# Designing dialogue

**USING DESIGN RATIONALE TO ADVISE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

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# Abstract

This thesis takes an interdisciplinary approach to research how design rationale may improve practices for participatory design in urban planning. Knowledge on sustainable development, participatory planning in public sector, design rationale and innovation are brought together to form a cohesive understanding for the matter of citizen dialogue and participation.

To further gain knowledge on the subject a case study is done following the planning of a consultation at the urban planning office in Norrköping by participatory observations. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews are conducted with civil servants from Norrköping and Norrtälje, discussing the theme of citizen dialogue and municipal capacity and competence for its performance.

The knowledge contributions addresses the specific case study at first hand, but are also applicable in some general sense. The study shows that design rationale can be of use and inspiration to address issues of culture and mental models in public sector, as these as believed to stand in the way of forming a more innovative and adaptive public sector that can design better practices for dialogue and participation. Design thinking and attitude can bring openness and human centred perspectives, among other things, to public organisations.

For the case study in question it is suggested that the urban planning office would benefit from implementing and trying out ways of working that are more in line with design thinking and attitude. It is also suggested that they might benefit from employing an experienced designer to be part of planning procedures, as expert designers can adapt methods and tools for participation to design case specific activities. To employ a more case specific and local approach to participatory practices is proposed to bring better results, both in terms of its democratic breakthrough as well as its impact on social sustainability.

Overall, this thesis offers contributions to design knowledge, knowledge that in turn can be important for the area of sustainable development at large.

**Keywords:** citizen dialogue, citizen participation, design rationale, design thinking, design attitude, public sector culture, innovation, sustainable development, urban planning, democracy

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*Change is disturbing when it is done to us,*
*exhilarating when it is done by us.*

– Rosabeth Moss Kanter (Holman, 2009, preface)

# 1.0 Introduction

This project aims to map out and untangle the difficulties found both in definition and facilitation of citizen dialogue. By involving in desk research and literature review as well as a case study at Norrköping's urban planning office, the goal is to find key factors that are obstacles for fruitful dialogue, as well as key factors for success and potential.

The project takes a stance to recognise citizen dialogue and participation as a democratic act, acknowledging each citizen's entitlement to take part and be engaged in the design of their commons. The project suggests a clear distinction between being inflicted by change or being part of change, the latter believed to be more socially sustainable.

## 1.1 Background & Motivation

### 1.1.1 The role of design – *Design designs*

To begin this report I should briefly like to address the notion of design itself. Design is commonly referred to as an aesthetic act; of shaping objects or adding colour to them. You may think of interior design, perhaps buildings or landscapes, where focus often lies on the finished result – neglecting the process that led to it. In popular speech design is often confined into a thing, to a result, and seldom viewed for what it is; a process that defines, explores and solves complex issues.

This report offers a different view on design, one that values design for its process, rather than its result. Instead of seeing design as an artefact, design can be understood as: *"a course of action for the development of an artefact or a system of artefacts; including the series of organisational activities required to achieve that development"* (Gorb & Dumas, 1987, p. 54).

Another important starting point is to see design not only for what it *is*, but for what it *does*. Design is ontological[1] in the sense that what we design designs. The material form of design can be seen as means rather than end as it has continuous consequence (Kalantidou & Fry, 2014). The products or services that we design shape our environment and behaviour – our world at large – and in turn our world designs us. As Tony Fry (2017, p. 26) puts it: *"we and design exist in a never-ending hermeneutic circling"*.

To exemplify design's power and how it impacts our being, we can use a famous example from Long Island, New York, where a bridge became an obstacle, first reflected upon by Winner (1980). An important road in Long Island leading up to the popular Jones Beach State Park, was crossed by an overpass built above it. The overpass was placed so low that public transport buses could not

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[1] Ontology is a philosophical term describing the nature of being.

pass, which in return meant that only people who could afford a car could reach the park on the other side. Thus, what might be been seen as just a bridge over a street, seen from a different view is a deliberately designed feature to restrict access for people of lower socio-economic groups.

Another design example that well illustrates that design designs, that it impacts our behaviour and everyday life, is the speed bump, reflected on by Latour (1992). The design of the speed bump connects collective concerns of safety in traffic with individual concerns of damaging the car, when it deliberately forces drivers to keep their speed down (Tromp et al., 2011).

*"Ontological designing happens whether the perceiving subject (who is the subject of, as in subjected to, the designed) is aware of it or not."* (Willis, 2009, p. 90)

This understanding of 'ontological design' (Willis, 2009) – that design steers, provokes or nudges us to act in certain ways, whether we notice it or not – may seem daunting. For a designer, it calls for an understanding of the power and responsibility that comes with design choices, and to apply 'mindful' designing. It is crucial to accept the responsibility that comes with design and take measures to make the decision making as adequate and representative as possible. This is where human centred design, participatory design, and co-design comes into place. These design methods, or rationales,  are used as means for involving customers, users or citizens in the design process, thus ensuring that the design best meets the requirements of its users.

## 1.1.2 Stepping in to a more dialogic paradigm?

The story of Long Island's overpasses clearly exemplifies the impact that design can have. The designed environments around us, from buildings to services, are made with deliberation and affect our everyday lives. Our surroundings may communicate values, dreams and norms and can have both empowering and diminishing effects on people and communities. Urban design or design in public space should be recognised for its capacity to impact citizens and society as a whole, as it forms a foundation for our being. Participatory design practices can therefor have a great role to play in the shaping of our desired future and the transition towards a more sustainable as well as democratic society; a notion that in recent years has gained attention.

In 2015 the Swedish government initiated an investigation concerning the role for architecture and design in regards to sustainable development, where participatory approaches were stated significant for obtaining and retaining social sustainability (SOU 2015:88). The investigation further claimed that means and methods for participation and dialogue in public sector needed to be tested and revised, and that service design would be of great use for both progress and assessment (Prop. 2017/18:110).

In the petition Strategy for living cities (Strategi för levande städer) the government recognises the complexity of the sustainable city and its dependance on a wide range of aspects; spanning from

transportation and infrastructure to public health. Sustainable development is recognised not only for its environmental and economic aspects, but also its social dimension where inclusion and equality must be prominent. It is further claimed that citizens should possess a sense of belonging in their communities, and 'mindful' design and participation are mentioned as measures that potentially can help attain these goals (Skr. 2017/18:230).

With the emergence of a new politics for architecture and design, participatory and dialogic approaches are gaining in perspective, and the idea that dialogue and deliberation is essential for sustainable outcome is increasingly seen as the norm. A participatory and collaborative planning process brings different values, experiences and expertise forward, which is believed to ensure a more flexible, adaptive and intelligent public system (Connick & Innes, 2003, Smedby & Neij, 2013).

However, alongside the realisation of participatory norm in public sector, participatory practices are receiving an increasing, even stream of critique. Failing to allow substantial influence for citizens (Amnå, 2006; Monno & Khakee 2012; Tahvilzadeh, 2015), failing to accommodate a representative audience (White, 1996; Dekker & Van Kempen, 2009) and giving business interests a disproportionate influence (Swyngedouw, 2005; Inch 2015), are just a few of the common problems seen in participatory development processes in urban planning.

It seems that public sector have trouble practicing the norm that is preached, and that there is a knowledge or ability gap in the urban planning office on how it can best accommodate this new, participatory, normal. This may suggest a need for structural change or capacity building within public organisations, to better align them with this ideology.

## 1.2 Aims and questions

This thesis project aims to contribute to the area of sustainable urban development by finding useful touch points between design rationale and institutionalised participatory practices that can advise or improve public sector's facilitation. The research question is therefor phrased as follows:

*How can design rationale help strengthen and develop civil servants work with citizen dialogue and participation?*

## 1.3 Delimitations

The project takes a stance to say that citizen participation and dialogue is desirable, meaning little or no emphasis will be brought to its eventual disadvantages.

The project focuses on dialogue incentives in urban planning, not involving dialogic practices in other municipal services such as health care etc.

This project predominantly handles the planning and conduction phase of participatory urban planning, and not so much how input is processed or implemented or what that takes place after the participatory procedure.

# 2.0 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework provides an overview of foundational theories that contribute to the thesis knowledge contributions and the design exploration. It starts with foundational knowledge on design rationale, moving into sustainable urban development and lastly participatory practices and innovation in public sector.

## 2.1 Understanding design rationale

Design *in general* deploys a human centred and multidisciplinary approach where learning is shared and having different mindsets is seen as an important contribution to the process (Hassno Plattner Institute, 2021). Co-designing activities *in particular* are shaped to make use of both expert and diffuse design as affected actors are invited to be engaged in the process (Freire & Sangiorgi, 2010; Sanders & Stappers, 2008). The motivations for deploying co-creative practises in design are many. Scholars are witnessing clear benefits from involving a variety of actors; where both the process and its result is improved and becoming better aligned with users' needs (Steen et al., 2011; Vink et al., 2016). The design perspective, and especially service design, may therefor be seen as a valuable contribution in public sector due to its co-creational approach.

### 2.1.1 Design thinking

Design methods and approaches have gained popularity outside of the design community with the emergence of *design thinking* as notion (Kimbell, 2011). Design thinking is a methodology or an approach for solving problems. The design thinking approach is believed especially useful to tackle complex issues (Dam & Siang, 2020; Cross, 2004), – even those that are ill defined – known as wicked problems, defined by Buchanan (1992). One reason why design thinking is suited for complex issues may be because of how it naturally combines technical and emotionally based values – looking at the cultural *meaning* of an innovation in a wide sense (Ravasi et al., 2012).

Design thinking deploys a human centered perspective which puts the user of the intended solution at the center of the development process and works in an iterative manner that diverges and converges until it reaches a solution (Giacomin, 2014). The Design thinking approach is defined by five steps, proposed by Hasso-Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford (d.school), and reads as follows; ***empathise, define, ideate, prototype*** and ***test***. Following below is a brief summary of each step, based on the description by Dam and Siang (2020).

***Empathise:*** The first step, to empathise, is about letting go of your assumptions and deploy a human-centered understanding of your problem. The phase of empathising is all about getting to know the people concerned by the problem, to understand their experiences and motivations, and it is typically done by observation, interviews or similar ethnographic methods.

***Define:*** In the second phase you analyse the input gathered from the first step to define the core of the problem and pose a problem statement. It is suggested that the problem is described in a human-centred, or user centred, manner rather than being described from the company or business side of view. Dam and Siang (2020) exemplifies by posing two sorts of problem statements: *"We need to increase our food-product market share among young teenage girls by 5%"* or *"Teenage girls need to eat nutritious food in order to thrive, be healthy and grow"*, the latter being preferred as it puts the human at the center.

***Ideate:*** This is the stage to start generating ideas. There is an abundance of different methods for ideation, some of the more common being *brainwriting* and *brainstorming*. The ideation phase usually deploys a combination of deep and profound understanding for the problem with 'outside of the box'-thinking. This stage is usually divided into two or more steps, as you start with a divergent approach to your problem where you're looking for a variety and quantity of ideas, to later turn into a convergent stage of the ideation; where you start sorting and choosing which ideas to move forward. The ideation phase is often illustrated using the shape of a 'double diamond', clearly illustrating how divergence and convergence is brought together, shown in figure 1.
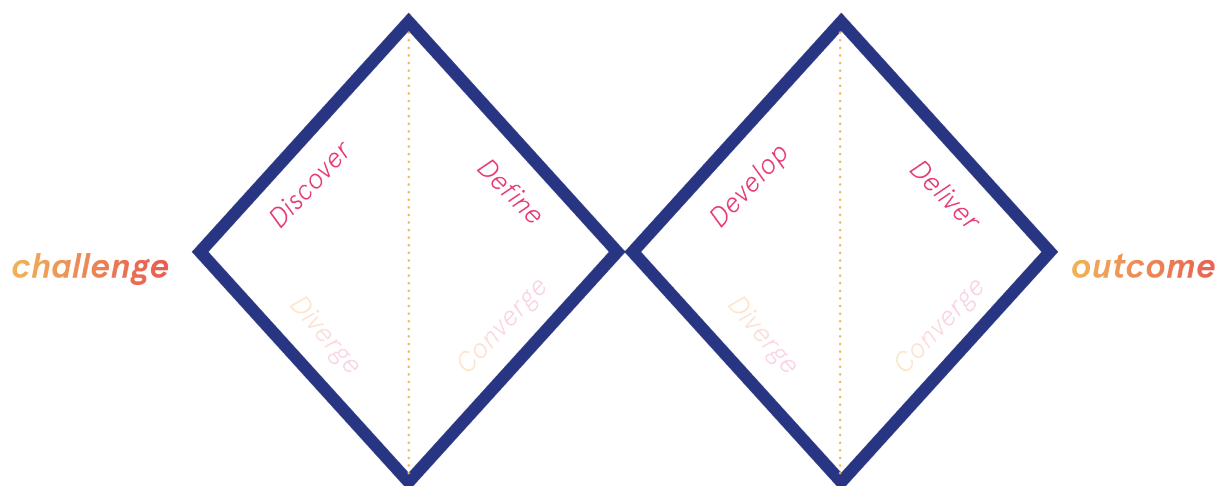


*Figure 1. The Double Diamond model, reworked from the Design council (2021)*

***Prototype:*** To prototype is to produce one or more suggestions for products or services that address the problem. It is usually done with inexpensive, scaled down versions that can be tested within the company or with coworkers. The prototype is to be seen as a means for driving the solution further, as this process evokes even more ideas or perhaps proves some ideas ineffective.

***Test:*** The final step means to test your prototype on a representative audience. Even though the step is seen as the final one, it is seldom seen as the end of the process. The testing phase usually

generates new knowledge that leads to redefinition of the problem, or new ideas to emerge. Testing should be seen as a way to gain important feedback for incremental, as well as, radical alterations.

The design process is often illustrated as a double diamond, as shown earlier in figure 1, to illustrate the divergent and convergent nature of design processes. The *design thinking model* on the other hand, puts emphasis on the iterative and continuous nature of design, where each step brings new knowledge that can improve the solution. An attempt of illustrating the iterative process, containing both divergence and convergence is shown by the infinity loop in figure 2.
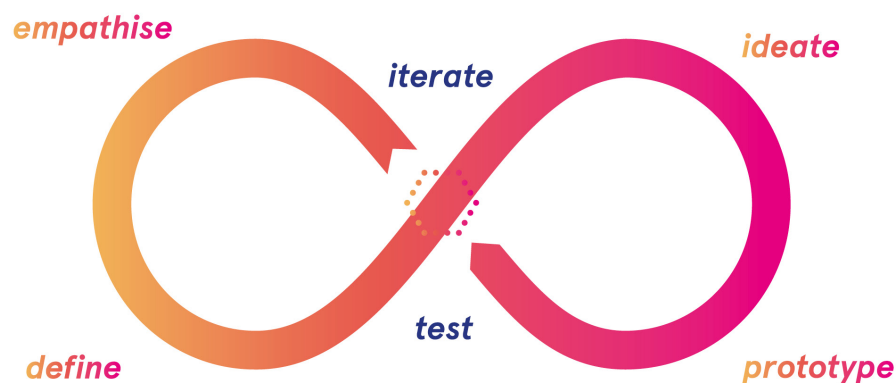


*Figure 2. The continuous process of design thinking, based on an illustration by Ashish Goel, 2014 (Slideshare, 2021).*

## 2.1.2 Design attitude

*Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand.* – Albert Einstein

Design at large can be viewed as a future-oriented discipline that naturally makes use of speculation and imagination, as it deals with the unknown as much as the known. According to Simon (1996) design is defined by the process of developing the current situation into a preferred one.

Michlewski (2016) states that design should be seen as an important strategic resource and vehicle for change, as designers are more prone in attitude to handle innovation, risk taking and openness. According to Michlewski (2016) designers embrace discontinuity and openness and might even thrive on the improvisation and ambiguity that innovation entails. Furthermore, Manzini (2009) describes the designer as an optimist, a person always presuming he or she can solve the problem. At the same time, designers must be deeply concerned with the reality of things – being realists. Manzini calls this, somewhat contradictory, condition 'realistic optimism'; meaning designers need

to be well aware of the difficulties they are facing but still continue to propose solutions or alternatives based on the opportunities they find.

Cross (1999) states that designers possess a certain kind of knowledge and ability, prominent for the design community; just like any other area of expertise concentrate on their forms of knowledge and abilities that are particular for them. He means that even though design as an activity comes naturally for the human being, an advanced design knowledge is best found with the people that practice it. He further describes design knowledge as a kind of culture or approach that designers possess, and that are more rarely found within other areas of profession.

## 2.1.3 Expert and diffuse design

The discussion about designers' attitude and knowledge, and whether designers differ in competence or personality from other professions, can be further explained by the notions of expert and diffuse design; notions first described by Manzini (2015). According to Manzini we should consider design an innate ability, present to some extent in everyone, but not necessarily developed and immersed by those who haven't practiced it. He suggests that making use of the experience and knowledge found within laymen (diffuse designers) is essential for attaining inclusive and powerful design solutions that sits well with the crowd. But that to facilitate the process of extracting and making use of diffuse design knowledge, an expert designer is needed. According to Manzini the expert designer is critical, creative and dialogic and *"should consider their creativity and culture as tools to support the capability of other actors to design in a dialogic way"* (Manzini, 2015, p. 82). He stresses the fact that expert designers must agree to the terms where they are part of a bigger process; one they should support and trigger, but not control.

*In short, it has become apparent that this is the only way of making sure that the technical solution found will actually be culturally and socially acceptable to the people and communities it is to benefit.* – Ezio Manzini (2015, p. 60)

Bason (2018) and Dorst (2015) describe a difference between expert designers and novice designers where experts have the ability to make reflective decisions in the situation, intuitively, whereas novice designers tend to be more focused on achieving results or ending at a goal. Wetter-Edman and Malmberg (2016) further stresses the importance of expert designers leading and guiding more novice designers in order to achieve substantial change or innovation. When introducing design knowledge and methodology into public sector, they found problems with continuity and utilisation without having expert designers present in the organisation.

The expert design role as described by many (Manzini, 2015; Bason, 2018; Dorst, 2015) can also be named a ***facilitator***. Manzini (2015) describes how the designers role have changed into a facilitating role that feeds the conversation, listens and suggests more mature proposals.

## 2.2 Sustainable cities and communities

Sustainability is at the core of urban development and public sector organisations today. The Swedish government has stated that Sweden is to become the world's first fossil free welfare country. *Fresh air*, *Limited climate impact* and *Well designed environments* are stated as three overarching goals for Swedish municipalities, businesses and citizens to address, where emphasis is put on limited traffic and increased housing (Skr. 2017/18:230). The government pushes and encourages municipalities, both by policy and subsidy, to make measures that will ensure a healthy and durable urban lifestyle that does not compromise the climate and environment.

But achieving sustainable change is complex, to say the least. Neimanis et al. (2015) states that we need to leave behind the time when we considered nature as something that simply 'is'. At the core for sustainable change lies the acceptance and realisation that we are in direct connection with nature, that we ourselves *are* nature, and that our lives from now onwards must tune in with the ecosystems. This argument suggests that a shift in behaviour and culture is needed to attain sustainable development and that the issue can not be addressed from an exclusively technological perspective.

Up until recently science and business have majorly been focusing on the environmental and economic side of the issue, trying to address sustainability from a technocratic perspective. Much has been achieved on the technological side of the problem, but means and will to transition into sustainable behaviour is lagging behind. Researchers are now acknowledging the need to address the social and behavioural side of sustainability in order to achieve durable change (Chapman 2009; Thorpe 2007; Forsemalm & Johansson 2019). The reason is simple: if people are unwilling to change their behaviour and adapt to new technology or new service systems, the problems will remain.

## 2.2.1 Linking social sustainability, public space and participation

To acknowledge the need for behavioural and cultural change in our societies may suggest an even greater need for communication between authorities and citizens. The Swedish government stated an aspiration to implement citizen participation to a greater extent in public sector and to develop more knowledge on how authorities and businesses can involve citizens in a successful way (Dir. 2015:24). A more transparent and inclusive governance is considered essential to achieve social sustainability, and social sustainability is in turn considered a necessity for attaining sustainable development at large.

In 2019 the Swedish government published their implementation plan for Agenda 2030 (Prop. 2019/20:188). In Agenda 2030, Goal 11: S*ustainable cities and communities* the sustainable community is described as *inclusive*, *green* and *smart,* where governance is *inclusive* and

*respectful* (Regeringskansliet, 2017). Hence, social sustainability may, in summary, be seen as both means and ends for a sustainable development.

However, the notion of social sustainability is complex. It concerns the health and wellbeing of citizens with the acknowledgement that 'social' is key. At the core of social sustainability lies the understanding that man is a social creature – always interconnected to others and reliant on his/her community (Dempsey et al, 2009).

| Non-physical factors | Predominantly physical factors |
| --- | --- |
| Education and training | Urbanity |
| Social justice: inter-and intra-generational | Attractive public realm |
| Participation and local democracy | Decent housing |
| Health, quality of life and well-being | Local environmental quality and amenity |
| Social inclusion (and eradication of social exclusion) | Accessibility (e.g. to local services and facilities/ employment |
| Social capital | Sustainable urban design |
| Community | Neighbourhood |
| Safety | Walkable neighbourhood: pedestrian friendly |
| Mixed tenure | |
| Fair distribution of income | |
| Social order | |
| Social cohesion | |
| Community cohesion (i.e. cohesion between and among different groups) | |
| Social networks | |
| Social interaction | |
| Sense of community and belonging | |
| Employment | |
| Residential stability (vs turnover) | |
| Active community organisations | |
| Cultural traditions | |

*Table 1. Touch points between social sustainability and urbanity according to Dempsey et al, 2009*

Social sustainability is dependent on a wide range of factors. When looking at social sustainability in an urban context, researchers have found touch points, or factors, especially important in contribution (Dempsey et al., 2009). These factors are shown in table 1.

The touch points for social sustainability in relation to urbanity are of both physical and non physical nature. According to the researchers these factors neither should, nor could be separated entirely from each other, and they further claim that social sustainability can not be considered an absolute or a constant, but should be seen as a dynamic state that needs continuous care (Dempsey et al., 2009).

In relation to the topic of public participation the touch points *Participation and local democracy* and *Sense of community and belonging* is of special importance. According to Parkinson (2012) the notion of democracy rests on the sense of a 'we' – the recognition that personal decisions impact the community and vice versa, and that we share collective resources. Parkinson suggests that this interdependent state between individual and community can be seen as a condition for creating a sense of belonging, as 'belonging' implicates a community, and community implicates a 'we'.

Furthermore, Parkinson (2012) claims that the 'we' creates a touchpoint between democracy and urbanity, as urban spaces and *communities* can reinforce an individual's sense of cohesion and belonging. According to Parkinson the urban realm and public space holds promise and capacity to strengthen democracy and social sustainability as it can reinforce a person's sense of community and belonging, both in physical and intellectual terms. Dempsey et al. (2009) similarly claims that the *neighbourhood* is of importance for social sustainability; that the everyday experience of our local environment and its services impact our wellbeing.

The neighbourhood, community and sense of we is also closely related to what Dempsey et al. (2011) describes as *identification* and *pride*. As social creatures we identify not only with other people but also with our surroundings – why we may also feel proud about living in a beautiful place or being part of an agreeable community. How proud people feel about their community is one way of assessing social sustainability (Dempsey et al., 2011).

*The IKEA effect* describes that people are more prone to value things that they have been part of making (Norton et al., 2012). It implies that the process of making and involving with a product creates a form of attachment. To recognise this cognitive bias suggests that people may strengthen their sense of belonging and pride by engaging in their communities. This further supports the idea that participation is an important contributor for social sustainability.

A noteworthy aspect on the theme is that democracy and participation should not be mistaken for individual liberty (Parkinson, 2012). For public space to be genuinely accessible to all, there must

be rules and regulations that ensure it. According to Parkinson, democracy is concerned with resolving conflicts between individual concerns, and not so much with building unity.

## 2.2.2 Globalisation / Proximity

As a result of the globalisation, locality today is linked with the global; – what happens nearby may be shaped by distant events many miles away, and vice versa (Giddens, 1990). This forms a contradictory relationship when it comes to environmental sustainability and social sustainability. While questions regarding environmental sustainability are often addressed and referred to on global scale, social sustainability is often or always referred to as a local scale issue; a question of neighbourhood and community. According to Neimanis et al. (2015) *alienation* and *intangibility* are factors that keep us from achieving sustainable solutions and actions; meaning that because we often address sustainability issues on a global scale, people find it hard to relate to them, leading to insufficient or non-existent actions. They pose that tangibility and connectedness are important aspects for attaining sustainability, as people are more prone to care for what they can personally experience. Their argument therefore suggests that the local scale of neighbourhood is an important touch point, not juts for democracy but also for sustainable development.

There are several scholars and stakeholders that support the belief that the new way of addressing global issues is with the local. In recent years, and especially in the repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic, the idea of the 15 minutes city, first suggested by Carlos Moreno in 2016, has gained attention in urban planning and sustainable development (Moreno et al., 2021). The idea proposes that all living essentials should be accessible at a ratio of 15 minutes by bike, walk or public transport. In contradiction to the current urban planning norm based on specialisation and spatially segmented areas, the 15-minutes city proposes small scale communities within the larger city where accessibility is key (C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, C40 Knowledge Hub, 2021). The proximity would have tremendous effects on diminishing the need for cars and transports, thus decreasing pollution and improving air quality, among several other positive effects on the environment (Moreno et al, 2021). But equally important is its contribution to social sustainability and wellbeing for citizens. The proximity, above all, gives citizens back their time – a proximal lifestyle allows for spontaneity and creativity, important values in the future of urbanity according to Moreno.

## 2.3 Participatory practices in public sector

A participatory and collaborative planning process brings different values, experiences and expertise forward, ensuring a more flexible, adaptive and intelligent public system (Connick & Innes, 2003; Smedby & Neij, 2013). Our current urban planning procedure is based on the idea that governance should be as representative as possible, and reflect the needs and wants of its citizens (Alonso et al., 2011).

Sherry Arnstein presented the Ladder of participation in 1969. The ladder divides public participatory practices into steps; the higher the climb the closer to citizen power, as seen in figure 3. According to Arnstein (1969) common participatory practices, like consultations, implemented by public institutions is likely to maintain status quo in power balance between government and civil society. Arnstein calls these practices 'tokenism', as they are only of symbolic value, with no real chance for citizen influence. Arnstein describes that mobilising of communities are of greater value for citizens' power to increase; that by strengthening civil society communities and groups can become strong stakeholders in relation to the government and industry. This perspective means that rather than inviting citizens to give feedback, citizens themselves should be given space and capacity to collectively operate their own initiatives alongside businesses and other stakeholders.
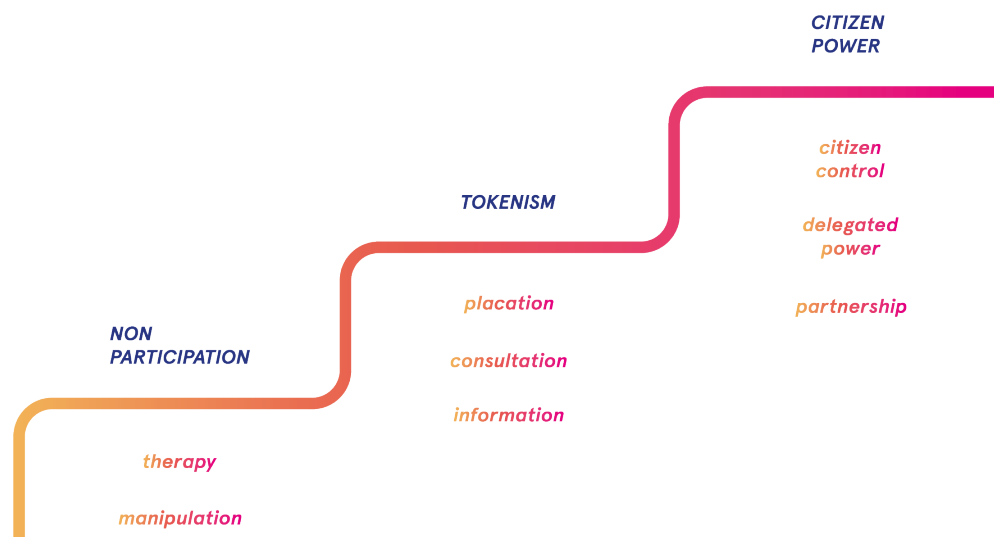


*Figure 3. An illustration of levels of participation, based on Arnstein's Ladder of participation (1969).*

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) divides public participation in three categories: *information*, *consultation* and *engagement* (OECD/LEGAL/ 0438). In opposition to Arnstein, OECD describes consultation as a two-way relationship where feedback goes two ways. Engagement is when stakeholders are given the opportunity and resources to actively collaborate in all phases of the policy cycle.

Overall, OECD promotes the *open government;* founded on principles of *transparency, integrity, accountability* and *stakeholder participation* as it is believed to create a more dynamic and mutually beneficial government based on mutual trust.

## 2.3.1 Juridicial obligations

Swedish municipalities are obligated by law to consult with concerned citizens before implementing or altering overview plans (översiktsplan) or detailed plans (detaljplan) of the physical or strategic planning of municipal ground (PBL, 2010:900). A citizen is defined as a person who is registered, owning property or paying tax in the municipality (Kommunallag 1 kap, 5 §). The law states that the purpose of the consultation is to give the affected stakeholders insight and ability to influence outcome, and that the decisions should weigh both general and individual concerns.

The lawful requirements for how consultation processes are to be done are similar in overview plan and detail plan. For both, the law states that consultation should be clearly announced both at the municipality notice board as well as the local paper. Furthermore, it should be clearly announced how to attain the information and how to leave feedback. The time for consultation differs between detail and overview plans however; detail plans should be available for public examination for at least three weeks, whereas overview plans require no less than two months. How feedback from the public is attained is not regulated, but it is obligational that all feedback is handled and considered, whether it has been attained by email, phone, consultation meetings or any other media.

## 2.3.2 Regulations and guidance from Boverket

Aside from stating that consultation is to be done, and the purpose for it, the law in itself (PBL, 2010:900) offers very little instruction or information on how consultation is made. As a civil servant or planner you are referred to the government authority for community planning, Boverket, for information and guidance on implementation and conduction of consultations or other types of citizen participation. Boverket serves with regulations and guidance primarily focused around the Swedish Planning and Building Act (Plan och bygglagen), The Swedish Environmental Code (Miljöbalken) and The Housing Supply Act (Bostadsförsörjningslagen).

Apart from the municipal obligation to conduct and hold consultations, it is suggested and encouraged that municipalities involve citizens *beyond* consultation (Boverket, PBL Kunskapsbanken, 2021). By the time projects have reached the phase when plans are presented, a lot of assessments and decisions have already been made, and it is therefore suggested that the municipality initiates early participatory design processes to better make use of the knowledge and experience that citizens possess (Boverket, PBL Kunskapsbanken, 2021).

Boverket further offers suggestions on what civil servants should consider when planning for dialogues, an outtake summarised below:

‣ *Be honest – Declare what is impressionable*
‣ *Implement early dialogues to prevent mental and physical obstacles*

‣ *Adapt language, information and set to ensure accessibility*
‣ *Choose a  neutral communicator*
‣ *Prepare to handle conflicts*

Aside from the guidance offered by Boverket there are several consulting initiatives as well as authorities that offer more in detail methods and tools for civil servants. To mention an example; *Dialogguiden* is an online access provided by Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (Sveriges Kommuner & Regioner). At Dialogguiden anyone can access information on dialoguing methods as well as read examples from other municipalities efforts. It is also becoming more common that municipalities initiate having their own guide or toolbox for dialogue and participation, guides that are often accessible online to anyone. As examples can be mentioned *Falu Dialogguide* (2017) and Gislaved municipality's guide *En handbook för medborgardialog* (2013). One might summarise to say that guidance and information for dialogue and participation is easy to access, but that implementation and distribution seem to be lagging behind.

## 2.3.3 Criticising public sector's capacity to perform dialogues and consultations

The common critique of institutionalised participatory practices is that it

1) lacks transparency (Bickerstaff & Walker, 2005)
2) fails to allow any substantial influence of citizens (Amnå, 2006; Monno & Khakee, 2012; Tahvilzadeh, 2015)
3) fails to accommodate disadvantage groups (White, 1996; Dekker & Van Kempen, 2009)
4) gives business interests disproportionate influence (Swyngedouw, 2005; Inch, 2015)

The lack of transparency can be seen as a recurring problem at several stages of the consultation processes and even for municipal organisations in general. According to Boverket, PBL Kunskapsbanken (2021) it is essential to state what citizens can expect from a consultation and to what extent they may influence the project at hand. An honest approach is crucial or else citizens' trust and interest for the municipality may be diminished. Despite these injunctions scholars have found that lack of transparency is a common issue (Bickerstaff & Walker, 2005).

It is clear to see that lack of sufficient or proper information about a certain project may lead to irrelevant input from citizens and also to cause false hope among the audience. To inform citizens have therefor been emphasised and given large proportions in what municipalities call citizen dialogue (Thunström, 2021). Thunström (2021) describes there being a foundational idea among Swedish municipalities to give citizens legitimacy in their arguments and feedback by informing them about urban development and the procedure of urban planning. This informations-based form of dialogue is with pedagogic purpose and with good intent, but it is questionable whether it should be named a *dialogue*.

