Purpose
The aim of the project is to bridge the students’ Problem-Based Learning processes with real-life issues in the local community around Aalborg University in Copenhagen.

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) shares common characteristics with education for sustainability through the principles of interdisciplinary, collaborative, contextual and experiential learning, problem orientation and self-directed learning (Guerra, 2017). Universities as institutions can play a significant role in driving urban sustainability processes through stakeholder partnerships (Trencher, et al., 2013, 2014). Considering these perspectives, the purpose of this study is to investigate how applying PBL principles in university involvement with community stakeholders may foster sustainability in education and potentially for community development as well, although this latter point was not fully realized in the project.

Design and Methodology
The study involved a cohort of students in Urban, Energy and Environmental Planning at Aalborg University in Copenhagen during the course of the 1st semester of the Bachelor of Science program in engineering. In this timeframe, PBL based student projects were carried out in partnership with stakeholders in the city’s South Harbor District to investigate sustainability in community development and learning.

Findings
It is found that there are learning perspectives but also tensions in the alignment of expectations between students and community stakeholders in a collaborative PBL environment. It is found that students highly value the insights and relevance that come with being embedded in a real-life problem in the local community, and it is found that students have been able to reflect comprehensively about the role of being a planner in a changing environment as exemplified by the South Harbor District. Also taking into considerations, that students navigate the field between being academics, and being influenced by stakeholder interests and expectations - this balancing between university and practice needs further support in PBL learning processes.

References: