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Engaging with Young People in Shaping Sustainable Futures

Relevance and Ambivalence in the Urban Landscape

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Abstract

Young people are subjects of hopes and promises in the adult world's answers to more sustainable futures. Yet, their participation in shaping their own living environments is a democratically ambiguous matter. This dissertation explores ambiguities and new potentials in young people's participation through the lens critical utopian action research (CUAR) and landscape democracy. The main approach is a three year-engagement with a group of young people in Malmö, Sweden. Through future-creation workshops (FCWs) we explore the potentials and barriers to envision and shape their own living environments. This is supported by a literature review, and a case-study including interviews with key practitioners in Malmö. The review shows how attention to lifeworld and action (inspired by CUAR) is scarce in existing approaches to young people's participation. The case-study reveals a lack of stable channels from young people's everyday lives into the planning and development. The FCWs bring forward a discursive shift grounded in the young people's everyday life-struggles around segregation, equal opportunities to feel free to be oneself, and to feel joy and community in the city. This contrasts functionalistic discourses around landscape sustainability, and assumes a landscape-democratic quality with broader, discursive framings of the goals of urban landscape planning that are accessible to young citizens. The dissertation responds to calls in the literature to substantiate participatory ambitions in landscape research. Starting with young people's lifeworld and actions, the FCWs demonstrate how a discursive openness lead to broader engagements that contrast and complement participatory governance frameworks. The CUAR process provides an exemplary opportunity in participatory urban landscape planning and architecture to engage with pluralistic goals in envisioning and designing urban living environments for future sustainability in collaboration with young citizens.

Keywords: urban landscape, young people, critical utopian action research, sustainable transformation, planning, participation, governance, landscape democracy

Ungas Deltagande i att Samskapa en Hållbar Framtid: Relevans och Ambivalens i Stadens Landskap

Abstract

Ungdomar är ofta både mål för vuxenvärldens löften och förhoppningar om en hållbar framtid, samtidigt är ungas deltagande i utformningen av även sina egna livsmiljöer demokratiskt tvetydigt. Denna avhandling utforskar både tvetydigheter och potentialer för ungas deltagande inom ramen av kritisk-utopisk aktionsforskning (KUAR) och landskapsdemokrati. Huvuddelen i denna avhandling utgörs av ett treårigt engagemang med en grupp unga från Malmö, Sverige. Här utforskas de ungas barriärer och möjligheter till att forma och påverka sina egna livsmiljöer genom framtidsverkstäder. Detta kompletteras med en litteraturgranskning, och en fallstudie av Malmös förvaltning inklusive en intervjuer med praktiker. Litteraturgranskningen visar bland annat hur ett fokus på ungas livsvärld och på konkret handling (inspirerat av KUAR) som del av deltagandeprocesser är sällsynta. Fallstudien pekar på goda exempel och tillfälliga strukturer, men också på begränsade möjligheter för att skapa demokratiska samband mellan de ungas livsvärld, och gestaltningen av deras livsmiljöer. Framtidsverkstäderna leder till en diskursiv förskjutning som förbinder stadsmiljön med deras vardagslivs förhoppningar och utmaningar kring segregation, och jämlika möjligheter för att känna frihet till att vara sig själv, att känna glädje, trygghet, och gemenskap. Detta kontrasterar funktionalistiska diskurser kring hållbarhet i det urbana landskapet, men skapar en landskapsdemokratisk kvalité i form av en bredare, diskursiv ram för att förstå målsättningarna för urban landskapsplanering som är tillgänglig för en mångfald av unga medborgare. Avhandlingen adresserar fordringar från litteraturen kring landskapsdemokrati om substantiell deltagandemetodik. Med en grund i ungas livsvärld och handlingar demonstrerar framtidsverkstäderna hur en diskursiv öppenhet ger möjligheter för ett bredare landskapsengagemang som kontrasterar och komplimenterar delaktiggörande förvaltningsramverk. KUAR processen med de unga visar en exemplarisk möjlighet för att urban landskapsplanering och arkitektur kan engagera sig med en större mångfald av medborgare och målsättningar i gestaltningen av framtidens hållbara stadsmiljöer.

Keywords: stadens landskap, ungdomar, kritisk-utopisk aktionsforskning, hållbar omställning, planering, medborgardeltagande, förvaltning, landskapsdemokrati.

Dedication

For Jamie, for Dad

Contents

List of publications

This thesis is based on the work contained in the following papers, referred to by Roman numerals in the text:

I. Hagemann, Frederik Aagaard. Sang, Åsa Ode. Randrup, Thomas Barfoed. (2024). Young people's participation in urban landscape planning and transformation: a scoping review of interactive approaches. Socio-Ecological Practice Research, vol 6, pp 433-454. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42532-024-00200-1

II. Hagemann, Frederik Aagaard (2024). 'Can we Mec the Municipality?' Emerging voices of young people in a segregated urban landscape. Landscape Research, 1-14. https://doi.org/10.1080/01426397.2024.2369683

III. Hagemann, Frederik Aagaard. Altamirano, Ingrid. Young people's participation in urban landscape planning in Malmö, Sweden: democratic ambiguity and practice dilemmas (manuscript)

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The contribution of Frederik Aagaard Hagemann to the papers included in this thesis was as follows:

I. Frederik Aagaard Hagemann conceptualised the review. He was responsible for the development of the theoretical framework, he reviewed the literature, performed the analysis, and wrote the article. Åsa Ode Sang guided the review process and contributed to the formulation of research questions, analysis, and writing of the manuscript. Thomas Barfoed Randrup contributed to the formulation of research questions, analysis, and writing of the manuscript.

II. Frederik Aagaard Hagemann is the sole author.

III. Frederik Aagaard Hagemann was responsible for developing the research questions and strategy, performed the analysis, and wrote the manuscript. Ingrid Altamirano was responsible for developing the research strategy, collected and read the documents, performed the interviews, performed the analysis, developed the models, and contributed to the analysis and writing of the manuscript.

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Abbreviations

CUAR   Critical utopian action research

FCW   Future creation workshop

ELC   European Landscape Convention

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1. Introduction

This dissertation lives simultaneously in a small corner of academia, and at a busy intersection of diverse interests and perspectives. The small corner is a strain of action research that gravitates around the notions of critique and utopia as pathways to the creation of knowledge and learning. The busy intersection starts with a few key elements, namely young people, urban landscapes, and democratic change and transformation towards increased sustainability. As far as critical-utopian action research (CUAR) goes, this dissertation is a relatively modest contribution. A more elaborate work could have systematically related young people's analyses and visions back to CUARs theoretical vocabulary around critique, utopia, free space, social learning and imagination. A project with more ambitious, practical goals could have dwelled more extensively on the principles of diverse knowledge forms and what it entails to turn a participatory process upside down in facilitated meetings between young urban citizens' everyday life horizon, and landscape planners' and architects' professional practice.

Instead, this dissertation is mostly limited to dwelling on a group of young people's demonstrative ambivalence about a project framing of 'future, sustainable urban landscapes' such as I, as an engaged action researcher, introduced it. The dissertation then follows the young people and I, in chasing this ambivalence to its furthest possible consequences (within the frame of a research project), by developing a perspective on their urban environments that is radically their own. Already here, in the pursuit of this initial ambivalence, a rich meeting of new learnings and insights gather and find relevance in a range of academic and practical contexts and, perhaps most importantly: for the young people participating in this project. However, before we get into these new understandings, it is important to consider some underlying concerns pertaining to urban landscapes and democratic transformation towards sustainability that served as impetus for presenting this framing to the young people.

1.1 Urban sustainability and the need for transformative change

The influx of sustainability discourses increasingly pervade both rural and urban spatial planning. In urban settings, key concepts like blue-green infrastructure, ecosystem services, nature-based solutions, and ecosystem-based adaptation have arisen to aid practitioners and developers in creating more sustainable urban environments. Key scholars in the field of urban greening and sustainability have noted the lack of connection between these new framings of the urban landscape, and the existing societal challenges (Potschin-Young et al. 2018). Where functional interconnections between urban landscapes and wellbeing is increasingly well-described in Malmö and elsewhere (van den Bosch & Sang 2017), research has yet to find clear links to citizens' values and participation (Hauck et al. 2012, Kiss et al. 2022). There have been recent attempts to link ecosystem functionality of the urban landscape more closely with diverse citizens' needs (e.g. Fors et al. 2021, Hedblom et al. 2017) as well as to develop more refined methods to capture citizens' values around concepts like 'cultural' ecosystem services or biocultural diversity (e.g. Stålhammar and Pedersen 2017, Elands et al. 2019). Others have initiated critical discussions about the ability of these frameworks to capture socio-political complexity and its spatial equivalents (Ernstson 2013, Norgaard 2010, Dempsey & Robertson 2012), especially under the heading of urban environmental justice (e.g. Langemeyer & Connolly 2020). Meanwhile, it has been shown that localized sustainability action at times can overcome structural barriers to transformation processes (Barron et al. 2020). These studies and efforts have resulted in calls for new platforms for dialogue and engagement (Buijs et al. 2018).

Challenges like segregation, and increasingly competitive housing- and job-markets can even be exacerbated by sustainability- and greening oriented policies, while actively marginalizing certain neighbourhoods and populations (Anguelovski et al. 2018, Gulsrud & Steiner 2019, Langemeyer & Connolly 2020). Thus, the new green agendas might work against citizens' in underserved[1] neighbourhoods best interests by hiking housing prices and

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[1] While this can refer to areas that are statistically in lower income brackets, or with Malmö Municipality, the main empirical context for this dissertation, labels areas 'socio-economically vulnerable', Wacquant (2007) has described the territorial stigma entailed in these labels. For the purposes of this dissertation I will risks perpetuating some of these trends through the notion of 'underserved neighbourhoods'. The reasons for electing this shorthand is the close alignment with the young participants' own analyses (unfolded in later chapters) about

exacerbating stratifying trends in between areas with more, or less commercial interests. Metzger et al. (2021) emphasise how the very concept of sustainability can be used to engineer consensus across political divides that ultimately support a neoliberally oriented planning practice, prioritising economic growth over other societal values. To develop critical understandings that reveal the effect of 'sustainability', 'greening' and other seemingly neutral words oriented towards environmental issues, scholars have theorized them as 'fixes' to political and economic problems, rather than the benign headlines for alternative development trajectories they might seem to be (Harvey 2001, Jonas & While 2007, Holgersen & Malm 2015). This critical scholarship serves to underline also the political nature of the processes that these concepts encompass. To combine the development of sustainable urban landscapes with actual matters of segregation and marginalization means adopting radically different frames of questioning the shaping of the urban landscape, and not least new ways to represent the systemic social problems that have mostly been left out of the functional discourses around urban ecosystems.

Sustainability, for the intents and purposes of this dissertation will be understood along the lines of other action researchers, as an 'emergent social-ecological potential for human life to flourish without eroding its own conditions for reproducing itself' (Egmose 2016 p. 249). This means paying increased attention to the interdependencies between humans and the rest of nature, and can be understood as both critical, in terms of evaluating how societies reproduce themselves, and utopian, as looking towards currently unfulfilled potentials. Finally, sustainability can be understood in a democratic sense, as a potential that must be unfolded and negotiated in a pluralistic public sphere that accounts for diverse and conflicting social interests and tangible recognition and action to counteract existing patterns of social inequality and marginalisation. These stipulations are not meant to diverge from the critical understandings outlined above, but rather to indicate a direction that puts existing social life first, in order to contextualise critical understandings and sustainability potentials in the lived experience of actual citizens. Thus, starting with real people in real communities offers pathways to dislodge pervasive practices and values that are reproduced by existing

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a gap in needs and available services that becomes particularly glaring in some neighbourhoods, rather than others.

market- and state structures that have shown little promise in realising potentials for a sustainable reproduction of social life (Gibson-Graham 2005, 2016). This widens the scope to insert the question of sustainability in democratic deliberations of 'how we want to live?' (Nielsen & Nielsen 2016a), and allows critical understandings to help contextualise experiences of the diverse lives and livelihoods in cities of today.

1.2   Sustainability – starting with the young people

Young people are often hailed as a key actor and interest group in combatting climate change and shaping sustainable transformations. Far from the incisive impacts of the Greta Thunberg's of the world, most young people, in Sweden and elsewhere, grow up with very little recognition as important, democratic actors. Nevertheless, of all people alive today, they will bear the brunt of both the problems of- and solutions to- the societal sustainability crises. Meanwhile, an abundance of scholarship (Hilder & Collin 2022, Marquardt et al. 2024, Marquardt 2020, Molder et al. 2022, Parth et al. 2020, Sloam et al. 2022, Corner et al. 2015) describes the protests and activism of young people and underlines their potential as a critique of the largely insufficient answers from political establishments. Meanwhile, disillusion, disinterest, and downright scepticism about the significance of ongoing crises in societal relationships with nature have also been widespread amongst young people (Ojala 2015, Uba et al. 2023), and have been linked to societal powerlessness and a lack of inclusivity in broader social processes (Ojala 2015 p.1145). As the Europe-wide NEET report (data cited in Bladt & Percy-Smith 2021) has also made clear, austerity and uncertain economic conditions in family homes are exacerbated for young people, and negatively influence their recognition as participants in shaping public discourses and in democratic decision-making. As Bladt and Percy-Smith (ibid.) further note, the new EU Youth Strategy contains appeals to combat youth inequality by adopting inclusive approaches to young people's participation. While Walther et al.'s book (2020) document young people's struggles for participation by refocusing on their everyday practices in public spaces, Bečević and Dahlstedt (2022) paint a somewhat bleaker picture, of lacking participation due to structural inequalities and ethno-cultural segregation in European cities. They suggest need to see the question of young people's participation through a prism of marginalized citizenship and

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patterns of inequality and social exclusion (ibid. see also Dikec 2017 for urban protest as political counter-movements driven by young people). Addressing similar concerns, Bladt & Percy-Smith (2021) argue for a transformative kind of participation, which can redress power imbalances and bridge the glaring gaps in the (also fraught and austere) daily realities of young people, and an institutionalized practice working to improve the sustainability of urban lives and livelihoods. The question of citizens' participation has long been a contentious one, and the sustainability challenges to contemporary societies' relationships with nature push questions of democratic change and transformation with ever-increasing urgency.

1.3 Democracy and participation in new urban greening agendas

An increasing number of concepts and activities across the world wins recognition as renewal of democratic institutions with a focus towards increased participation, and allows minority groups a substantial say in local developments. From the collective, community oriented production and reproduction of the Mondragon collectives, to increasingly systematized environmental activism, academic and practical work towards commoning (e.g. Ostrom 1990, De Angelis 2017, Klein 2014 for an overview of poignant examples). Urban commons have been recognized as distinct by authors such as Huron, who understands them as (2015 p. 953): "space that is already densely packed with people, competing uses, and capitalist investment; and the urban commons is constituted by the coming together of strangers". This has led urban commons to be levied as framing devices for focusing planning efforts and urban land use decisions on multiple- and conflicting neighbourhood perspectives and local interest conflicts (e.g. Kvist 2022). Meanwhile, institutionalized practices around environmental- and landscape planning and governance are being opened to more diverse actors and localized processes, as have been demonstrated for example in experiments with 'mosaic' or place-based governance (e.g. Buijs et al. 2016, 2018, Edge & McAllister 2009). In practitioner-focused discourses, co-creation of green, urban living environments have been a widespread notion (Albert et al. 2019, Larondelle et al. 2016). Such discourses have pushed for wider framings of nature's values such as with 'nature based thinking' (Randrup et al. 2020),

as well as attempts at diversifying governance structures to accommodate for diverse kinds of knowing and practicing nature with, rather than for people (Mercado et al. 2024, Brand & Vadrot 2013). However, Remme and Haarstad's review (2022) indicates that citizens' participation in relation to nature based solutions currently fail to move beyond more instrumental governance discourses and engage substantially with citizens' lived horizons. Currently, such frameworks lend themselves too easily to technocratic implementation and risk removing institutionalised practice further away from the lived realities of the diverse citizens of urban landscape (Kiss et al. 2022, Remme & Haarstad 2022). This begs the question if new, blue-green visions for urban landscapes will do anything to abate the alienation from nature and society that segregated cities produce. Will fluttering butterflies on an urban meadow improve the chances of a fulfilling life span for all? Or: will the greening of neighbourhoods increase housing prices and push already marginalised groups further out to the margins of ever more unequal life conditions in our cities?

Like Sennett notes (2018), the gated community is currently the most popular form of new urban development in the world, and green gentrification has become an established and recognised concept in big cities across the world. This raises urgent questions around inequality and democracy in urban greening agendas. Remme & Haarstad (2022) suggest an increased attention to discourses such as commoning that take up structural conditions around property enclosures and policy alternatives to an ever increasing neoliberalization (ibid.). Couched in terms of broader social agendas, emerging frameworks concerned with blue-green infrastructure, ecosystem services, and nature based solutions might well be open to the most hopeful and transformative visions they inspire. This would, however, require working with, and somewhat beyond, these new governance frameworks. Critical scholars of environmental governance have pointed out how the majority of established governance paradigms lacks capacities to engage meaningfully with citizens' lifeworld (Elling 2003). This point has been taken up in critical strains of action research (Nielsen and Nielsen 2006a, 2007), where the alternative to disengagement and technocratic expert cultures is not increasing participation, nor establishing networks or fusing relations. In this view, the problem is a fragmented social everyday life-sphere and absence of basic processes of localised democracy. Urban landscapes are prime cases of common affairs that transcend what we

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can meaningfully address, for example as private consumers or isolated as users of a given park.

A truly participatory care for local nature/landscapes thus requires the formation of new democratic forms of deliberation, action, and organisation that goes beyond current neoliberal framings. This has been a key focus in critical strains of action research. As Nielsen and Nielsen demonstrate (2006a, 2016a), by refocusing a citizens-engagement process from institutional procedures to starting with fundamental questions about how citizens' want to live. This also requires an often fraught line of enquiry into what local citizens actually have in common, in the face of an increasingly individualized and socially stratifying societal development in capitalist nation states. As Nielsen and Nielsen note in the Danish context, the tendency to think and operationalize governance and management of nature primarily from above, reflects the growing disengagement that have been orchestrated by an increase in societal relationships with nature mediated by market economies (2006a). They call for a renewed political culture around localised forms of care, attention, and responsibilities for living environments, and their critical utopian action research devise how new practices, knowledge and democratic forms of organisation can arise from collaborations between researchers and lay citizens around fundamental questions of, 'how we want to live?' (Nielsen & Nielsen 2016, see also Egmose 2015). Other critical utopian action researchers have demonstrated how these potentials can be enacted with young people, and other peripheral or marginalised groups (Bladt 2013, Tofteng & Bladt 2020, Hansen et al. 2016).

Returning to the people with whom this dissertation is primarily concerned with, I will investigate whether more democratic and transformative kinds of participation with young, urban citizens can be enacted, and offer a broader, social agenda for urban landscape change while maintaining a dialogue about the sustainability of their living environments. I will pursue this line of questioning in a multi-pronged approach, but primarily based on a critical utopian action research project with 34 quite different young people from two neighbourhoods in the city of Malmö, Southern Sweden. Before detailing the research strategy and design, I will introduce the critical theoretical underpinnings of the dissertation, and describe how they motivate the key questions and themes in this project.

1.4   Aim and research questions

This project examines and suggests potential links between the knowledge and initiatives co-generated with young people through critical utopian action research with young people in underserved neighbourhoods, and builds onto stipulations from the field of landscape democracy to introduce the notion of 'transformative participation' in sustainability discourses related to urban landscapes.

The goal of this PhD project is to develop an analytical and methodological approach to a broader social participation in urban landscape transformation along with young people, who constitute a group with less access to formalized channels of power and decision-making, especially in underserved urban areas. The project centres on the iterative work with young people to decide on key problems, priorities and outcomes related to urban landscape change in their local environments. While searching empirically and experimentally for outcomes at both subjective (for the people involved), organizational (in relation to relevant institutions), and societal (in searching for democratic processes for sustainable transformation) levels, the research interest is roughly guided by the following four research questions.

RQ1: How do existing interactive approaches to participation in urban landscape planning engage with young people's lifeworld and incorporate action orientations?

RQ2: How do young people from underserved areas in Malmö, Sweden articulate their perspectives and intervene in existing discourses and developments in relation to the urban landscape?

RQ3: What challenges and opportunities exist to enhance young people's democratic participation in shaping and planning the future city of Malmö?

RQ4: How do the analyses and interventions from young people's participation in a critical utopian action research project contrast and potentially inform prevalent discourses around sustainable urban landscape transformation?

These questions are pursued as closely related studies and will result in the development of three papers, which are more thoroughly introduced after the sections detailing the theoretical framing and background for the action research engagement in Malmö.

2. Urban Landscapes and 'crooked timber': action research as democratic knowledge creation

In this section, I outline key concepts and the epistemological position that has been underlying the main methodology and analyses in this project. I also briefly touch upon the ontological assumptions drawn from both: critical theory, pertaining to a critical conception of society; and from the action research tradition, a dynamic, process-oriented and theoretically driven knowledge creation. These considerations play into how I investigate the relationships between young people and their urban environments, and the possibilities for their participation in plans and actions for transformative change.

2.1 Not ticking the young people box

'Young people' in this dissertation refers to a non-homogenous group, which is central to the research and the very gesture that underlies its participatory work. There are about as many ways of defining and delineating 'young people' as there are researchers who concern themselves with them. My intention is not to get into any of these discussions, but rather to situate myself squarely in the middle of various age-spectra (see for example Paper 1, figure 4 for an overview of the spread in ages and labels related to young people just in the urban landscape-field). However, I will add a few stipulations from social theorists Ziehe, Negt and Bourdieu that pertain to the particular concern for young people's lives in public, and what they might have in common after all. A first distinction that has to be made is that I do not conceive of 'young people' in the sense it is often implied in the USA, for example, as everyone below 18 years of age (see e.g. Hart). As the fieldwork here will also show, even the selected age range of 15-20 years, held such a vast spread of interests in their living environments, which at times it hardly made sense to work together as a group. Nevertheless, the starting assumptions here pertain to the particular social- and political status that young people are often awarded in modern society.

Ziehe (1989) described already in the 1980s how young people were seemingly stuck with an acute ambivalence in a society that promised vast

freedoms and possibilities to be whatever you want to be, but for the majority held little material possibilities to actually realise this promise. This central ambivalence is stratified across social groups, and is only exacerbated for young people who grow up with insecure social and economic conditions surrounding them. With the increase in possibilities for social mobility that has occurred, it is also followed by more acute decision-conflicts left to the individual that previously were much more closely inscribed in local norms (ibid.). Now, in light of climate change and societal sustainability challenges, young people of today can largely, for the first time in generations, perhaps no longer expect to accumulate more resources than their parents. Bourdieu already started noting this overall societal discrepancy in the 1980s (Bessant et al. 2020). Gardiner (2013) outlines climate change as an 'ethical tragedy' as we undermine the living conditions of future generations, without any tools for addressing this harm. Thus, in a basic sense, these overarching concerns for the world and the role of young people in shaping their own lives come into play in new, radically different ways in the transformative changes required for how humans relate to a wider nature.