Lack of transparency is not just a question of retrieving the right information but is also in question when citizens input is being handled during and after consultations or dialogues. Eriksson et al. (2021) refers to the process of handling input as a 'black box' where most stakeholders lack insight. Eriksson et al. describes that input and insights gathered from citizens go through a sorting process where feedback is grouped, categorised and assessed. According to them this evaluative process is criticisable as there is no common, regulated procedure, rather it is often based on civil servants individual judgement.

Some researchers also claim that the question of transparency is related to the discrepancy in language use between the involved stakeholders in consultation processes. Demszky and Nassehi (2012) means that there is a constant translation happening in consultations, that civil servants are often in charge of. Those in charge of a consultation must make sure stakeholders understand one another, which often requires an adaptive language. Information from civil servants must be presented with a language that is understood by citizens, and citizens input must be translated into a coherent and accessible format that can be shared with decision makers. This view of civil servants duty and role is supported by Smedby and Neij (2013) who claim that the planner is increasingly becoming a facilitator, pointing out that the urban planner's role needs changing.

The even stream of critique that is brought upon institutionalised participation has brought some scholars to question the entire concept of public participation, saying that if it is to be legitimate, citizens must have real potential to influence the outcome (White, 1996; Monno & Khakee, 2012). Monno and Khakee (2012) proposes that one of the reasons why citizens seldom have real influence may be because the planning profession is dominated by engineers and architects, meaning much focus lies on technical aspects and the inclination to equate these aspects with citizens' perspective is rare.

Several reasons have been found for why participatory processes in public sector fails to have real influence. Four main factors are:
1) the structure and design of the participatory activities (Fung, 2006; Dekker & Van Kempen, 2009)
2) The quality of the communicative and collaborative dynamics (Healy, 2002)
3) intra-organisational capacity for change (Bickerstaff & Walker, 2005)
4) issues of power (White, 1996; Flyvbjerg, 2004; Bond, 2011)

The collected research done on institutionalised participatory practices suggests that consultation procedures often are done much too unreflected. Though will and intention is good and honest, the crafted procedure, competence and capacity may be seen as still immature. On one hand we may see consultations as important meeting points, a chance to develop a relation between citizens, municipality and other stakeholders, where the meeting in itself has a value in the form of

meaningful interaction (Björgvinsson, 2010). On the other hand, if there is no potential for citizens to influence the outcome, practices risk becoming a waste of time and money, as well as diminish citizens trust for authorities and lust to participate again (Tahvilzadeh, 2015; Cornwall, 2008; Bickerstaff & Walker, 2005). Cornwall (2008) describes how the lack of trust leads to citizens opting out from consultations and participatory processes, as they perceive their participation having little or no effect. This further emphasises the importance of well designed processes for dialogues and participation where citizens partaking is valued and taken care of. It also brings light to the importance of recognition and giving feedback on citizens input.

Thunström (2021) suggests that citizen dialogue should not be approached by, or seen for, its methods. She means that dialogues are achieved by several methods, and that the municipality achieves a dialogic relationship with citizens by employing an overall attitude and ambition to be dialogic.

## 2.3.4 Who makes a city?

Many dialogue initiatives may end at the tokenism level of Arnstein's ladder of participation, rarely leading to more than increased awareness and knowledge distribution. But initiatives on improving and increasing citizen influence and power in more practical ways are increasingly given attention.

To nurture cultural expressions as a way to attain social sustainability, resilience and citizen power in our societies is a perspective brought forward by De Tullio (2020, ed). They suggest a perspective where communities are brought forward as stakeholders, the same way that businesses or authorities are, and that these communities need to be built and reinforced by cultural actions. In their perspective it is cultural expressions that bring people together in communities, and that the forming of communities is crucial for potential citizen empowerment. This *"cultural commons"* perspective falls well into Arnstein's idea of empowering communities to allow for citizen power – the highest rank on the Ladder of participation. Gielen (2020) further describes that cultural commons can create more solidarity as well as greater social inclusion by allowing and encouraging more participation and engagement in our communities.

Manzini (2015) offers a similar view where he claims that investing in our local communities and grass roots organisations are crucial for social innovation; a type of innovation that he further describes stems from social and cultural values and needs, as opposed to business oriented values. According to Manzini social innovation is more likely to attain sustainable solutions that are in line with peoples' needs and desires. He suggests that a shift from linear, hierarchical power systems to a distribution of power will bring greater resilience to communities and allow for organic and cultural development where people are at the centre.

Shifting approach on power balance between citizens and their governments has been proved successful not only in theory or project scale but also in the development of an entire city. In 2010

and 2011 New Zealand was hit by a series of earthquakes that led the council of Christchurch to redesign the power distribution between citizen and government by initiating so called "gap fillers" (Adams, 2018). The proportion of the earthquakes had devastating effects and the entire city centre of Christchurch was demolished. In order to achieve fast recovery citizens' ideas, eyes and hands were used as assets, as communities were invited and encouraged to rebuild their local communities, creating urban designs that would serve as transitional projects while the city was being restored. Communities were liberated from the otherwise bureaucratic procedure of urban planning as the council changed rules to allow for temporary *placemaking*.

Fisher (2017) poses that the earthquake and the following use of transitional gap fillers in Christchurch suggests new possibilities in terms of power relation between citizen and government. According to Fisher citizens today have gone from owners and change makers of their communities to spectators and consumers. He poses that the relation between citizen and its government needs changing, that it is time for a different distribution of power, and that we may learn from how the rebuilding of Christchurch was done. The transitional gap fillers meant that government helped build capacity in the community and first and foremost answered to the community need, having the approach that local people have the ideas and skills to make great places. Thus the power balance went from the citizen approach of *"the council should be doing that"* to *"the council can help you do that"*, and the council approach from *"we know best"* to *"we have the resources to help you make the best city possible"*.

Fisher poses that local governments should take the role of a *facilitator* and *enabler,* that contribute to the community with specialised skills. He poses that by allowing for community placemaking, the power balance changes, local communities build better relationships and the community resilience is overall reinforced (Peinhardt, 2019).

## 2.4 Innovation and adaptability in public sector

It is suggested that public sector's own capacity for change is a vital challenge to address in order to achieve successful participatory practices where change can be made (Bickerstaff & Walker, 2005). Public sector organisations are often accused of not being innovative enough, lagging behind private sector in terms of capacity for change and disruption (Algehed et al., 2019). Neimanis et al. (2015) argue that many institutions are "18th century institutions facing 21st century problems".

While public sector is often seen as a complex hierarchical system full of regulations, and not regarded particularly innovative, researchers are increasingly finding examples of adaptation and change making in public sector (Bason, 2010; Osborne & Brown, 2013). Nevertheless, innovation in public sector is often referred to as reforms or streamlining processes, with demands on results for the common good (Algehed et al., 2019) and measurability (Cäker & Åkesson, 2019).

## 2.4.1 Can public sector organisations achieve radical innovations?

Even if visionary approaches and innovative ways are becoming normative ideologies in public sector (Algehed et al., 2019), civil servants often find themselves stuck in their work trying to accommodate long term visions while simultaneously answering for the demand of short term controls and measurability (Broström & Ernits, 2019). Cäker and Åkesson (2019) sees a problem with public sectors demand on measurability especially when it comes to innovation, as they mean that innovation by nature is difficult to define and thereof to measure. If innovation in addition actually creates something novel, then the organisation will most likely not possess the proper tools for measuring its value. The relation between innovation and measurability thus becomes an opposition, and the demand for measurement may therefore diminish the will and potential for innovation (Cäker & Åkesson, 2019). However, Cäker and Åkesson (2019) mentions that there are way of measuring innovation that might be fruitful; to follow up on the distribution of new knowledge and experience within the organisation is brought forward as one example.

There are different ways to innovate, as there is also different scales of innovation. Norman and Verganti (2014) defines a difference in radical and incremental innovation. According to them a radical innovation means an advancement in technicality or cultural meaning, while incremental innovation focuses on improvement or alignment with user needs. Both types of innovations are needed in organisations, but according to Palm (2019) radical innovation is hard to attain in public sector. Palm (2019) explains the reason being related to public sector's culture, where measurability is once again an issue. An incremental innovation is often easier to measure, as it often has direct visibility, while a radical innovation means risk taking and entering unknown territory; where the result could even fail. Therefore, a more visionary, risk taking and supportive culture in public sector is argued for by Palm (2019), where failure is allowed and conflicts are seen as assets.

In terms of organisational culture, there are researchers claiming that mental models in public sector may have large impact on its innovative and adaptive capacity. Pirsig (1974) points out that the rationale embedded within an organisation may very well sustain a systemic change. He claims that organisational patterns may repeat and rebuild themselves if too much attention is paid to the system, and too little to understanding the culture. Shared mental models can enable efficiency (Berggren, 2016) and reduce insecurity as it serves as a foundational co-created experience base for deliberation (Prahalad & Bettis, 1986). According to Denzau and North (1994) institutions are a reflection of their mental models, why in order to change an organisation we must start with its actors and the assumptions and beliefs that guide their ways (Dequech, 2013).

Another important factor in terms of public sectors organisational capacity for sustainable innovation is cooperation and coordination. Public sector organisations tend to systematise into silos, where communication and distribution of knowledge may become an issue (Broström & Ernits, 2019). Many of the challenges that public sector is facing are of complex nature (Bason,

2010; Cox et al., 2015), so called wicked problems (Buchanan, 1992) that span over multiple areas of expertise, thus require coordination between various practices and logics. Neimanis et al (2019) calls this problem *compartmentalisation,* and means that our drive for order and systematisation causes the forming of organisational silos that become hard to penetrate. The silo structure is seen as ill-fitted to accommodate complex issues, as sustainable change often require an interdisciplinary approach that go beyond organisational borders (Niemanis et al., 2019).

*Projectification* is yet another praxis recognised for standing in the way of meaningful innovation and development in public sector. Fred (2019) and Karvonen and Eneqvist (2019) describes that a *project* denotes power of action, initiative and determination, and often offer clarity in terms of what goals to achieve and in what time. But according to Fred (2019) the project delimitation may lead to short term answers for long term problems, often staying at incremental improvement rather than radical solutions. A more continuous approach is proposed to be more successful for attaining sustainable directions.

## 2.4.2 New public governance

New Public Governance (NPG) describes a paradigm shift into a new public administration model that suggests a more cooperative form of government where citizens, private actors and businesses are involved. NPG is believed to be a model better equipped to face the growing diversity and plurality of our societies, as a result of the ongoing globalisation (Osborne, 2010). In comparison to its precursor New Public Management (NPM), where evaluation is concerned with market value and efficiency, NPG lays its focus on inter-organisational endurance where relational capital and trust are core mechanisms to be evaluated (Osborne, 2010). Furthermore, NPG has an increased focus on innovation and enhancing capacity for adaptation (Algehed et al., 2019), something that is opening up for design practices to take place in public sector (Cox et al., 2015). According to Cox et al. (2015) the perspectives found in NPG; a more inclusive approach where a variety of stakeholders shapes the system to become more user oriented, relates to the foundations of service design and design rationale.

## 2.4.3 Design's role in public sector

Design is being increasingly recognised for its innovative capacity and how it might help public sector organisations in their challenges (Malmberg, 2017; Bason, 2018). Cross (2014) points out that the ability to handle ill-defined and complex issues is part of design expertise, and that this could be a reason for the growing interest. Cox et al., (2015) points to the development of NPG and the demands and requirements for public sector to be innovative and adaptive, taking inspiration from the private sector and its implementation of service design and design management. Manzini (2009, 2015) further argues that the design community can play a positive role in the necessary re-orientation towards a more sustainable society, as the complexity of the problems surpasses the traditional know-how and requires a focus on innovation and exploration.

Apart from design implementation in the form of consultancy in public sector, there is an increased interest to introduce design methodology and design thinking within the organisations' knowledge base (Malmberg, 2017). Initiatives aiming to develop design capability in public sector is increasing (Bason, 2010; Bailey, 2012) and is being recognised for its transformative capacity that can change stagnated institutional arrangements in service systems (Kurtmollaiev et al., 2018). The embedding of design capacity and design thinking may be seen as a way to address public sectors challenge in changing mental models and allowing a more innovative and explorative culture. The ability to change mental models within public sector suggests changing the system of institutional work from within - going from micro level (mental model of a person) to macro level (changed institutional arrangements). By engaging in service design methods and design logic, we may close in on institutional change from the inside (Vink et al., 2019).

The benefit of implementing design capacity into organisations rather than hiring consultants or doing one-off workshops is supported by Malmberg and Wetter-Edman (2016). They point to the risk of failing to sustain design knowledge and expertise in organisations should we see design as just methodologies to use occasionally. In alignment with Manzini (2105), Malmberg and Wetter-Edman (2016) support the idea of the diffuse, novice and expert designer, claiming that a combination of all is of preference within an organisation, but that organisations will struggle with maintaining or achieving significance in their design work without an expert designer to guide the process.

Holmlid and Wetter-Edman (2021) describe a hesitance in organisations towards implementing design methods or rationale, as the rationale is founded on aesthetic, experienced and qualitative knowledge that is often hard to measure or describe. However in order for design to be of significant change for an organisation, they propose that integrating design rationale is essential. Holmlid and Wetter-Edman further defines the difference in design *capacity* and *competence,* the former being of quantitative nature; like how many people within an organisation have design-related positions, whereas the latter is of qualitative nature; how the organisation makes use of the design competence that exists. Both capacity and competence is described necessary, where organisation of capacities and competence becomes crucial, and in different ways offering space for design culture.

In recent years the denomination *design for policy* has emerged in the public sector landscape, often referring to particular *policy labs* initiated to engage stakeholders in collaborative policy development (Whicher, 2020). The policy labs may, according to Whicher (2020) be of various shapes and carry different names, but share the goal of attaining innovation in public sector by the means of design.

## 2.4.4 Embarking on new adventures

*The future cannot be predicted, but futures can be invented* –Dennis Gabor
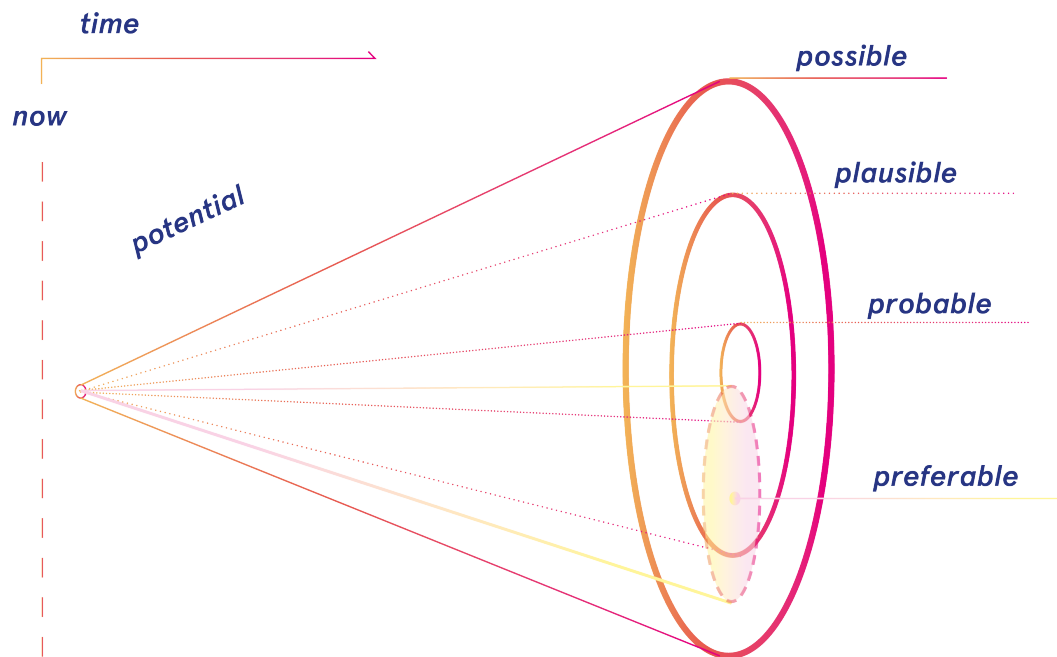


*Figure 4. An illustration of Voros's (2001) Future cone.*

Slaughter (1993, p. 845) states that *"the future is deeply implicated in the present"*, meaning it's dependant on the actions, or inactions, of the present. Together with Kalantidou and Fry (2014), Slaugther (1993) points to the urgency of understanding the impact that design today will have on our future. This means that when we approach design challenges, we can choose to have the future in mind rather than the existent. As Voros (2001) reminds us; the future is not predetermined nor predictable, and we should recognise our possibility to influence it.

Voros (2001) states four types of futures:

1. *possible futures*: futures that we can imagine, but don't necessarily know how to attain, these futures can be reliant on future knowledge that we imagine we might have.

2. *plausible futures*: futures that could happen, that stem from our current understanding and current knowledge

3. *probable futures*: futures that are considered likely; stemming from current trends, continuing in a linear or 'business-as-usual' kind of way

4.  *preferable futures*: futures that we want to happen; based on value judgement and subjective ideas. Preferable futures may exist in all of the previous.

By categorising and acknowledging the different ways we may approach futures, Voros, most importantly, illustrates that we have choice. With this acknowledgement we can choose to direct preferable futures rather than probable futures and we can actively choose to allow for an alternative process that can possibly give new perspectives and solutions. Figure 4 shows an illustration of Voros's Future cone.

The interest for innovation and the acknowledgement for the importance of innovation in relation to sustainability goals has gained interest in urban planning. To look ahead and target preferable futures is increasingly being recognised for its capacity. *Backcasting* (figure 5) is a methodology suggested to be especially suited for targeting the complexity of sustainable development (Dreborg, 1996), especially when present trends are part of the problem (Holmberg & Robèrt, 2000). Instead of starting from the present situation, backcasting starts by identifying the preferred or desired future and later tries to find levers that can bridge the gap between present and preferred future (Holmberg, 2019). The principle of backcasting is that a variety of people, stakeholders, with different expertise and experience join an explorative journey.



*1. Where are we headed? Why?*

*4. Think big, start small, act now, fail fast and learn fast*

*2. Where are we now?*

**preferred future**

**present**

*3. Find levers between present and preferred future*

*Figure 5. An illustration of backcasting methodology, first illustrated by Holmberg & Ròbert (2000)*

Holmberg (2019) clarifies that leading conversations or explorations about desired futures is no easy task, as people seem preset to try and find solutions at once. To balance the conversation between radical exploration and understanding for others perspective, and to keep people open

minded, is described by Holmberg as an art form. He emphasises the importance of good design and facilitation in explorative design projects like backcasting, resembling these projects with expeditions where someone must be navigating.

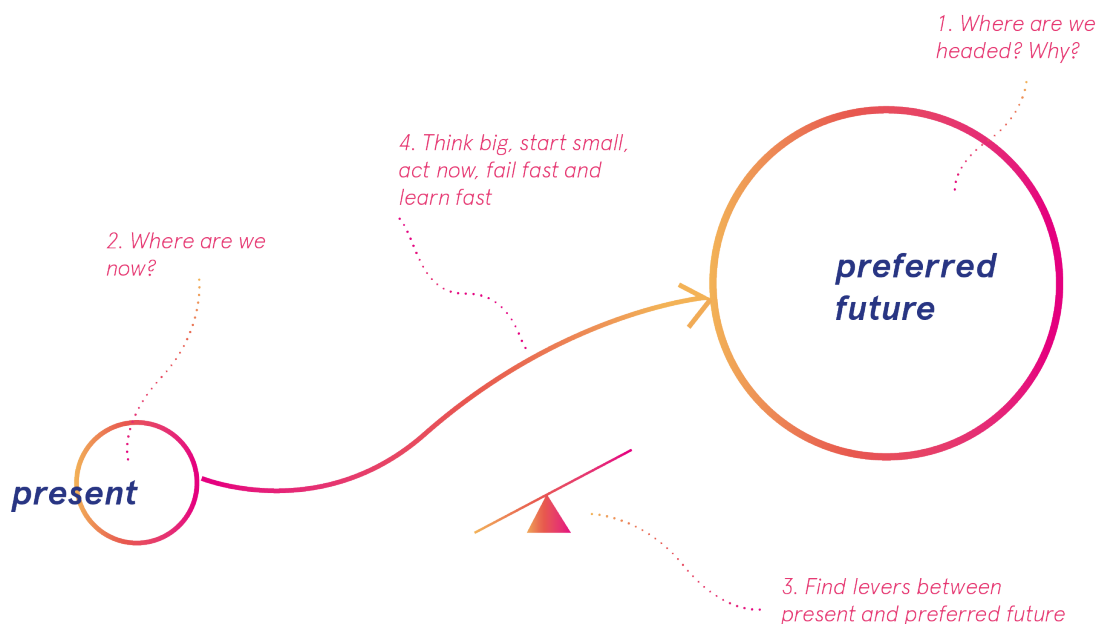*Imagination* is suggested a key aspect for sustainable development. In similarity with the above mentioned researchers, Neimanis et al. (2015) claims that apart from scientific measures or legislative means we must try and envision the future as we want it. At the same time they point to the problem of *intangibility* and *alienation*, meaning that most people find it hard to imagine, let alone grasp, both wicked problems or their solutions. Neimanis et al.'s argument suggests that making ideas visual and tangible can be of great significance to help people in their imagination of future scenarios.

One way of narrowing the gap between alienation and imagination can be by initiating so called *testbeds*. Testbeds can happen in labs or artificially constructed environments, but have during recent years been recognised for their potential in *real* urban environments. Testbeds are then being used to arrange and supervise experiments in realtime and in real environments (Halpern et al., 2013). The learnings from testbeds can then be applied to a larger urban areas or entire cities.

Testbeds are said to be of significance in the challenge of finding sustainable solutions in cities, simply because they mean *real* testing in real environments. Since sustainability is especially challenging to achieve, not knowing how to, the testbed approach is considered a fruitful way (Karvonen & Eneqvist, 2019). Testbeds are designed to allow risk-taking as well as failure, where the prime goal is to learn by building knowledge and experience involving several stakeholders. Testbeds, in contrary to projects, seldom have set ends or specified goals, but rather continues and builds knowledge for as long as is deemed needed or fruitful. According to Karvonen and Eneqvist (2019) testbeds open up for the idea of viewing the sustainable city as a process for improvement rather than reaching a final goal.

Forsemalm and Johansson (2019) takes a stance to acknowledge that sustainable development must embrace that there are several aspects of 'truth'; that evidence based urban development should include the truth and expertise not only found in science but also among the concerned stakeholders. In other words, for urban development to become sustainable, concerned stakeholders should be involved, and experience and expertise found with them utilised. Forsemalm and Johansson suggests four types of evidence; *scientific*, *professional*, *organisational* and *interest* based. Furthermore, they claim that how one builds inclusive and equal environments must, first of all, be an ongoing discussion that change according to project. Each site has specific requirements that concern specific people, and therefore possess different evidence or truths. That is why sustainability, from their point of view, cannot be seen as a constant with a definite answer, but should be approached as an ongoing discussion between those concerned in the specific project or site.

Forsemalm and Johansson's (2019) argument for expanding the notion of evidence is founded on the belief that diffuse expertise is important for solutions to become sustainable in the sense that they will be appreciated and utilised by the concerned parties. An authoritarian approach risks posing solutions that fits ill with what people want or will do. As mentioned earlier in the report; sustainable solutions have little or no affect if they are not received successfully.

## 2.5 Key insights from theory

The literature review provided with insight and understanding of how participatory practices relate to sustainable development and design rationale.

We learnt that involving citizens is of great importance for achieving both social and environmental sustainability, and that there is a need to focus on behaviour change for sustainable development at large. Public participation in local scale and neighbourhood were brought forward as especially important factors to bridge between global and proximal concerns, as well as a way to make matters of sustainability and urban development tangible for citizens. Making use of diffuse expertise, thus recognising that citizens are experts on their own circumstances, was recognised as an important part of urban planning, design and sustainable development at large, as it brings diverse perspectives and ideas as well as bed for proposals and solutions that are better aligned with peoples wants, needs and their capacity to adapt.

The meaning of, and methods for, citizen dialogue was discussed posing there being a difference in municipality lead participatory practices that often ends at informing or consulting with citizens, or on the other hand encouraging and enforcing citizens' own initiatives; driving distribution of power and active and participatory citizens. An attempt to organise and identify different methods in relation to what they can bring is shown in figure 6.

It was posed that citizen dialogues should not be seen limited to methods or activities, but rather as a municipal ambition or attitude. This perspective aligns with the idea that sustainability, and especially social sustainability, should be approached with a continuous approach and an attitude of openness and iteration as social sustainability is a fluctuating state that needs continuous care.

Attitude, culture and mental models were brought forward as potential barriers in public sector, keeping municipalities from achieving innovation and change due to lack of openness and adaptability. We found similarities between the desired attributes from public sector organisations to perform dialogues as well as to innovate, and the attributes prominent for design thinking and design attitude. Design can be recognised for its empathetic and open attitude were imagination is key to obtain preferable futures.

We also found that both professional designers and urban planners may see their roles as that of a facilitator's. The facilitator uses his/her skill to guide, but not steer, participatory design processes by employing a dialogic, empathetic and open approach that feeds the conversation.

**A mapping of reasons in relation to methods in participatory practices**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **WHAT?** | Increase awareness (Both ways) | Influence policy | Empower community | Innovate / Re-design |
| **WHY?** | Establish visions Establish knowledge Develop common language | Bring human centred perspectives Generate diverse input | Strenghten sense of belonging Build resilence in com-munities | Establish common ground for future perspectives |
| **HOW?** | Dialogues Consultation Seminars | Co-design activites Employ human centred perspetives Make use of diffuse expertise | Nurture common activities and care for common places Distribute power by offering placemaking | Back casting Test beds Make use of diffuse expertise |

*Figure 6. Organising motivations in relation to methods for participatory practices.*

# 3.0 Method

This thesis project takes an exploratory approach, starting from a broad research plan, allowing input from one step to serve the next one. In other words, a typical design methodology approach was employed where the process is shaped and built as it goes along, continuously combining divergence and convergence.

Designers must be humble and learn and understand the practice and context in which they enter (Mulgan, 2014). Additionally, in order for design to contribute successfully, an understanding of the current culture and its conditions must be developed (Bailey, 2016; Manzini, 2015). Therefore, to gain an understanding of the current situation for planners and to be able to define problems and design openings much focus was put on empathising phase; the *Preliminary research* and the *Case study*. The input retrieved from this empathising phase is presented in *Findings from the Case study,* where I make an attempt to summarise and analyse the information into salient themes. These findings are then used to form design openings and proposals in *Exploring design interventions*. The design explorations offer practical perspectives on how to make use of design rationale to improve municipal work with participatory planning in Norrköping.

The illustration in figure 7 shows how the different parts of the method relate to one another.
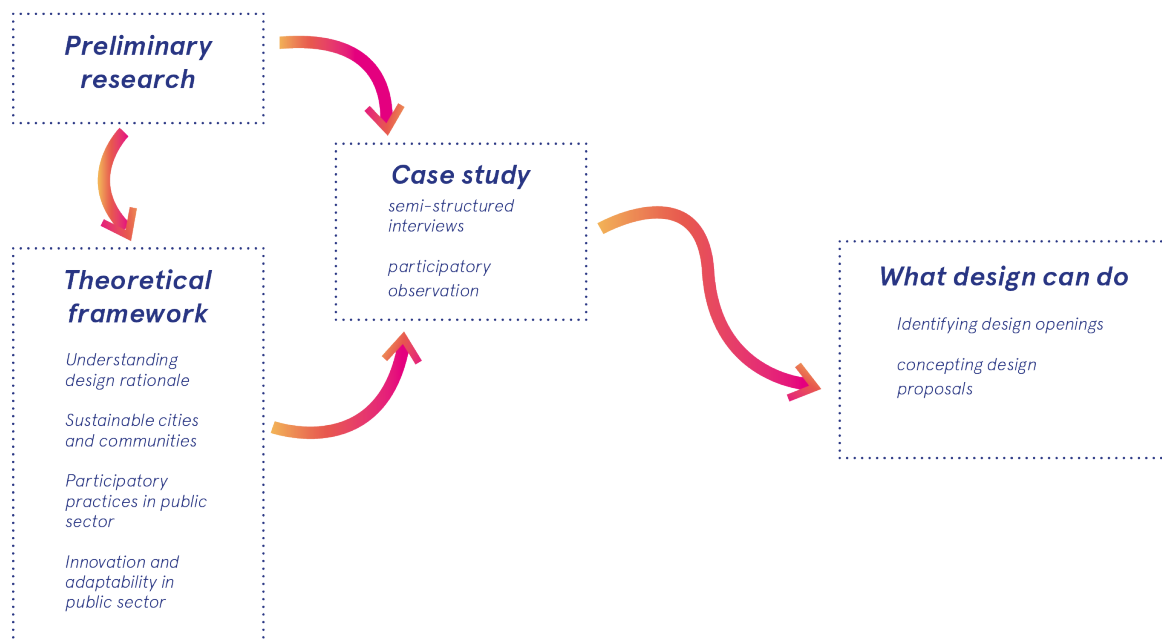


*Figure 7. An illustration of the method employed for this project.*

## 3.1 Preliminary research

At the beginning of this project, citizen dialogue and municipal planning procedure were uncharted territories for me. I started the project with experience in design rationale, project management and some in participatory design practices, but with little insights or experience in how civil servants' at the urban planning office spent their days, or how municipalities worked and approached citizens in relation to co-creation. The aim of the preliminary research was therefore to get to know the field of citizen participation in general and its parallels to design rationale in particular. I started off broadly, looking at how municipalities in Sweden and elsewhere in Europe worked with citizen dialogue and participation, and later looked more specifically at Norrköping municipality and their approach to the subject.

I took an explorative approach where I broadly examined the topic, which meant that I conducted desktop research scanning the web for any information that might guide me in my work. Several unorganised research activities were done, as examples can be mentioned the attendance of open seminars about co-creation, service design and sustainable development.

## 3.2 Case study: Consultation in Norrköping

I wanted to observe a real life case example of public participation in a Swedish municipal setting to give credibility to my study and to have a recipient for my analysis and design proposals. I reached out to Norrköping municipality, partly because I came in contact with persons from the urban planning office through previous course projects, and partly because I assessed it being beneficial to have some kind of personal connection to the municipality. I have been spending some of my master study time in Norrköping, but isn't per se a municipal resident or citizen of Norrköping. This put me in a position where I could be objective observer, while simultaneously having some previous understanding of the municipalities overall state, its areas and infrastructure. My positioning would also allow me to reach specific sites or areas in case the need should occur.

In the end, a case study together with the urban planning office in Norrköping and the particular project of a consultation on a Traffic strategy was chosen for the case study. The choice of this particular project was done primarily because of their interest and willingness to let me in to their process, but also due to the suitability in time scale in relation to my master thesis duration.

### 3.2.1 Semi-structured interviews

In parallel with the desktop research and unorganised activities I conducted interviews with people involved in dialogue work and participatory practices in public sector with representation from two municipalities, and with a variety of roles and titles. The aim for the interviews was to lay a

foundational understanding for the topic; its logic, concerns and possibilities, that would serve the design exploration of possible interventions. The intention was to gain insight on the potentials, struggles and practice from an authority side of view, and to weigh the interviewees statements against information and critique found in the literature review. I was curious to see how the interviewees viewed the topic of citizen dialogue in general, how they approached it in their everyday work in particular, and how they assessed the organisational capacity and potential for participatory practices in their municipality. The interviews were thus based on the topic of citizen dialogue, planning procedure and organisational capacity; following the interview guide (Appendix 1), but allowing for diversion.

The interviews were semi-structured and explorative, leading to informative and inspirational conversations rather than formal inquiries. Thus, the interviews followed the guide but grew in different directions as I allowed for diversion. All interviews were conducted online, using Zoom or Teams, except for one that was done by email. The interviews lasted for about 40 to 60 minutes and were recorded. Four people at Norrköping's municipality were interviewed:

‣ *a communicator, responsible for Norrköping's urban planning office*
‣ *a chancellor, Norrköping*
‣ *a planning architect, Norrköping*
‣ *a planning architect, Norrköping*

I also decided to make two additional interviews outside of the organisation of Norrköping municipality. The reason being to gain another perspective and to further earn inspiration for the design openings. The two informants were chosen due to a specific project taking place in Norrtälje municipality, where citizen dialogue incentives are driven from an artistic perspective, lead by a group of artists. With the purpose of finding potentially new perspectives that could benefit my project I also interviewed the following:

‣ *an artist working with cultural planning, Norrtälje*
‣ *a strategist in sustainable urban development, Norrtälje*

The input from the interviews were analysed to describe the common meaning for the participants and serve as summative description, rather than an explanation or individual perspective. The analysis thereby follows a phenomenological view where the aim is to convey the unifying essence and lived experience of participants (Moustakas, 1994).

## 3.2.2 Participatory observation

A participatory observation was done at the basis for the case study as a way to understand situations and relationships (Clark et al., 2009) within the urban planning office in Norrköping. The choice for participatory observation was motivated by the fact that civil servants at the urban

planning office had little or no time for engaging in the project aside from the hours set aside for their planning meetings. Moreover, they were keen on gaining an outside perspective and an extra set of brains to help the procedure.

An additional reason for choosing participatory observation on my end was due to my lack of knowledge and understanding of their work and procedures. By observing their planning I could learn about their culture and practice, their ways for addressing tasks or solving problems, and by participating I could try out my own ideas and perspectives to see how they were received by the group.

