Participation and deliberation in low-carbon transition governance:

Learning from climate policy making in Sweden.

Authors: Annica Kronsell¹, Roger Hildinsson and Jamil Khan, Lund University, Sweden.

Introduction
The strategies implied by the future climate objectives are posing challenges for governance. For Sweden it is based on the objective that by 2050, Sweden will have a resource efficient energy supply with no net emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere (EPA 2012). On this topic, transition theories, sustainability studies, green democratic and deliberative theories converge on the call for inclusionary and participatory methods as a way to accomplish the transition through increased legitimacy and compliance in governance. Coming from different perspectives and disciplines, these approaches differ on which actors should be included, on what grounds, what these actors are expected to contribute with and what the optimal procedures for collaboration is. This is the starting point for the analytical framework of this paper, used to analyze participation in climate governance in Sweden.

The case study was conducted during 2011 involving national policy makers responsible for climate policy making in the environment, transport, energy and innovation sectors.

¹ Corresponding author is Professor Annica Kronsell, Department of Political Science, Lund University, Annica.Kronsell@svet.lu.se
In general, policy makers characterize the climate issue area as one of consensus seeking and cooperation. At the same time we found a variety of different types of collaboration: formal and institutionalized as well as informal and ad hoc arrangements that were difficult to oversee. While a majority of the respondents viewed broad cooperation as necessary to accomplish the transition envisioned, our study reveal many different perceptions and opinions among the policy makers on suitable forms for participation, who to be included and the purpose of collaboration. We also found that economic actors, trade and industry were considered highly important actors in the transition process. The aim of this article is to analyze how Swedish policy makers view the inclusion of stakeholders in climate governance aimed at low-carbon transition and assess those findings against different theoretical approaches to participation in climate and sustainability governance. The Swedish case study can be helpful in pointing to problems and potential challenges regarding collaboration and participation of societal sectors and interest in climate governance. The empirical findings can be useful in understanding the potential of different models and their implications for transition governance.

The importance of participation in Climate Governance

A key issue in political science is the discussion on how representative democracies succeed in representing the electorate and whether voting is sufficient as a way to include the public, whether as citizens or organized groups, in policy making between elections. Most agree that elections are not sufficient to maintain democratic quality, other means of participation in policy making are needed in order to strengthen democracy. Most greens favor widespread political participation in decision-making (Ball 2006: 133). When considering environmental issues, such as those brought on by climate change, we are dealing with problems of great complexity and uncertainty (Lazarus 2009; Levin et. al 2010). Solutions are varied and the nature of the problem also contested, outcomes are unsure but likely to require considerable societal transition that may imply substantial sacrifices from citizens. Policy makers are highly dependent on expertise, likely to be found also outside governmental circles, and they need to create legitimacy for politics and decisions of the kind necessary. First, this article discusses the role of participation in transition governance by turning to the theoretical inquiries found in work on (neo)corporatism, green and deliberative
democracy theory as well as transition theory, in order to theoretically map out the conditions for participation in transition governance. We have explicitly chosen these three different models because neocorporatism represents a real model based on historic empirical studies has shown to be prevalent as a policy model particularly in northern Europe. Transition management is an experimental model specifically focused on transition as is this article and it has been tried empirically particularly in the Netherlands. The green deliberative model remains largely an ideal model that has not been tried empirically or experimentally in climate policy making. Yet, it is important to include this model because of the way it views political community, extending beyond humans and into the future. Secondly, the findings of the Swedish case of climate governance will be analyzed using this theoretical framework. The aim is to discuss which implications these results about the inclusion of societal sectors and groups in Swedish climate policy making have for transition governance.