I would argue that the pace and scale in which change is needed urges new questions of the democratic role of young people in society. Young people's democratic participation, however, is often a contentious matter, and have for long been a topic of consternation among the older generations. Ziehe (1989 p. 25) noted for example that 'we tend to talk a lot *about* young people, but rarely *with* them'. In Percy-Smith's critical analysis of current approaches to participation with young people (2015 p. 6): "in spite of the inclusive rhetoric of "participation" and community/public engagement initiatives, these are on the whole toothless vanguards of ailing liberal representative democratic systems". Substantiating participatory practice beyond tokenistic approaches, to Percy-Smith (ibid.), needs to start with notions of lifeworld and social learning around increased possibilities to shape young people's everyday environments. Much scholarship on young people's participation in relation to landscape questions are couched in terms of education and pedagogy (see Paper 1), but new trends open up further to how the surrounding society can, not just teach, but learn from young people. Katz' extensive ethnographic work (2004) eloquently shows how the overarching economic development trends restructure children- and young people's lives across diverse, global contexts, leaving it up to the young people's own creativity, with little societal support, to navigate ever-

changing living environments. Meanwhile, a recent review by Rodela & Norss (2023) point out how young people's welfare in Sweden is often conceived in narrow views on social- and family policy, and lacks relevant connections to spatial planning practice. In an anthology of youth participation, Hagen and Andersen (2021) describe how recently innovative, transdisciplinary engagement methods are brought forward, especially in action research environments. Hagen's extensive review (2021 pp. 281-282) documents how the structural barriers to participation in planning lead to a lack of processes that seem meaningful to the young people involved. Among the list of these barriers, they cite an 'adult-centric view' of young people as 'not yet grown', and thus not needed to be taken as seriously as adults (e.g. above the legal voting age) in policy- and planning processes (see also Rodela & Norss 2023). Another important barrier cited in Hagen's review (2021) is the lacking capacities to take into account social-, economic-, and political contexts. What Hagen and Andersen's anthology demonstrates, is the importance of the 'how' of young people's participation. They argue for a 'thick' participation that moves beyond formalistic schemes and 'box ticking' for young people's interests, and instead allows for creativity and conflict (Hagen & Andersen 2021). To aid this in practice, Hagen suggests three pyramid models that outline ongoing, meaningful participatory processes within municipal planning, social enterprises, and collaborative research with young people (Hagen 2021 pp. 293-297).

These models outline the complexities involved, especially for adult professionals who are smitten with the ambition but searching for the 'how' of meaningful youth participation. This dissertation takes up the question of meaningfulness of participatory processes in an exemplary co-creative research engagement with young people. Rather than following the modelled steps, however, I engage with critical-utopian action research as it offers ways to dwell on central ambivalences appearing in the 'how', of co-creative processes with young people in urban landscapes. The choice of working with young people has a range of implications, not least due to the peripheral democratic status and pace and scale implied in 'transformative' change, as mentioned above. Unlike children, young people can be considered relatively independent users and actors in urban spaces, and yet tend to be either conflated with children, underestimating their potential and agency, or conceived as separate from children, but appearing in what Johansen (2016) considers a 'deficit discourse', for example as problematic or unaccountable.

Thus, young people in co-creative research oriented towards transformative change can play a significant role in highlighting, and overcoming democratic dilemmas and existing paradoxes. Shifting entrenched roles as users and consumers ever so slightly, along with young people, can hold important learnings oriented towards transformative change, especially if professionalised research and practice does not just tick boxes, but engages with their perspectives and potential roles and responsibilities in open and creative ways. The context for these overarching concerns for young people in this study is the urban landscape, to which a few stipulations are added below.

2.2 Landscape as a lived, practiced democratic entity

The study of landscapes has a long and pluralistic history that I will not recount in this dissertation. A brief recourse to the European Landscape Convention's (ELC) statutory document however understands landscape as (European Commission 2000, chap. 1, art. 1): ''an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors''. Landscape practice in fields such as planning, design, and architecture might seek to understand and give shape to living environments as they appear in contexts as much concerned with human-, social- and natural sciences. Thus, professionalised landscape practitioners move in complex webs of multiple understandings and interests and bring these together, typically with human life in the centre. In this dissertation, I will situate the research, insofar as it pertains to landscape, squarely in the tradition that conveys landscape as a democratic entity, and is given meaning by diverse social, cultural, as well as political interests.

Olwig (1996) unravels the long etymological arch in Northern European understandings of landscape, and situates it in socio-political fields, rather than in purely physical or aesthetic terms. To Olwig (ibid.), historical practice in Northern Europe suggests an intimate connection between the practices of everyday life and shaping landscapes. The formation landscape as something deliberately planned, governed, administrated, or designed thus follows a long history of modernity, but initially derived from a reference to

the everyday practices[2] and common affairs of all people. When alluding to the word 'practice', in urban landscape practice, this dissertation refers to 'practitioners' in professional or other explicit roles working on planning and development of urban landscapes

The notion of landscape democracy goes somewhat beyond what statutory documents like the ELC lays down, where participatory questions pertaining to landscape concern parties 'with an interest in definition and implementation of landscape policies' (European Commission 2000). What constitutes such an interest, however, is a question of wider patterns of democratic recognition. Olwig's philological work of restoring old connotations of land, shared by common uses, customs, perceptions and decision-making practices also cast the question of practice much more widely. Currently, such practices could include everything from allotment gardening, pruning trees in private gardens, or actions of volunteer groups working explicitly with biodiversity conservation, nature pedagogy, restoration, or green social justice. While these latter examples can be considered somewhat recognisable 'actors' with worthwhile contributions in frameworks like 'mosaic governance' (Buijs et al. 2016, 2018), there is yet a deeper implication, if practice goes deeper into the everyday lives and perceptions of lay citizens – who might also not have such recognized interests. While this dissertation reserves the word 'practice' for professionalised, or at least deliberate, actors aiming to shape the urban landscape, it takes pivotal inspiration from the concept of 'landscape democracy' (Egoz et al. 2018).

If processes pertaining to landscape are to be 'democratic', they need to reflect the lives and needs of all members of society, not just those already pointed out as having an interest. The Convention's preamble does also allude to broader platforms for participation and democratic deliberation, but its' determinations, as Olwig (2007 p.587) also points out, are more oriented towards naturalistic understandings of many of the professionals who might use the document as a navigational tool in professionalised practice, and less towards the social, cultural and political aspects. Thus, it lends itself to top-down governance via technical and instrumental language in the stated

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[2] When alluding to the word 'practice' this dissertation refers to: 'practitioners' work in professional or other explicit roles having to do with planning and development of urban landscapes; 'participatory practices' as processes related to citizens' involvement and inclusion, outreach activities etc.; 'everyday practices' as activities belonging to lay citizens' daily lives in their urban environments.

measures, and stands in discursive tension with the aspirations for diversity, rather than new, broad participatory and democratic agendas redefining social-ecological relationships. It is easy to read between the lines, as Olwig does eloquently (2007 p.589), that landscape is the prime concern of experts, and the broader public is mostly to be informed and consulted about landscape plans and developments. A more fundamental engagement with the landscape-dwellers is thus not stipulated in this statutory document. Taking the convention by its word, that perception is crucial, and the added impetus from the field of landscape democracy, I will distinguish between the landscape as 'lived', and as 'practiced'. The former refers to everyday lives in urban environments, shared by common uses, customs, perceptions and decision-making of dwellers in a certain landscape, and the latter to professionalised practice within specialised subfields. This distinction begs questions of what a landscape democratic engagement can look like, and what gaps, and potential synergies can be found in between lay citizens' interests and engagements, and more professionalised discursive framings. In relation to emerging, open governance frameworks, it urges new questions of lay-citizens involvement in shaping their living environments and livelihoods, be they recognized actors or not. In a city, characterized by also social, economic, cultural, and political complexity and intensity, the question of whose perspectives are recognized becomes central.

2.3 The crooked city

Urban planner and theorist Richard Sennett's understanding of the city starts with a distinction between the *ville* and the *cité*. Sennett (2018 pp.1-2) distinguishes between the city as a built, physical landscape (ville) and as a lived experience and consciousness about how life is, right here, and how you might want it to be (cité). As Sennett remarks, "how people want to live should be expressed in how cities are built" (2018 p.2), but goes on to recount the 'crookedness'[3] of all urban life, with glaring inequalities, migration, and ambivalent diversity that does not neatly fit into the urban form as it is planned, designed, or governed. Analyses of the urban, in this view, need to be able to address complexity and diverse (and conflicting) values. Sennett

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[3] With reference to Kant's dictum: "From such crooked timber as humankind is made of, nothing entirely straight can be made".

(ibid. p.8) argues for acknowledging the 'crooked' and promoting equality by embracing a particular, historically situated promise of the city: that you do not have to inherit a fixed social- and economic position in society. To do this, the urban planner or spatial practitioner must become partner to the urban dweller, and explore with the diverse, visceral experiences of living in the city (ibid.).

Drawing on Jane Jacobs and other great urban planners and theorists of public engagement in the city, Sennett also recounts the inability of the most widespread format to handle conflicts around urban land use: the public consultation. Typically, the consultation format pushes citizens into an adversarial position, and practitioners to be defenders of rules and regulations. Partnerships, Sennett argues, can only arise when co-producing plans for urban environments between the technically trained and the ones with lived experience of the environments (ibid. p.244). Echoing a long tradition of critical theory, Sennett has elsewhere demonstrated how public life and reasoning abates in neoliberal state regimes, and how citizens tend to enter into planning and research as 'passive populations' rather than active partners in taking responsibility for the common affairs of society (2003). The compound effect of neoliberal regimes lead to glaring inequalities of urban environments. To Sennett, the fact of inequality comes with an erosion of respect for people's diverse life circumstances, which in turn diminishes the development of wider practices of care around less affluent lives and not least living environments in the city (2004).

Counter to these predominant trends, the term landscape democracy has levied to elevate the role of diverse citizens' groups in their experiential knowledge, and own understandings and everyday practices of care for their living environments. Landscape democratic engagement has been developed as engaging with 'connoisseurs' of landscape (Arler & Mellqvist 2014), and guiding documents like the ELC is concerned with 'interested parties' such as volunteer groups and active citizens. Meanwhile, the rise of participation in urban planning agendas have also been questioned in Swedish contexts. Thus, Tavilzadeh (2015), for example, contends that the alleged aspirations to democratisation can also be seen as increases in governmentality within increasingly dominant neoliberal state regimes. To unravel the critical- and hopeful potentials of participatory processes, the next section outlines some implications from critical theories around democracy, participation, and the public sphere. This serves as theoretical background understanding for the

participatory approaches developed in the action research engagement that forms the core of this dissertation.

2.4 Substantive participation in a pluralistic public sphere

The public sphere has been abundantly theorised, not least by critical philosophers who are concerned with its crucial importance for democratic processes. The latest major development in this field is commonly attributed to Nancy Fraser's critical reading of Habermas' conceptualization of a dialogue- and consensus oriented public sphere (1990). Fraser's work builds onto Habermas in theorizing the public sphere as the main corrective to state structures and market economy, but goes much further in reading the operations of power in social, cultural and political processes. Thus, securing the public sphere as a dialogical arena where all can engage in dialogue, free of domination, is not enough. Fraser reads the active struggle for civil rights of marginalised- and minority groups to have been historically dependent on multiple, co-existing public spheres. Crucially, minority-views or suppressed experiences tend not to be expressed or be actively delegitimised in broader public discussions, which can be summarised in more monolithic conceptions of 'the' public sphere. For any other than the currently politically dominant ideas to come into contention, societies require alternate, protected arenas to congeal into perspectives that can be meaningfully negotiated in the same arena as more broadly recognised ideas and interests.

Ideas about pluralistic public spheres also appear in critical scholarship on political dimensions of landscape democracy and spatial planning discourses at large. Olwig (1996), for example, has called for a 'substantive' understanding of landscape to be invigorated, which would entail a deeper recognition of the historical and contemporary importance of local communities' practices of shaping and perceiving their living environments. Scholars concerned with landscape democracy have argued for such substantive engagement in participatory processes, allowing conflictual- and marginalised interests to be better expressed and represented in landscape planning processes (Calderon & Butler 2020). In order to counteract the exclusionary effects of a generalised notion of 'the public interest' in spatial planning, Friedmann (2011) has argued for 'radical' planning approaches where planners and practitioners devote time and resources to substantive

participatory engagement with minority groups to counter the effects of inequality and marginalisation in whose perspectives are represented (ibid., 1999). Following these critiques and arguments about landscape democracy and the city, it is appropriate to work from the assumption that the visions and plans for urban landscapes express how some want to live, and that new and more radical approaches are direly needed in order to plan and envision urban landscapes for all. The question remains about how a landscape engagement with marginalised perspectives can be levied as legitimate counter-discourses. And importantly, how such counter-discourses might fare in transformative processes oriented towards increased socio-ecological sustainability. The urgent question being, whether they manage to challenge expert-discourses and top-down implementation logics and engage substantively with a pluralistic public spheres of diverse social groups and conflicting interests.

Calderon and Butler (2020) are clear in their analysis of participation in contemporary landscape planning: it needs to move beyond a merely procedural focus and requires theorising and re-politicising; it needs to be substantive in ways of engaging with real world difference, power, and conflict. Conventional methodologies like citizen surveys and public hearings and consultations are unlikely to achieve this, as they treat citizens' perceptions, preferences, and roles between practitioners and governance officials as static (ibid., also Sennett points this out 2018 p. 244). Fraser (1990) coins the notion of 'subaltern counter publics' as protected spaces where political interests that contrast current hegemonic power regimes must be able to be articulated. Though Fraser extracts the notion from revisionist histories of civil rights movements, this provides a relevant theoretical frame for any democratically peripheral or marginalised groups' participation (ibid.). The single public sphere or generalised notions of 'public interests' cannot account sufficiently as a corrective for the difference between stratified social groups, such as in segregated cities, in actually existing democracies of today. To Fraser, critical theories of society today must (ibid. p.77): "render visible the ways in which societal inequality taints deliberations within publics". In essence, a critical reflection must look at existing democracy from its limits, especially those experienced by its peripheral and marginalised groups and actors. In this view, predominant trends and policies around sustainable transformations of urban landscapes must be brought to contention with its most peripheral, even if most

impacted, actors: young urban citizens. To collaborate meaningfully with young people in giving shape to future sustainable urban landscapes needs both theoretical and methodological criticality, and openness to allow diverse groups and marginalised experiences and perspectives to become articulated and brought into contention with more predominant discourses. The full, entwined, and sometimes antagonistic way an urban scene or environment might strike someone in their daily life is rarely brought to bear in all its complexity, and would require new modes of researcher-citizen-practitioner relationships to develop in pluralistic public spheres.

2.5 Critical philosophy and participation in action research

The questions and cross-cutting problem-constellations outlined above call for transgressive research methodologies. Action research has had a long tradition as an experimental, humanising, and democratising strain of scientific thought and praxis (Brydon-Miller et al. 2003, Toulmin 1996, Nielsen & Nielsen 2006b). The social psychologist Kurt Lewin was first to coin the term 'action research' (e.g. Lewin 1946, see also Adelman 1993 and Nielsen and Svensson 2006). One of Lewin's points of departure was a confounding large-scale study, the Hawthorne experiments in General Electric's factories in the 1920s. Here, researchers were experimenting with how various factors in the interior of the factories could improve productivity. All attempts, however, to alter the lighting, shift- and break-durations etc. came back inconclusive. Remarkably, productivity increased both when brightening, and when dimming the lights. This led the leaders of the experiments to conclude that another factor to consider was the presence of university-researchers in the factory setting. As Nielsen & Nielsen describe (2006 p. 69), this led Lewin to conclude that this was not merely a factor, but the crucial finding: that by taking an active interest in the working conditions of factory workers, researchers could contribute to improving real life processes, and even push them in a more humanizing direction (ibid.). Elsewhere, Adelman recounts Lewin's early foundations of action research in researchers' work place engagement that favoured democratic participation over coercive structures in industrialised societies (Adelman 1993 p. 9): "It was part of Lewin's insight that he could take contentious social issues and refute the taken-for-granted, often pessimistic assumptions

about 'human nature', and replace these with what has become a new 'common sense'." This was the outset of a different, complementary, approach within the humanities and social sciences, namely action research.

The emerging jungle of action research approaches have in common that they (to varying degrees) deviate from especially the otherwise prevailing norm of scientific disinterestedness, and instead aspires to a norm of democratization (Brydon-Miller et al. 2003). Bradbury (2015) refers to this as a difference between research *on* - classical research, *for* - common to 'applied' approaches (for example in 'modus 2' research (Gibbons et al. 2010)), or *with* people (see also Nielsen & Svensson 2006 p. 20 for an overview of these contrasting perspectives on collaborative research.). Researching *with* people being the key aspiration in action research, I will further detail how this has been conceptualized in particular ways inspired by critical theory, providing an alternative to the norm of disinterestedness and instead experiments with democratisation of- and in social scientific practice.

As the Norwegian philosopher Hans Skjervheims influential essay (1996) on the researchers role as 'Participant and Spectator' states, social scientific exploits objectify human research participants when adopting a 'neutral' or 'disinterested' stance. This opens a space for critical reflection in conventional scientific practice, by allowing comparisons of a given response, selection, or outcome to other, similar instances. Ultimately, following correct, established and formalised procedures, this produces generalizable knowledge. However, to Skjervheim (ibid.), the objectification entailed in the initial communicative stance turns the actual research situation into an instrumental relationship, where the input from one part is artificially solidified (e.g. as 'data'), and used for purposes exterior to the actual communicative situation. As opposed to most other social interactions, this casts the observer-participant relationship as one where the latter is a mere means to the ends of the former. Within this, the researcher is the sole agent and the participant merely an occasion to study a pre-defined phenomenon, rather than a fully subjective, other human being. To Skjervheim, this misrepresents the new social reality where the participant-observer interaction has already happened. 'Data', from such an interaction freezes the understanding of it in an extra, artificial layer of reality that now has increased status due to one parts alleged disinterestedness (ibid.).

Inspiring the field of action research, especially in Scandinavia, Skjervheim outlined the foundations of a research process in social science with human participants that instead of objectifying aims to establish true subject-to-subject situations. The key strategies for achieving a subject-to-subject relationship is thus, firstly, transparency about the researcher's own, specific sort of engagement in social reality, and, secondly, a dialogical process that allows for researcher and participant to establish a mutual interest in the phenomena being studied. Instead of objectifying, the aspiration in action research is rather to 'subjectify' the participant as an active part in society, with a shared interest in a given phenomenon also under general consideration in the research process (ibid.). It is exactly these aspirations which have been central in critical utopian action research, as it has been developed primarily in Denmark, but with considerable spread in international contexts (Paabye et al. 1988, Gunnarsson et al. 2016, Hansen et al. 2016, Egmose 2015, Schwenke et al. 2021). Here, we find unique approaches to critically reflexive, interested, and open forms of experimentation in social research.

2.6 Interested norms, free space and ethics of co-creative experimentation

An 'interested', democratising norm has been developed in the framework of critical utopian action research (CUAR), which explicitly aims to develop an un-instrumental relationship between the researchers and citizens. Critical action researchers have taken inspiration from Skjervheim and related discussions about methodology in social research, and have developed approaches to conducting research that starts with the establishment of mutual interests between the researcher-participant and the citizen-participant in a given process (Nielsen & Svensson 2006). This open starting point troubles neat division between subjective and objective factors, and otherwise entrenched epistemic hierarchies between the researcher's generalised knowledge and disinterestedness, and the subjective and particular experiential knowledge, for example of citizen-participant. The methodological approaches is inspired by critical philosopher Theodor Adorno, and aim to investigate a largely antagonistic reality by paying particular attention to contradictions and ambivalence around central terms and concepts (Nielsen & Nielsen 2006b). The fact that topics and concepts

are often delineated and understood quite differently among diverse groups of citizens is a fruitful starting point, rather than a hindrance for the creation of knowledge. CUAR aligns with the participatory stance of Skjervheim and the radical ambitions of critical theorists such as Adorno. As theorist of science, Stephen Toulmin (1996) have noted about the advantage of action research, the process of creating knowledge about a dynamic world must itself be dynamic, and as no change-process is directionless, the humanising and democratising ambitions already stated by Lewin, becomes central to theorise and develop. CUAR theorise this direction building onto Lewin's early conceptualisations with a normative aspiration derived from critical theory, namely to diminish alienation and avoid reification of societal structures through research practices. In this view, research that claims neutrality or no clear stance about the contemporary society will only reproduce dominant political trends, and thus be ideological in this philosophical sense. Nielsen and Nielsen sum up the theoretical- and practical underpinnings of CUAR (2016 p. 74):

> "This is a kind of Action Research committed to the initial democratic impulses of Lewin and Freire, but it has its specific inspiration from the German-Austrian writer, journalist and grassroots activist Robert Jungk, and, theoretically, it is based on Critical Theory in the tradition of Theodor W. Adorno. It favours the emergence of social imagination, based on everyday life experiences and utopian thinking, without reducing the critical perspective. This constitutes its potential for democratisation".

Aside from taking a critical stance on central aspects of how society is developing, the import from critical theory in CUAR is also a certain 'anti-objectivism'. This entails a self-critique of the ways in which scientific practices tend to disintegrate the experiences and lives of research participants into succinct parts meant for focused analyses based on stated scientific values, and also for critical purposes (Egmose et al. 2020). Instead, a scientific practice that treats other participants as partners in the scientific process must open up to deliberating on shared aspirations about the future. The central methodological import in CUAR comes from artists- and

activists Jungk & Müllert's (1987[4]) development of the future creation workshop (FCW), and importantly, the notion of creating free spaces where the normal workings of society can be paused while deliberating what Nielsen and Nielsen (2016 p.82) call the 'central democratic question, of how we want to live?'.