The guide and schedule for participatory observations is provided in Appendix 2.

## 3.3 What design can do

This part brings a short but important exploration of design interventions that bring together input from the literature review and the case study. An attempt is made to identify design openings and explore solutions or improvements for participatory practices and dialogue incentives in Norrköping municipality. The design exploration is a process of individual and subjective judgement where previously attained input is sorted and assessed. This is the phase were my professional skills as designer combines with the the data input to form possible interventions on how design rationale can advice public participation by taking practical examples. At the end of the chapter is a summary of a discussion taking place with a group of planners from Norrköping's in order to test and validate the outcomes.

# 4.0 Preliminary research

The preliminary research consisted of several unorganised research activities that would help me form a foundational understanding for my topic. This phase guided my work further by informing the literature review and rooting the design explorations in relevant knowledge. Most fruitful and noteworthy activities, apart from the literature review, were the attendance of seminars from FORMAS[2] (2021) and Experio lab[3] (2021).

Seminars from FORMAS provided me with understanding for the dominant logic and perspectives on challenges facing sustainable urban development in Sweden today. This type of knowledge fed my understanding and empathising with civil servants work for urban planning in Norrköping, and their particular challenge in defining and presenting a new traffic strategy for Norrköping. The traffic strategy is deeply rooted and concerned with sustainable urban development and is following the dominant scientific view of how sustainability should be attained, which motivated my need for knowledge and understanding in the subject.

The seminars presented by Experio lab, on the other hand, fed more to the design rationale perspective of the project. Experio lab is a cooperative organisation focused on finding ways to use service design to inform and improve health care services. The seminars focused on how service design research meets practice, each session bringing different perspectives from different researchers or practitioners to present methods for innovation and development, often in relation to public sector organisations. Especially important was a one session with Anna Whicher and Katarina Wetter-Edman that handled design for policy. The session fed my understanding of how design can contribute in public sector, especially in how methodologies as well as individual skillsets and design thinking is being implemented today in public sector, defining difference between skillsets, knowledge and mindset.

The preliminary research did not lead to any concluding insights on its own, rather it informed the theoretical background and the case study. For this reason key insights from theory and findings from the case study are representative for the input that was retrieved in this phase.

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[2] FORMAS is a Swedish research council for sustainable development.

[3] Experio lab is a cooperative Swedish organisation addressing issues of health care by the means of design.

# 5.0 Case study: Consultation in Norrköping

The purpose of the case study was to gain first hand experience on the planning procedure for a consultation as well as gain insights on the organisational structure and culture at the urban planning office. To observe the planning provided me with insights and example on their approach to citizen dialogue and participation, and their capacity to plan and facilitate. This further helped me answer the question of what difficulties, obstacles or potentials that can be found in the municipal dialogue practice and how these could be eased or improved.

Alongside the participatory observation semi-structured interviews were conducted with civil servants of different roles. Their input and reflection further fed my understanding of the organisational culture overall, and the approach and level of maturity for participatory practices.

To give an understanding for the case study relevance and the organisational context in Norrköping municipality this chapter provides a brief background of the municipal goals that relates to the topic. The specifics of the Traffic strategy in question for consultation is also briefly shared to give context. A summary of relevant findings, including both semi-structured interviews and participatory observations, is written in the analysis at the end of this chapter.

## 5.1 The municipal goals

It is stated in Norrköping municipality's overarching goals that all their operations should contribute to sustainable development according to Agenda 2030 (KS 2019/1474). Local efforts should be connected with the 17 global goals, making clear the municipality's contribution.
The goal document presents 12 main goals with thematic target areas, where *Participation* is one them.

The target area *Participation* relates to 7 of 17 global goals and concerns questions of equality, sustainable communities and accessibility, to name a few, and spans a wide range of concerns. Especially noteworthy in this context is Norrköping's Goal 11 that concerns citizens contact with the municipality. The goal targets citizens possibility for *insight*, *co-creation* of the municipal organisation's development, and *accessibility* to municipal services.

In both Norrköping's overarching goals and budget plan citizens are recognised as creative, knowledgeable people who should extensively be part of the municipal development and be given the possibility to influence their community and workplace (KS2019/1474; KS 2019/1474).

In 2020 the municipal board published an inspirational document called *Citizen as co-creator* (Invånare som medskapare) where the possibilities and advantages of participatory practices were brought forward (KS 2020/0288). The document is to serve as an inspiration bringing forth

successful participatory examples from within the organisation, but also brief explanations of service design methodology, with examples from *Innovationsguiden*[4].

## 5.2 Semi-structured interviews

The purpose for the interviews was to learn how participatory practices were used and/or integrated in the everyday work at the urban planning office and how participatory practices were viewed at large within the municipal organisation. It was a way to get to know more about the capacity, competence and culture surrounding dialogue practice to make an assessment on their maturity level in terms of reflective and innovative thinking for the topic.

An informal but important part of the case study of Norrköping's dialogue and consultation work was the initial scanning and searching taking place to find relevant information and informants among the organisation. Many conversations took place before and in between finding participants for the interviews, and in this procedure a preliminary understanding for the structure and logic of their working structure was built. I started off by asking for a person or persons within the organisation with special responsibility in matters concerning dialogues and consultation, but no specific person could be identified. Instead I was continuously handed names of people that could be of help – that had some experience or knowledge in the matter. This led to the interviews having an open structure and content, and a procedure that grew organically as one informant led to another.

## 5.3 Participatory observations

The project group for the Traffic strategy consisted of several persons with different expertise, but the coordinative responsibility for the consultation was left for three people alone, of which one was adjacent for a longer period of time due to parental leave. Furthermore a communicator, working at the office but unrelated to the specific project, was often invited to feedback on the content and ideas.

Thus, I attended the meetings that concerned the planning of the consultation, not the work meetings concerning the content of the strategy. The meetings were performed online due to the Covid-19 pandemic. I attended a total of eight meetings spanning over three months, each with a duration of approximately one to one and a half hours. These meetings stood for the major part of the planning process for the consultation, but there were assessments and communication done via email or informal conversations between planners that I had no observation of.

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[4] Innovationsguiden provides innovations support for public sector organisations.

I also attended one so called 'dialogue meeting'; meetings that were part of the consultation process – an occasion were citizens and planners met online.



*Figure 8. Cover image for the Traffic strategy document (KS2019/0415)*

## 5.3.1 Traffic strategy

The urban planning office in Norrköping was in March 2021 presenting a new over arching strategy for traffic and travels in Norrköping municipality. The strategy is a thematic supplement to the overview plan (översiktsplan), and consists of a long term plan for how traffic matters should change and contribute to the municipal vision of a more sustainable city in 2035 (KS2019/0415). Four main challenges are presented for attaining sustainability in the traffic planning:

1) The municipality wants to decrease the use of cars in order to improve the air quality, and give more space for sustainable ways of transport (biking, walking etc), while simultaneously facing a rapidly growing population with an increased amount of travels as a result. According to their calculations the population will have risen from around 140 000 people today to 175 000 in 2035, which in turn means a rise in amount of travels with 100 000 travels per day. The challenge is thus to accommodate sustainable ways to travel without compromising environment and health.

2) The second challenge is about behaviour change. It is described that women at large have a more sustainable behaviour when it comes to travelling; they travel by car less often than men and do shorter travels in general. Thus, to travel 'like a woman' is preferred – as to attain the sustainability goals.

3) Challenge number three is about space. Statistics describe that cars claim a disproportionately large space in relation to how often they are being used. The parking lots in Norrköping city equals a space of about 500 football fields; space that could be utilised differently.

4) The forth and last challenge is to diminish the occurrence of barriers in the city environment. They aspire to attain a more accessible and inclusive city for all.

In relation to these four challenges, six target areas are defined to give guidance and support for coming urban planning. The target areas are described as follows:

1) *The city and man* – enable more space for 'hustle and bustle' by promoting sustainable traffic types that will ensure more space left for dwelling.

2) *Mobility management* – behavioural change in small and large infrastructural change for more sustainable travelling.

3) *Pedestrians and bikers* – Ease the choice to walk or bicycle by ensuring safe and accessible walkways and bike lanes all year around. Diminish barriers to allow these travel types to reach further.

4) *Public transport* – Travels by public transport must increase, thus network and systems must be improved with a wider access and fewer barriers and unnecessary stops.

5) *Cars and parking* – Travel by cars is to decrease, why other travel types must be promoted as well as invested in. Public transport or carpooling should be implemented as replacement and car parks should be evaluated and reconsidered.

6) *Freight trains* – By changing locations of on–and off load, transports can become more effective and sustainable.

The strategy can be summarised with the belief that a community less dependent on cars is a more accessible and safe community, not only because of the cleaner air, but also because of the new and increased space that it leaves. With lessened car traffic there will be more room for pedestrians, bikers or wheelchair bound to roam the streets freely, which is believed to have impact on both health aspects as well as social aspects of sustainability. The 15-minutes city, a notion first mentioned by Carlos Moreno (Moreno et al, 2021), lies at the core of the strategy. The 15-minutes city perspective says that important services (like grocery shopping, schools, health care etc.) should be accommodated within a 15 minutes range attained by walk, bike or public transport. The proximity is believed to lead to less car travels as well as more time spent walking or biking. Norrköping's traffic strategy aims to build a strong net of public transports so that choosing the tram, train, bus or bicycle will come first hand for Norrköping's citizens.

## 5.3.2 Consultation

The traffic strategy work is categorised as a supplement to the overview plan (översiktsplan) which by Swedish law (PBL 2010:900) requires a consultation. The consultation is a series of actions, spanning from April to June this year (2021), that aims to communicate the information and gain perspective and feedback on its content. The consultation is for most part provided online at Norrköping municipality's homepage (Norrköpings kommun, 2021). The main events for the consultation is:

1) *Online meetings: a series of meetings divided by target areas in the municipality. Citizens can attend via a Teams link and discuss their neighbourhood or concerns with fellow citizens and civil servants.*

   The online meetings seem to be considered the main attraction of the consultation and the 'real' dialogue according to the planners. The meetings are planned to be held online due to the ongoing pandemic and are divided into target areas according to location. This choice of division is argued because of the assumption that citizens will be prone to participate if a connection to their own neighbourhood is prominent.

2) *An online survey with a offline touch points: an online survey that informs on sustainable travelling as well as asks citizens what it would take for them to travel more sustainably. The survey is made available online while simultaneously being promoted with signs put on different locations.*

   The online survey serves as a core of the consultation. Signs with questions and information regarding traffic and strategy is placed about the urban environment to spark interest and lead invitation to answer the survey. The illustrative content of the signs differ depending on their placing as a way to capture the locality of impact in some places. The choice of using signs are motivated because it is believed a good format to lure busy citizens.

3) *An online quiz for children/youth: a Kahoot[5] quiz made to teach and inform children and youth about the traffic strategy content in a playful way.*

   Aside from the story map, the quiz walk and the online meetings there is also the desire to involve and reach children in the consultation. Because of the pandemic situation many ideas are rejected but the group eventually decides on designing a survey with a playful touch. A Kahoot quiz is designed with the motivation that it will inform children and youths in a playful way, while simultaneously being easy to distribute and access.

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[5] Kahoot is an online teaching resource where you design quizzes for free.
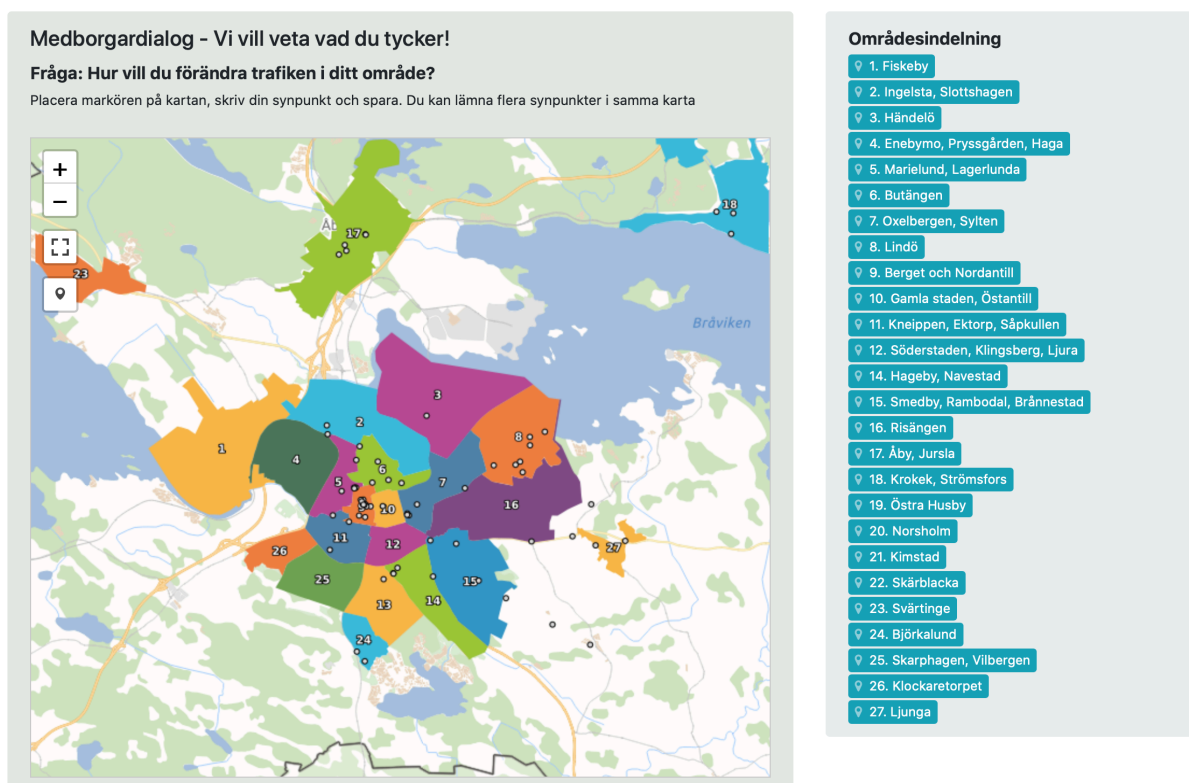
*Figure 9. A screenshot from the interactive 'storymap' that was provided online (Norrköpings kommun, 2021).*

4) *An online 'storymap' (figure 9): an interactive map made available online where citizens can leave comments or feedback in writing by leaving a pushpin at a desired location.*

The online storymap consists of a set of illustrated maps that contain important features for traffic plans in the future, such as where bicycle lanes will be drawn or new roads will be built. The story map serves as a fairly easy way to get both overview and go into detail of a desired location, as well as easily share feedback on a specific location.

## 5.3.3 Involving children by gamification

The matter of involving children was brought to discussion several times during meetings, but continuously pushed on the future. I noticed a clear will to reach children and young adults, but little experience or ideas on how to do so. Because of the Convention of the rights of the child becoming law in Sweden since 2020, planners are aware of their obligation to involve children in consultations, but seem weary on how. The Convention of The Rights of the Child states that children are capable of forming his or her own view and that they have the right to be heard in all judicial or administrative proceedings affecting the child (Lag 2018:1197, artikel 12). Thus, children have the right to be involved in consultations on the same terms as adults.

As part of my participation in the planning procedure, I took initiative to research ways for children to be involved, and bring a few suggestions to the team. I found that the team struggled a bit on how to approach the task, and found that my experience and competence in exploring uncharted

territories could be of use here. I started off the process by researching what other municipalities had done in involving children, and looked closer at the tool called *Impact assessment for children* (Barnkonsekvensanalys). Two documents were of great value for this research; *Integrerad barnkonsekvensanalys och dialog* (Stockholm stad, 2017) and *Metodhandbok för barnkonsekvensanalyser* (Huddinge kommun, 2021) These documents helped me form reflective questions that could be posed to the team in order to reach a meaningful consultation with children. The reflective questions can be found in Appendix 3.

