staffanstorp and such towns which are actually placed right in the middle of an arable field. Those towns are very young, they don’t even have an old core. But this [place] is a 150-year-old town, these [including Rydsgård] are old towns, you know. So they are not an unnatural creation.

The accuracy of this history telling can be questioned: much like Staffanstorp (another town in southern Scania), Skurup developed by the railway, in close interplay with farming and farm-related business (e.g. Möller, 1987). Thus, the “old core” was not much of a core before the mid-1900s, and certainly not more urban than that in Staffanstorp. Rather, the statement (and a similar narrative in the comprehensive plan) can be regarded as an outcome of the breaks from the rurban history of Skurup, favouring a story of a small town independent of its surroundings. Thus, the standardized historiography of TOD is re-iterated, rather than the local history.

The close historical relationship between land enclosure and farming for the establishment of Skurup seems to be difficult to integrate into the contemporary reading of, and planning for, the town and the municipality. The most obvious example is the attempts to protect the landscape of Svaneholm (including Skurup town and its surroundings), for which the County Administrative Board has been the driving actor (Lännsstyrelsen i Skåne län, 2006). Even though traces of the land reform are still evident in the field, the vast number of stakeholders has put a hold on the actual designation of the area. Despite this, the interviewees at the Country Administrative Board argued that the process and dialogues with the municipality when discussing the proposal led to a heightened understanding and appreciation of the cultural heritage which, in the mid-2000s, also informed the detailed development plans. However, with no formalized regulations or
plans and with the future arrival of new planners and new politicians, this could easily change. In our interviews, the local politicians presented a very vague idea of what constitutes the Svaneholm landscape, locating it in the countryside and especially at Svaneholm Castle, even though Skurup is in the middle of the landscape affected by the land reforms. While the planners interviewed related the cultural heritage to the land reform, they too placed the heritage in the farming landscape, without mentioning the town.

The strong emphasis on a rural–urban divide in the interviews and in the historiography concerning Skurup can partly be explained by the key role of land use (and cartography) when conceptualizing the town within spatial planning. This focus can also be found in reports concerning the cultural heritage. An investigation by the County Administrative Board (Länsstyrelsen i Skåne län, 2006) and an additional study carried out by the Regional Museum (Malmö museer, 2009) focus on land use patterns, concerning ownership and landscape character. The pattern, rather than interactions between (or the interdependency of) town and country, is thus emphasized. While this pattern has been preserved through the old roads and housing blocks in the town centre and in the field structure in the countryside, more recent urban development at the city edge, in combination with the ongoing rationalization of farm fields, made the interviewees question whether the readability of the cultural landscape would last much longer. The western bypass road was mentioned as being particularly detrimental, cutting off the connection between town and country. If the planned eastern bypass is built not much of the connection will remain, according to the interviewees. A shift in focus towards the rural–urban interplay could perhaps facilitate a more inclusive understanding of the cultural heritage, not only concerning the countryside but also the town.

Analysis

By arguing that Skurup has always been an urban centre along the railway (“a bead on a string”), history is used rhetorically to defend a conventional TOD strategy for Skurup. However, studies of “discontinuities” and of reinterpretations of former TOD strategies can be equally, if not more, informative for developing a sustainable TOD. This study identified dependencies “and” breaks with previous history which have implications for the current TOD strategy and for the management of the cultural heritage of Skurup:

(1) The early twentieth-century Skurup was rurban in character, with farm and forest products as the main economic incentives for developing the railway. The continuity of the railway from this era is partly a chimera; its connections to ports are broken, it is separated from local industries and the dense regional railway network from the early twentieth century has been replaced by a star-like pattern of railways with Malmö at its centre. Remnants of this landscape, notably old industrial buildings along the railway, are still to be found.