Prevalent political motives are ascribed to economic and other 'necessities' to which 'there is no alternative', but the idea of utopia entails 'transformation of the totality' (Nielsen & Nielsen 2016), which, with critical philosophers Bloch and Adorno (1989), constitutes a longing for the human aspirations that contemporary society does not yet fulfil, and stifles the possibilities express. In CUAR these relationships are temporarily paused as the researcher attempts to liberate the imaginative process from what Nielsen and Nielsen (2016) call the 'reality power' that to varying degrees leaves citizens with little social agency (ibid. p. 80). Creating free space, in this sense, means establishing a space to freely investigate alternative social futures, and enable a democratic negotiation of wishes and values in planning for those futures. Deliberating this question has radical implications that go beyond the empowerment of citizens. By working out 'future sketches' in a discursive space where current societal structures are paused CUAR encourages a transgressive reflection. In their evocative example of finding free space in Danish prisons, Bladt and Nielsen (2013) demonstrate how free space, as a procedural norm, temporarily neutralizes power structures and allows people to challenge the conditions under which their everyday lives play out — and pursue other alternatives. In this sense, Bladt and Nielsen declare (ibid. p. 371): "the CUAR tradition is critical in its view of the world as it has developed, but not of the capabilities of citizens and their dreams".

The utopian element is not just about dreaming up radically different realities. It also builds off a practical-political change orientation in critical philosophy (Bloch & Adorno 1989 p. 3): "Not only if we travel there, but *in that* we travel there, the island of Utopia arises out of the sea of the possible". For the idea of utopia to make sense in change oriented research and practice, it requires concrete action that is initiated with the intention of changing the totality. In the CUAR methodologies centred on the FCWs, an integral part is moving from protected processes, typically with groups of citizens without

[4] See also Paabye et al. 1988, Husted & Tofteng 2015 for an introduction to the development of FCW as the main methodological arrangement, and Egmose et al. 2020 for a succint introduction to CUAR in english.

relative positions of power, towards incremental steps of realising a democratically negotiated future. This has been developed as particular approaches to working on renewal of welfare systems and democratic participation with young people experiencing marginalisation from society by Bladt (2013b, see also Tofteng & Bladt 2020). In this dissertation, I have taken inspiration from this work, and invited young people to be, what could with Hagen (ibid. p. 296) be construed as, co-researchers. Rather than following the processual steps and facets laid out, however, this collaboration shifts the epistemic role away from rationalised models, and into a group of young citizens' lifeworld. Such a shift has been theoretically and methodologically developed as 'upturned participation' (Tofteng & Bladt 2020, Nielsen & Nielsen 2006a, 2007, 2016), and encourages groups of citizens in making 'self-managed outlines for the future' (Nielsen & Nielsen 2007 p. 13). Rather than a process of rationalised steps, this form of AR facilitates young people's own analyses and actions, revolving around critique, utopia, and democratic principles as key elements.

The central productive dynamic instilled is to attempt to close the gap between future visions and daily realities. This work has found particular relevance with groups marginalised from existing positions of political and discursive power. As Egmose et al. contend (2022 p. 678):

> "Whilst societal change often relates to developments of national and international governance, action research has a particular role to play in working with marginalized practices in identifying needs for change, which can inform broader transformations".

CUAR can provide pockets of free space to articulate difficult and ambivalent experiences about common affairs. How this can play out in specific methodological arrangements and in concrete experiments will be further explicated in the third chapter describing research strategy and design. This chapter will conclude with a section on the exemplary learning that arises out of CUAR processes, and a brief remark about how the multi-pronged approach of this dissertation differs, and interacts.

2.7 Exemplary learning and democratic facilitation in CUAR

Social learning in CUAR engagements and FCWs has been theorised with critical educational scholar Oskar Negt (2019). Negt was concerned with how individuals became collectives, and further: societal beings, and theorised a democratic learning that is chiefly concerned with making connections. This, to Negt, counteracts the tendencies for market- and state-logics that casts citizens in isolated roles as consumers, clients and users of specific products or services. Negt develops a critical hermeneutical and phenomenological understanding and insists that a critical scientific practice cannot generalise data-points, facts and findings outside of research interests and political values. Rather, a critical research practice in this view is concerned with investigating the complex social character of given phenomena alongside equal participants with diverse interests in them. Such investigations can at best result, not in generalizable research knowledge, but as examples that 'mirror the whole' (ibid. p. 141). In action research, a qualifying criteria for such knowledge is whether it helps given groups of interested citizens to take action on common affairs in their societal context. Thus, instead of attempting generalisations, the action researcher strives to assure that the topic is: (1) represented as it appears as part of participants' lifeworld, (2) is related to wider societal trends, and (3) has an emancipatory potential where the learnings, when properly contextualised, can indicate pathways to further democratic action that allows citizens better opportunities to affect their own living conditions.

The free spaces CUAR creates have also been shown to germinate beyond citizen-groups in urban development. In Egmose's (2015, 2016) transdisciplinary work on sustainable community development, he witnessed what he calls a 'doubling' of free space. Working with a series of citizen-produced short-films, researchers and practitioners created an informal forum for citizens to articulate what they perceived as unsustainable in their everyday lives. During this work, a recurring narrative emerged from the participating researchers and practitioners: they described free spaces as not only empowering to lay citizens, but for themselves to adopt new perspectives and senses of meaning to their work, thus 'doubling' the free space first for lay citizens, and subsequently for professional practitioners (ibid. p. 107). CUAR thus offers, not only a forum for deliberating from the margins and challenge established daily life- practices, but also a way of

intervening in entrenched governance arrangements and offer seeds for new relationships to arise between citizens and practitioners.

Democratic facilitation, in this sense, means paying particular attention to power dynamics, and how contradictory- or minority viewpoints can enter into wider reflections in relation to the given topic. Key procedural concepts from CUAR to secure this include: the already mentioned free space; a structure of systematic encouragement to make sure the diversity of voices in the room gets to be represented in the collective notes; and insistence on ambivalence, that things that do not make immediate sense or seem paradoxical do not need to be immediately understood or resolved, but can live on, as a reflexive frame for the workshops going ahead. The democratic procedural ideal also means that statements, selected priorities, or outcomes of specific activities are not represented as 'data points' to be subsequently analysed, but as content to be further discussed and understood by academic and lay participants in the workshops.

This results in a special role as action researcher facilitating the FCWs, but also as an occasional participant in a diverse group of young people's daily lives (Husted & Tofteng 2015, Ortiz Aragon & Brydon-Miller, Nielsen & Nielsen 2016). To adopt this perspective, and allow for democratic shifts, requires steps to counteract epistemic hierarchies such as the societal privilege of research and generalised knowledge. This leads to a research practice where withholding one's own knowledge, thoughts, and answers plays a significant role. The theoretical points and framings of the researcher moves to the background of the workshop situation, in order to establish a shared language for the given phenomenon. Theoretical, and more generalised points, only filter into the process insofar as they are directly beckoned by lay citizens questions and musings. Such sharing of discursive power allows new problem constellations to appear that can transcend established knowledge frameworks or societal divisions of common affairs. Another result of the dedication to a critical reflexive research process is the occasional focus on collective exploration of specific points, by insisting on the 'why' of a given theme or key-word being raised as part of the FCWs.

To summarise this extensive theoretical framing of this dissertation, CUAR contrasts and complements more widespread participatory openings in governance and planning. It theorises a need for meaningful participatory practices that radically shifts the perspective to lay citizens' lifeworld, and creates a free discursive and action-oriented space to critique and draw

connections between lived experience and societal circumstances. Thus, it offers ways for broader research-practice collaborations around young citizens' lives and landscapes, urged on by a critically reflexive distance to, but also encounters with, currently dominant structures shaping the discourses around greening- and sustainability of the future urban landscape. The next section will introduce the local societal context, noting some apparent trends and critical questions that appear when approaching young people's role in urban landscape change as an aspiring researcher in the city of Malmö, Southern Sweden.

3. Societal context: young people, sustainability and segregation in Malmö's urban landscapes

The contextual focal point of this dissertation is the city of Malmö, Southern Sweden. Malmö is a city of around 360.000 inhabitants, and is not only the country's fastest growing metropolis but also one of its most multicultural and demographically young areas. Often described as a modern, young and global city, Malmö's inhabitants originally hail from 180 different countries (Malmö Stad 2021a). Since 1996, the average age of its residents has steadily decreased and today nearly half of the inhabitants are under the age of 35 (22% are under 18 years old and 19% are between 25 to 34 years old, Malmö Stad 2022). Overcoming financial difficulties after a mostly collapsed industrial era, the municipality of Malmö today brands the city as a "dynamic knowledge centre built on cultural diversity, youth and sustainable development" (Malmö Stad 2021b, frontpage). Malmö is an industrial hub turned service and knowledge economy, especially the focus on green and sustainable development has become a means to overcome economic crises (Holgersen & Malm 2015). Green, affluent neighborhoods with multifunctional outdoor environments have been built on industrial rubble, while techno-driven visions for sustainable transformation have fueled the economy (ibid.).

Figure 1: Malmö, aerial view (photo credit: Camilla Andersson).

Malmö municipality has developed ambitious plans for maximizing the environmental benefits and services in the city, for example by replacing grey infrastructure solutions with raingardens and networks of green and blue corridors (Malmö Stad 2023, 2019, 2017). Working with concepts like urban ecosystem services, blue-green infrastructure, and nature-based solutions, the city aims to spearhead the transition of the urban landscape towards more sustainable dynamics for its inhabitants. These topics all provide functional perspectives on urban landscapes, and have shown potential to explain and emphasize the current and future value of nature in the city, improve planning for multifunctional blue and green spaces, provide well-being for urban citizens, and minimize negative environmental impacts (Andersson et al. 2019, van den Bosch & Ode Sang 2017, Sunding et al. 2024). Meanwhile, a social sustainability commission has focused its work on sustainable investments strategies, health inequality, and democratic management (Malmö Stad 2022b). These diverse strategies form a strong emphasis on sustainability and greening in the city's spatial planning, and overall development strategies. Thus, it is worthwhile to dwell on the policy-import and implications as a background for understanding participatory practices, and what role young people's perspectives on their everyday landscapes could potentially play.

3.1 Malmö municipality's visions of sustainability and planning for blue and green environments

'The sustainable landscape planning agenda' of Malmö city is an extended notion in this study, aimed to capture the official, municipal 'sustainable urban planning' framework (Malmö Stad 2021b), a plethora of emerging approaches that concern landscape and sustainability that have been pioneered. This agenda has won Malmö international acclaim and plays a significant role in shaping the urban landscape (Malmö Stad 2019, Holgersen & Malm 2015). These include tangible spatial elements such as in the cloudburst plan (2017) but also visionary documents like a blue-green plan (2019) resting on an ecosystem service foundation.

Figure 2: Cloudburst-plan, example design of bioretention-area (Malmö Stad 2017)

Figure 3: Suggested network for blue-green infrastructure (Malmö Stad 2020)

Figure 4: Visionary image of participation from blue-green plan (Malmö Stad 2019)

The concrete developments range from prestige projects like the new urban housing and commercial developments, especially in the harbour districts, to retrofitting of older working class neighbourhoods to handle increasing amounts of stormwater. The programme laid out for 'sustainable urban planning' goes from the city's comprehensive planning and across the various administrations. This amounts to an overall introduction of contemporary terminology related to highlighting social-ecological interconnections in the landscape, like ecosystem services, nature-based solutions and the like. This to better understand also the points that critical scholars have made in relation to policy and planning trends in Swedish cities, especially around notions of greening and sustainability (e.g. Holgersen & Malm 2015, Tahvilzadeh et al. 2017).

This dissertation includes a more detailed reading of the plan for Malmö's blue and green environments (Malmö Stad 2019), as it ties directly to evocative and participatory sustainable landscape visions for the future. The blue-green plan expressively ties wider sustainability challenges to an overarching urban planning agenda. It adheres to the comprehensive plan, and is considered a complement to other planning documents such as the municipality's nature care plan, cloudburst plan, and storm water strategy that all concern environmental aspects and concrete urban landscape developments. Risking an overemphasis on a supplementary planning document, I will present, however, a more detailed reading of the plan's aspirations, as it appears exemplary of predominant and broad thinking about a sustainable future within professionalised landscape practice in Malmö.

The blue-green plan's four-fold focus to: improve health, adapt to climate change, improve biodiversity, and strengthen citizens' inclusivity and participation in urban environments (ibid. p. 6) means it most explicitly spans social-ecological topics and wider landscape dynamics, as well as makes a participatory agenda explicit. The plan states that the vision is founded on an ecosystem service-approach (ibid. p. 6). The plan also states more aspirational and utopian goals for the plan to achieve with reference to economic, ecological and socially sustainable development, and to leave the next generation with a society that has solved the major sustainability problems locally without contributing to environmental harm elsewhere (ibid. p. 7). The plan cites its relevance for a substantial list of UN's development goals including reduction of inequality (10), building sustainable cities (11), and mitigating climate change (13). Furthermore, the plan states that the blue and green environments should improve citizens' health and recreation, lessen the effects of climate change, improve the overall 'attractiveness' of the city, and improve the citizens' sense of ownership (ibid p. 6.). As the multiple goals might indicate, another aspiration of the blue-green plan is to develop visions across administrations and over planning documents, and thus to counter the tendency for creating competing professional siloes that has hampered previous work with ecosystem services and blue-green infrastructure in the region (Sunding et al. 2024, Hagemann et al. 2020). For these high aspirations, it is also noteworthy that the plan aligns with Sweden's overall national interests in agricultural and industrial production, and explicitly exempts agricultural land and concerns for environmental degradation from emissions and

pollution, which in effect are not part of the future blue-green vision (Malmö Stad 2019 p. 7).

The various topics of the plan lend themselves to multiple audiences. While the formulations and definitions of the planning for climate change adaptation and biodiversity lends itself primarily to experts and collaboration with professionalized or private commercial actors, the topic related to health and wellbeing is focused on 'users' of blue and green environments. With a focus on accessibility and safety, quality of outdoor spaces, and cultural heritage this topic covers important social values and is attentive to socioeconomic divisions within the city. In its visions for health and wellbeing, the plan does not mention otherwise well-described concerns for green gentrification (Anguelovski et al. 2018) or "High Line effects" (Gulsrud & Steiner 2019) when the increased 'attractiveness' pushes less affluent populations further out to the margins. The focused approach of the plan leaves out mentions challenges and possibilities in socio-economically differentiated neighbourhoods. Thus, the focus on citizens' participation becomes all the more crucial in mediating social difference within the planning agenda.

The blue-green plan's section on inclusivity and participation sets a high aspiration that all citizens should feel involved in the societal development (Malmö Stad 2019 p. 16). The plan goes on to mention children and elderly as specific interest groups where the municipality needs to allow inclusion and participation in decision-making in planning that concerns their everyday environments. The section on inclusivity and participation states overarching benefits that may contribute to for example integration of a diverse population, as well as to adding new values and functions to blue and green environments. The plan also links citizens' involvement as a contributing factor to feelings of safety in the city's blue and green environments (Malmö Stad 2019). The plan mentions the importance of involving citizens in aspects of management and nature care as well as mapping of blue- and green environments, and cites the possibilities for both recreational- and small scale commercial allotment gardens as a concrete example (ibid. p. 16). Unlike the other sections in the plan, there are no apparent connections drawn from the topic on participation to any other plans, and while mentioning two specific social groups, children and elderly, there are no concretizations of participatory visions, despite recurring

statements that it is important to strengthen the opportunities for these groups.

The blue-green plan lays out more concrete visions and actions in relation to a range of structures and elements in the urban landscape, such as parks, streets, coastlines, but also green corridors and more distinctly legal and political delineations such as neighbourhood public space, or rural land (ibid. p. 18). These sections define key actors, and the goals they need to reach to realize the plan. In relation to parks, natural areas and water-features, for example the plan states the possibility for these features to lessen dividing factors among inhabitants and states how the integration of citizens into planning, development, and management both serves the municipality and creates better outcomes (ibid.). The goal in relation to participation states that especially underrepresented groups need to be provided with good opportunities to participate in relation to development, management, and renewal of blue and green areas in the city. It also states that the blue and green areas must be utilized as a resource to create cohesion among the populace. The goals for inclusion and participation in the other blue and green environments are similarly formulated, in some cases underlining the importance of underrepresented groups but in all cases emphasizing the need for 'good opportunities for participation in development and renewal'. It also locates the responsibility for securing marginalised and underrepresented citizens' participation with the municipality's technical committee (ibid. p. 22).

When looking elsewhere in the organization, for example in current budget and task descriptions of urban area improvements in terms of social sustainability, the documents reveal an added focus on children and young people's participation (Malmö Stad 2023a). This is primarily by expanding the efforts of a participatory programme rolled out via the school systems, and the quantifiable avenues of participation that the municipality states accountability for includes (Malmö Stad 2023b): the act of voting, participation in public leisure activities, and response-frequency in a public health survey. This rather limited approach to garnering public interest does not necessarily represent the myriad of activities and initiatives that actually allow pluralistic public sphere a say in the development of socially sustainable urban landscapes. It does however indicate the narrow definition of democracy and public interest that reigns in more formalized branches of the municipal institution. The strong aspirations of the municipal planning

for future blue and green environments and the widespread allusions to democratisation of governance and management (e.g. Malmö Stad 2019) are thus accompanied by a vagueness about how to engage with citizens and diverse interests in the urban environments. The lack of further-defined participatory avenues, as well as any concretization of how to strengthen a diverse citizens' ability to deliberate, formulate, and challenge potentially conflicting land-use and planning goals, indicates that further work is needed to really provide 'good opportunities' e.g. for underrepresented social groups.

3.2 New green reams in a somewhat segregated city

Over 20% of Malmö's population lives in what the municipality considers as 'socioeconomically vulnerable areas' (Malmö Stad 2021). The fact that average life expectancy varies over five years between different urban areas due to markedly different living conditions have become a public talking point and concern in public policies and governance in Malmö (Salonen et al. 2019) The crisis of the Scandinavian welfare model; increasing inequality, unemployment rates, and lack of successful strategies to integrate waves of immigration into the labor market; has exerted pressure on Swedish cities such as Malmö (Gressgård 2016). In Sweden, as elsewhere, austerity measures and neoliberal governance strategies around housing development are exacerbating segregating trends for urban populations (Lunneblad & Sernhede 2021). On the one hand, Malmö has a young, growing population as well as a city awarded in estimations of sustainability and fair trade (Malmö Stad, 2023), and on the other hand, it faces substantial divergence in socio-economic security as well as political recognition and involvement in local open space development (Stålhammar and Raymond 2024). According to Gressgård (2016), urban governance in Malmö has increasingly been predicated on issues of security and immigration control, leading to an increased othering of people with immigrant background (ibid., see also Turan 2021, and Kvist 2022 for similar findings in neighbouring Copenhagen). This risks othering of large social groups, alienation from wider urban landscapes and living environments, and distancing from their planning and development.

The rather high aspirations of the sustainable urban planning agenda in Malmö seem to allow to municipal organizations to develop new

participatory foci, for example on 'underrepresented' groups, however, with little clarity of how a further democratisation could be achieved. Turan (2021) has noted how the silent reign of predominant and unchallenged notions of what constitutes 'public interests' in urban planning can come at detriment of marginalized groups. Also in innovative and seemingly progressive urban renewal projects, their access to their own everyday public spaces are weakened (ibid). From an intersectional perspective, factors of marginalisation such as income, gender and ethnicity can become exacerbated for young people (Kern et al. 2020), and thus underpin their very experience of public places. As Cele (2023) points out, everyday landscape engagement is of pivotal importance especially for children and young people in their journey to citizenship.

In between the functional, benign visions for sustainable urban landscapes and the realities of stratified societies, new approaches to landscape democracy and sustainability are needed. In Rutt & Gulsruds (2016) suggestion for a 'new green agenda for the city', a substantive participation of more diverse social groups is mentioned as a factor that can counteract tendencies towards green gentrification, thus making the participatory efforts and engagement with diverse publics in planning all the more salient. There is an apparent need for alternative approaches that can allow more radical and conflictual perspectives on the visions and goals for future sustainable landscapes, as Calderon and Butler point out (2020). Malmö's sustainable landscape planning horizon is by no means perfect, nor could or should it be. It contains broad appeals to increase citizens' participation and hints at an attention to a differentiated citizenry, but also begs important questions of what constitutes its landscape in the first place, and which interests are to be safeguarded for the future. This constitutes a problem that relates to the fact that the municipal planning agenda presumes to give a broad, encompassing frame for sustainable landscape engagement, while it succumbs to more technical and functionalistic concretizations that fit more neatly into existing planning practice. Thus, there is a paradoxical promise in the strive for increased engagement of citizens, while introducing yet more functionalistic frameworks on a backlog of predominantly economic motives for sustainable planning and development. Where, and how increased engagement should play out in such plans and vision is thus, somewhat predictably, vague.

Looking back at Malmö's plan for future blue and green environments, there is genuine acknowledgement of the importance of including 'underrepresented groups' and strengthening participation. However, the stated aspiration to bring together topics of sustainability, climate mitigation, adaptation and concerns for underrepresented groups entails a certain 'whistling in the dark' approach to planning as mentioned by Friedmann (2011). It aims at drawing connections and pushing a discourse that mostly exists as potential, rather than concrete reality. This must be understood on a background of the urban landscape that comes in to view: one that is structured by market logic and economic interest, and increasingly envisioned in an ephemeral hue of blue-green dreams, aspirations for social-ecological sustainability, and resilience in the light of climate change.

While economic interests, and knowledge of ecosystem-, climate, and biodiversity filters in, the urban landscape that appears lacks connection to the plural, vibrant, and conflictual social life that transpires in the city and the neighbourhoods of Malmö. But rather than merely critiquing the lack of concrete or practicable goals for inclusion and participation in Malmö's sustainable planning agenda, I would argue this presents a challenge for lay citizens, practitioners, and researchers to bring together social and environmental concerns where they conventionally seem far apart, in new, transgressive visions for the future. This dissertation experiments with bringing a different landscape into view. Starting from the margins of established landscape discourses, it substantiates the 'social' of two urban neighbourhoods, and brings young people's everyday life horizons into view in a broader, participatory agenda for transforming their living environments.

4. Research strategy and design: multiple methods and future creation workshops

The scholarly community in the field of urban landscape seems to agree on the importance of citizens' participation. While this has resulted in a rich literature, it rarely centres on the landscape as a political, and democratic entity (Calderon & Butler 2020), and thus there is still no apparent platform for how to engage with diverse- and conflicting interests and perspectives. The need for increasingly radical transformations of urban landscapes towards increased sustainability, thus risks entrenching patterns of segregation and continued lack of basic relevance of the urban landscapes for marginalised groups in society. To address these cross-cutting needs for substantive engagement processes, young people's perspectives, and transformative change perspectives I have outlined a theoretical and methodological framing grounded in critical utopian action research. Building from this, and the primary engagement with a group of young people in Malmö, I have developed a multi-pronged research strategy and design.

4.1 Fieldwork, papers and synthesis

This dissertation mobilizes some of the critical conceptual works and methodologies from a subsection of action research to interrogate fundamental aspects of young people's participation in urban landscape planning and transformation (paper 2). The fieldwork is more thoroughly described and discussed in chapter 5. The action research is put in theoretical and methodological context by a scoping literature study, that takes stock of prevalent methodologies in young people's participation in a sample of literature related to urban landscapes (paper 1), and situated geographically by a study of local practitioners' perspectives on emerging opportunities and challenges, in relation to young people's democratic participation (paper 3).

Table 1: Overview of papers

Paper	Purpose	Approach/methods
1. Young People's Participation in Urban Landscape Planning and Transformation: A Scoping Review of Interactive Approaches	Methodological overview and discussion of aspects of lifeworld and action in current participatory approaches with young people in urban landscapes	Scoping literature review, systematized database search, methodological discussion
2. 'Can we Mec the Municipality?' Emerging voices of young people in a segregated urban landscape	Empirical experiment with foregrounding lifeworld and action in young people's participation in negotiating the landscape as a democratic entity	Critical-utopian action research, future-creation workshops with young people in two underserved neighbourhoods in Malmö, Sweden
3. Young people's participation in urban landscape planning in Malmö, Sweden: democratic ambiguity and practice dilemmas	Analyse governance arrangements in Malmö for barriers and openings for young people's participation in shaping the future urban landscape	Case study, document analysis/actor mapping, semi-structured interviews with practitioners in Malmö, Sweden

4.1.1   Paper 1: Situating in the participatory landscape literature

The scoping literature review (paper 1) takes stock of prevalent approaches for practitioners and scholars in the urban landscape to engage with young people. It outlines a specific methodological lens derived from key aspects of action research, to reframe the challenges and opportunities for young people's participation in urban landscapes. To do this, the paper operates across classical frameworks for participation, like Arnstein's and

subsequent 'ladders' and spectrums, that typify participatory approaches. It initially applies an approximated typification, but goes on to suggest the importance of the concepts 'lifeworld' and 'action'[5] as they, inspired by action research, are brought to bear in participatory processes with young people. These add a critical-normative frame that questions the reach of existing participatory approaches in a systematised sample of literature. The aim of the paper is not to provide an exhaustive review, but rather to lay an incision in the field that can provide a reflective space for researchers and practitioners to move beyond tools and practical approaches. This methodological lens thus serves to pinpoint openings for participatory approaches to gain relevance in the young participants' lives, and engage with societal dilemmas in the field of urban landscape planning.

4.1.2   Paper 2: future creation workshops

The heart of CUAR has been the future creation workshops (FCWs), which facilitate a critical- and a utopian brainstorm and analysis where groups of people find collective understandings and take action on given topics and issues. The FCWs work through these key dimensions while applying a few, simple procedural rules to secure a democratic process where everyone is involved and active in discussing and defining the central analytical points, utopian visions, and pathways to realisation[6]. The FCW format have been followed more or less accurately in this project, so here follows a brief introduction as far as it was operationalised within this research (see paper 2 and further in chapter 5).

Initially, the participants investigate challenges regarding their uses, needs, and values regarding the urban landscape (critique), they crystallize key themes to address, and then generate ideas of 'the urban landscape of the future' (utopias). In the first two phases the researchers gather keywords on collective note-taking papers, making sure there's a shared understanding of the themes, arrange voting-sessions for key priorities, and facilitate aesthetic

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[5] As paper 1 elaborates, 'lifeworld' is applied as it appears in critical phenomenological theories, and 'action' is drawn in as a central orientation in dynamic knowledge creation in action research.

[6] See fx. Jungk & Müllert 1987, Paabye et al. 1988, Nielsen & Nielsen 2016, Egmose et al. 2020 for general introductions. See Bladt 2013, Tofteng & Bladt 2020, Bladt & Percy-Smith 2021 for the FCW in context of youth and marginalisation. See Egmose 2015 for the general CUAR approach in sustainable urban planning and development contexts, and Nielsen & Nielsen 2006 and Hansen 2007 for examples related to citizens' involvement in governance of nature and local environments and in conservation efforts.

exercises to more deeply explore key topics elected by the participants. The participants then select 1-3 working-themes from the utopias to concretize in the workshop, and the researchers will then aid the participants in planning, designing, and initiating the working-projects and encourage experimental changes (see figure 4). In the future-creation workshops, the public element is central and hence it will work towards a public presentation, event, or exhibition of the working projects.

4.1.3 Paper 3: Practitioner interviews and mappings

This study presents an in-depth case study of Malmö's governance arrangements around young people's participation in planning- and development processes related to the urban landscape. We analyse if and how young people's perspectives and activities are integrated into institutional policy, planning or development processes, or not, based on a mapping of relevant actors and interviews view key informants. The study consisted of semi-structured interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009) with 8-10 relevant practitioners mainly from Malmö Stad (local municipality). The interviews will serve as background for an analysis of the governance systems that young people striving for increased authority of the urban landscapes they inhabit meet. Our analysis of Malmö' s public management in relation to young peoples' participation shows that even though there are a few mechanisms in place to gather the concerns and ideas from our study group, the inclusion of young people's perspective on urban landscape planning is still incipient in Malmö's municipal practice. The dominant approach is still top-down planning and there is a predominance of studies and initiatives concerning urban planning for the satisfaction of the needs of the children and elderly.

4.1.4 Synthesis/Compilation

The critical epistemology of the action research approach also means that this dissertation includes a chapter dedicated to unfolding the practical and analytical process conducted with the young participants, as well as it details the experimental actions undertaken. The analytical work is integrated into the collaborative process with the young participants, thoroughly accounted for in chapter 5, which provides a phenomenological description of the concrete collaboration that took place between myself and the young participants. The experiences and mutual learning that occurred during the

collaboration is the main knowledge generating process, and goes beyond the individual qualities of the second paper that presents the key findings. Thus the synthesis of theoretical frames, fieldwork/empirical findings and urban development context details a dialogical work, where all main analytical points have been presented and discussed, in many cases numerous times, with the young participants. The iterative process of finding understandings that resonated, or created important tensions eventually leading to new insights, thus took place in concrete situations described below.

This results in an integrative compilation text (chapter 6, 7 and 8) where findings from the individual papers are also discussed in relation to the collaborative process. This helps to tie together a shift in perspective around key problems related to young people's participation in shaping the urban landscapes of tomorrow. The decision to add a chapter (5) describing the collaborative process in more detail aligns with the ambition to lift democratic experiments with knowledge creation (Svensson & Nielsen 2006). In line with these methodological points, and other scholarship on action research and participatory planning practice with young people, a systematic attention is given to where the possibilities to collaborate between young participants and researcher open up, and close down. This will be illustrated in how the young participants in between themselves, and in relation to me, as an engaged action researchers, come to agreements – or not - about process, content, and outcomes. While, at the face of it, this aligns with more consensus-oriented approaches (Elling 2003), reaching agreements is not the goal per se. Rather, substantial analytical attention is given to allowing conflicting perspectives to be iterated and to shape the process going ahead, and these are in fact treated as the main analytical tensions for further analysis.

5. Process description: phenomenology of what happened

The timeline below gives a crude, chronological overview of the progress of the collaboration between myself, a research assistant, and the total of 34 young participants. The line indicates a definite starting point in winter 2020, where I took contact to municipal- and grassroots organisations working with young people in areas of Malmö.
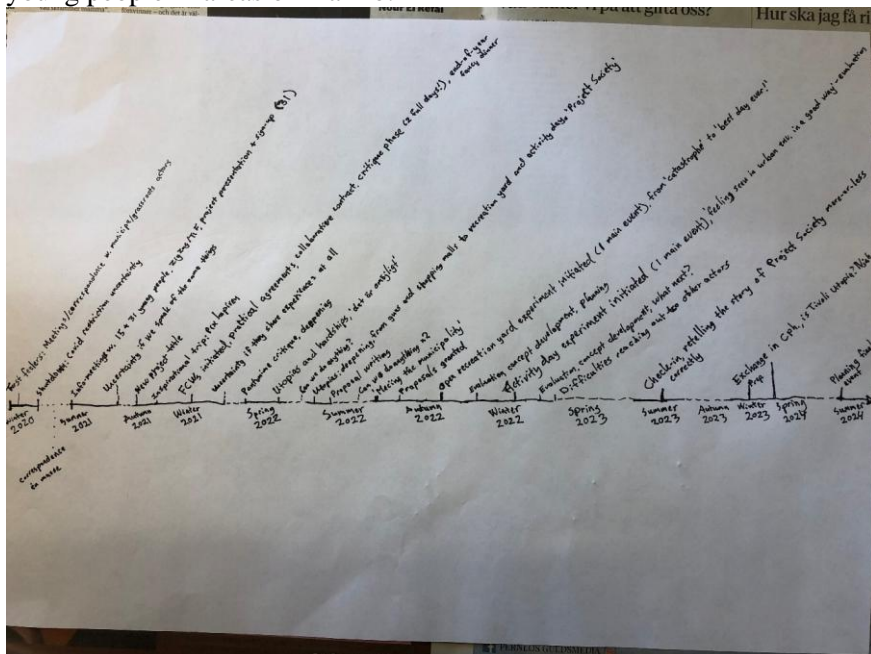
Figure 5: Sketched linear timeline for the collaboration.

The dotted sections of the main line indicates moments where there was uncertainty among the participants about whether they wanted to continue the collaborative work, and can thus be considered break-downs in the process. The arrow pointing outside the paper on the right side indicates that this is an open-ended process with ambitions and consequences that reach beyond the PhD project.

The research material thus consists primarily in the wallpapers holding the collective notes from workshops, planning meetings, trips, and evaluations of experimental activities. This encompasses both a critical

analysis of urban environments from their perspective, a utopian vision, and in-depth analyses and discussions of key themes and priorities to be developed. A smaller group (N:15) have chosen to pursue the visions resulting from the initial analyses in further actions and interventions, which have also been planned and documented in this material.

Figure 6: 6 km of collective note-taking papers detailing the analyses, discussions and evaluations that the young people have generated.

This section presents the cornerstone of the dissertation, in the form of commented notes and focus points from the analyses of the role the urban environment plays in the young participants' lives, to the creation of a sketch for the future that arose from the collaboration between the young participants in Malmö and myself, as an engaged PhD Student. I will outline the stepwise development from initial meetings, over analyses and utopian visions, and to the concrete experiments with realising a different future. I will not describe every meeting systematically, but rather expand upon the key analytical phases and go through the keywords and discussions that gave important pointers to the openings and closures for an extended democratic participatory practice with young people.

Figure 7: Map of Malmö, neighbourhoods the young participants' hail from (credit: Jack Richold).

Throughout the process-description, I will comment on methodological developments and choices that arose along the way. The selection of specific situations narrated in more detail aims to ultimately outline how a particular landscape democratic quality arise through the discourse the young people start to develop, on the backdrop of ambivalent feelings and experiences about the initial project framing. The text starts with one of my first visits to Hermodsdal, one of the neighbourhoods from where the young participants hail.

5.1   Can we agree to meet? Information meetings and mild curiousity

Waiting outside the door to a basement locale, I find my contact from ZigZag[7] sitting in a car on speakerphone, while sifting through what seems like an overfilled calendar to find a time to meet with whoever is on the other

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[7] A local grassroots group supporting young people in marginalised neighbourhoods finding access to jobs and education.

end. It is with a fair amount of gratitude that I proceed and say hello when he has waved me over. This first information meeting is already the result of a longer chain of emails, referrals from University colleagues, and brief interactions on street corners, at a local school, and cafés. Eventually I get in touch with a volunteer activity group making activities for young people at the local school in Hermodsdal. They sound very enthusiastic about the project proposal, but also describe the overwhelming fatigue after having worked for better access to both school, work, and meaningful pastimes for young people in marginalised life situations, in addition to their day jobs. I get referred onwards again, with the promise that if we want to we can use their basement locale for workshops. I finally get to present the idea, first by email and later by video-call, to a contact who agrees to circulate a flyer about the project, and arrange a meeting with the young people he works with in Hermodsdal in Malmö.

Back to the first meeting, as the time passes 17.00 a few people start to show up. My contact has a serious, but joking in tone, discussion with a young man about the importance of 'feedback', both giving and taking, especially when you engage with people whom you might not understand, and who do not understand you very well. I later learn that the young man arrived not that long ago as a refugee, and is struggling to find educational opportunities and balance this with the need for a job. My contact works with entrepreneurship for young people and provides meaningful links between a competitive and often prejudiced labour market and young people who experience difficulties accessing it and maintaining educational engagements etc.

It was not an explicit goal for this research to engage with young people who find themselves struggling with- or marginalised from the workings of the rest of society. It was, however, a goal to move beyond any givens of what it means to be young, and what common problems occur, what hopes and dreams you might have for the future. In order to diversify the image of what 'youth' entails as an actor of change, I threw out some fishing lines for interested collaborators in neighbourhoods in Malmö where some of the felt effects of patterns of socioeconomic segregation are present, if not in the young people themselves, then in their immediate social and spatial vicinity. Thus, when getting in contact with ZigZag, it was clear that we could search for some different answers than in neighbourhoods where access to money, education and labour markets is more of a given. My thought, throughout

this process, have been that the relationships to the urban landscape and answers to 'the future sustainability of what?' is likely to differ, and this difference is important to keep in mind when planning for the future of youth- and other everyday lives in the urban environment.

At 17.15, only four young people have arrived, and we still do not have access to the locale we were supposed to use, as my contact had delegated responsibility for the key to one of the young people who had locked after their last meeting. ZigZag's work with young people's participation and right to equal conditions leans heavily on this sort of trust and responsibility. I had suggested inviting young people aged 15-20, and thus at the verge of full democratic citizenship. Somewhat after the stated meeting time, more young people (including the key-holder) trickle in, and eventually we find ourselves around 18 people crammed into a tight basement locale. As I present the project prompt, I see a fair bit of detached gazes, but also a few questions arise, whether anyone can join, and what taking part would entail. Among the 14 who sign up to take part going forward, there is agreement that the workshops mostly make sense for them to do in weekends, as the demands to maintain school, education or youth jobs are already plenty during the week.

5.2 Can we agree on a title? Breaking the frame and finding (mutual) inspiration

Several of the 14 who already signed up also appear when I invite for a second information meeting in the neighbourhood of Sofielund, this time arranged by TiF (Tillsammans i Förening[8]) who works with equal access to public places and cultural activities in the region. 18 'new' people have also shown up in the well-equipped meeting room. My contact from TiF has helped set up the room to make a nice atmosphere, and I have covered most of a long wall with sheets of wall-papers that can be used for collective note-taking, including the project title I have proposed: "The Good, Sustainable Future of the Urban Landscape - According to Young People in Malmö". The young people start to drip in, a few chatty and lively and loudly

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[8] Local grassroots organisation, working for equal access to public spaces, initially to bridge a gender gap, but increasingly working with a range of social factors determining how comfortable young citizens can be in the city's public places.

complementing that it is cosy with lit candles, and that we got the best kind of potato crisps. Other's arrive more demurely and immediately seek out the back of the room.

The meeting starts again with a brief introduction of the workshop series I envisioned, and migrate to talk about the parameters for our potential collaboration. This ignites the formulation of our collaboration contract that the young people clearly want to be made explicit before any further discussion. I outline the few processual key points (see also section 2.6 and 2.7) that are meant to facilitate a safe, free and democratic process. The 'rules' for our collaboration, include that we vote about key themes, and that the young participants can talk about and share the project freely, while the involved researcher(s) have professional secrecy, and can only share the collectively agreed points and other aspects from the process that the young participants allow to be shared. I also state, that to best facilitate the workshops, we try to express ourselves briefly, that contradictory points or statements are allowed next to each other (both verbally and in the collective notes), and we do not (initially) discuss these. These points are meant to contribute to the open and encouraging atmosphere so that everyone feels comfortable to share spontaneous thoughts or experiences without risking being shut down or talked over by someone who thinks differently, and may have more words that can drown out less verbalised points. Finally, a few of the young people intervene and say that for them it is a requirement that we also promise to treat each other respectfully, and when everyone seems to concur, this is added to the collaboration contract.

Most of the young people, and especially a group of girls, seem somewhat uneasy with the situation, and after sharing their names they shy away from speaking up at all (see also article 2 p.1 for an extended vignette from this moment in the workshops). When prodded, they declare it is quite unclear to them what the project would be about. After a little while, and a lot of silence, it becomes increasingly clear that the project title does not make a lot of sense to anyone in the room. As the discussion ensues, the contact at TiF, who helped set up the meeting, nudge on the group of girls and they eventually pitch in. Their contributions, at first shy and later somewhat defiant, amount to a vocal critique of why it has to be about 'sustainability' and questioning what 'landscape' means anyhow. Right off the bat, the FCWs turn into a space with both conflicting perspectives in the room and open negotiation of both content and framing. Rather than explaining more about the different

dimensions that I had thought we would consider throughout the proposed year we would initially try to collaborate, the information meeting turns into a workshop that has the main ambition to clarify what could be a title of a project that both the young participants and the action researcher could see themselves in.

The points of contestation quickly arise as one of the young people contest the word 'sustainability' as in her experience irrelevant to anything that has import on her life. Someone else in the room protests that this is super important, and contends that 'just look at the stinky canals and trash by the beach!'). Before I get to participate in this discussion, someone else is questioning the word landscape. Several of the young people accord that they are actually not really sure what 'landscape' means. Already from the start, the prompt provided in the form of the project title proves a somewhat divisive issue, and the tidy plan to provide information and make practical arrangements for the workshops is turned on its head. Clearly, several substantial and conceptual points need negotiating before anything practical can be initiated. As also described in article 2, I, as action researcher/facilitator attempt on the spot to only pick one battle, letting go (for now) of what 'sustainability' might entail in our work together, I try to give tangible examples of what I mean when I say 'landscape'. I refer to the outdoor places in the city, the parks and streets and squares, moving around in the very built up places we inhabit, but also noting the plants and trees and pigeons and even mention the nearby canals and coastline. One of the young participants declares that this should be called the 'urban environment' (stadsmiljö). As the others seem to agree on this I suggest that we can give the project a new title.

5.2.1   Contradictions and a title that does not fit the room

As I open the floor to the young people to pitch in keywords[9] and points to bring to our collective deliberations, they immediately point in many different directions (and I struggle to write notes that sufficiently capture the points being raised). One of the first keywords about the future urban

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[9] Gathering keywords is a central dynamic in the workshops. It takes place as a form of open brainstorming session, where the facilitator makes sure that some aspect of interest or curiosity from everyone in the room is represented. In many cases, I as facilitator, ask follow up questions from my knowledge interest e.g. the role the urban landscape plays in their lives.

environment, to my initial surprise, is 'psychologically supportive'. Interested and slightly puzzled I write it down on the wall-papers, and before I get to ask any clarifying questions several other points are being shouted and I struggle to capture them while also asking the young people to take turns so I can get to write it all up. This, to me somewhat chaotic, atmosphere is typical for the livelier workshop moments, and seems to have its own energy that had the power to, even in this initial moment, completely alter the course that I had envisioned for the meeting. Before long, we have keywords about how we envision 'the urban environment' that stretches from the aforementioned 'psychologically supportive', to a 'clean city', 'places to meet', 'places to gather when you're discontent', ' places to work', 'equality in health', 'non-discriminatory', 'old and new together', 'good infrastructure', 'everything is close/accessible', 'shopping everywhere' and many more. For example, sustainability comes back into the frame as one participant points out that all the water they know of in Malmö, the ponds and canals seem dirty and disgusting, so 'clean water' goes on the wall, and leads some to insist that 'sustainability' was an important theme after all. Another particular theme arises as someone suggests that everyone should have guns when going out. As I ask why, and several others in the room argue loudly against this, I have to remind about the rule not to discuss but hear each other out. Someone else immediately wants written that 'nobody should have guns', and the discussion turns into a collective reflection of how important it is to feel safe, in the urban environment, and the apparently quite different experiences and ways of getting there can all be represented. In the following years, this theme and others that came about in unusual and seemingly contradictory ways have been central gathering points for the work the young participants have been doing.

After this hectic phase and a good long break, I ask if we can gather some of the 50+ keywords in some themes that cut across[10] these many important points. In this more deliberative atmosphere we do discuss which things seem connected or which things are different, and after a long discussion

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[10] The themes come about as the participants together are encouraged to reflect on the sum of keywords suggested, which ones might be connected, or point to broader, more encompassing points that frame a range of more individual experiences and interests. This is a step towards a more collective learning process that transcends the individual viewpoints, and opens up new reflections and curiosities. This step often condenses a host of keywords into a more select list of key-themes, at this stage everyone is also encouraged to pitch in, if they feel something is missing from the list of themes, so as to make sure more verbally cautious participants' viewpoints and interests are not drowned out.

where more than half the room takes very active part, we are still left with 13 themes that they consider important when thinking about their lives and the future urban environment. Finally, each person casts two votes[11] on the key themes to integrate into the title for the collaborative action research project, and all enthusiastically partake in the voting while I take a step back. Half an hour later, the votes have been cast, and it appears that the majority of the 13 themes have gotten a substantial amount of votes. Digesting this, I start to put one, very long, wall-paper up to write the new project title, which now encapsulates 'The Good/Sustainable/Safe/Comfortable/Equal/Healthy Urban Environment - that grants access to care, housing, work, and education'. The paper with the title does not fit on any of the walls but has to fold into and around a corner, and almost come to symbolise how the outlooks on life that break the research-focused framing of 'environment' and does not even fit into the otherwise elegant meeting room that has been procured. The problems the young people see and present are of an uneasy size and shape, but it is easy to see how they and their perspectives do not fit neatly into established practices of participation that they might have encountered, be it in school councils or when asked for preferences in a questionnaire. They hardly even fit into the stylish meeting room we are in.

Our process of clarification is by no means finished either, as difficulties in conveying what we mean with 'the future urban environment' prevail, I decide on the spot that it would be relevant to start out the workshop series with an inspiration trip, to provide further chances to feel out where each other are at. I propose the urban experiment, Pixlapiren[12], in nearby Helsingborg. This trip is meant to present a tangible inspiration for having a say over a part of the future city. The young participants receive this idea with enthusiasm and some surprise ('does this mean we get to go to another city!?') As this second information meeting comes to an end, all the young people sign up to take part in the workshops.

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[11] Voting on key themes is another central dynamic, alluding to the democratic form. While this is formally a key, collective decision-making tool, it does not necessarily determine the final focus on themes and action proposals. As the workshops progress, a range of deliberative, aesthetic, and action-oriented process allow key foci to be perpetually re-negotiated. In this organic process, the facilitator also plays a role as 'project memory', also in terms of safeguarding that minority viewpoints and interests are kept in play, thus overcoming overly formalistic notions of democratic procedures.

[12] Here, city dwellers have had the opportunity to apply to get more or less free reign to temporarily transform one (or more) 10x10 square meter 'pixels' of the former pier for the ferry to Oslo at the harbour front, poised for future redevelopment.

5.2.2 Frail collectivity and inspiration

Twenty young participants show up an early Saturday morning. With us is also a contact from TiF, and, for the first time, Ingrid, who worked as action research-assistant helping facilitate everything from critical analyses to wallpapers and falafel throughout the majority of the FCWs. When we all arrive at Pixlapiren, we walk up to an elevated wooden platform with benches, but as I start to introduce the place, someone suddenly shouts from above. One of the participants' have crawled inside a big wooden duck and grins happily from inside the head of the duck, two meters above the rest of us ('can you go inside it!!'). This derails any attempt at meeting facilitation, but makes for tangible excitement as most of the young participants scramble to also crawl inside the duck. A good half hour and some laughs and lots of silly photos later, I get to briefly introduce the place, encourage them to freely explore, and indicate the parameters, both where Pixlapiren ends, and what time we have to reconvene for lunch to talk about what on earth this is.
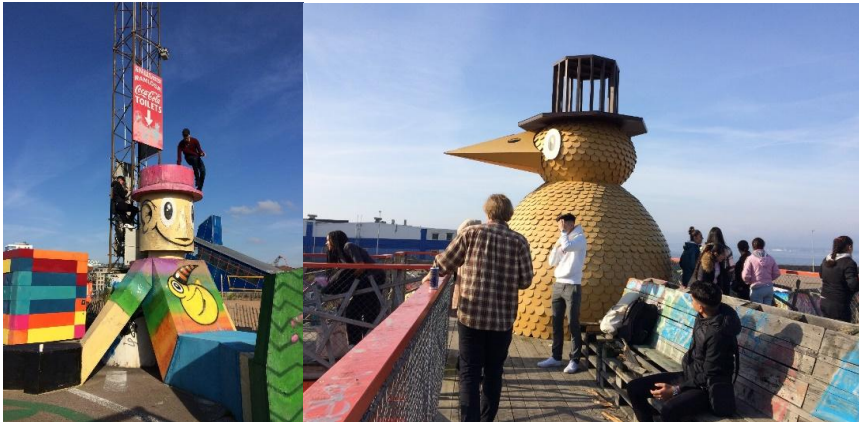
Figure 8: Inspiration trip to Pixlapiren

Lunch turns out to be required immediately, so sandwiches are distributed, and eventually the young participants start to wander off in different directions in smaller groups. They dissipate among the art installations, urban gardens, experimental street furniture and beach-lounging environments, skating ramps, concert stages and old containers housing unclear projects. There are no other people around except the occasional dog walker, and the young participants noticed that there was no one to ask about the different things going on in this foreign environment. After walking off, some of them immediately report excitedly back that they

have found flags from the countries their parents hail from in the extensive graffiti murals that can be found around Pixlapiren. This seems to open up the area for more curious investigation.

A few participants come back relatively quickly to the centrally located wooden platform where our contact from TiF, Ingrid, and I have been waiting. As the time for reconvening draws near, it is hard to locate quite a few of the young participants. This was a considerable stress-factor especially for our contact from TiF, who for this initial excursion had gathered consent from parents to those under 18 and promised to be responsible. After several attempts, someone gets a group of girls on the phone, and they declare they are lost, but might be close to the train station. As we eventually guide them back we only have time for a brief analytical moment: "treasure chest/trash can", where we try to evaluate the excursion and inspirations to find out what could be learned going into our workshops. The young people seem unanimously swayed by the freedom, and are still somewhat in disbelief that you can do exactly what you want with the 'pixels' you get allotted[13]. Thus, in the treasure chest goes for example 'you can do what you want with the area!', 'diversity of activities and opportunities', 'lots of graffiti', 'nice view to the water', 'colourful environment', 'hanging benches with roof over', 'good hanging out', 'easily recognisable landmarks e.g. giant wood duck and chicken', 'even more art'. As we turn to the critical points, there is some silence and unease, and eventually someone blurts out that 'we would never have found something like this if you had not taken us'. This spirals on as they note how inaccessible it seems, how things like that might happen in Malmö but they would have no idea about it, the lack of clear information of how things work and how you get a spot. Overall, they seem to recognise a certain element of cultural capital that plays into the access for such urban experiments that might not be readily available for them. Also the mere fact that it is located at a harbour front is an obstacle. It can seem a world apart even within Malmö where they live further inland and rarely (if ever) go to the beach or harbour areas, even if they hold a strong allure and provides 'nice views'. Other critique factors that appear include that the bathrooms are closed off, the lack

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[13] It turns out later as I revisit the 'rules' for Pixlapiren that their disbelief is somewhat warranted, and that the municipality maintains a set of control mechanisms, see Jansson et al. (2019) for assessment and description. They also conclude, however, that Pixlapiren provides useful lessons on co-governance of urban landscapes oriented towards increasing democratic participation with diverse actors.

of an indoor space to hang out in bad weather, and the lack of greenery. None of them seem interested in the raised garden-beds and greenhouse experiments, but they miss a lawn you can hang out on, trees for shade in the summer etc. They also note the apparent ramshackle character with rusting ironwork and building materials strewn around that appears to them as disorder and potentially dangerous for kids.

As we prepare to leave Pixlapiren, another ambiguity appears in that I emphasised that they should explore freely, but the fact that some wandered far off and got lost presented a problem for our TiF contact who had assumed responsibility for those under 18. After a modest telling off, this experience was quenched by the joyful chatter on the bus home, Ingrid I, and the contact from TiF discuss what the freedom to walk your own way as a young adult can mean when mobility and access to new and different urban areas is not a given. As we return to Malmö, this inspiration trip concludes with enthusiastic agreement to continue with the workshops that I had proposed, and see what kind of collaborative critiques, utopias, change proposals, and experiments can arise as we start to work together.

5.3   Can we agree on problems (critique)? When the urban environment lives on the inside

In the next meeting, two weeks later, the critique phase starts, as most of our meetings, with a bit of confusion, running around, and minor misunderstandings about where we were going to be at what time, and who was actually going to come. This time it takes place at the Scandinavian Green Roof Institute, a previous flagship project for urban greening located in Malmö, which also happens to be conveniently located right in between the two neighbourhoods where most of the young participants live. The place is fascinating, with lush rooftop gardens and integrated stormwater solutions around the buildings. Inside is also full of plants and posters and tapestries with visions of future blue- and green urban environments. The interior and visions abundantly posted also symbolise very specific conceptions of what the sustainable future looks like, with a strong emphasis on technical solutions to the complex problems the urban landscape faces. In response, Ingrid and I go to great lengths to cover up the grand illustrated plans in the room, so that the young participants do not feel coerced into the particular kinds of answers to the urban challenges that this locale exhibits. From

sustainability problems that are mostly functional, like increased rainwater and summer heat, the young participants, right from the start, turn to problems that are decidedly social, and with less clear connection to environmental qualities.

The critique starts hesitantly. A typical dynamic for theses brainstorms, that are central to the analytical work is: a keyword is presented e.g. 'better places to meet', and I, as facilitator when needed ask clarifying questions, that either the participant who gave the word, or others in the room help to focus and explain. The encompassing topic outlined in the title workshop, this time hangs neatly across the vast end wall above a stage. I also already seems somewhat overwhelming to brainstorm more focused critical points around. 'The Good/Sustainable/Safe/Comfortable/Equal/Healthy Urban Environment - that grants access to care, housing, work, and education' *is* indeed a mouthful. From the insistent enthusiasm that characterised the title workshop that all these elements were important, the young participants now seem a little deflated with how many problems are also entailed in the words they have chosen. Urged onwards by Ingrid and I, the young people start to list other problems they perceive in what role the urban environment plays in their life. The main procedural rule in this stage is that the things they bring up can only be critical: that they are not allowed to moderate or give balanced accounts, but they have to fully embrace the negative aspects of their experience of the urban environment. Thus encouraged, someone immediately shouts 'unequal standard!'. When probed a bit, both he and others add all the aspects that make their lives seem unequal when they are out and about in the city. "When we look around, things here are worse and uglier, and it just feels like people here don't have the same opportunities to access education, jobs, health, housing, and when you go out you're exposed to crime" someone quickly summarises. Other themes that arise in this stage include 'people with negative influence' that might lead others into trouble related to drug abuse and crime. 'Everything is expensive' also becomes a keyword that leads to other keywords, and eventually we have a whole wall-paper covered with notes about all the things that seem expensive and thus inaccessible. Someone else adds 'and you always get judged by your background and how you appear, and not who you are!' and gets loud cheers and they insist that this is written as a main critique. This also leads to further discussions, as someone feels very affronted by the very notion, and angrily argues that people *are* not different no matter if they are doctors or lawyers,

or they clean the stairs of their hallway, or are unemployed. Others argue back (so much for the rule about not discussing) that this is exactly why it is important to point out.
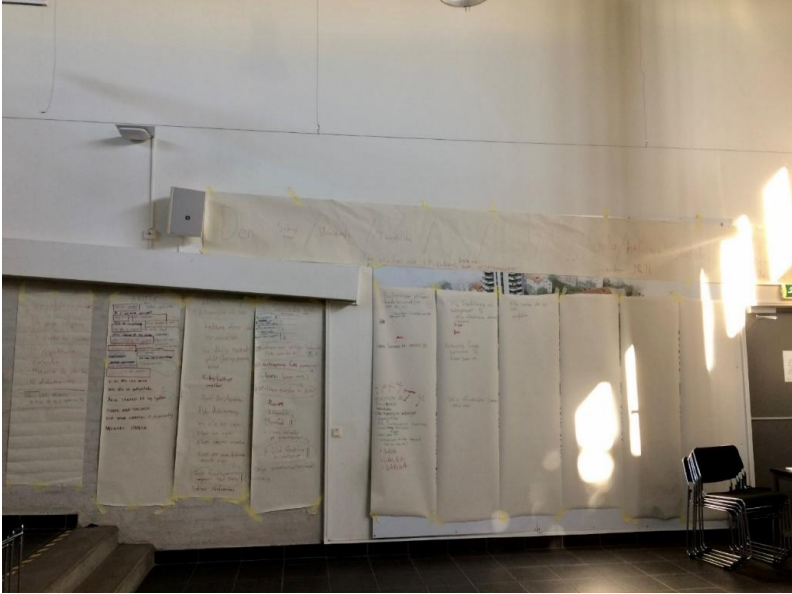
Figure 9: Example of workshop-wall in the making

Eventually, one of the participants declare that it is tricky to talk about for them, because 'when you are young you have a different insecurity about who you are', and most participants nod in agreement and insist this is written up. Along the way, it becomes clear that this insecurity applies both to the young participants' descriptions of how they feel in their urban environments, but also plays a part in if, and how, it is possible to even talk about. It can be considered alternately a failure and a success of our initial collaborations that the topic of insecurity in the urban environment comes in- and out of vision throughout our collective process.

5.3.1   The quiz

Due to the divisions that appear in the room, and the fact that the young people often divide themselves up as per which neighbourhood they were from and which grassroots organisation they had been contacted by, as well

as by gender, we decided to start each workshops with a quiz[14]. In this case, it served the further purpose of countering that some of the young people seemed somewhat prone to waiting for one or two 'spokespeople' from the group they felt most affiliated with to speak up. During the quiz, in a Jeopardy format with question-themes selected by the young participants' and with 'answers created by Ingrid and I, each participant was strongly urged to speak up individually. Thus in addition to being a simply fun element of the workshops, it also served to facilitate more people feeling comfortable sharing their voice in the room. Each workshop from this point on, thus included a quiz-session, often to start with, or in some cases over a communal dinner halfway through- or at the end of the work.

5.3.2   Silence and subgroups

It is not a unique experience that the critique dimensions for FCWs can be hard to both start up and go through with, but it is confirmed for us as the keyword gathering comes to a bit of a halt. It is especially clear that a group of girls feel uncomfortable speaking up. While the FCW generally focus on openly forming collective outputs that represent everyone in the room, the hardships and clear gender divides nudge me to suggest a processual adaptation at this point. I ask if they would consider it fruitful to form some smaller groups to try sharing and deliberating what might be important themes. As they concur, they divide into three smaller groups of 5-6 young participants, and as Ingrid and I browse around to help document their suggestions, it is immediately clear from their hushed but eager conversations, that for some, this, even smaller, protected forum provides a free space that the context including us all did not. In this stage it also becomes increasingly clear that Ingrid's presence provides an easier path for some of the girls to speak up, as they sit together and suddenly freely share experiences and key points to bring into the workshops. In the group of boys, I get the sense that one of them systematically leads the discussion. When probed a bit afterwards, it becomes clear that he had had a leadership role in ZigZag since the summer. In order not to create any sort of hierarchical space

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[14] This has been previously described by Bladt (2013) as a way to counter dynamics where some young people hold others back from speaking up and where 'seeming smart' can be a tricky thing in some social settings. Answering quiz questions and competing for points (and prizes) have thus shown to help create a playful and enthusiastic atmosphere to build onto in the future workshop work.

where they feel he has more say that the others, I explain the importance of this anticipatory democratic space, and ask if he can make sure not to fall into that role during our meetings, and he concurs. When the subgroups dismantle, I ask them to phrase the key points they have brought up in some ways that they feel comfortable to share.

As also mentioned earlier, it here becomes quite clear that even the 17 young people present this day come into the process with quite different experiences, struggles and preunderstandings. Some talk about better bike lanes and public transport, or lacking opportunities to do outdoor sports for girls, others seem very intent on 'feeling safe/comfortable when out', and yet others: 'getting kicked out' – of schools, yards, leisure time spaces, parks etc. The group of boys shared points about how hard it is to express yourself, and you always feel like you have to conform when out in public. They for example mentioned getting laughed at when wearing colourful clothing, but also being looked at suspiciously just based off of their appearance. They also emphasised how far away attractive and fun places like the harbour front seemed in their everyday lives, and recalled a few happy times they had made down there in the summer. The groups of girls emphasised the safety element, and lacking freedom to move around, lacking opportunities for sports activities etc.

One thing that they seem to all have in common relates to a combined theme of racism/xenophobia/islamophobia/prejudgements, which again leads to some disagreements and attempts at clarification. I also step in and mediate as tempers flare up about which is the more important term, and emphasize that we all come into these discussions with different but related experiences. The young people seem to accept this, and write all the possible alternatives up as critiques on the wallpapers. Someone also shouts 'unequal infrastructure and services', and when probed what this means, the word segregation came up. Some clearly felt it was important and others were unsure what it meant. One participant explained to the others that it was the same as the points about 'unequal standards' of everything in the living environments, buildings, schools, green spaces, and just how pretty it looks where you live. This seems to resonate. Overall the moments where the young participants help each other understand the different points being raised seem the most fruitful in attaching specific experiences, feelings and perceptions to the keywords. When one of the young girls try to explain that the main thing is, that you feel 'judged by your background, not who you

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are' when they are almost anywhere in the urban environment, everyone concurs.
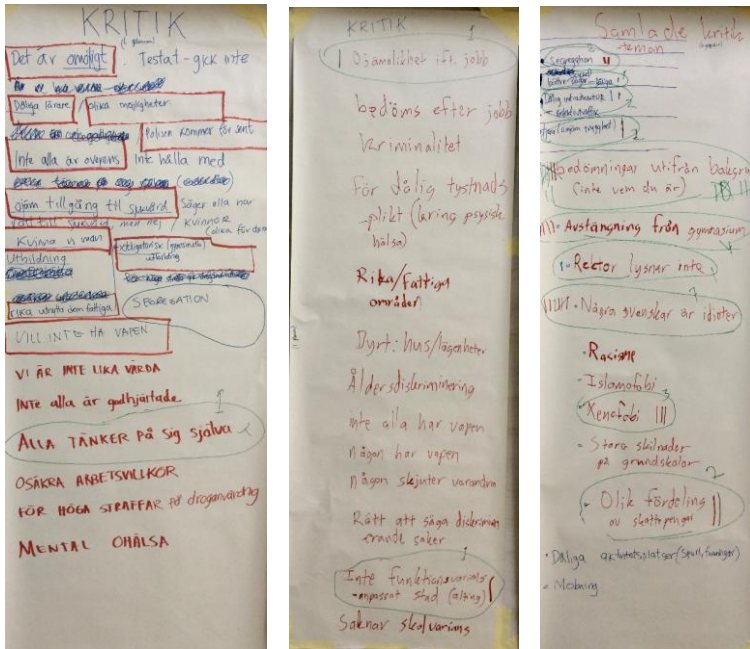
Figure 10: Examples of wallpapers with collective notes exhibiting a very wide range of experiences and issues that the young participants affiliate with their urban environments.

The young participants draw together key themes, from the now 50+ keywords, to the point about feeling 'judged by your background, not who you are', as well as the point about 'unequal standards'. These become clear gathering points for a range of experiences that seem to underpin their experiences (or lack of-) of their urban environments, and also get voted as top priorities. In order to investigate the key critiques further, I present an aesthetic exercise in the form of a small 'critique play', where smaller groups of participants choose a critique theme, and enact a small pantomime play that explains the critique. Ingrid and I make a small, and slightly silly demonstration of one of the critiques that the young people did not select, in order to explain what we had in mind.

5.3.3 Critique plays

The 'wordless play' has been a methodological tool that has played various roles in action research[15]. In this case, I suggested to the young participants' doing 'critique plays' without words, to investigate further how the main points they had chosen come about. The intention for this was to open up further reflections on critique themes, how they are emplaced in their living environments, which actors might be involved, and if possible on the preconditions that determine them.

As the young participants somewhat acquiesced to this aesthetic exercise, they got 15 minutes (and took 25) to prepare three critique plays, one about the 'unequal standards' and two about 'feeling judged by your background, not who you are'. This resulted in the following 3-4 minutes plays:

1. In the first play, a self-assured looking type walked back and forth between a happy, and a sad-looking participant in opposite ends of the stage. After simulating a calculation, he very seriously handed a single napkin, representing money, to the sad-looking participant. He subsequently walked to the other end of the stage and let the napkins rain over the head of the happy-looking participant, and they together seemed to have a small party.

2. The second play started off with two participants furiously arguing with each other, and eventually pushing and shouting. A very adult, and serious-looking type enters the stage and separates the ones arguing. As they both start talking to the adult-looking type, that indicates 'blah-blah' with a talking hand to them both, and calls on two other serious-looking types that push both the ones arguing off the stage.

3. In the third play, one participant stands alone in the front of the stage, and a larger group looms in the background. As she walks a bit around the stage, the ones in the background walk up, looking at her sceptically, and puts post-it notes on her jacket saying things like 'criminal', 'poor', 'muslim', 'terrorist'. Eventually she starts to sob, and as she walks off the

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[15] It has both served as a form of 'forum theatre', where actors and participants together can investigate social situations and discuss their implications generating understanding, empathy and actionability for social change (Wrentschur 2021). It has also been adapted to transition into utopian investigations in FCWs, using the present bodies to express the possibilities for the participants' in this free space can be something different (Paabye et al. 1988).

stage, crying. In a moment of unintended poetry, she passes through a sunray from the ceiling-windows as she jumps down from the stage, and all the post-its flutter off her jacket.

The last play immediately garner a range of reactions, both slightly indignant that 'writing words is cheating!', but also participants that enthusiastically called out if we noticed that the labels came off when she went off the stage, and maybe that means she could be herself again. This led to discussions about being out in public, and how specific places made you feel wrong and made you notice, lacking places to go, or feeling surrounded by things in disrepair, and overall inequality of life circumstances compared to other urban areas. These plays throughout the collaboration became a reference point, not least for reflections about how you feel on relative to off 'the stage', and where you can find public places to just be yourself. For the first time in our discussions, their concerns became emplaced in and around their neighbourhoods, and we got to talk about experiences in concrete places like school- and inner yards, streets, squares, and other open areas. This provides an important learning about how to find the lived pathways that make otherwise abstract concerns for 'urban environments', space and place relevant to the young participants. This avenue led to fruitful meetings between the young participants' experiential horizon and more generalised concerns about social sustainability challenges in the urban environment.

5.3.4   A new critical oncept and an awkward transition to utopia

The next workshop, two weeks later, was supposed to facilitate the transition to making utopian sketches of the future urban environment. However, as the majority of the participants had last minute hindrances and could not make it, we decided to instead try to deepen the critique a little further with the eight young participants present. This was thought as an attempt to tease out various analytical levels of the selected critiques, and, by drawing sketches of how the problems they mentioned might play out, to allow more, and non-verbal, forms of expression. In smaller groups, we asked the young people to draw the critique, and to describe (with words) how it applied to their lives, to other lives they knew of, and for the city as a whole. These attempts at facilitated analyses turned out to fall completely flat. The sketches (the images of these will not be shared, as the young

participants' considered their drawings not pretty enough for others to see) provided meaningful reflections that illustrated infrastructure in disrepair, and young people moving about school yards, streets, parks, or outside shops feeling judged, and with a deep sense of insecurity. The attempts to divide the analysis into different levels, however, resulted merely in considerable confusion. The young people had a hard time seeing the point of these divisions, and kept insisting that the various concerns were if not 'the same', then at least so connected that the analytical exercise did not make sense to them.

This part of the workshop, however, ended with my recounting the process up till here, and the main critiques the young people had selected. As they, in response, reflected on what 'getting judged by your background, not who you are' and 'uneven standards' meant, they suddenly did draw in the city-scale to point to the difference between which parts of the city that seemed attractive, and how hard it is to feel like yourself, especially in more affluent neighbourhoods. This led to an extensive discussion about what it means to be yourself, and what different environments, and other people's prejudgements, had to do with it. Clearly, this topic of 'being yourself' ran as a much stronger undercurrent in the young participants' analysis than I had immediately grasped, and thus corrected, I reiterated that main conclusions so far with this more in focus, and the young participants' concurred that this was crucial.

It has been unclear to all project participants, myself, Ingrid, and the young people alike, when exactly the young people's critical analysis found a pivotal formulation. The fact that the collective process rests substantially on dialogue, mutual understandings, and also memory, entails such uncertainty. It is however clear, that far into the realising the projects that eventually came about from our collaboration, the participants start to cite an idea of a 'segregation of joy and entertainment' ('nöjessegregation', in Swedish). There is widespread agreement among us, that a few participants used this term early on when trying to elaborate their critique of the urban environment, and what role it played (or rather did not) in their lives. It did not find its way into the collective notes until much later, however, when it became a framing rationale for the young participants' change proposals. In the mutual reconstruction, primarily the young people's responses to my puzzled questions of where that idea came from, they cite everyday life experiences of lacking things do to, places to go, and to have fun with your

peers, from early in- and prior to our collaboration. Somehow, this idea that the inequality of the city, which with the term 'segregation' can be described succinctly and reflect generalised knowledge, quantitative, qualitative and otherwise, comes to reflect their inner lives.

As also mentioned in the second paper in this dissertation, the concept 'segregation of joy' gathered considerable explanatory force when we were talking about the go-kart complex that sits close to many of the young participants' own building blocks. Here, the close-yet-distant promise of entertainment and joyful pastime that the young people are intimately acquainted with in their immediate social world, and the action research workshop setting that allows a wider, critical reflection of paradoxes and ambiguities came into a fruitful meeting. Exactly how 'segregation of joy' was first articulated and explained is, as mentioned, lost to the diffuseness of the process. However, the emerging, alternative discourse that the young people engaged it gave it wings to fly across a range of contexts, and gather their lifeworld experiences into an autonomous frame, that also resembles a different landscape understanding. As the looming go-kart centre comes into view, it came to represent this inner- and outer segregation in their everyday urban landscape. 'Segregation of joy' helped to talk about why it could be, that the young people living the closest to the go-kart centre might not get to go there, and it helped widen the reflection over a divided landscape, where these young people have little say. Crucially, it also spurred on a lively discussion of how it could be otherwise, and provided an opening for change that takes direction from the young participants' lifeworld. With this new collective understanding, the workshops transitioned to investigate utopian dimensions of the urban environment.

5.4 Can we agree on visions (utopia)? The slow establishment of common affairs at Burger King

Speaking to the difficulty of the form of collaboration we had engaged in, the articulation of shared, utopian visions took place over several meetings spread out over four months. Several meetings had very few participants, had to be cancelled early due to lack of concentration, or the eruption of conflicts and divisions within the group. This was not exactly how it had been planned, so rather than describing events in a neat chronological order, this section will focus on the key aspects of facilitation, input, difficulties, and the

decisions that came about when all participants' had eventually gotten to pitch in.

The utopian dimension was initiated by another aesthetic exercise, this time in a very playful tone, where we asked the young people, in the same format as the critique plays, to divide into groups and design kitchen machines, which they had to act out in small pantomime plays. This initiation was meant to both cater to a free space that has a playful atmosphere and with a specific attention to drawing out that right now, right here, everything can be something different, and there is space to unleash your imagination. This resulted in the creation of both a giggling microwave, a kitchen aid, and a mysterious contraption that no one could guess what was, and the group refused to divulge so that everyone was left confused. Going from this creative process, back to a brainstorm about keywords for the utopian urban environment proved difficult for some. It was very clear, that only a few of the participants felt comfortable speaking up and sharing aspects of an urban environment they would hope for. The following week the majority of young participants' showed up, dropwise over the first hour. As the room gradually filled up, Ingrid and I gave an enthusiastic pitch about how for this moment, they could forget about what was 'realistic' and dream freely, and that anything pertaining to their hopes for young people's lives in the urban environment could be mentioned. This enlivened the room considerably, first with 10 power-minutes where Ingrid and I could hardly keep up as collective-note takers. There were keywords about everything from luxurious school yards, more nature, diverse amusements and leisure time activities, better mobility, mental health, architecture and air quality, access to education, jobs, meeting places, local artists and sports, as well as respect for equal worth, the need for equal conditions, abolition of crime, war, and borders. Eventually the young participants also created a full, separate wall-paper with all the things that should be freely accessible, including: housing, sports, transport, food, pets, basic things needed for studying, going out for food etc. All in all, we gathered 70+ keywords, of which the ones mentioned were only a varied selection. After this lively session, the young participants' seemed happy but exhausted, and asked if we could end early, to which I concurred.

Figure 11: Utopia wall, examples of keywords and themes

It took several attempts where very few participants showed up, and a completely 'work free' end of the year communal dinner, where everyone showed up, before we could resume the workshops. Meanwhile we had discussions in smaller groups about the difficulties of gathering people. We also made smaller investigations such as a mutual idea about creating maps over 'things to do' and 'places to meet' for young people in the outdoor environments in the two neighbourhoods. These various incursions, however, served more as useful reflective spaces for the few people who showed up, than possibilities for actually driving the collective work forward. A particular example of this came as some of the participants complained that they had been asked to do several mapping exercises before, and they seemed only to the adults who suggested them. The young participants' themselves never actually used the mappings for anything, and under this critical scrutiny it was decided that for now, it is not sufficiently clear what relevance these mappings would have for the young participants to continue them. One constructive outcome of this suggestion, however, came in the young participants' own responses from the little while the maps *were* on the tables. Namely, the sheer amount of times that someone named some attractive place or aspect of Malmö and most of the other participants responded that they would never get to go there was telling. The fact that neither 'Malmö' as a city, nor its landscape as such, were not really relevant categories of reflection for the young participants, was to become an important entry to learning from their lifeworld. This difficult search for shared utopias, and yet another awkward transition to realising the utopian

ideas drew out over several months, working to get the input of the, by now, around 20 young participants who still occasionally showed up.

5.4.1   Societal division showing up in the free space

More than one year into our collaboration we eventually gathered the majority of the participants in a restart. This was initiated with another re-telling of how I interpreted the project work and main substance so far, ending with a summary of the keywords for utopia so far provided. Quickly, the young participants honed in on the question about where, and how, you can get to feel like yourself in the urban environment. This resulted in vigorous discussions about how some of the young participants did not feel that others understood them, and the earlier point of division about xenophobia, racism and prejudgements arose again. In this case, some of the young participants argued that they did not feel understood, and that racism was felt very different dependent on the colour of your skin. They did not feel many of the other interjections reflected how bad it was, and the need for protected spaces to be yourself. This resulted in a further breakdown of the collectivity of the process as various less-sensitive remarks were made about where other people were from. At this point Ingrid and I broke the discussion off, in order to insist that the various feelings at play were extremely important, and that we would like to take them into consideration for the future work, but that we were currently breaking the collaboration contract where we had promised a respectful way of treating each other.

5.4.2   Mec'ing an imploded project

After this, the meeting fell apart, and we went straight to a nearby Burger King for the communal dinner that was arranged as the meeting was scheduled for three, long after school hours. At this point, I (also aided by Ingrid) felt unsure how to handle the immediate conflict in the future collaborative work. We were especially wondering how to lean on the method and democratic procedures to pick up the discussion at a place that felt reasonable considering both the strong emotions at play, and our hope for forming a shared, utopian vision. Before we got far with these ruminations, however, the young participants' themselves showed the way forward, as they suddenly laughed and joked together about how to get out of unappetising school obligations, and one participant loudly recounted how he had 'mec'ed' the school to get time off. When asking about what they

meant that they had 'mec'ed' the school, several of the young participants enthusiastically pitched in that they were turning something, that seemed adverse, to their advantage. In the humorous sharing of experiences and getting to explain their reality to two (apparently ancient) research-representatives, a feeling of shared interests seemed to re-emerge. Without any further interventions or changes to the process, the young participants agreed to meet again two weeks later to finish developing a shared utopian vision.

At this next meeting, the adding of a few keywords and creating cross-cutting themes became somewhat chaotic. However, after a session in smaller groups, and a final vote, it became clear that the topic of 'freedom to be oneself' and 'equal standards', and mobility specifically related to accessibility of education/jobs/joyful pastimes/healthy activities in the urban environments were the key interests for the young participants. It occurred once more, that when pushed by me and Ingrid to focus on the specific environmental qualities e.g. public places and outdoors in their neighbourhoods, they blankly refused, and insisted on the primary importance of a future urban environment that addressed the integrated challenges. Based on this insistence, the young participants' new, shorter project name also makes sense, as the integrative frame of 'Project Society' was necessary for them to contextualize environmental qualities, and have a landscape-frame make sense. Their utopian deliberations for example related to keywords such as a 'law school in the main square in Sofielund that accepts everyone' or a 'free amusement park in Hermodsdal'. These ideas became ways of expressing sharing experiences of uncertainty about whether they could make it in this society, or whether they could get to have fun and feel joy in the way they imagined other young people did. The geographical vicinity of the facilities that embodied these dreams became ways for them to install their lived reality in a discussion about their urban environments. It also utterly transcends the usual frame for talking about the public places, streets, squares, and parks in Malmö and their future sustainability. Clearly, the integrated challenges of 'how do we want to live' with the added insecurity about being able to make it in this world makes the path to reflections about the urban environments as the way it is practiced by planners and other practitioners almost untenably long. However, with the transition to realising the utopian visions, the young participants started

grappling with these impossibilities they themselves so aptly pointed out initially, and have since started paving that way themselves.

5.5   Can we do… anything (realisation)? Project Society as a good catastrophe in an abandoned car garage

The most extensive dimension of the FCWs comes in the attempts at realising the outlined utopia. However, this is by no means a discreet 'phase' of the project, and many times throughout the planning and practical experiments, deliberations over the main critiques and utopia re-emerge and change character in light of the thoughts and experiences that amass in the action-oriented, collaborative work. Thus, this section tries to give some outline of the more than two years of work that at times more, and times considerably less, intensively transpired as part of 'Project Society'. Particularly with regards to the realisation-dimension, a systematic, chronological description would become too extensive and labyrinthine. Instead, this section will lean on my continuous re-telling of the project with the young participants throughout the years. The point of re-telling was initially to make sure that we had a shared understanding of what had happened, what was important, and the key things we learned, but it also became important correctives or affirmations of the various interpretations that inevitably comes into play between researchers and young citizens who inhabit somewhat different social worlds. The re-tellings focused on a selection of key dimensions, moments, and more extensive situations that stuck out in both the young participants' and my memory. These include: the transition from utopia to practical experimentation, change proposals, project planning and applications, trial actions, collaborative difficulties, two fully-fledged test events, missing attempts at continuation, and experiential exchanges and tentative conclusions.

The transition to taking practical steps towards realising the young participants' utopias starts out where we ended the iteration of shared utopias: at the Scandinavian Green Roof Institute. But rather than the initial slightly uncomfortable and alienated feeling, the young participants' have now appropriated the space to a considerable extent. Rather than entering and leaving as quickly as possible, they now explore the nooks and crannies, and find it unjust that they cannot access the diverse roof-gardens and experiments on and around the building. With this new sense of feeling okay

about being in a space in their neighbourhood that had any relevance for them, we try to start a collective brainstorm about ways to realise the selected utopian vision. At first, however, this falls quite flat. As the dialogue drops and nobody has any immediate ideas about how to take practical change initiatives to pursue the utopian vision, I end up with yet another re-telling of the project process, this time with a specific attention to their early objection about the impossibility of changing anything. The young participants' seem to pick up on the fact that we discussed this so long ago, and looking back at the extent of the collaborative work and hardships overcome. In this light, and when probed, they are expressively less certain about the impossibility that they could change their urban environments. When trying to focus a bit more expressively on experiences about things actually being changed for the better, the young people are acutely aware of a plethora of examples, especially from local grassroots-organisations (some with-, some without municipal support).
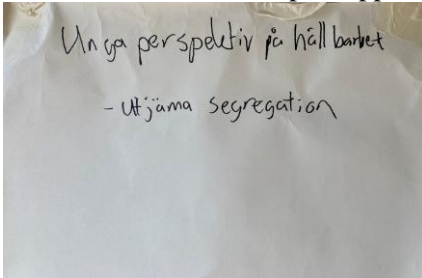

Figure 12: Sustainability comes back into the frame of 'Project Society', but now with an insistent hue, that if it is to relevant to the young participants, it must address urban segregation.

Before we get to explore these experiences with changes, however, we encounter another point of contention. My re-telling mentioned the word 'sustainability', to which two of the participants angrily protest, and argue that in their perception, we had decided that the project was *not* about sustainability. Before I get to recount my perception of how some felt this was one aspect worth considering, the young participants take charge of 'what the workshops really were about', and pick up on the utopian discussions about places to gather, to feel like oneself, and to feel joy in the urban environment.

5.5.1 'Utopia for Whom?' as an enduring question

This forceful insistence of a shift in discourse about their urban environment seems to gather the room, and outline a truly shared utopian vision for the young participants. At this point, the workshops goes into a range of parallel discussions about whom the change is for. Practical suggestions abound, and I probe the young participants to reflect on this by exploring a range of these differences in relation to practical change-ideas in smaller groups. All of these groups start out by pointing out how their urban environmental utopia is about joy and freedom to be oneself, but that this also obviously varies substantially when considering the specific age group that the change initiatives would be for. The smaller groups revert to pointing out the things they experience as missing are very different even within the age span of the young participants. They restate general critiques like the lack of things to do and places to be for 17-20 year olds in their neighbourhoods, and the fact that entertainment opportunities in their own neighbourhoods seem to exist primarily for young people with resources, and are inaccessible for most of them. Others restate the considerable difference between boys and girls in participation in sports- and other outdoor leisure time activities. This becomes a new gathering factor around which to share experiences about lacking access, especially for some of the girls from the different neighbourhoods. A recurring example of this is the unequal opportunities to play football. In both neighbourhoods, the girls describe that the otherwise strong focus on women's football had been increasingly elite-focused, and that it was extremely hard to find a sport in a team or just a pitch and a time to play if you just wanted to play for fun.
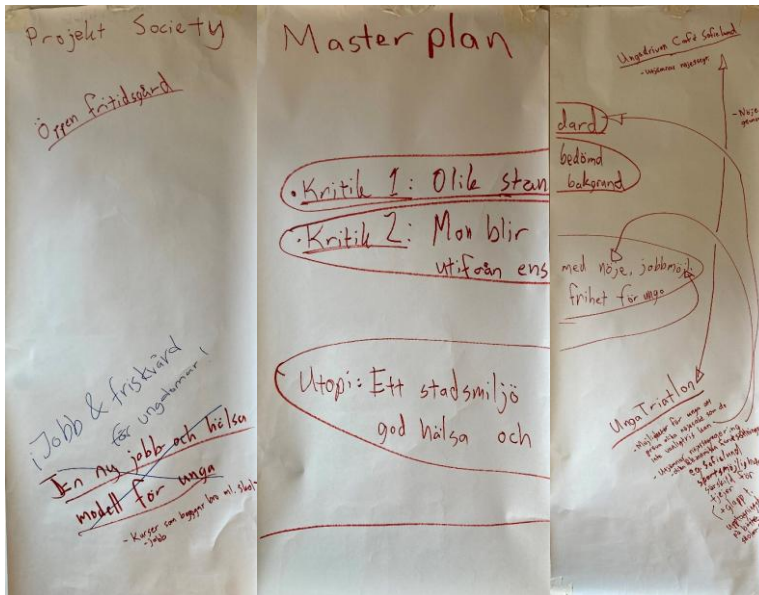
Figure 13: Note-taking examples from realisation discussions and planning change proposals.

Yet another group discussed extensively how the freedom to be oneself is a particular problem already from an early age. To describe how the problem with feeling wrong in public spaces and schoolyards etc. start much earlier than their present age. They describe how when this becomes apparent, for example as recounted in a range of experiences about not feeling respected, welcomed, or getting downright kicked out of the municipal recreation yards (fritidsgårdar). The experience of getting kicked out, which a few of the young participants have in common is particularly strong. Everyone seems to resonate that this is extremely important, both as an experience and as a looming threat when it comes to feeling good about yourself in the few places that are meant to facilitate young people's social life in the neighbourhoods. When resonating this painful experience, the very abstract concern about 'places to be yourself in the future urban environment' becomes concrete in the workshop. This leads to a sudden change into a very practical mode, where the groups that were mainly meant to spell out their reflections about different utopias turn into project groups with their own change proposals in the spot. Trying to keep up with this process, Ingrid and I quickly write up the range of change proposals that have

come up, and ask the young participants' in the room to write their names next to the one they feel most inclined to start working on. Quickly, they select three key ideas: an activity day where young people from underserved areas get to explore the leisure amenities of the city, an open recreation yard where you cannot get kicked out, and a youth programme meant to support young people's physical- and mental health. This newfound orientation towards initiating experiments with practical changes takes somewhat different paths for the three groups that have spontaneously formed.

5.5.2 Planned vs. spontaneous paths to realisation

Two of the groups started more elaborate planning processes, and one jumped right into action, and decided to arrange an excursion ('it has to be tomorrow!') to the local, municipal recreation yard (fritidsgård) to interview them about the place and their policies. A quick phone call later, they decided that it did not make sense for them to talk more, but just to meet up there the day after. I insisted that they met with me an hour before the actual visit to the place, in order to think a bit about what they would like to find out by visiting, and what would be the relevant questions to ask the staff and young people.

As we convene the next day at the nearby library, the young participants show up with a range of suggested topics that they deem relevant to talk and think about in relation to the municipal recreation, and to ask the staff about. These included: feeling subjected to negative influences from other young people, how the spaces can help young people feel more free to be themselves, alternatives to kicking someone out, why they exist in the first place, and how/if you can get to experiment with organising them differently. Walking around the premises turned out to be difficult, as one of the young people in our group had got kicked out of the particular recreation yard, but one of the staff was willing to come out and meet us in the little pocket park outside to take part in an interview. This interview is not as such part of my research project, but rather an activity the young participants' undertook to strengthen their own change proposal. Thus, I will not recount the interview, but rather mention topics that stood out to them as we digested the experience afterwards. Sitting out in the pocket park looking into the recreation yard, the young participants wonder about their rules of behaviour and conduct, like using bad language, or breaking things, or getting into rows, and they reflect on how this seems always more difficult for some young people than

others. In relation to this, they wonder what 'consequence thinking' means, and if you really learn to think about the consequences of your actions by getting kicked out. They also wonder how to facilitate respectful interactions among the young people and in relation to adult staff, and if the possibility of going to the recreation yard to should be expanded beyond the current age-range of 12-18 years. This reflects their previous discussions about their lived experience of not really having somewhere to go where you could feel like yourself, already from an earlier age.

This leads to a reflexive walk through the pocket park and back to the library to 'talk to some children' about what they think is missing. As we walk there, the young participants start to spontaneously assess the pocket park and path we walk along. They point out how if you are not welcome in the recreation yard, it can be okay to play and hang out, but there is no shelter from rain and cold, and the fact that there are always strangers passing through makes it less comfortable. From the irrelevance of the mapping exercise I had suggested, the landscape architecture of the immediate surroundings start to come into view, as far as it pertains to their own analyses and future visions. Back at the library, we walk to a small space, designed and created by young people themselves with the help of a local grassroots organisation (Växtverket[16]). The colourful space is full of children reading, chatting and playing, and the young participants burst in and ask if the children know that one of them had taken part in building and painting it. Among the happy chatter, and pedagogical challenges trying to hold a focused conversation with boisterous children, the discussion hops between which are the better inner yards, and whether there would be space for an outdoor swimming pool with slides next to the local McDonalds. Thus diverted, the young participants and I agree that there is lots of input to take with us into further discussions about their change proposals, and to arrange a planning meeting about this in the following week.

Meanwhile, the two other groups working on change proposals were engaged in extensive discussions about planning their projects. In order to help organise these thoughts, I suggested creating timelines, pointing from the present moment and towards the future realisation of the utopian vision. One group quickly start to elaborate plan for a diversified approach to

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[16] Local organisation of landscape architects and nature-pedagogues working with young people as co-creators in urban green spaces.

minimising the segregation of joy for different, fine-grained age-groups. Their analysis includes discreet needs for 12-15, 16-18, and 19-21 year olds, for boys and girls, for newly arrived refugees etc. As the complexity of finding relevant concrete actions along all these lines grows, they hone in on an idea for a 'Triathlon'. This is not a Triathlon in the conventional sense, but a triathlon of activities in the urban environment. To start with, they agree to focus on identifying the young people who does not really have a chance to feel they take part in any the fun activities in the city. They immediately compile a long list of grassroots organisations operative in their neighbourhoods to help with the selection, and map out attractive in- and outdoor entertainment options that they know about, but have not tried. Difficulties arise, however, when their excited attempts to reach out and talk about their project is met with many unanswered phone calls.

The final group seems mired in discussions about the many aspects they try to merge in one change proposal. One suggestion that gathers some of their thoughts is to try to start a youth-driven café that would provide work training while also creating a supportive space for getting help with homework and other study needs. However, others' protest that this has little to do with the health- and outdoor-life aspects that they cared most about. Handling the insistence on the diverse ambitions, and the difficulty of spanning the long list of challenges, this group trying to work on this change proposal eventually decide to join the other ideas, and a few decided not to take part in the workshops anymore.

5.5.3   The devil's applications

Several action research projects in the critical-utopian strain have installed various versions of a 'devil's advocate' to help nuance the change ideas that arise. The Devils Advocate approach in FCWs have been suggested as a way to widen the sphere of reflection from the immediate lifeworld of the participants, onto other groups, considering other interests, and deliberate over implications for society at large. In facilitating such a moment in the FCWs, the action researcher encouraged other participants to practice explaining the relevance of their change proposals beyond their own context. In our context, this was instated in the form of funding applications, as a smaller part of the research budget for facilitating was reserved for supporting change initiatives. It was agreed within the research team, that the young participants' could access this money if they wrote an application

detailing a motivation for their change initiative in relation to the urban environment, and send a short project plan and budget. This proved a considerable challenge, transitioning from the freer, verbal and creative forms of expression and lively discussions that had characterised the workshops up till this point.

Over the next four-five months, the project groups struggled, but managed to arrange meetings, develop texts, and work out a multitude of practical details for their experiments. The work on change plans and applications was mostly conducted by the young participants themselves, but I played a role facilitating a few, larger workshop-meetings where the different project groups that were forming could meet and share experiences. Here, and in the overall work, I played a particular role as 'project memory', which could help to remember key aspects of the critical analysis and shared utopia that somehow disappeared in the practical details. Thus, the initial dimensions of critique and utopia could come to play a role as navigational knowledge that the young people could use, and refer to throughout their work. A particular struggle in this regard, was to find threads between the increasingly specific change-proposals, and the shared utopian vision. For example, the young participants were encouraged, several times, along the way to present their proposals to each other, to receive and discuss critical and constructive input from the others. This led to many moments of tension, especially due to the earlier noted problems with how societal divisions along gendered and racialized lines showed their face also in our workshops. But here, as elsewhere, a mix between the young participants sense of some shared purpose, playful metaphors ('we will mec it!') and the attention to always allowing conflictual perspectives to be present and articulated (but not solved) kept a (somewhat fragmented) utopia in view.
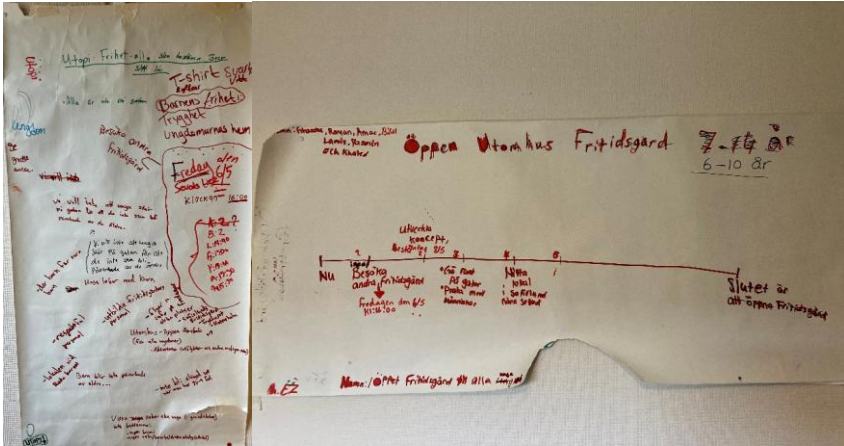
Figure 14: Examples of planning-meeting notes.

Another problem arose in the division of labour within the project groups, where endless frustrations occurred, but also moments of beauty as a laptop was passed around between five young participants sitting around a table, making sure everyone gets a say in how things are formulated, and priorities are staked out. The basic problem, of where one can have a meeting in their everyday environments, also proved a tremendous stumbling block. This work progressed through the onset of spring and summer, and yet, very few outdoor areas in their neighbourhoods (and thus, easily accessible in between school, spare time jobs, taking care of sibling, or other social obligations) were particularly fitting. As also narrated in Paper 2, an acute example came about, as six young participants and I attempted to have a planning meeting in the inner yard where they lived. This was broken off due to the young participants feeling spied on, we embarked on a long walk around their neighbourhood to look for a place to sit down, and work out the final details of their project plan. However, walking past the go-kart centre parking lot, up and down the streets, past a square with a playground, and several smaller street-side green spaces, nowhere proved feasible.
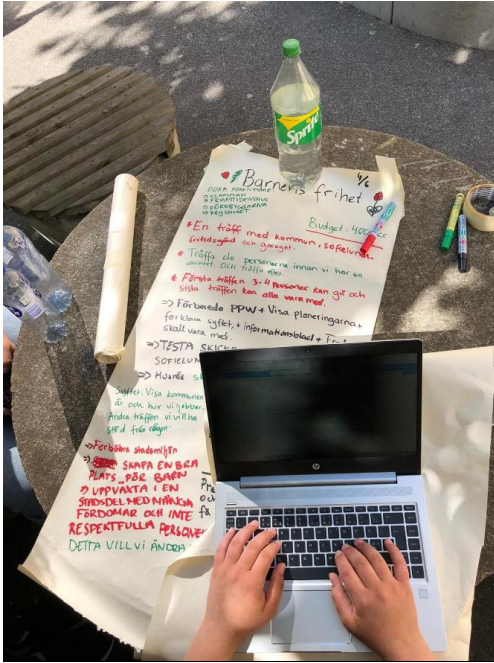
Figure 15: Planning meeting in inner-yard, abruptly broken due to unfriendly gazes.

We ultimately ended up by the local library, but as it was busy and there were no available meeting rooms, we sat somewhat uncomfortably outside along the library wall. While this of course could work, it also provided an important learning for both me and the young participants about how inaccessible their urban environment could feel, and how very few things seemed to invite their presence in the local public places.

The participant-constellations shifted somewhat during these months, and endless hours were spent explaining and recounting what the project was about to participants joining other change-proposal groups and a few returning after long absences from the project. During this slow process, however, the ideas in the change proposals also matured considerably. The divisions that caused so much head- and heartache also became constructive frames of reflection, for example over what it means, that the unequal access to leisure time activities vary also with gender, and within smaller units than the urban areas we had previously talked about. This led the recreation-yard group to start practical deliberations about how to make sure that diverse groups beyond themselves would feel that the place they tried to create would feel both welcomed, safe, and respected. They insisted, for example, that the

involvement of other young people in running activities and providing a different kind of pedagogical support could help many of those who felt misunderstood by adult practitioners. These discussions also led the Triathlon group to start envisioning their activity day as an occasion to learn about the needs from other young people in different areas and different life situations ('you don't really understand how it is to be here as an unaccompanied refugee!'), and develop a questionnaire and focus group discussion they could conduct at the end of their activities.

Eventually, the project applications were sent off. The next workshop was meant to reiterate and clarify how the two, concrete change ideas, the open recreation yard, and the Triathlon that had materialised applied to the shared utopian vision. This, however, quickly proved a difficult exercise, and several of the young participants declared their scepticism if anyone would really support them in their endeavours. Others tried to come up with more solutions if the applications did not work out, and started envisioning how they could canvas local businesses for sponsorships, making alliances with grassroots groups, or even collecting refund-bottles to finance their experiments. As the groups brainstormed over this, a positive answer to the first application ticked in during the meeting. This garnered a considerable amount of disbelief ('I mean, we tried, but we didn't really believe we could get money'), and eventually celebration that the answer seemed to say that they would receive the requested funding, pending on a few alterations in budget allocations to meet the university's guidelines for research activities. During the final weeks leading up to the summer break, the workshops were imbued with a supportive and creative energy, and two funding applications eventually got approved by the university (represented by the wider research team around the PhD-project). While the planning activities leading up to the first practical experiments with realising their utopia held many interesting situations and learnings, these held primarily relevance for the young participants' own process, and a bit less so in terms of the key outputs of this PhD research. Thus, the following section jumps a few months ahead to the initiation event for the open recreation yard.

5.6 Opening a recreation yard where one is free to be oneself

Leading up to the first, public experiment with realising their utopia the young participants engaged in a flurry of activities, some on their own, some supported by me. The group planning the open recreation yard decided early on to open their recreation yard in a pilot event, organised as orchestrating a place for a half-day of partly organised leisure activities, couched in an autumn festivity including food in the evening. The important parameters was to make it seem welcoming for children and young people between 8-15 years old (this span was changed multiple times), so that they could experience an urban environment where they could be themselves, and they cannot get kicked out. They assigned themselves roles with different practical- and pedagogical responsibilities, canvassed their own and the few surrounding building blocks, hung up self-designed posters, handed out flyers, and spread the word in the month leading up to the selected date. Planning and preparation progressed nicely, but finding a place to be proved a significant stumbling block. After unfruitful requests to the local school, the municipal recreation yard, and the library to find out if they could offer an area we could use, a local grassroots organisation (Växtverket) came to the fore. They had just taken over an abandoned car garage and the large, concrete yard space in front of it.

Figure 16: Växtverket lent out a place to test 'open recreation yard'.

Växtverket's intention was to activate this place for local artisans and eventually make it a democratic meeting arena for local citizens' to initiate and organise localised activities aimed at creating more sustainable livelihoods. When I put them in touch with the young participants, they readily agreed to offer up the place for their pilot event for a non-prohibitive fee. Prior to the day, the young people had only seen pictures of the place. I had indicated that it needed some adaptations for our purposes, but when we showed up in the morning, their faces dropped with the state it was in. While we had previously discussed the good potential of having access to both outdoor, indoor, and in-between areas (there was a large overhanging roof on the building), the disorder of the place looked overwhelming. As also described in paper 2, this resulted in an initial panic and desire to call off the entire event. Eventually, the project group conferred together and declared that 'we just need to get to work, quickly!'. The next few hours were frantic, pushing aside old tool-shelves, covering up piles of abandoned construction materials, and organising the few raised beds, cosy lights, tables and chairs that Växtverket had acquired for the place. As action researcher, I primarily made myself useful as driver, helping to pick up provisions and materials for the event.

After four hours, the place had been transformed, and the young participants looked around with considerable relief and declared, that it actually looked quite nice. A small argument arose by the rolling gate that separated the area from the street. A few of the participants felt it should be wide open, so as to almost provide a new square for passers-by, but others thought that it was of prime importance to create a more safe and sheltered feeling. They worried that a wide open gate could make for both unwelcoming eyes and invite in the kinds of behaviours that the young participants tried to create a safe haven from. They struck a compromise with a two-thirds open gate that they thought could create a sheltered feeling, but also indicate that this was not a private event, and children and young people from the neighbourhood could drop in. The questions about who, if any, and how many might show up was quickly forgotten when, a little after the official opening time, a large parade of people came walking together. The place was a few blocks over from where most of the young participants lived, and had done the majority of the canvassing, and now a group of 20+ people came walking together from that direction. Looking at two, very young children maybe aged 4-5, one of the participants declared in a hushed

whisper that 'they brought babies, what do we do!?'. This remark had a comic resonance also with the action research experience at large, where Ingrid and I had several times been at a loss with how to handle the fact that the young participants frequently brought younger siblings along for the workshops, and needing to develop contingency plans on the spot. Owning up to the situation, the young participants, quickly organised a corner of the indoor area that could resemble more as a kindergarden, and one person was assigned to help take care of the younger audience.

Half an hour into the event, after a bit of uncertainty and awkward standing around, the young participants declared the official opening of their alternative recreation yard 'Freedom For The Children'. This was done with a speech detailing a few points from our work in the FCWs, emphatic remarks about feeling ok being yourself in public places, and that here you could not get kicked out, and finally also a confetti canon that one participant had insisted was needed for an opening event. Everyone clapped, and thus the activities started, and the young participants quickly assumed their delegated roles, organising activities, setting up games, and helping to care for the, unexpected, youngest audience. The quite diverse group of children and young people demanded a fair amount of the young participants, who had to adapt and try to make sure that everyone felt seen and engaged. Starting out with a range of quite divided activities, the audience gradually merged more and more, and especially a customised game of musical chairs out in the recreation yard brought collective joy to those gathered. Eventually, they also got tested on their core ambitions, as a smaller conflict arose during the afternoon. They tested their alternative approach to mediation and advising one child a 'thinking break' from the game that had caused the conflict, and another round of panic ensued as the food they had provided took a long time preparing, and in addition there was crying from a smaller child and other voices of dissatisfaction. Reminding each other of the agreement to be respectful and engaging for everyone, the young participants ran around trying to address the various dissonances that arose.

As we later sat over dinner, and the young participants rejoiced and started conversations with the children and young people gathered, asking if this had been a good day, they were confirmed in that they had in fact managed to create the kind of place they had envisioned, and no one had been isolated or kicked out, but several in fact declared that they had found new friends. A few new learnings had also occurred, for example that a few

in the audience did not share a language, and that this needed special attention. They also learned that the dynamic with taking extra responsibility for young people as young people had been good, and that it worked well with also having a few adults present and helping to talk through challenges that arose along the way (as well as extra hands with driver's licenses etc.). When the event was finished, and a considerable cleaning and resetting the place to how we found it was underway, the young participants blasted loud music, and as they danced around with vacuum cleaners one participant loudly declared that this had been 'the best day' she could remember. Not only did they provide an alternative place for younger people in the neighbourhood to be themselves, developed a meaningful answer to the segregation of joy, they also fulfilled some of their own utopian aspirations, at least for this half day.
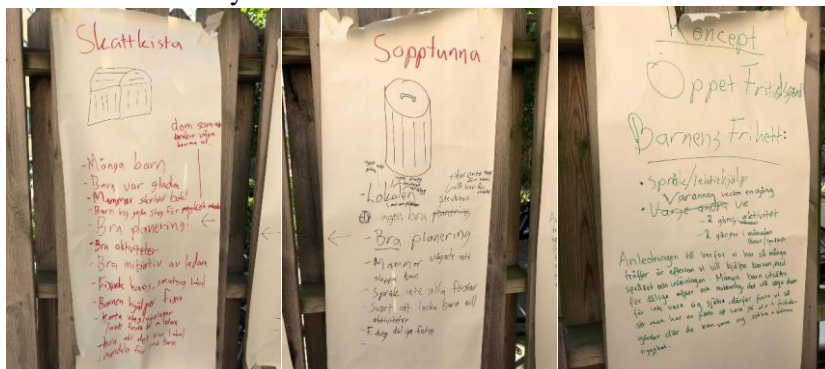

Figure 17: Notes from evaluation and concept development meetings of 'open recreation yard'.

In addition to the spontaneous evaluation while dancing with the vacuum cleaner, several meetings in the ensuing months touched upon how to refine the concept, when (and where) to test again, and how to garner more support for the idea. The entire group of young participants agree that the open recreation yard has strong merit for the neighbourhoods, and provide a critical alternative to places shaped by market dynamics and state institutions.

5.7 Triathlon against the segregation of joy and amusement

In the other group planning a change initiative in pursuit of their utopian vision, the Triathlon took shape. Working from the initial senses of agony over the ever-alluring go-kart centre, it grew into a fully fledged concept for how to bring young people to experience segregation of joy, out into the attractions of Malmö's urban environment. Their focus remained on their own demographic, the 15-20 years olds, but focused more on making the city feel like a city, reflecting the earlier noted experiences of the attractions of 'Malmö' as such not really feeling available to the young participants. Working with the expertly curated list of local grassroots organisations working in underserved areas, the young participants quickly recruited the 14 participants they had budgeted for (including the four who were doing the project planning). The day plan consisted of three main activities, using their own collective knowledge of which places hold allure, but seem inaccessible in Malmö. These had been earlier points of contention, as two of the activities were exclusively inside buildings (go-kart and bowling), and I argued that this ran counter to how we had understood and discussed 'the urban environment' with a focus on green- and other outdoor areas, public spaces etc.. To this, the young participants argued that their experience of an urban environment was cut short by not having equal access to its many allures, and that this preconditioned their experience of living in a city altogether. Furthermore, they rightly pointed out that for this moment of our collaboration it was effectively their project, and their understanding of the urban environment that mattered. The plan for the day also included food and provisions and carefully thought-out logistics for experiencing the three different neighbourhoods that were going to be visited throughout the day. The overall planning in this sense, along with the points of contention around diverging understandings of 'urban environment', ultimately proved a fruitful ground for social learning and imagination.
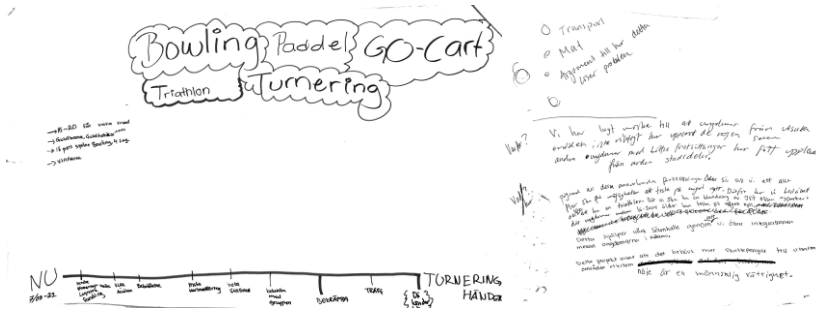
Figure 18: Planning and proposal-notes from 'Triathlon'.

As the 14 participants' gathered in the morning of the event, the organising group announced their initiative, including a speech about the lingering disbelief that the pilot event was actually happening, as they tended to expect things to go wrong and good activities to not pan out. We got to the high-end sports complex that was the first activity site, as also described in Paper 2, hushed conversations among the 14 participants' marvelled at the seemingly endless possibilities and well-organised and luxurious facilities. The activities were, as in the other pilot experiment, a mix between organised activities feeding into an overall tournament-structure for the day, and also unstructured time for free play. The tournament was thought as an incentive to try out the many different things, and the main point of the unstructured time was merely to grant access to the sites, and leave it up to participants themselves to determine what to do. Especially the organised activities proved a great attraction where everyone audibly enjoyed themselves. The unstructured time proved harder, and several of the participants seemed uncertain what to do with themselves in the unfamiliar surroundings. Walking through the mostly unfamiliar neighbourhoods, between the activities the participants discussed dis-/similarities to their own, and one recurring reflection was whether we were now somewhere 'upper class'. As we approached the bowling venue, some declared that they had tried it before, either as a special activity with after school care-institutions, or a few with their families. When asked if this was really an inaccessible joyful pastime then, they declared that it was very different with their families, or as an activity with a public institution. This led to a longer reflection about the idea of a 'segregation of joy', and several participants shared stories also of not being allowed to come along for after-school excursion due to misbehaviour, or that going bowling with the family was a very different

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thing. When probed some more, they concluded that not having money or freedom in other senses to more spontaneously do fun things with people they felt comfortable and free with, made them feel on the outside of youth life in the city as such.

The logistics of the day had left a very long gap in activities over lunch, and due to cold weather, the initial plan to spend the time out in a park was scrapped. Scrambling for alternatives, one of the organising participants pointed out that ZigZag, the local organisation that had arranged our initial contact, were arranging a large football-tournament nearby. Seeing as this was also related to attempts to combat the segregation of joy experienced by young people growing up in underserved areas, he proposed to spend the time-gap by checking out this tournament. This led to a very varied experience, as some got to witness the extent of activities (there were 500+ players in the tournament) that could be arranged by actors they knew, and joyfully hunted around for familiar faces, and others were confronted with strongly gendered dynamics. Several of the female participants felt utterly estranged by the football tournament, and actually preferred to wait outside in the cold. As responsible for a somewhat democratic process of figuring out what to do, I unsuccessfully attempted to facilitate a dialogue about this ambiguity of what constituted a fun/welcoming space in this situation. Without any mediation, there was grumbling discontent, but also reflection over 'what counts as fun' as also a diverging activity, and there seemed to be some recognition that football provided a socially liberating environment for some, and less so for others. However, as the participants partook in the organised bowling-tournament, and as the organising participants also surprised everyone with snacks, the fraying sense of collectivity seemed somewhat restored.

Figure 19: Pictures from 'triathlon against segregation of joy' (edited for anonymisation).

The grand finale of the Triathlon was entering the elusive go-kart facility, back in one of the neighbourhoods where the majority of young participants lived. It was very clear from the explicit elation of the participants, that racing around that go-kart track made as much personal- as it made societal sense, in addressing the issues we together had discussed and worked on for almost two years. As we later sat over dinner, and the organising participants handed out their questionnaire and, possibly inspired by the FCW format of open deliberations, discussed what had, or had not worked about this day. The recruited participants gladly shared the almost exclusively positive feedback, as the organising participants jotted down the remarks: "no one felt left out", "everyone felt seen and welcomed", "organisers made sure everyone could take part", "Triathlon was a very good, and clear way to organise the day", "the food was important", "we remembered to clean up after ourselves because everyone felt responsible". Adding to this, I shared an observation that only some of them knew each other before, but throughout the day had come to share experiences and joy through in-between chats, hugs and high-fives. I also shared that this seemed a good indication that they had made a place to be themselves, meet other young people, and today had done a significant contribution to diminish the segregation of joy in Malmö. This seemed to resonate, and became a happy final note to the pilot event.

The young participants thus concluded (for now) their critical analyses, drawing connections, and arguing and uniting around transformative visions for the future. This resulted in a perspective shift, and an emerging new discourse around joyful and unprejudiced urban environments that guides

towards more secure futures in terms of jobs and education for all, that cuts across existing structuration of what counts as urban landscape-matters. The landscape comes into view, however, as the young participants take action on the lack of places to be themselves, or the ever-unattainable go-kart complex in their neighbourhood. At this stage, where the current project frame finishes for the purposes of this dissertation, it begs new questions of landscape democratic framings and participatory capacities in municipal planning and development practice. Some of these aspects are reflected also in the findings from papers 1, 2, and 3, and are discussed below, as they offer new substantive insight for research-practice collaborations with young people's lives and landscapes in the city.

6. Overall findings

This section outlines the main findings as they appear when reading across the different papers and chapter 5 which details the collaborative process more extensively in this compilation text. The following sections will discuss the implications of the main findings in relation to young people's relationships to their urban environments, and the possibilities for landscape democratic engagement with young people, in planning sustainable urban transformations.

6.1 Lifeworld and action in existing interactive approaches

In the literature sample, the existing approaches to young people's participation in urban landscape planning did not firstly appear as particularly interactive. The majority of approaches labelled as participation or engagement turned out to contain very limited room for interaction. Rather, they showed a prevalence of traditional research methods such as questionnaires and interviews, mixed with digital tools such as PPGIS which provided a spatial dimension to various kinds of surveys. This gave, for a majority of the studies, limited possibilities to investigate how lifeworld- and action orientations could be nurtured. In the subsection of studies which did detail more interactive approaches, the conceptual lens derived from action research methodologies, drew attention to how multi-method- and creative approaches often seemed to allow young people to contextualise the urban landscape in relation to their lifeworld. What is even more evident is, that in the sample collected, action-orientation is rare in established participatory practices, and when present, young people primarily partake in public participatory artwork, or the range of possible actions is pre-determined by adult practitioners. This lack of an explicit action-orientation indicates a new potential to inscribe transgressive action research methodologies more deeply in future practice related to young people's participation in landscape planning. This would enhance the democratic potential of ongoing transformations of the urban landscape towards future sustainability, especially with conventionally peripheral groups, like young people.

Both Paper 1 and this compilation text (Ch. 2 and 5) demonstrate that the examples from CUAR, and in adjacent fields, makes unfolding these

potentials possible. Thus, action research have showed young people taking action and devising their own answers to societal challenges in welfare state services and facilities. In the extensive action research engagement described in Paper 2, and the process description (Ch.5), these potentials also appear in the search for relevance between discourses of sustainable landscape transformations and the young participants' lives. The relatively abstract methodological lens outlined in the first study allows a tentative mapping of current participatory approaches engaging with young people in urban landscape planning. The mapping of approaches suggests a possibility that becomes more concrete in the second study and the process description (Ch.5). Here, in between the strict attention to the young participants' lifeworld, and the possibilities to encounter structuring societal dynamics, the urban landscape, at first a somewhat alien abstraction, suddenly becomes relevant in relation to young people's life projects. The young participants' insistence on their own demarcations, shows pathways where conceptual openness in the process provides free spaces for academic- and experiential knowledge to meet. Further, the extensive engagement through the FCWs confirm the findings from the reviewed literature when social, cultural, political, and other aspects attain specific qualities that relate intimately to places in the neighbourhood and the urban environment as such when explored with aesthetic exercises. These allow embodied, experiential knowledge to be expressed, explored, and reflected in collective settings and form the basis of a youth-driven analysis of the urban environment. Finding the relevance of urban landscape-concerns for the future in young people's lives thus requires the kind of mutuality entailed in the CUAR process as evidenced here.