Other than finding relevant case examples and reflective questions for the children's consultation, I brainstormed what activities children might be engaged in. I divided the brainstorming into two categories, one being online ways for participation, and the other situational. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic it was important to think of ways that would not require joining in larger groups or meeting in person at all. Involving teachers or educators could be a way to reach out, another was to go fully digital or to place something on location that children could interact with but didn't require too much observation. The mind map that was created as support for discussion with the team is shown in figure 10.
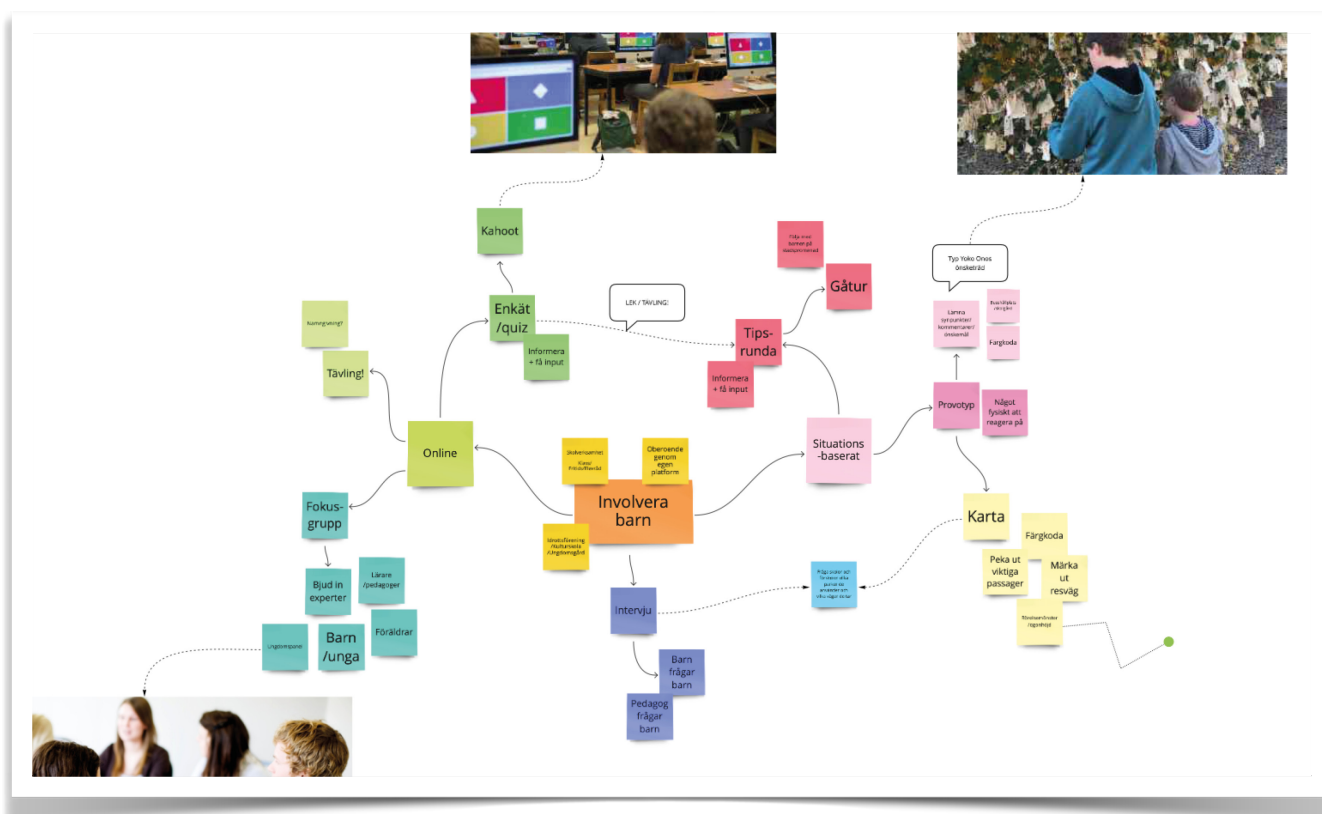


*Figure 10. A visual support for discussing and ideating possibilities for children's participation in the consultation.*

The choice of method for consulting with children eventually fell on making a Kahoot quiz. The choice was motivated by its simplicity in both how to design one from planners end, as well as possibility for distribution on the other end. It was imagined that the quiz could be played at school during lessons and perhaps be used as a challenge between school classes. The Kahoot was to be designed mainly to inform children about the Traffic strategy in a playful way, but also to invite

them to discuss the information further with planners if they pleased. The quiz could also be a way to research how distribution of sustainability knowledge and traffic matters were dispersed in the schools, as the collected answers would bring planners relevant feedback on the level of knowledge that children have on the subject.

# 5.4 Findings from the Case study

The following chapter presents the findings from the case study. The findings are presented with salient, recurring themes that represent the conversations, interviews and reflections made throughout the process.

## 5.4.1 Communication – to anchor, inform or... nudge?

*What we do not understand we do not possess* – Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

A recurring theme from the case study is the importance of good communication between the municipality and its citizens. Communication is interpreted in a wide sense in the organisation, where questions of municipal *services* and municipal *presence* is often brought forward. Accessibility to municipal services is sometimes almost equated with communication, referring to them as meeting points and enablers of dialogue, and municipal presence is brought forward as something that is an ongoing communication between the organisation and citizens – an important factor for trust.

The planners perspective on communication and municipal services brings forth the question of what dialogue really *is,* and if staring ourselves blind on *talking* to one another really is the way to achieve co-production or distribution of power.

When discussing communication in the context of dialogue and participation, it was often mentioned that establishing and *anchoring* ideologies and strategies with citizens is the purpose or goal. Indeed, anchoring is seen as an important reason for communicating with citizens, over all. The motivations for anchoring ideologies are in line with previously mentioned scholarly views – that any durable change is hard to attain without the will and understanding from the 'crowd'. It is also stressed that citizens who don't have sufficient knowledge will not have the chance to give adequate feedback. When confronted with the question of what purpose or advantages participatory practices brings for the organisation, the importance of aligning citizens with plans and visions is a common answer.

The Traffic strategy in question proposes ways for the municipality to transition into a more sustainable transport system; plans that will effect each and every citizen and their everyday life.

According to planners the transition will require behavioural change among citizens, and mean that their consultation procedure must partially be persuasive and influential; guiding or nudging people to either accept or embrace change. For a matter as important and universal as sustainability, this may very well seem a necessity, and perhaps a justified way to approach a consultation, but it does mean that planners have a set agenda, even for the outcome.

Nevertheless, the difference between *informing* and *communicating* is often discussed, the latter supposedly being of more dialogic form, and therefor purposely separated from informing. It is mentioned that it is important to know when to implement which of the two, but that both serve purpose. While this discussion is present in the planning of participatory practices, my observation tells me that proper, dialogic, communication; of more distributed and less hierarchical nature, is hard for civil servants to achieve. Their working procedure and culture doesn't lend itself easily to diversion, allowing them to stray from the 'plan' or 'reopening' decisions, thus leading to a linear, tick-the-box kind of procedure with little spontaneity. Diversion, openness or iteration, on the other hand, are features that require skill, but above all *time*; something that civil servants have little of.

The scarcity in time and high pressure on progress, the organisational *culture* and *capacity*, seem to be a crucial reason for why dialogue incentives stay at anchoring or informing. Another reason is the *competence* found within the organisation; – if divergent thinking or explorative ways are not supported, neither will they be developed or enhanced.

## 5.4.2 Trust and transparency

A majority of the interviewees mention the importance of communication and accessibility between the municipal organisation and citizens. The services that the municipality offers, both in physical and intellectual aspects, are pointed out as important touch points to procure a sense of trust among citizens. It seems that employees have the common perspective that information and trust are foundational pillars for the organisations dialogic work.

Trust is also being referred to in other, less obvious ways, such as how the municipality is perceived. It is important that the municipality portrays itself in a humane way – putting civil servants faces at the centre of their actions, to make sure that citizens understand that they are normal people, just like anyone else. It is their belief that citizens trust and alignment will be easier to achieve if the person behind the effort and ideas is shown – giving citizens something to relate to.

The issue of trust is closely related to transparency, as transparency in information and organisation is important for citizens to attain proper information or access to the municipality. Issues of transparency can be a problem both intra-organisational as well as in the information flow between organisation and citizens. Planners mean that citizens often or always see the

municipal organisation as one entity, and that this can sometimes become a hinder for good communication. It is described that citizens join consultations to put forward their feedback or ideas, negligent of what theme or area that is in focus for discussion at the time, which in turn means the feedback brought forward is difficult to address or make sense of.

The citizen view of the municipality as an entity may be seen as sign of lacking knowledge of the municipal organisation, thus a sort of transparency problem. It suggests that either the communication of consultation purpose is not clear enough, or that alternative ways to reach the municipality when having concerns or feedback is not clear enough. It may however also be a case of pent-up needs; – that citizens have a desire and wish to meet their community and speak their needs ands thoughts, therefor taking any opportunity. It may also be seen as a desire to be able to address the municipality as an entity or with simplicity, a sort of resistance towards the bureaucracy of municipal organisation structure and compartmentalisation.

## 5.4.3 Visionary futures or applicable current?

In todays society, especially regarding issues of sustainability, visionary approaches on urban development and problem solving is often argument for. In the work with participatory practices in urban planning this ideal comes down to a definition between early or late dialoguing in projects. Early dialogues are here spoken of as if they were preferred, as it is proposed that an early dialogue can capture citizens desires in a better way, and possibly allow for more citizen influence. Early in this context means at the very beginning of a planning phase, before deciding on detail plans, budgets or stating agendas.

At the same time it is mentioned that visionary feedback that is attained at an early stage may be hard to accommodate, follow up, or even use, as the nature of feedback at this stage often is broad and abstract, opening for several and wide interpretations. Moreover, as a project of this kind spans over many years, there is the risk that citizens feedback is being left behind at some point, when new stakeholders take part, or planners roles are changed or transferred.

There is a slight hesitance and insecurity towards implementing dialogues and inviting citizens into participatory practices in general. There is always the potential risk that citizens overvalue their part and believe that they can influence more than they actually can. There is also the risk that civil servants receive irrelevant input that they have no need for, or cannot address in any way.

This may be coming down to the lack of advice and guidance in *how* to do dialogues and *what* feedback to ask for. Civil servants know that they *should* involve citizens, and that it can be done in an early or late stage, but they are not trained on how to facilitate such a situation. Civil servants are trained in their respective field of knowledge, and they are encouraged to be neutral in some way, to have an objective view on things, but are simultaneously encouraged to activate citizens in visionary dialogue practices. It may be that the gap between visionary feedback and a not so

visionary organisational culture creates an almost impossible situation for planners. To employ early dialogues and visionary approaches are argument for, but is the organisation open or prepared to handle it?

If systems and structures for handling visionary feedback are not in place, then it might be a better idea for civil servants to design and build dialogue processes according to what they believe they can accommodate and handle. It seems that the excessive belief in visionary ways neglects the importance of organisational maturity or facilitation skills – focus is set on the method instead of organisational or professional capacity and competence.

## 5.4.4 Reaching a representative audience

When talking about representation among citizens both *how* to reach a representative audience and what a representative audience *is* are relevant questions to discuss. It is also relevant to ask where the municipal responsibility begins and where it ends in this matter. Some claim that the municipality can't do much more than offer the chance to dialogue, and that people can choose wether they want to be part or not.

An alternative view on reaching audience would be to deliberately seek out groups of people who seldom participate, or who are especially important for the question at hand, and design a dialogue practice especially for them. This is no common view on public participation, but it does happen.

Because The Convention of the rights of the child has become law in Sweden since 2020, there is an increased interest, or pressure, on involving children in consultations. The law states that the child has the right to be heard in judicial or administrative proceedings affecting the child, which is applicable to most consultations – the Traffic strategy consultation for one. Which is why in this case a special dialogue for children was designed where language and content were adjusted to answer to a younger audience. In addition, the dialogue was designed as a game; to create lust and interest for participation.

The adjustments made for the children's consultation brings ideas on how we may think of designing dialogues. What if rather than focusing on theme or subject for the content we would start from the people it should answer to. This was a perspective brought forward in the planning phase of the traffic strategy but it wasn't given much attention aside from when discussing children. It was described that consultations usually have an overrepresentation of elderly people, but that by using social media platforms the organisation would reach a more representative audience.

For the traffic strategy consultation target areas for dialogue meetings were suggested according to location. This choice of division was argued because of the assumption that citizens would be prone

to participate if a connection to their own neighbourhood is prominent. Thus rather than sorting people by age or interest, their connection to the neighbourhood was chosen as the linking attribute.

Social media platforms offer chance to reach a wide and distributed audience and are viewed by planners as great tools for reaching out with information or engaging citizens in quizzes or surveys. Social media platforms also often offer data on what audience you have reached, allowing communicators to keep track of the representation. There is the recurring idea that citizens for most of the time are busy and have a short attention span, why 'fast and easy' communication is promoted.

## 5.4.5 Power dynamics and distribution

The distribution of information and easy access in social media is also considered having its drawbacks. One interviewee means that social media promotes the tendency to bend with the wind as politicians put disproportionate emphasis on loud, but perhaps irrelevant or incorrect, feedback. The social media culture promotes a fast and easy way to promote opinions, no matter they are or are not well grounded, and can easily gather several voices for promoting a cause in a short amount of time. This poses a situation where politicians are tempted to consider opinions that gain much attention in social media, however relevant they might be, to put themselves in favourable light.

Rigid and closed planning procedures were budget needs to be set and followed are pointed out as an obstacle for allowing citizen proposals, redesign or innovation in general. Budget plans span many years and take all money into account, which means that there is little or no room for divergence from the plan. In practice this means that planners and council will receive input and feedback from citizens that they cannot address, no matter how relevant it might be.

Furthermore, the challenge in handling power dynamics and power of speech is brought forward as common in consultations, whether reflected or not reflected by persons in charge. It is only natural to pay attention to the one who speaks their opinion clearly, and it is challenging to push for valuable input from those who are not conformable speaking out in front of people. This is the dilemma with dialogue as form. It would be naive to think that just by offering the chance to dialogue we are automatically achieving a representative or democratic act. However, this seems to be a somewhat common idea, at least the idea that having a dialogue is better than not having it – which is in part contradicted by theory.

Dialogues and participatory practices are often initiated  by civil servants, as it is often part of their job and practice to think of public concerns and find a basis of common interest to build ideas and projects on. The responsibility for citizen dialogues rests on the shoulders of civil servants, from planning to employment of methods to compiling feedback, but in the very end it is the politicians who have most power over final decisions. One may argue that it would make sense that politicians

should be more involved through the process of dialoging, from planning to implementation, to become more aligned with, and aware of, citizen concerns. It is argued by one interviewee that civil servants who act as project managers must get the chance to follow projects all the way through, minimising the risk of losing valuable input from citizens along the way, as roles change and new people take over as the project moves forward.

Interviewees from Norrtälje municipalities mentions that artists may be able to achieve other outcomes when it comes to public participation, because citizens perceive these initiatives differently and have other expectations. They pose that the sender impacts the outcome; that artistic initiatives can allow themselves to be more speculative as citizens don't have the same expectations on these initiatives that they have in projects initiated by the municipality. This is why they pose that an 'objective' sender better can measure 'citizens temperature' or overall perception of their city.

## 5.4.6 Capacity and competence

The organisational structure and culture was a key interest of mine, and how these could be related to participatory practices and views on dialogue work. I wanted to gain an understanding specifically on Norrköping planning office's capacity to undertake participatory practices and the specific planners competence in facilitating dialogues. I was expecting the municipality at large to have some kind of common idea or ground for addressing dialogue incentives, but couldn't find one. There were no strategies or visions documents to be found that addressed dialoguing for the entity of the municipality, and I couldn't find anything with special regards to the urban planning office either.

By all accounts it seemed that because there are no specific guidelines, dialogue work is dependent on the culture and organisation of each specific work team, and the maturity and reflectional level of the issue differs from person to person and team to team. Knowledge on dialoguing is a silent matter, existent but not visibly elaborated, immersed or scrutinised. The fact that it turned out to be difficult and obscure how to attain information about the matter as well as reaching representative informants, says something about the maturity of the topic and how the organisation deals with these matters. On the other hand it was evident that informants and team members in the observation were concerned with developing good relations to citizens and a mutual sense of trust. The desire to contribute to sustainable relationship between municipality and citizen was persistent.

Another prominent observation on competence and culture was the team's eager to converge processes. At times when I thought that we were only just beginning to explore a subject, planners were ready to take decisions and move to the next step. For each time I diverged or expanded into discussion, they seemed to want to peel off layers and get to conclusions. They were curious and positive to my expansions and it was clear that I brought an alternative culture and way of working

that they considered inspirational and useful, but it was also clear that they had little experience or room for it. They were especially positive to my using of visual material to support brainstorming and mapping of ideas, as well as having a human centred approach and ease in elaboration of ideas and possibilities. When discussing ways to involve children in the consultation it was clear that my guidance in both reflective questions and visual support helped planners become more comfortable in ideation and reflection.

It was also mentioned during the consultation planning that having an outside perspective was of great value. That a person with no specific interest or prior understanding for the topic can bring new perspectives and point out obscurities in the material.

## 6.4.7 Analysing the Case study

The case study implies that participatory practices at the urban planning office in Norrköping municipality rarely reaches above the level of information or consultation. There is little reflection concerning what a dialogue is, should or could be, as planners find themselves too busy with following plans and delivering on time to explore these questions. However, the will to achieve sustainable relations between municipal organisation, citizens and other stakeholders is strong, and *trust* and *presence* are recurring themes that are spoken of.

It is also clear that the *purpose* for doing dialogues is perceived in different ways among civil servants. There seem to be a number of ideas, or rationales, for why citizen dialogue incentives should be done, spanning from the anchoring of information in order to receive better feedback that in turn can develop a better design, to the idea that informing citizens may lead to more acceptance for the change that is to come.