(2) The car-based planning from the 1960s onwards, with an old-fashioned railway of marginal importance, initially ignored farmland and then provided wide zones for urban expansion. Even though the master plan of 1963 has been replaced by other plans, large parts of Skurup have been developed according to this modernistic plan, and detailed development plans which conform with its intentions are, in some areas, still valid; thus the shadow of the master plan still lingers in the landscape.
Present-day planning supports a car-based society, with TOD as a complement. Commuting is a key purpose of the renovated railway and rural–urban “divides” are used as a base for planning. Skurup is in effect marketed as an attractive suburb to Malmö, Lund and Copenhagen. The neglect of the lingering industries (and industrial buildings) next to the railway illustrates the exclusive focus on commuting and urban values—and the silencing of the countryside and farm-related entrepreneurs in the conceptualization of the railway and the town.

By expanding acknowledgement of the importance of cultural heritage within TOD to include the rural–urban history, the cultural history of Skurup could be brought into the TOD strategy. This study revealed the strong continuity between the agrarian reform in the eighteenth century, the railway and the early development of Skurup as a rural village. By focusing on this interplay (and the rural heritage of the town), the cultural heritage could be maintained and elaborated upon. This would lead to a different strategy than that suggested by Calthorpe (1993) and Länsstyrelsen i Skåne et al. (2010), which disregarded industries in central locations based on their extensive land use. With a comprehensive conceptualization of sustainability (including cultural heritage, identity and future sustainable industrial transportation), a strategy which emphasizes (historical and contemporary) rural–urban relations can be defended. For such a strategy, railway side-tracks are of key importance, as are the few remaining industrial buildings which are now in an early phase of decay. If farm-related activities were facilitated in the former industrial zone along the railway, the relationship between farming, the town and the railway would be re-emphasized. This could be a more fruitful way to maintain (functional aspects of) the cultural landscape rather than focusing solely on land use patterns. Such a strategy would not rule out densification in parts of the town centre, but would allow for a more differentiated strategy beyond the standardized urban ideal. In addition, while the heritage from the 1960s could merit protection, its unsustainable structures and their influence on contemporary planning need to be counteracted, for example, the contemporary plan for a by-pass road and the strong emphasis on rural–urban divides in current plans.

Conclusions

This study demonstrated the need for a site-specific and differentiated conceptualization of TOD and illustrated its potential in a historical study of a small Swedish town. Various lessons were learned for the specific case, as listed above. Since the study argues for an approach which carefully considers the TOD history of the place, it would be misleading to claim that the case is representative of, for example, small-sized transit-oriented settlements in Sweden. Instead, it illustrates the fruitfulness of the historical study, and how deceptive the standardized narrative of the rise and fall of twentieth-century TOD would be in this case. However, the following recommendations can be made on issues to study in order to facilitate a wider discourse on TOD:

- Trace historical (and present-day) rural–urban interdependencies. This paper presents a case illustrating how the railway and its settlements were not primarily urban enclaves, but had a “rurban” character which was dependent on rural stakeholders and goods. However, current TOD proponents tend to argue for the development of conventional urban settlements, a strategy which could not only threaten the heritage of the town,
but also hamper some of the driving forces for moving to such a town, for example, its green character or its landscape amenities. Thus, historical studies of the rural–urban interplay are recommended to widen the discourse on the (perhaps rurban) history, identity and future potential of the settlement.

*Study multiple historical TODs.* There are many versions of TOD and any current settlement is likely to be an assemblage of generations of TOD. This plurality opens the way for a discussion on alternative TOD strategies.

*Question claims of continuity and change.* An old railway is not a guarantee of a long, continuous history of TOD. Modernist planning, on the other hand, has a tendency to linger despite planners’ claims to have left it behind. A critical look at current morphology and at persistent planning ideals, narratives and imaginaries could provide new insights on the basis of current discourses on TOD.

*Study planning that matters.* A planning history of TOD needs to focus on planning documents that made a difference. On a methodological level, this study illustrated how a close look at the planning process reveals that informal plans can play a key role in a town’s development. Therefore, one should not assume that the formal status of a plan coincides with its role in everyday practice; planning history requires a closer look at the planning process.

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