Corporatism or neo-corporatism is one form for including groups into policy making which has been applied widely and is a real model. Howard Wiarda (1997: 3-4) writes that corporatism is about “the incorporation of interest groups into the decision-making machinery of the modern state” thus, creating pacts between labor, industry, management and policy makers to guarantee economic development through peaceful labor relations but also social welfare and education. Corporatism has taken many forms but all emphasize group over individual interests (Wiarda 1997: 15) and in its practice (neo)corporatism has often evolved to different forms of tri-partite relations between the state, the productive sector and labor unions. Colin Crouch argues that the triumph of neo-liberalism beginning in the 1980s did not lead to a general dismantling of the neo-corporatist structure in places were this system was considered effective, and where the existence of strong unions felt it in their interest to assure the performance of firms and even whole sectors. While corporatism, the welfare state and the Swedish model has been pronounced dead, or at least severely reformed (Anxo and Niklasson 2006; Blyth 2001; Pestoff 1994; Premfors 1991), the system of interest group participation seems to have continued vivacity in the environmental and climate sector (Hildingsson, Lundqvist).
Colin Crouch continues and says that in many European nations, neo-corporatist structures continue to operate but there has been a shift in the balance of power favoring industrial actors. This is due to the increased competition of the global economy whereby relations tend to focus on how to improve competitiveness (Crouch 2006:50). To this, green political theorists (like Eckersley 2004) argue that as long as the central state imperative is to favor economic growth, producer interests and already established economic sectors have a particularly favored position. Rather than dismissing the capability of corporatist arrangements altogether, Meadowcroft (2005) argues that there is a potential particularly for advanced welfare states, with Sweden as an example, to deal efficiently with environmental and climate problems. In part it is due to their experience of dealing with market failures in the past, through labor and capital compromises, but also because of a long-tradition of dealing with interest groups.

In neo-corporatist structures it is more difficult for groups that do not represent economic or production interests, environmentalist movement groups for example, cannot like labor and capital, connect so easily with what is also the core imperative of the state: economic growth (Dryzek et al 2003: 2). Yet, Colin Crouch (2006:60-61) claims that Nordic countries are an exception to this because also environmental interests have been successfully part of the neo-corporatist model. Coming from the green perspective, Eckersley (2004: 69) suggests that some states have decided to increase stringency of environmental regulation through ecological modernization. To these states, environmental regulation has become a way to enhance and advance their competitiveness in the global market (Barry and Eckersley 2005: 263) hence, using environmental legislation and performance as a leverage in the competition in transnational trade relations.

In qualifying the relation between social movement groups and the state, using environmental groups as an example, Dryzek and his colleagues (Dryzek et al. 2003) suggest it is useful to think in terms of how exclusive or inclusive a state is to interest representation. A neo-corporatist model tends to be exclusive as only specific and selected groups would be included, while an inclusive state would be open to a wider range of interests. The potential lies in how states are able to respond to emerging interest groups and new demands and ideas in the public sphere (Hunold and Dryzek
Furthermore, the state can be active or passive in the kind of interests it connects with, when it is active it tries to guide and control the interaction and also the contents and modes of action of interest groups. The passive state is one that does not interfere with the group's activities, which are left to social movements and the public sphere. In combination then, an inclusive and active state is one that values societal interests but tries to actively both anticipate what they may be and influence the organization of those interests. Their example is Norway. Dryzek et al. (2003) write about passive exclusionary states that once interests have been included, all others are systematically excluded but the exclusion is passive because the state does not in any way try to undermine or interfere with these ‘excluded’ interests, organisations or social movements. They are left alone but only provided with very few opportunities to engage in channels of political influence (Dryzek et al. 2003: 8). This may actually lead to a more vibrant public sphere, exemplified by Germany (Hunold and Dryzek 2005: 91). For the empirical analysis in this paper it is relevant to ask under what conditions are different actors involved in governing the climate policies in 2011: What actors are deemed important and how are their relations organized?

Transition management research is subset within the governance research field, particularly interested in governance for transformation toward climate and sustainability goals. In this article, it is particularly interesting for what it proposes about the actors involved in transition governance. It is an experimental model, tried most extensively in the Netherlands but also in Belgium and the UK. Its foundation is in transition theory that view transitions in relation to three analytical levels; niches—the setting where innovations take place—, regimes—the networks and institutions with vested interests in the current order, and the normative or cultural landscapes in which the other two levels are embedded (Grin et al. 2011). Transition management has its focus on – niches – or transition arenas which are participatory processes where a diverse set of relevant actors can meet and deliberate and generate innovation that lead to transitions (Kemp et al. 2007; Loorbach and Rotmans 2006, Loorbach 2010). Transitions theorists argue that to bring about change it is necessary to assemble different participants from various sectors and experiences. Broad participation as a way to work together for change is a key feature in transition management but it remains a selective participatory model. The participants should represent different
interests and agendas but most importantly, must be willing to debate and discuss as well as have a desire to transform the current system. There is a particular emphasis on actors who are forward thinking. “Forerunners are key to transition processes, in particular real go-getters with an overly amount of energy and enthusiasm” and they should be given organizational, mental, as well as juridical and financial space to act (Loorbach and Rotmans 2010: 243). In transition management research it has been noted that powerful actor constellations of the incumbent regime, can easily capture the agenda and actors who represent new thinking and innovation can become hostage to the transition process (Smith and Kern 2009; Smith and Sterling 2008; 2010). This should be avoided hence, they warn against the inclusion and dominance of actors who represent the current system. Transition management strategies see the imminent necessity to weaken the power of the incumbent regime by encouraging collaboration and dialogue in niches outside the regime context. New ideas that encourage transition can flourish and grow in such niches because they are outside the power of the existing regime (Schot and Geels 2008). The powerful incumbent regime could be exemplified by the tripartite relations developed in the neo-corporatist model.

Empirical research by Foxon et al. (2009) shows that broad participation is essential to the success of a transition strategy. Accordingly, transitions are possible if important groups and individuals are able to contribute, formulate questions and answers and be given a chance to actively take part in the process of governance. It is as Carolyn Hendriks (2009) argues, to take democratic politics into account. Indeed, broad participation in governance processes is important to assure democratic values but also for the possibility to tap into available knowledge and experience and to listen to views and aspects that may be relevant to accomplish the transition for example in generating new ideas and innovative thinking. Transition management theories focus attention on an important dilemma between the desire to have open, broadly participative deliberative processes and the risk of having that agenda captured by the most powerful actors (cf. Meadowcroft 2009; Voss and Borneman 2011). Hence, transition management theories have developed specific ideas about the range of actors to be included, they have to be representative in terms of the issue raised, their interest should not conflate or overlap with those of the incumbent regime, and a final requirement is that the participants desire change rather than status quo. For our case
study we ask: How are innovative or niche actors viewed and included in the climate policy-process?

Underlying the neo-corporatist model, as well as pluralist democratic systems, is the idea that different groups represent interests that are mirrored in the societal collective. It is about making claims to represent someone or something (Saward 2006: 183-185). For example, labor unions are expected to represent the interests of the workers, i.e. the material conditions of having a job with a decent wage. Groups perceived as reflecting interests in society are also represented in policy making which thus, takes these interests into consideration and they influence policy. Such policy making often imply an aggregation of interests through bargaining and negotiating. The discussion on political representation often centers on how well an elected representative mirrors the voters interests. From a democratic perspective there are additional problems with this. First, the bargaining process itself requires resources that many socially and economically marginalized groups do not have. Second, interest group bargaining require that ecological problems and climate issues be disaggregated into particular interest associated with distinct actors. Thirdly, and this follows from the first two, the interests of eco-systems, non-humans, future generations are not represented in this way. For climate governance that aims at a low-carbon transition it is highly relevant to consider long-term interest and that ecosystems and non-humans also are represented in policy making and this motivates the input from green political theories.

Terence Ball (2006: 136-137) says that the one distinguishing feature of green versions of democracy is the rather immense widening of the political community, for example to include the ecosystem. Green political theory finds it is essential that there be ways to account for current interest of nature and creatures and of the needs of these in the future (Goodin 1992: 45-53, 65-73). These groups are not represented in contemporary democratic politics and ways for non-human and long-term ‘interests’ to be accounted for need to be worked out (Saward 2006: 183-185). We do not know what the preference of subjects in the future will be. Terence Ball suggests it is possible to figure out those preferences while still tapping into interest based politics. He suggests that it is possible to speak about interests in the future by articulating this ambition in terms of autonomy and choice. Interest can be calculated based on the desire to “leave our
distant descendants with their autonomy intact and with more choices instead of fewer” (Ball 2006: 138). Other species as well as future generations are communities that can potentially be harmed by current industrial practices and political decisions (Saward 2006: 187). This speaks to the climate agenda as well. Following the IPCC reports about the 2 degree limit, makes it clear that action has to be take. An interesting question for transition governance is how the possible interest of future generations of humans and creatures, as well as entire ecosystems are being taken into account.

With its wider notion of political community ecological democracy requires “that the opportunity to participate or otherwise be represented in the making of risk generating decisions should literally be extended to all those potentially affected, regardless of social class, geographic location, nationality, generation, or species.” (Eckersley 2004: 112) In order to do so a different ‘method’ is suggested. Terence Ball advice that “/h/ow these interests are to be given voice and protected by whom is a matter for debate, deliberation and reflection by those who are capable of doing so.” (Ball 2006: 144). The method proposed is deliberative democracy which “has put communication and reflection at the center of democracy. Democracy, in other words, is not just about making decisions through the aggregation of preferences. Instead, it is also about processes of judgement and preference formation and transformation within informed, respectful, and competent dialogue” (Dryzek 2010: 3). Here Dryzeck like other deliberative theorists (refs) reject the idea of politics based (soley) on interests. The appeal of deliberative democracy to green and environmentalist scholars and practitioners is that it moves away from the short term strategic bargaining between what is assumed to be self-interested actors to reflective deliberations that center on questions of value and a common problems in a long-term and future oriented perspective. To represent those currently marginalized from the polity, non-human species, entire ecosystems and all these also in the future requires a high degree of reflection, imagination an openness in thinking and listening (Eckersley 2004: 111-138). Derived from this is a final question of whether the climate policy-process of the case study showed any signs of deliberative processes.

**Analysis of Swedish climate policy making**
The data for this case study consists of 59 elite interviews conducted during 2011 with national policy makers responsible for climate policy making in the environment, transport, energy and innovation sectors. The majority were civil servants in the agencies (39) in government offices (7), but we also interviewed national politicians (6), and representatives from other relevant interest organisations (7). The results of the interviews were communicated to the participants in a report of December 2011 and discussed in focus groups, data from participant observation in the Climate Roadmap reference group 2012 has also been included.

The study confirmed that contemporary Swedish climate politics were conducted in a cooperative spirit and in a congenial atmosphere; this was also viewed as something in general beneficial and conducive to stricter legislation in the environmental and climate policy-making. The informants described the relationship between different actors involved in climate policy-making using terms like: mutual understanding, collaborative relations, discussions and dialogue. This is exemplified with the following quotes from interviews: “Everyone agrees that it is good to meet in different contexts, to meet trade and industry and the different ministries. Often the discussions are very good, everyone understands each other” (I 41) “there is a good atmosphere where everyone’s different opinions are respected and listened to” (I 10) and “most agree to what needs to be done. No one says we should ignore the climate issue. The question is how do we do it” (I 19). Although some respondents pointed to conflicts and clashes between different interests, the general impression was that an atmosphere of collaboration exists. We think this in itself, can be a good starting point and conducive to trying ‘new’ ways of participation and interaction in the future, such as those suggested by the transition management or the green deliberative model.

Climate governance as we perceived it from the interviews was part of a tradition of cooperation, of engaging and collaborating with societal actors that built on the traditional model of policy making articulated by one respondent as follows: “I think there is a lot of mutual understanding. Engagement...I think that in Sweden we have a cooperative tradition” (I 29). Our interviews seem to confirm that the neo-corporatist tradition of policy making remains relevant. This was supported by the general feeling conveyed of an understanding that the system was in general collaborative, consensus-
seeking and open to the engagement of a diverse set of actors. Yet, we noted it was an restricted set of actors that were considered much in line with the neocorporatist model, albeit a reformed one. It was not the ‘old’ constellation with the tripartite relations between market actors, the state and labor. In climate issues the emphasis is almost exclusively on economic actors.