There is hesitance towards engaging in participatory practices or allowing for citizen propositions, as planners fear not being able to meet desires and expectations that citizens have. A knowledge gap between citizens and municipal organisation is mentioned as a hinder, and rigid planning and budget processes that don't allow for divergence or disruption are also brought forward as concerns.

An attempt to summarise the findings into problem statements was done in order to lead the project in to the next phase of exploring solutions or ways to improve the situation at the planning office. The problems, seen in figure 11, were identified as standing in the way of successfully implementing participatory practices and were mapped and elaborated on in terms of what they mean more specifically and how they relate to both authority and citizen. I found it important to distinguish the difference between how planners and civil servants may experience a problem or a hinder, and what they think might be the reason, in relation to how this problem may be received by citizens.
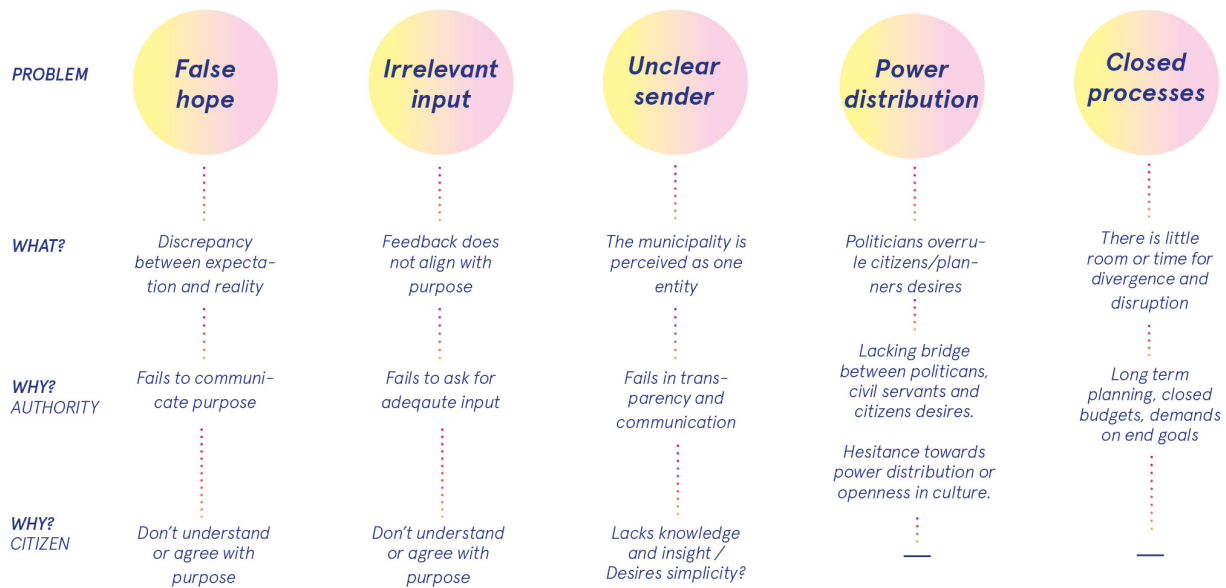
| PROBLEM | False hope | Irrelevant input | Unclear sender | Power distribution | Closed processes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **WHAT?** | Discrepancy between expectation and reality | Feedback does not align with purpose | The municipality is perceived as one entity | Politicians overrule citizens/planners desires | There is little room or time for divergence and disruption |
| **WHY?** AUTHORITY | Fails to communicate purpose | Fails to ask for adeqaute input | Fails in transparency and communication | Lacking bridge between politicans, civil servants and citizens desires. Hesitance towards power distribution or openness in culture. | Long term planning, closed budgets, demands on end goals |
| **WHY?** CITIZEN | Don't understand or agree with purpose | Don't understand or agree with purpose | Lacks knowledge and insight / Desires simplicity? | — | — |

*Figure 11. A sorting and reflective elaboration of recurring problems.*

In general, the recurring problems and themes brought forward in the case study relate to the organisation's culture.

*False hope*, *Irrelevant input* and *Unclear sender* indicate that even though the municipality aims at bringing adequate and sufficient knowledge to citizens, their attempts are failing. However, it might also be the case that citizens simply don't agree with the purpose that is given. The discrepancy in expectations between citizen and authority can be seen as an indication that citizens want something different, not only that they haven't understood the purpose. Furthermore, the problem *Unclear sender* – that the municipality as such is perceived as an entity might be a problem from the authority's side of view but doesn't necessarily mean it is a problem for citizens. Perhaps it is a symptom of rebellion towards too much of impenetrable bureaucracy?

Regardless of whatever reasons for the transparency and knowledge gap, a more open discussion and reflection on dialogues and citizen involvement is most likely beneficial for the organisation at large. A more mature understanding for the problems and issues at hand might benefit from a developing a reflective culture where the practice and impact of dialogue practices are elaborated and scrutinised.

Troubles with power distribution and the fact that planning processes are too closed or rigid to allow for divergence are other structural problems. One might say that it would be just to alter in systems, like setting aside money from the budget for citizen proposals, for example. But it is likely that those changes would be difficult to maintain if the overall structure and culture is till intact.

# 6.0 What design can do

The theoretical framework together with the data retrieved from the case study are brought together in this chapter to form an understanding for what design can do for improving the implementation of citizen participation at Norrköping's urban planning office. It starts off with proposing design openings, continued by a motivation and elaboration on the openings' potential impact at Norrköping's urban planning office. A few chosen openings are explored further to provide with examples of what these design openings could entail more specifically and in practical terms.

## 6.1 Identifying design openings

The insights retrieved from the case study and the theoretical framework poses that there are several ways that design rationale can improve and inspire better ways for citizen dialogue incentives and participatory practices in public institutions at large. I have identified five overarching openings in how design can contribute:

1) *By offering a knowledge base*
   A written and illustrated guide with examples on methods and tools for participatory practices, how they are used and when which method should be chosen may be helpful for civil servants in their day to day work. This could be in digital or printed form, interactive or not.

2) *By inspiring and forming the role of a facilitator for dialogues*
   Planners involved in dialogue incentives can be trained in their role as facilitator, being inspired from design thinking and design culture, getting specific training in receiving and handling diverse feedback, while maintaining a human centred approach. The facilitator role can be seen as a pedagogic role, above all else.

3) *By developing and enhancing design capacity and competence within the organisation*
   Rearranging working structures as well as cultures in the organisation to allow for openness, iteration and ambiguity – qualities needed for an innovative and empathetic approach on sustainable development.

4) *By using expert design skills to design processes and methods that are adapted to specific cases or scenarios*
   Expert designers can be integrated in the organisation and become part of planning procedures to be able to co-design suitable participatory processes that are adapted to specific cases.

5) *By designing an alternative system*
   To use imaginative and speculative skills to propose new systems and ways in which

participatory practices can be reinforced and a more dialogic society can be achieved, going from top-down hierarchical structures to bottom-up systems that distribute power.

## 6.2 Concepting design proposals

The complexity of the subject at hand doesn't lend itself to one solution or a final proposal for design intervention, rather it is most probably best addressed through all of the previously presented design openings. However, I will motivate why some are more applicable to the case at hand and why some might not be. Some propose incremental approaches and offer ways in which the current system can be improved in a gentle way, while some propose more radical and disruptive approaches.

### 6.2.1 Motivating which design openings are most promising for the case at Norrköping

*Design opening 1* is deemed inappropriate because of the way I assessed the urban planning office's organisational culture of knowledge distribution. It seemed they were more motivated to give and receive information and inspiration by mouth to mouth rather than by inspirational documents or reports. In my observation I noticed that planners solved tasks by asking for feedback or guidance from their peers rather than looking to the internet or intranet. Guide books or inspirational documents were seldom referred to, but other employees were. This is why I believe that a static guide book or access would  have little impact here, and if it was to be developed something in the means of a guide book, perhaps an interactive one would be preferred.

How planners use one another to solve tasks and gain knowledge implies that addressing the organisations own capacity and competence in dialogic approaches and design thinking may be the most fruitful way to address the issue. If one team's maturity and reflectional level of design thinking is developed, it is likely that this knowledge will soon disperse, in the long run improving maturity in the understanding of dialogues and participatory practices at large. Hence *Design opening 3;* to *develop and enhance design capacity and competence within the organisation* may have the best chance at attaining sustainable and durable improvements for Norrköping.

I assess *Design opening 2* being of great importance but that it requires additional knowledge and elaboration on facilitation skills that I have not provided for in the theoretical framework, hence this opening will be left aside for now. However, facilitation skills should not be overlooked, as theory shows that this can have crucial consequences. Furthermore, to develop design thinking within an organisation and a manifesting a human centred approach will most likely benefit the role of the facilitator as well.

*Design opening 4* poses one of the most promising and interesting openings, as it understands the issue of participation from a design perspective; – that each case is different from the other. An expert designer may help organisations and teams to develop methods and tools that are suitable to the specific case, perhaps in relation to an area, a theme, or to a certain group of people. Furthermore a trained expert designer may also be able to redesign and reinvent those methods, as processes proceed and conditions change.

*Design opening 5* poses an exciting approach but one which requires maturity in both design thinking and participatory theory. It can definitely be part of opening 3 or 4, as design maturity evolves within the organisation, but for this specific case at this stage, it may be too radical. Proposing too radical changes to an organisation at its current state may not be well received. It is my belief that an alternative system may very well be desired, but that steps need to be taken little by little, perhaps starting with proposing alternative methods or tools before proposing to change whole systems.

Hence design opening 3 and 4 are assessed having most potential to inform and inspire the urban planning office in Norrköping in developing their dialoguing practices. They put the culture and understanding for design thinking and human centred approaches at the very core of development, and practices using both diffuse and expert design skills.

## 6.2.2 Developing and enhancing design capacity and competence within the organisation

Design capacity and competence can be implemented at different levels of an organisation. It can be staged to offer specific functions, or implemented as management theory and part of the strategy in an organisation (Cooper, Junginger, S., & Lockwood, T. (Eds.), 2013). Figure 12 shows an illustration depicting levels of design competency in an organisation, developing maturity with each level, and with examples of what each level can entail.

It is suggested from theory that an organisations own culture and working structure is crucial in order to achieve durable change (Vink et al., 2019; Wetter-Edman & Malmberg, 2016), and that the organisation's capacity for innovation has impact on their performance in citizen dialogues and participatory practices (Bickerstaff & Walker, 2005). Furthermore, a culture of openness, risk taking and iteration are proposed to be beneficial in order to meet requirements for sustainable urban development (Palm, 2019).

In fact all of the following main factors seen to stand in the way of successful participatory practices can, to my understanding, be related to organisational culture.

1) the structure and design of the participatory activities (Fung 2006; Dekker &Van Kempen 2009)
2) The quality of the communicative and collaborative dynamics (Healy, 2002)
3) intra-organisational capacity for change (Bickerstaff & Walker, 2005)
4) issues of power (White 1996; Flyvbjerg 2004; Bond 2011)

In this case, looking at Norrköping's urban planning office, deploying a more open, iterative and human centred approach on their planning procedure in general may very well be a way forward. The organisation has much to gain only by bringing the matter of dialoguing in to light, to discuss, reflect and define what it might entail. The practice today is done with good intent but little reflection and elaboration, thus lacking in maturity. To develop maturity in design thinking and human centred approaches may help them overcome their communicative problems as well as develop their capacity for intra-organisational change, which may lead to better and more innovative designs of participatory practices.
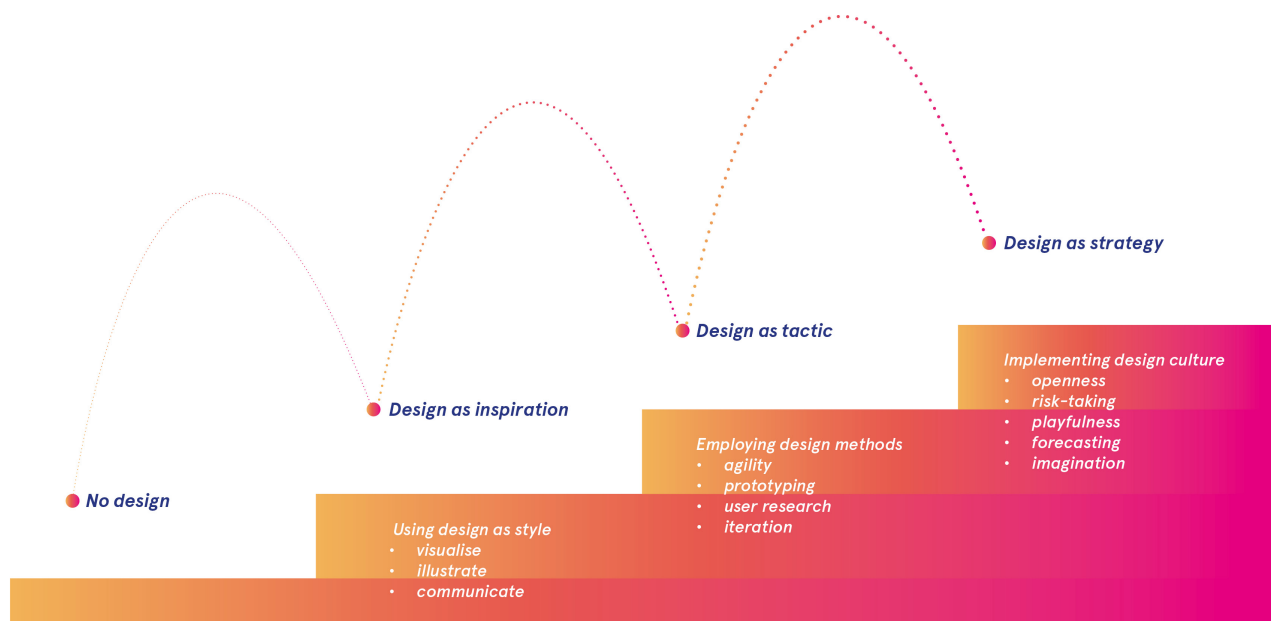


*Figure 12. Levels of design competence and maturity.*

To implement more attributes from design thinking and develop design culture in the organisation could in practicality mean to:

‣ Generate a supportive environment within teams where openness, risk taking, iteration and ambiguity are natural and crucial components of the planning process. Before this is a natural part or state of a teams work it might be necessary to plan for it by and setting aside time for discussion and reflection, for example.

- Try out the design thinking process and explore the possibilities in following the process of ideation, prototyping and iteration. Making these steps clear and visible may help find flaws and possibilities in plans and suggestions, and can build a practice to be continuously improved. Outspokenly referring to planning for consultations or participatory practices as design processes may help to consolidate understanding for its importance and impact, as well as how to approach it.

- Train divergent thinking by setting time aside for brainstorming activities. Planners mental models may be set on convergence; reaching solutions and ultimate, measurable goals – mental models that will not change over night. It may be a way forward to practice being comfortable with not having answers and spending more time in states of divergence. Divergent brainstorming may in turn lead to alternative ways and proposals that wouldn't otherwise have been considered.

- Play games and employ a more playful practice. Games can help with diverging ideas as well as foster a playful and open culture where imagination is valued.

- Embrace aspects of diffuse versus expert knowledge. Mix areas of expertise in teams and make the effort to bridge between silos and understand other's perspectives.

- Work in close relation with citizens: invite people from local communities or with certain expertise to co-create and plan participatory activities. This goes not only for when the consultation or dialogue incentive is to be done, but *when* designing the plan for it. As was mentioned by planners themselves in the observation; – an outside perspective may lead to better reflections for the team and in turn greater accessibility for the finished result.

- Accept your ignorance, but be curious. Don't assume to have the answers, assume that you can attain sustainable results with the help of others, and that citizens are entitled to their own perspective. Recognise that little change can be done without citizens acceptance.

- Employ a dialogic and deliberative way of working. Practice your tools and methods on yourselves, hence be as democratic in your internal procedures as you hope to be in your external.

## 6.2.3 Using expert design skills to design processes and methods that are adapted to specific cases or scenarios

It is suggested that local and specific approaches on sustainability can address problems of intangibility and alienation (Neimanis et al., 2015), as well as support the development for social sustainability and resilience in communities and neighbourhoods (Dempsey et al., 2009). Thus,

there seem to be several reasons for why case specific solutions may be the best way to address citizen participation.

An expert designer can develop methods and tools according to each specific case and make reflective decisions to adapt or redesign processes as they proceed (Bason, 2018). An expert designer can weigh several stakeholders interests and navigate in complex issues (Manzini, 2009, 2015). An expert designer can also lead novel and diffuse designers to co-create sustainable outcomes (Wetter-Edman & Malmberg, 2016; Manzini, 2015 etc). Expert designers may therefor be able to make design decision that would be beneficial for both citizens and planners, taking into account organisational capacity and competence. The expert designer can help in providing research and visual material to use as basis for the planning, as well as guide the decision process; when to diverge and when to converge. All in all, an expert designer can help develop the dialoguing practice as well as distribute and share his or her own knowledge and attitude in the organisation.