That economic interests and actors dominate was shown in the interviewees’ responses to our question: which are the most important actors in climate politics? While most respondents pointed to the importance of the government and the ministries, it was particularly those policy makers who have control over the economic sector that were termed significant, i.e. the finance and commerce ministries. The importance of the finance ministry was underlined also in the focus group discussions. About the role of actors outside the immediate political context, respondents listed trade organizations, industries and businesses as particularly important. Although innovative environmental and climate technology companies were mentioned a few times, it was clear that our respondents saw business actors like, car manufacturers, energy companies, car lobbies and transport companies as much more important than other societal groups and also than international or EU actors, media, research, municipalities or citizens, actors rarely mentioned. In the material, it is the old established industries and economic sectors that are viewed as most important. Here expressed in the words of a civil servant: “the industrial sector is a very important actor since industry builds much of society. We cannot reach our climate goals if they are contradictory to industrial interests” (I 31). A view that comes across from the interviews is that industry in Sweden is in a vulnerable position in relation to the global economy, and hence there is a felt need to specifically protect Swedish industry and thus not push environmental legislation too far (I 44). Economic interest, industrial and business interest are considered extremely important but perceived as something naturally so, it is never articulated as a new phenomena or as something different than what has been the case before. This is also why we are inclined to say that the relationship between politics/administration and economic interest continues a corporatist tradition but one where the economic actors have gained more influence than other actors. What we seem to see evidence of here in the climate governance field is a neo-liberal model of corporatism with the emphasis on
economic actors and economic interest. The strong emphasis on economic actors may also be explained by the way that the climate issue has been framed as an economic, industrial and trade concern by the current conservative-liberal government. Politics do seem to matter here. The focus group discussions articulated a worry relating to this framing, the tendency that climate policy making becomes narrow in its focus to center on calculations of public financing and costs.

What we observed was a more exclusionary kind of state (Dryzek et al 2003) which included an exclusive set of interest groups only. The labor unions play no significant role here, only one respondent referred to the unions. In our material, environmental or climate interest groups are not mentioned as important either. This is rather astonishing. It might be because they are somehow taken as given actors in this field or as having a different role. As we see below, when specific forms for collaboration are discussed in the interview then we hear about the role of environmental groups. In one interview we were told that established environmental organizations are important in molding public opinion but are less instrumental in the policy process.

Another surprising finding, if we take the perspective of the transition model into account was not only the great importance put on established economic actors, is that the interviewees did not differentiate between economic actors, i.e. whether they are influential because they have so much at stake or whether they have the potential to transform. Among the important actors are “enterprises, in part the businesses and trade organizations we have today, it is important how they act, but then there are climate actors who try new innovations, like climate and environmental enterprises” (I 18). There is no distinction made between the actors implicated in the climate problem (i.e. regime actors) or important actors in getting through a transition to a low-carbon future (niche actors and forerunners). Neither did they express any ideas about how to include different types of economic actors. A main point of transition theory is that there is a problem with including the existing/incumbent regime, i.e. the actors and ideas that support the fossil-fuel economy, in climate policy making for the future. These actors

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2 Although the view of Swedish climate policy making is perceived as such by the majority of the respondents it does not mean that they approve of this neocorporatist model, many and particularly those within the Environmental Protection Agency were highly critical of it.
will work against the transition because it will be against their interest, is the argument of transition management. The Swedish climate policy makers who we talked to do not seem to share the fear articulated by transition management/theory researchers but we also found that they were not familiar with this research nor with the transition experiments in the Netherlands. Among our informants the emphasis was on including the large economic actors and to get them to change their behavior. Innovative actors like climate or environmental industries and enterprises were mentioned but not in terms of an exclusive or specific importance. Nor were any specific efforts or resources devoted to these groups.

The view that the existing industry representing the incumbent regime could be both a change agent and an obstacle to change at the same time was confirmed during the focus group discussion: “It is important to view the industrial sector as a driving force in innovation. Their engagement is positive but it is important to be aware that this can give trade organizations and basic industry opportunities to delay the implementation of transition strategies.” (p.20) The incumbent regime is viewed as not only resisting change but as having an important innovative potential as well. In contrast to transition management it is clear that Swedish climate policy-makers do not consider it necessary to differentiate between different types of industrial, business and trade actors. It may also point to the strength and stability of the policy making model and the influence that politicians and civil servant have over policy making, since they did not show fear that these important economic actors will take over the process, but rather that they are in control of it. Returning to Dryzek et al. (2003) framework about the state’s relations with interest group the study indicate that it is a corporatist model that is exclusionary because it includes an exclusive set of actors namely economic actors. It is also active in its relation and interaction with these actors as shown in the following section.