The design of the Kahoot quiz for involving children in the consultation, which is described in the *Participatory observation*, can be brought forward as a simple yet clear example of how an expert designer can help planners design suitable methods and practices, putting the receiver at the centre of development. The Kahoot quiz was a relevant and good choice of method for this specific case at this specific time, taking into account aspects of children's interest, the content of information, and the pandemic restrictions. It combined the capacity of the organisation with the capacity of the children. But the choice of a Kahoot quiz may not be of relevance in a different situation with a different question at hand.

To exemplify what posing specific methods could entail is of course difficult, since the whole point is that they should be developed in relation to the subject or situation and don't necessarily follow predefined methods or tools. However, the following list proposes possible methods or activities that the urban planning in Norrköping could engage in as a part of the consultation process for the Traffic strategy, to exemplify how participatory practices can be adapted to the present theme as well as bring in more aspects of locality to prevent citizens' alienation and intangibility; sustainability and traffic.

- *Get real* – Implement the test bed approach by trying out car free weekends or cutting off a part of a street. If the traffic strategy presents plans to cut off a street, why not briefly try the situation out? Evaluate the impact and the reception. This could be done on just one occasion or for a longer duration of time.

- *Free parking* – Make empty parking lots bookable to citizens, associations or communities. Invite citizens, associations or communities to make use of the space and pay attention to how they use it, or wish to use it. This action may bring several levels of value, both by

infusing activity and participation but also by receiving input on how citizens approach a space that is not yet claimed. There might be much to learn!

- *Guided tour* – Offer guided tours through the city where information, visions and ideas are shared. Instead of joining in conference rooms or online, join at the location where change is to be made. Travel together by bus, train, bicycle or walk to try out a new route or to point at where change is to be made. Invite persons, communities or stakeholders to share their perspective. This can also be done the other way around; – invite neighbourhoods or schools to take the planning time for a guided tour, showing their everyday routes and perspectives. Joining a preschool groups on their daily commute from preschool to city parks is one example.

These three activities suit the specific theme of the Traffic strategy consultation well, but don't necessarily fit the next coming consultation for the urban planning office. They are posed as suggestions to exemplify that each occasion of citizen dialogue or participation may benefit from having a specific design exploration. By putting the time and effort to explore what each opportunity can bring, we may enhance the quality of the activity and thereby not just improve feedback but also increase the motivation for both planners and citizens to join coming participatory projects.

## 6.2.4 Validation

At the end of this project and case study (Late May, 2021) I presented the findings, key insights and suggestions for ways to improve dialogue and participatory practices with the help of design rationale for a team of overview planners at the urban planning office in Norrköping. Insights gathered from the case study as well as findings from the literature review were brought forward as means to create awareness and inspiration for their future work with citizen dialogue and participation. I presented how design rationale in general can improve their ways of working, and how design opening 3 (developing design capacity and competence) and 4 (using expert design skills) can be of special importance for feeding this development, with special regards to the urban planning office and their team. The presentation was a mix of inspiration and advice of both general and specific character, where much emphasis was put on addressing their specific cultural and structural hinders.

The presentation was met with enthusiasm. Planners claimed to recognise themselves in my description of their culture and working structure and how linear processes and convergent thinking may be natural to them, but sometimes hindering for innovative or reflective processes. They said that I had circled and summarised their recurring problems and their complexity in an adequate way.

The presentation led to an informal discussion and reflection about culture, working structures, competence and capacity for employing a more design driven work way in general, and how this relates to dialogue practices. The following aspects were brought forward and discussed:

‣ The importance, and the teams potential shortcoming, in asking reflective questions and push ideas and concepts further. The capacity, culture and time to diverge.

‣ The occurrence of organisational silos and how it is sometimes difficult to attain and disperse knowledge and information, as well as cooperate between teams and offices.

‣ The possibility for more iteration in their work. How to implement ways of working iteratively within the linearity of their everyday was discussed as a possible first step to try and work more design driven and allow for .

‣ The difficulty in asking the right question in consultation processes and the fact that convergence is sometimes needed in order to receive input that is applicable and feasible within the normative process that they are currently in. To narrow down is sometimes helpful and respectful to citizens as it might bring more relevant feedback. This discussion relates to the debating of early versus late dialogue incentives and the difference between visionary and more practical feedback.

‣ The eventual contradiction between motivating that a more local, active and physical approach to citizen participation might be more impactful, in relation to the ongoing digitalisation that is taking place within the municipality and its services. It was proposed that having a palette of different activities and communications channels should be preferred, and that the current consultation process taught them the importance of having physical touch points that connects the tangible with the digital.

‣ A new problem emerged as one planner said that citizens are often slow at giving feedback or understanding or grasping the meaning of proposed changes. It is not until the final design or change is in place that citizens feedback and reaction appears. Why artistic, practical and provocative ways of addressing citizen dialogue were debated to be potentially important. Testing, prototyping and visualising changes on a large scale was brought forward for its advantages.

‣ How to allow for distribution of power on small scale. An upcoming project with the planning of a new district was discussed in terms of how citizens desires might be pared with citizen responsibility. The example of planting trees in the neighbourhood was brought forward as future residents had wished for trees but the planning office had trouble answering this wish as it would demand increased maintenance from their end. By allowing

residents to plant trees on their own, maybe they would also be inclined to take care of them?

- In relation to the upcoming new district project it was also discussed whether the team and office could somehow break their norms and circles and try a new way of working. It was proposed that they could move the office outside and try out being on site to better be able to have direct communication with residents.

Overall it was a fruitful and interesting discussion that fed new ideas and seemed to spark new energy into the team in regards to their work with citizen dialogue and their reflectional maturity for the subject.

# 7.0 Conclusion & Discussion

This thesis project set out to explore ways that design rationale can advise public participation, and more specifically answer the question:

*How can design rationale help strengthen and develop civil servants work with citizen dialogue and participation?*

In order to answer this question a preliminary research was done, followed by a literature review on the topics of design rationale, sustainable urban development and participatory practices in public sector. A case study was done at the urban planning office in Norrköping, doing semi-structured interviews and joining in participatory observations for the planning of a consultation to get first hand experience on civil servants day to day approach to citizen dialogue.

The knowledge contributions gained from this project are at first hand directed to Norrköping's urban planning office, but outcomes are of both specific and general character, some applicable in a wider sense than just between the walls of the urban planning office. The study offers suggestions on how Norrköping's dialogue and participatory work may be improved, but also brings forward alternative perspectives on participatory practices and possibly fruitful connections between urban development, design rationale and sustainability.

We have learnt that design can be recognised as a process, an attitude and a way of thinking. That design in general deploys a human centred approach and carry a culture that favours risk taking and ambiguity which are important factors when addressing wicked problems concerned with sustainability. Design thinking can be seen as a driver for innovation because of its future oriented nature and designers can be considered optimists as they thrive on challenges of the unknown.

The above mentioned qualities and competences are relevant and applicable to the practice and performance of citizen dialogue and participation, this study shows. The planning design of participatory practices is considered flawed, and the overall culture and mental models existing in public sector are regarded to be standing in the way of a more adaptive and innovative organisation. My conclusion is that both these issues may be improved by design rationale. Above all by implementing and developing design culture into organisations to bring openness and human centred perspectives. Secondly by employing designers to be part of planning teams that can feed new knowledge and attitude into projects, as well as develop case specific designs that aligns well with theme and focus group for the participatory project.

If design rationale is proven to improve and feed better ways for participatory practices in public sector, it means that design is not only a vehicle for change, but also a vehicle for democracy, which should motivate the implementation of design rationale in public sector even more.

### Social and environmental sustainability

The importance of conquering issues of intangibility and alienation in sustainable development suggests to consider locality and proximity to a greater extent in urban development. To engage and activate with your community and neighbourhood is also considered important for the sake of social sustainability. This points to two promising directions for design and participatory practices.

The first is that case specific designs of methods, activities and tools that adapt to the local space and community may be of great importance and could potentially attain greater impact and breakthrough than if generic tools and methods where applied that had little adaptation to the project at hand. Thus, this points to the benefit of having expert designers co-create participatory practices together with citizens and civil servants to form ideal activities. Activities that would have the chance to overcome issues of intangibility and alienation by being designed with locality and community in mind.

The second direction points towards the benefits of locality and placemaking in terms of social sustainability. To engage in ones community and neighbourhood can develop better social sustainability in communities and bring social resilience, which suggests that participatory practices could benefit from a more local as well as active character if the goal is to attain social sustainability. By engaging people in their local communities we may bring positive effects on both social and environmental sustainability. Placemaking activities can reinforce active citizenship and stir the distribution of power, perhaps attaining greater level of citizen power than regular consultations.

### Dialogue as conversation or activity

This brings us to the recurring discussion of the definition and perception of citizen dialogue and participation. Citizen dialogue and participation is promoted from all ends, it seems, but the notion of dialogue simultaneously seem undefined. At the urban planning office in Norrköping, dialogue seem to be, first and foremost, about distribution of information and inviting to conversation, putting emphasis on the spoken and written word, with little attention to active participation. In this specific case there is the understanding and belief that dialogues and consultations are important, but with little reflection on for what purpose other than attaining as much feedback in spoken or written form as possible. The question here remains whether this method and perspective actually brings values of social sustainability to citizens and the municipality, and if social sustainability *is* in fact the goal.

What is often casually called citizen 'dialogue' is often a case of consulting or feedback, where change proposals are presented by institutions for citizens to share opinions on. However dialogic the form of conversation might be, it is debatable whether this method is actually bringing dialogic and deliberative *values*. It is possible that the notion of citizen dialogue and the implication of the word may stand in the way of allowing municipal organisations and planners to approach the

mission in a more open sense. The notion connotes conversation, while conversation may or may not be the best way to reach either deliberation or dialogue, nor social sustainability.

If we were to put aside the conversational idea of dialogue and start investing in ways for citizens to actively perform desires and wants, and be part of design processes; is it not possible that we will reach a greater extent of power distribution, accessibility and social inclusion? If the final goal for citizen participation is to attain social sustainability and democracy, then perhaps the concept of conversation is an obsolete understanding of what citizen dialogue should entail.

It may be that we are too occupied with achieving a dialogic consultation process that we neglect the fact that other methods may be of more use and with better outcomes. If consultations keep getting the critique that it does, staying at the tokenism level of Arnstein's ladder, why not move towards other practices?

### *Issues of scale – visionary or specific feedback*

The case study in question also points to the fact that there is a difference in addressing consultations on overview plan or detail plan – on large or small scale. The case study consultation handled an addition to the overview plan for Norrköping in the form of a strategy document pointing out concerns, directions and plans for Norrköpings traffic matters on a fairly abstract level. Reactions or feedback from citizens would concern the *visions* and *directions* that planners provided, not particular feedback on a site specific project of physical character. It may be that giving feedback on the level of abstraction that this type of strategy means, is very different from giving feedback on more detailed plans. This relates to the difference between early or late dialogue incentives, and visionary or specific types of feedback. Planners implied that specific feedback may be easier to handle, while early and visionary, or value-based, feedback is being promoted. This discussion points to the need for further investigation on how consultations or other dialogue incentives should be designed depending on the project's level of abstraction. In other words, it may be that different types of designs are beneficial for different types of dialogues; early and visionary, or late and specific.

### *Knowledge distribution and change making*

This project also brings forward the difference between *embedding* knowledge and developing mental models and culture within an organisation, as opposed to *offer* knowledge in the form of a guide or toolbox. The case study concludes that addressing problems on micro level (starting with the people in the organisation) may be the best way to achieve change, reflecting on the fact that knowledge sits with persons rather than documents, guides or methods. At Norrköping's urban planning office planners would turn to their peers for guidance rather than search for documents online or in their own intra-web. This is most probably a common way for many organisations and points to the importance for consultants or change makers to know when to offer knowledge and when to *train* or *embed* new ways that can help people rethink and reshape processes on their own.

# 7.1 Future work

For future research it may be interesting to compare regular consultation practices with more active methods for participation, to see if they bring different values and if one can be promoted before the other. It would be especially interesting to research how the design of case specific solutions may impact outcome in terms of social sustainability and what design expertise can bring to make that happen.

It would also be relevant to look further into the difference in designing dialogues on abstract or specific scale, i.e. early or late in the planning process, and how feedback from citizens can be attained and put to use in manners that suit that scale.

Furthermore, a successful dialogue requires the facilitation and mediating skills that could possibly require the emerging of a new role and skillset in public sector. Acknowledging certain competencies for facilitation of participatory practices are part of understanding the question at large, as scholars have argued that the facilitation role demands specific qualities and training, maybe even special personality traits. It would therefor be of interest and importance to further explore the role of the facilitator and what it could bring to institutionalised practices of participation. The facilitator is a pedagogic role that exists in virtually all co-designing activities. It is a role becoming more and more common in the area of design, and most probably will become more frequent in society at large if participatory practices disperse into other areas following the participatory norm.

The issue of power distribution within municipal organisations is another topic worth scrutiny. The relation between planners and politicians, and in turn citizens, is flawed and should be addressed in order to expect any level of sustainability for participatory practices. As long as politicians have the last say in decision making, they are key stakeholders for addressing change and development in public sector. It was brought forward as a problem in the case study that politicians could overrule both planners and citizens in their aspiration for popularity. This may very well be a common problem not just relevant for Norrköping, therefore worth looking further into.

A last, but noteworthy, topic for future research is how children can be involved successfully in participatory practices, and how design may help with that. The interest for this seems widely spread and many tools and methods (such as *Impact assessment for children)*, have been proposed as means to help planners accommodate children in participatory practices. Yet the practice is still young, why research in this area could be of great importance for future development.

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/Solith af Malmborg

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*Figures that are not referenced belong to the author.*

# Appendix 1: Interview guide

The six interviews took place under the duration of several weeks at the beginning of year 2021, all performed online, through Zoom or Teams or email, following the present order:

- March 8: a strategist in sustainable urban development, Norrtälje
- March 18: an artist working with cultural planning, Norrtälje
- March 22: a communicator, responsible for Norrköping's urban planning office
- April 6: a planning architect, Norrköping (answered by email)
- April 16: a chancellor, Norrköping
- April 19: a planning architect, Norrköping

This is the interview guide followed for the interviews, originally performed in Swedish and therefor translated.

### Preamble

Small-talk with presentation of myself and briefly explaining my thesis project. Asking for permission to record the interview.

### Questions

- *What is your role/title in the organisation and how does it relate/not relate to citizen participation and dialogue?*

- *How does the organisation decide when participation or dialogue is necessary or desirable (apart from the consultations that are lawfully required)? Is there a prioritisation taking place etc?*

- *How does the organisation distribute roles or responsibility in the planning for dialogues and participatory practices?*

- *Does a common strategy or guide exist within the organisation on how to approach the task?*

- *How do you asses your organisation's capacity and competence to plan and implement dialogue incentives?*

- *What are the prominent advantages of doing dialogues or participatory practices? What are the possible obstacles or disadvantages?*

- *What are prominent challenges found with participatory planning?*

- *How does political turns affect the work with participation and dialogue?*

# Appendix 2: Participatory observation guide

The participatory observation took place under the duration of three months at the beginning of year 2021, joining the consultations team's meetings online by Skype for business or Teams following the present order:

Febuary 10

Febuary 16

March 1

March 25

March 29

April 6

April 8

April 22

The meetings were annotated following this thematic format:

**Date**

**Theme**

**Present persons and roles**

**Notes**

**Recurring themes**

**Personal Reflections**

# Appendix 3: Reflective questions for involving children in the consultation

The following questions and advise were composed by me but based on the input from two documents: *Integrerad barnkonsekvensanalys och dialog* from Stockholm stad, and *Metodhandbok för barnkonsekvensanalyser* from Huddinge municipality. Advice given for consultation procedures from Boverket were also considered.

The questions and advise was first presented in Swedish, why they have been translated.

**Goal & Purpose**

- What is the purpose? To gain material and perspective that can enhance future designs? Or to anchor current visions and ideas?

- What good can consulting with children do? What kind of input can be beneficial for future projects?

- Is there room for change in the Traffic strategy? In any particular aspect more than another? What is impressionable?

- Is there room for innovation or change at a specific location?

- Is their need or might it be beneficial to have children's input for any special concerns or for a specific place?

- Does any specific idea, vision or design need testing from a child's perspective?

- How is feedback or involvement received and followed through?

**Advise**

- Keep it personal

- Keep it local

- Adjust communication to age, use colours, smileys or other ways to express and address complex things.
-
- Differ between the child's perspective (what the child expresses and desires) and taking a child perspective (an adults attempt to understand)

- Make clear the purpose and what their involvement brings

- Feedback