Through our interviews we learned about the forms of collaboration and cooperative practices in climate policy making. Interest groups are included formally in the process of the referral system but there are many other planned, organized and formal consultations as well as ad hoc, spontaneous and informal processes. Different forms of collaboration seem to have different purposes but were hard to overlook. Hearings of different sizes and workshops were used when specific topics needed to be aired
broadly among actors and in some depth. Reference groups are frequently used when it is easy to choose the relevant actors to be included. An informant from the agencies says: “It is standard to have hearings or reference groups. We always have that. It is both for information and to gather views but it is also so that we can spread information about what we are doing, argue to a certain extent and explain why we choose to do certain things” (I 3).

Many forms for collaboration were geared specifically toward economic actors, in trade and industry. This relation was described as “a continuous contact with trade associations who give their comments and views as regulation is developed” (I 24) and another informant spoke about “specific consultation groups where checking and tuning with industry and trade associations were routine matters” (I 52). These forms of collaboration seem to be close to what is often termed lobbying and among our informants most viewed lobbying in positive terms. In one interview we heard that those who lobbied most fervently and also were listened to came from economic sectors dependent on and profiting from the fossil fuel dependence: “there is a lot of influence from the loosing industries and businesses. The grey industry.” (I 13) On the quality of the relations with industry, one respondent from the Transport Agency articulated this as follows: “our relation to big companies like Volvo, Scania etc. is damn good. Our mutual collaboration is terrific” (I 31). Another perspective is offered by the trade organizations who point to the strong influence from the environmental lobby which is “knowledgeable and engaged and knows how to talk in the corridors and contact and influence politicians” (I 51) but an informant from the same sector recognize a shift from “historically listening extensively to environmental organizations in these types of dialogs, to a shift whereby there is an attempt to consider the diversification in society” (I 55). Is this an indication that environmental interest groups have become less influential? The only groups representing environmental or climate interests that were mentioned in the interviews was the long established nature conservation society with the same director representing the organization at least the last 10 years, there was no interest for or mention of other social movement networks or organizations. For example, the transition towns movement organization established in locations in
Sweden were never mentioned.\(^3\) Neither is this or other new groups on environment and climate represented in the Environmental ministry and Environmental Protection Agency’s ongoing work with setting the Roadmap or Pathway for Sweden’s low-carbon transition.

The interviews revealed how differently these lobbying processes were viewed among various actors. The ministries saw lobbying as a form of reciprocal exchange, in this case with industrial actors. “To us, lobbying is more about hearing their view, how they perceive problems that we do not even know about. This increases our information on how industry is affected by legislation. It is a mutual exchange” (I 41) However, the representatives from trade and industry did not appear to perceive this exchange as mutual or reciprocal: “To be proactive, the government and politicians should invite us more than they do. Today, we are always the ones taking initiatives. It is always we who react when there are suggestions that we find less suitable. It would be better if the government would initiate a constructive discussion about how climate goals are to be reached, before making finished policies which we can react on as good or bad” (I 58).

Through the interviews we learned that the collaborative relations between relevant interest group actors, civil servants in agencies and ministries also take more looser forms as networks and can be more or less ad hoc meeting places where actors can exchange ideas, give input to the policy process through knowledge and information exchange. Also individuals will contact politicians and civil servants directly. The economic actors from trade and industry definitely dominated.

The perspective of climate policy makers is that there is a reciprocity in these relations as collaboration is about gathering facts and views to reach the most optimal solution as possible. At the same time it provides an opportunity for information and knowledge exchange that establishes support for proposals. At an early stage policy makers become aware of the reactions that different interest have. This increases the possibility to reach acceptance and broader legitimacy for climate proposals. These process seem to go beyond simple interest group bargaining, to reflect what Dryzek (2010) suggests to be necessary for effective climate policy making namely, deliberation. We do indeed see evidence of communication, mutual sharing, a will to learn from each other in this

process. There is a certain dedication in creating a dialogue through varied means of interaction. “Dialogue is always better than if you sit in your own office and think up something” (I 44) says a voice from the ministries. In previous work on sustainable and environmental politics where Sweden was a case (Bäckstrand et al. 2010), we found evidence of deliberative elements in the policy process. What we found was a deliberative/reflexive model but not in a green democratic sense as including and even emanating from civil society, but rather more exclusive, instrumental and where deliberation is defined top-down by the policy agenda (cf. Hildingsson 2010).

The preference for deliberative forms of communication is part of the collaborative tradition of the Swedish style of policy making in which for climate policy making it does seem that ‘old’ economic actors have a particularly prominent role. While it is a transparent system, due to the myriad of forms for collaboration in practice it seem difficult to monitor what kind of influence the included actors have. Furthermore, there are many potential actors and interests either marginalized or excluded from the Swedish climate policy-making process. As concluded above, ‘New’ industries and climate and environmental enterprises seem less interesting to policy-makers, how policy makers view the role of environmental and climate groups does not come out clearly in our material. The emphasis is on the economy thus on the productive sector, hence the involvement of other social groups beyond environmental groups is extremely limited. Yet, there is a general and broad concern to reach acceptance and legitimacy and here our respondents seem to recognize the need to broaden the interests and actors in climate governance. “Participation is important, leadership is not sufficient. When we have to deal with uncomfortable decisions there has to be engagement and participation. However, our relation is not with the public. In order for us to reach far enough with our policy goals the public and the whole society must be involved” (I 15). Another civil servant expresses a similar view: In order to make climate policy “for the future, I think it is important to include people, the users, the inhabitants in an explicit way. If they are allowed on board, they are given importance which will make them feel responsible and committed” (I 29). While there is a recognition of the importance to go beyond the productive sector and a few selected interest groups in climate policy making for the future, we found no evidence in our interviews of any call to include also non-humans, eco-systems, future generations of all species in climate policy making. We
were actually surprised by the lack of evidence of forward or future centered thinking among our respondents. In our interviews we had a set of questions relating to future policy, politics and found that most only talked about this reluctantly and few had formed any thoughts on the topic. Hence, they did not seem to possess the imaginative possibilities that are required of those who represent the future generations, other species and eco-systems and necessary for building ecological democracy (Eckersley 2004).

Conclusions and implications for transition governance

From the analysis it becomes clear that the transition management model is not in use in Sweden and participation is more in line with the neo-corporatist tradition with an emphasis on co-operation between the state and established economic actors. While this close relationship is viewed as problematic by some interviewees most see it as fruitful to climate policy making. There seems to be a strong held faith among Swedish policy makers that – to speak in the terms of transition management – incumbents of the dominant regime will be able to act as innovators and contribute to regime change. This is exemplified by the co-operation with car manufacturers such as Volvo and Saab. From a theoretical perspective the question arises whether the Swedish governance model is less favorable to a transition or if it is possible to imagine an alternative model for transition based on a neo-corporatist governance model? To be sure, also in the Dutch case where niche nurturing was a proclaimed policy aim, policy practice has come to be dominated by incumbents such as the energy company Shell (ref.). The question whether it is theory or practice that is faulty is wrongly asked. It is more conducive to acknowledge that all theory needs to be contextualized which in this case means that we can not think away the strong corporatist tradition that exists in Sweden. This begs the question, to what extent the transition management approach can guide policy making in a corporatist governance context?

Another important finding in the study is that there is a lack of deliberation and participation and that many groups in society are excluded from the governance process. Furthermore, this is not seen as a major issue by many of the interviewees. Compared to the ideals of deliberative democracy the Swedish model falls far short.
However, deliberation is not totally absent and there are both formal and informal procedures were policy makers interact with interest groups and the public. The main problem from a deliberative point of view is that participation is selective and that it does not emanate from civil society but is rather controlled top-down. Participation is guided by an instrumental rationality – to inform, to improve decisions, to increase acceptance – rather than a deliberative rationality. There are two possible implications of this. First, there is a risk that the transition process is shaped and defined by a narrow group of actors who favor certain solutions over others, regarding for example technologies, governance arrangements and distribution of burdens and benefits. Second, it could be difficult to find acceptance for many of the difficult decision and measures that are necessary for a low-carbon transition. In line with the arguments of environmental deliberative democracy, sustainability change will not be possible without the development of an increased ecological rationality among the general public, something which is unlikely without open and inclusive public deliberation.

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