The FCWs conducted as part of this dissertation shows promise in working outward from the young participants' change proposals and into active discussions with municipal- and other practitioners concerned with the future urban landscape. As the third study shows, however, the path between the lifeworld grounded analyses and project proposals and into municipal planning and policy is somewhat contentious. Malmö municipality has, in later years, showed great industriousness in supporting various forms of participatory experimentation through green students' councils, livings labs, and care-oriented neighbourhood interventions. Furthermore, signing onto the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child has spurred and increased attention to formalising concerns for children and young people in all aspects

of urban development. This has led the municipality to establish a range of procedures that can best be described as *planning-for* young people, especially through risk- and consequence assessments and increasingly creative practitioner-roles. As far as *planning-with* young people is concerned, the practitioner interviews evidence a range of temporary initiatives and experiments, notably a Green Student Council, and care-oriented initiatives in the CTC platform in some selected neighbourhoods. However, for all the good aspirations and initiatives for involving young citizens in determining the future of the urban landscape, significant gaps also appear. The municipal organisation is at pain to allow a differentiated approach to participation between different user-groups, and entrenched understandings of 'public interest' hampers the dedication of time and resources to targeted efforts that could allow perspectives from such marginalised or subaltern public spheres to be lifted into more formalised planning processes. As the literature review (paper 1) reminds, this is by no means unique to Malmö, but can be considered a widespread issue.

Thus, existing interactive approaches to young people's participation in urban landscape planning and practice show some promise in lifting lifeworld-concerns from young people into some level of dialogue with more formalised spheres of society such as academic or practical landscape planning discourses. However, more radical democratising- and action oriented strains of research or forms of engagement seem absent, though budding with potential to establish new forms of mutual relevance, as evidenced in the FCWs conducted as part of this dissertation, and CUAR processes in adjacent fields.

6.2 Young people's ambivalence, future sketches, and discursive shift: landscape becoming relevant

Through the FCWs, the young participants devised a *discursive shift* around the future of their living environments. This shift was inspired by the young participants' insistence on their own demarcations, and it shows pathways where conceptual openness in the process provides free spaces for academic- and experiential knowledge to meet. This project successfully engaged with 34 young participants, hailing from two underserved areas in Malmö, Southern Sweden. In 50+ workshops/meetings/activities over the course of more than three years, the PhD Student, a research assistant, and

the young participants strove to find mutual relevance of collective investigations, plans, and actions related to their urban environment. At first, the young participants vehemently rejected the framing offered by as far it pertained to future 'urban landscapes' and to 'sustainability', but still seemed interested in doing something together in a more broadly conceived action research project. This led to the gradual development of 'Project Society', which started out exploring underlying factors preconditioning the young participants' experience of their urban environments. In the initial, critical, stages of analysis, the young participants developed a shared understanding of how their possibilities to encounter and feel good in their urban environments were drastically hampered by experiences of opaque behavioural norms, prejudice, racism, insecurity, and limited financial means. Through a range of explorative and aesthetic exercises, brainstorms, rounds of voting and further deliberations these concerns came to be emplaced as urban environmental critiques, as the young participants started connecting their critiques to concrete encounters and emotions in specific places in and around their neighbourhoods. Thus, experiences of getting kicked out of the local recreation yard became exemplary for how the whole group understood their own relationships to the urban environment as fraught, conflictual, and marred by inequality.

These points were further underlined, as the sense of shared interests even within the project group began to fray. While almost falling apart as a shared process in several instances, the young people themselves devised a way back to a shared understanding and interest that felt relevant and applicable for all. The idea gained ground and seemed to gather them, that they needed to 'Mec', to tweak the adversarial relationships in-between themselves, between themselves and their immediate and more distant adult peers, and ultimately in relation to the urban environment. Their own words and metaphors thus came to drive the process forward as a mutual engagement, also when combined with more technical concepts, such as in their idea of 'segregation of joy and entertainment'. Moving from the initial analyses, the young participants developed utopian visions of a city without such segregation, and with welcoming and accessible places to meet and have fun. Through actions and experimentation, the young participants pursued these visions, partly by developing an intervention to enable young people from underserved areas to access the existing attractions for young people in Malmö, and partly through a new invention: the open recreation yard. These

socially nuanced change initiatives and interventions resulted in successful pilot projects that were integrated in their broader life context. Along the way of developing the critiques, visions, and actions, the urban environment came into view, and attained distinct and nuanced meanings that spanned both alienating experiences and situations brimming with hope.

Though the initial rejection of the landscape term, and the cultural- and socio-political constructions around it seemed alien to them, the semantic affinity with the 'urban environment' that occurred when continuing the conversation, provided a useful meeting place for a mutual engagement. The fact that the young participants early in the process could appropriate discursive power thus proved crucial. Further, the insistence on preconditioning socio-political factors and that a landscape-related project gradually becomes 'Project Society' indicates that the young participants engagement also hinge on the possibility to break with existing division between fields- and spheres of interests, practice and knowledge.

Considering a frame a encompassing as 'society' became a way for the young participants to explain and explore the multitude of factors that determine their relationships to their urban environment, and in extension to the landscape. Thus, the *relevant* implications of places they inhabit came into view for both them and myself, as an engaged action researcher. Importantly, this came after they got a chance to express ambivalence and developed critiques, explored what could be different, and started taking action on their utopian visions. From these new vistas, their urban landscape utopia included: places that nurtured freedom to be oneself for all young people, places to meet and feel safe, sense of possibilities to develop, and to feel joy. Also practical questions arose, around issues of mobility and equal access to what the urban environment might have to offer. Perhaps most crucially for reading the young participants analysis into a more focused context oriented towards landscape democracy, was their dedicated work to nurture a respectful, unprejudiced and anti-racist public life and culture. This required distinct interventions in public spaces in their neighbourhoods, to create open-yet-protected venues where young people could take increased responsibility for a diversified, respectful atmosphere like in the Triathlon, and the Open Recreation Yard. For these aspects to be seen as landscape interventions in the views of existing planning- and other practical fields related to landscape and sustainability might be a long way to walk. However, the young participants have provided important initial pointers for

the direction future research and practice around a democratic landscape transformation can take.

6.3 Challenges and opportunities for young people's democratic participation in Malmö

In the third paper, a range of possibilities and challenges appear in the existing governance arrangements that emerge in the analysis of interviews with six practitioners who hold key roles in organising citizens' participation in general, and with young people in particular, in Malmö. One of the first things to stand out in the analysis of the interviews is the seeming, communicative gap between centralised systems, and decentral efforts. When asked about citizens' participation, several interviewees described centralised systems that offer formalised channels for citizens' to make their voices heard, but also readily considered these largely irrelevant for young people. The practitioners in the more centralised roles experienced exasperation with the very notion that they could or should engage with a range of specific citizen groups within their responsibilities for formalised planning. The consensus here seemed to be that the municipality plans *for* young people, but also that it does so to an increasing degree with tools like consequence- and risk assessments, especially oriented towards children. One notable exception to this was the Green Student Council, which on a temporary basis had allowed pupils from Malmö's school to make their voices heard in the city's overall planning and policy process. Meanwhile, for more decentral municipal practitioners, working in area-specific platforms such as 'Communities That Care', or from local libraries, described more hands-on experience working *with* young people in shaping their living environments. These experimental and extended roles ranged from simply making comfortable environments to meet and freely socialise available, to targeted actions like strategically filing error reports in areas where young people lacked good outdoor environments. The practitioners provided a murky image of sometimes well-coordinated activities, and sometimes glaring gaps between centralised planning and localised practitioner-engagement. The strategic use of error reports was an illustrative example of how decentralised action could use centralised systems to overcome the gaps, but also a scrambling for better communicative forms to make underrepresented voices heard.

This also shines a light to how efforts to plan *for* specific citizen-groups might be the only feasible options for a range of practitioners', and ambitions that go beyond must come about in more roundabout ways, and often as a result of strongly invested individuals who go above and beyond their formalised roles. The many examples that did showcase dialogues, actions, and interventions including young people were temporary, and mostly limited to interventions in specific areas. While practitioners cited both current and historical ambitions to scale up young people's participation in overall urban development, such as in the million-housing projects of the 1960ies, they now ran into difficulties related to resources. Thus, several practitioners described the ambiguity of dedicating time and resources to facilitate democratic processes with specific groups, such as young people. In some practitioners' view, their task was to consider and safeguard generalised notions of 'public interest' in planning and developments staked out by formalised systems and relevant policies. Others decried the glaring injustices in young people inheriting a society with tremendous sustainability challenges, yet having little say over current developments around their own living environments, and argued for the urgent need to provide the means for young people to take increased action and responsibility where the adult world is currently failing. In between these disparate views, the urgent democratic question arises of who should take responsibility for which common affairs. Planning *for* young people in an urban landscape with a multitude of diverging and conflicting interests appeared as the most feasible strategy for municipal practitioners to live up to their role in the existing governance arrangements. However, several see the need for practitioners to be allowed to take more dynamic roles that can facilitate young people taking up new active stances and responsibilities for their urban environments.

6.4 Discursive shift, actions, and interventions in existing landscape discourse and participation

As described in this compilation text (Ch. 1 and 3), emerging trends in envisioning and planning the urban landscape is increasingly influenced by what is here broadly conceived as sustainable urban planning agenda, especially incorporating functional framings like ecosystem services, blue-green infrastructure, or nature-based solutions. The ways these framings are presented in Malmö's planning- and steering documents, sways between

tangible actions and technical elements that can be readily introduced in urban environments, and more utopian aspirations to remaking urban lives and livelihoods in a greener, more sustainable elements. As the initial analysis states, the increase in technical- and functionalistic planning visions show no concrete pathways to meet with substantive democratic approaches to urban planning and development. It does, however, state an explicit focus on children and elderly as key demographic groups whose interest to pay particular attention to in future urban planning. While young people, in the sense evoked here as adolescents/young adults, are not mentioned as a specific group, this opening to specific, more peripheral needs and interests show promise, and can also be seen reflected in the 'fire' under the municipal organisation that the interviewees note has been lit to take in children's' perspectives.

These visionary and practical developments does show change and promise representing a wider range of underrepresented perspectives on the urban environment, but they also stay within a conventional planning frame. As argued, planning *for* underrepresented groups is limited when it comes to achieving democratic and transformative outcomes. When the young citizens in this study were given the chance in the FCWs, the discourse around planning and developing their urban environments were markedly different than the municipal, and pointed in directions with little or no concern in the sustainable planning agenda from Malmö.

The FCWs (Paper 2 and Ch. 5) evidence how diverse lifeworlds can be met and integrated into more collective deliberations, generating new interests and answers to challenges that otherwise seem far apart. Especially the possibility for young people to take discursive power over core content and framings opened ways to establish a mutual relevance between action research, young people, and the urban landscape. Yet few (if any) participatory approaches described in the interview study (paper 3) paid particular attention to facilitate young people nurturing their own problem definitions, visions and actions. The approaches that does approximate such openings seemed incipient, and somewhat at odds with the daily workings of municipal practice- However, an increased attention and will to facilitate increased participation for young people was present among the majority of the interviewees. As for the FCWs, the young participants explored taking increased responsibility for both their own-, and a younger other young people's (and even children's) possibility to feel safe and joyful in the urban

environment. Their hesitation about pursuing the paths forward to further establish these efforts does also, however, illustrate their uncertainty about whether they could, or should take this extended responsibility. This puts the question of relevance of outdoor spaces and the urban environment into perspective. While participatory practice with young people have shown promise (Paper 1) in generating understandings of young people's lifeworlds in relation to the landscape, the missing orientations towards concrete action, and resulting distance to established, planning- and development practice remains.

'Sustainability' and 'landscape' appeared as largely irrelevant to the young participants. However, to most of them, the feeling of moving around the city somewhat freely, and feeling seen and respected, and experiences tinges of joy was new. If anything, this is telling of how inequality and landscape experience entwine, and needs to be considered more profoundly in the establishing of democratic arenas where deliberations about greening yards, daylighting urban streams or establishing green roofs and raingardens can serve interests like those outlined by the young participants. The current sustainability agenda, however, would need both a discursive openness and integration of new capacities for entering into dialogue with young citizens' lifeworlds in order to connect with a social reality where the urgent needs are for recreation yards and better mobility. Crucially, such a meeting between the formalised planning agenda and young people's lifeworlds requires the opening of governance frameworks into more participatory visions to take the word 'participatory' in a more radical sense than currently. The difficulty of spotting young people's lifeworlds and actions in both a majority of established practices in scholarship, and in Malmö's municipal practice shows an abyss between the landscape as *lived*, and the landscape as *practiced*. Facilitating increased dialogues between the two requires practical approaches, like the FCWs, that does not turn young citizens into tokens or pawns in a predetermined agenda, but allow them to define problems and visions, and gradually find their own way to determine the relevance of landscape aspects.

The probing way, the young participants in this study eventually discovered the need for thickets to shield from traffic noise, canopies for micro climate control, or just the lack of ways in which their public lives impacted by judging glances and opaque social norms let these topics become relevant. While these particular outcomes are not that different from

planning sustainable neighbourhoods with functionalistic framings like ecosystem services, this needs to be levied in a substantive democratic dialogue that allows for diverse lifeworlds to appear and dissonance and conflict to be expressed. The sustainable urban planning agenda becomes a moniker for generalised notions of public interests. Thus, the functionalistic framings like ecosystem services currently, compared to existing participatory practices with young citizens like those in our study, puts the wagon in front of the horse. The sustainability 'of what' must come first for landscape change and interventions to become relevant for young people. Otherwise, the current gaps between young citizens and 'sustainable' landscape framings in planning and governance risk adding to current worries over green gentrification and exacerbating urban inequalities. Practicing further democratic experimentation and opening of formalised practice to diverse lifeworlds does, however, show potential in generating transformative visions of a landscape where all young citizens' can feel more in tune.

7. Discussion

The contribution from this dissertation is not per se to be found in one specific academic field or discipline. While it draws extensively on critical- and participatory action research literature in its focus and framing, it also reserves a partial attention to scholarship on young people's participation in urban planning, on critical conceptions of landscape democracy, and on emerging urban green agendas in governance and planning. Bridging these areas systematically is also more ambitious than the current work can aspire to. However, in its open and explorative approach, and the young participants' attempts at answering key problem-constellations, these diverse inspirations attain their own unique meaning. Thus, the research project also becomes a lens that can reflect back on the conceptual input, to the fields involved. To me, the ambition was always as much scholarly, as it was practical. While I devote some attention to reflect on what the process and findings can contribute to further development of these diverse strains of academic knowledge, I am mostly concerned with exemplary possibilities arising from the young participants' analyses and actions, as they become contextualised in wider societal trends. I would argue such possibilities, a few of which I will discuss below, abound in this laborious attempt to find critical reflection and meaningful pathways between the young life-projects, and the higher levels of organisation around transforming urban landscapes and livelihoods towards increased sustainability.

The common thread throughout this discussion is a consideration of the difficulty of making questions about the urban landscape relevant in a way that provides young, lay citizens' with new possibilities to engage in substantive, democratic processes oriented towards transformative change of their own living environments. I will discuss this in terms of methodological implications, what answers this kind of process generates, and how the specific developments can be understood in context of related academic trends. Finally, I will provide a reflection of how the paths chosen by the young participants open up some potentials for critical reflection on the *goals* of planning and development, that offers a new context for urban landscape practitioners to build onto the paradoxical promises of the policies they adhere to. This would incorporate dynamic notions of landscape democracy, both conceptually and practically in open-ended facilitation forms inspired by CUAR and the FCWs conducted here.

7.1   Methodological reflections

What can be considered the first, crucial, data point in this dissertation was the silence that ensued when presenting the title at the information meeting with the young participants. The title vocabulary came from discourses that resembled starkly different social horizons and priorities, and was resoundingly irrelevant to the young people present. As the review shows, the majority of existing interactive approaches to urban landscape planning with young people provide a frame set by adults. While that in some ways might be easier to adhere to as a young person, it also precludes an opportunity to dwell at underlying ambivalences, and through them think more freely about the 'what' of the given discourse. Thus, the FCWs diverged from most existing practical approaches that prompt young people's participation with set questionnaires and surveys, interview- and focus group-questions, and also interactive maps, games and collaborative artwork (Paper 1), and allowed a different quality to unfold. The methodological choice in the critical-utopian framing, was to accept the apparent wrongness of the only prompt provided, the project title. Already here, the young participants and I could not agree. Though looking for possible agreements, the research approach is not consensus-oriented in a strict, Habermasian sense (as Fraser (1990) recounts it), but takes the immediate point of contention around the framing as a productive analytical dynamic. In this view, dwelling on the conflict can move a mutual understanding of the role of young people's urban landscapes forward, in between research and their lived reality.

In this way, much like when young people were allowed to break and diverge from the suggested process of participatory landscape analysis (e.g. Breitbart 1995, also described in Paper 1), the young participants' lived landscape started to appear. As was also the case in Breitbarts study, the landscape that did appear was one of exclusion and alienation. This suggests that the kinds of qualitative investigations that aim to capture diverse interests and perspectives on shared living environments must incorporate a methodological openness, representation of conflicting perspectives, and ultimately allow young participants a say over both process and outcomes. In this way, the participatory process can become a meaningful part of a lifeworld, and thus attain mutual relevance for researchers and young citizens alike. This does, however, go beyond conventional qualitative investigations, and also established ways of making sense of people's priorities in relation

to their living environments (Paper 1). The specific, scoping approach and conceptual lens applied to the literature sample thus provides initial, methodological focal points that complements prevailing understandings in the field.

Rodela & Norss' (2023) comprehensive study of young people's participation in shaping their own living environments through spatial planning in Sweden supports the assertion the division of such processes along conventional policy domains leads to too narrow views. While this compelling study eloquently captures the state of youth participation in planning in Sweden, this dissertation offers an in-depth example of how a fundamental openness to the unknown elements can traverse diverse social realities. Thus, when my facilitation of the FCWs initially proved wrong and irrelevant, the openness to co-determination over the basic understandings and concepts meant that different understandings did not hamper, but in fact spurred on a constructive process. This led to mutual learning, about how the young participants' experience and perception of their living environments differ, in fundamental ways, from those that can be assumed in processes that does not give opportunities for contestation, and progressive learning over time. Thus, the FCWs, the open facilitation, and the productive dynamic with the young participants confirms the possibilities for introducing CUAR as a prospect for substantiating participatory practices in urban landscape planning with young people, As Calderon & Butler (2020), among others have called for. The critical action research foundation thus shows a potential to contribute to participatory research and practice in order to create better and more holistic understandings of the role urban landscapes play in young people's lives.

While this potential has been described in other realms within the CUAR literature, some specific methodological developments also showed important for moving beyond deliberations on 'common affairs' in general, into distinct concerns for living environments in specific places. The initial prompting for 'landscape' and later 'environmental' aspects in the FCWs did not find much relevance in the purely verbal workshop situations. Rather, the crucial dynamic to move from purely inner experiences and analyse their interaction with specific places came with the introduction of aesthetic elements like the critique plays, and embodied exercises to spur on a collective social imagination. This aligns well with existing scholarship on young people's participation, that underline embodied and creative elements,

(e.g. Harris et al. 2010, Breitbart 1995, Cele 2023, Hill et al. 2018), but adds a methodological nuance to critical action research processes. Where these aesthetic elements can often seem contingent on the direction that the mutual learning process take in a series of FCWs, they seem fundamental to making explicit how problems and visions relate to specific places. This suggests that for action research processes oriented toward landscapes and living environments, the fundamental openness is important when it comes to verbal understandings, while the insistence on aesthetic elements, such as the critique plays, are key to analyse spatial elements of the lived critiques.

The methodological developments described here offers a contribution to urban landscape futures, by substantiating visions and plans with lived critiques and lifting marginalised and contentious experiences. While frameworks like biocultural diversity (Elands et al.) or mosaic governance (Buijs et al.) have taken important steps to diversify these discourses and who can be considered recognized actors, a critical utopian engagement offers direct methodological pathways, to enact broader, landscape democratic forums. As for vehicular concepts like sustainability (Tavilzadeh et al. 2017), their apparent indeterminacy and subjection to elitist policy-making and governance can be countered by such substantiation, by allowed radically open deliberations over 'the sustainability of what' to be reflected in concrete, place-based political deliberations in dialogue with a wider range of civil society actors, municipal practitioners, and relevant scholarship. Developing these methodological openings further, topics like 'segregation of joy' and the nuanced understandings and implications of young peoples' diverse relationships to their living environments can realistically be brought into dialogue with more formalised planning practices for blue-green urban futures.

Finally, it seems clear, that in the land of Greta Thunberg and strong youth mobilization around climate and sustainability (Marquardt 2020), the location for such investigations also matters. Even in different neighbourhoods in the city of Malmö, an FCW process likely would have played out differently, and potentially produced much more recognizably "sustainable" outcomes recognizable by predominant discourses. It would likely have resonated and led to much more apt collaborative opportunities with existing practice, to engage in climate action, improve biodiversity or minimize harmful production or consumption practices within the frame of current societal reproduction and values. But these would have been largely

irrelevant answers to many other young people (and it can most certainly be further debated, whether recognized blue-green answers lead to more sustainable outcomes than, say, increasing possibilities for more groups of young citizens' to partake in a joy- and respectful public life, rather than resorting to distant dreams of more private utopias).

However, rather than speculate over demographic specifics and values, this dissertation show methodological pathways that open up of purpose-discussions in the urban landscape with diverse, young citizen groups at the periphery of predominant democratic and discursive recognition. The basic approach, to create an experimental situation where the increase in young people's say over their own living environments clearly contrasts prevailing notions of 'participation' in parts of the municipal organisation in Malmö. The line of questioning and the ensuing practitioners' narratives evidence as much. Rather than resulting in a comprehensive overview of governance arrangements, the impetus from action research to create shifts in perspectives that temporarily privilege a lifeworld horizon is taken into the interviews, and tease out central ambivalences and underlying assumptions about democracy and public interests. Thus, the FCWs discursive shift towards landscapes of unprejudiced joy and entertainment, and pathways to future livelihoods works with the young participants' peripheral perspectives to establish a sketch of a radically different future. How this discursive shift can be contextualized by scholarship on landscape democracy and inequality in new green dreams for the urban landscape will be discussed in the next section.

7.2 Theoretical reflections

The, perhaps, most telling result of leaning into the dissonance and ambiguity appearing in the FCWs came about as the young participants started working with the idea of a 'segregation of joy'. The meeting of technical concept and everyday vernacular that the young participants created, resembles what Negt, after Kant, teased out by distinguishing between school- and worldly concepts (Negt 2019 pp. 165-166). The distinction helps understand the difficulty with which a specific terminology, often developed in an academic field of practice, meets a reality shared with a wider public. To some extent, knowing how the challenges of urban sustainability entwine with those of socioeconomic segregation requires a

high level of abstraction, knowledge and use of technical terms. On the other hand, the combined challenges are present as lived experience for the young participants. Their poignant critique lifts into contention how urban socioeconomic divisions are felt and mostly left unaddressed, or handled so far away from their lives that it becomes irrelevant what they might think or feel. The FCWs gave a genuinely democratic occasion for diverse perspectives and social realities to meet. This rendered the collaboration between research and young, lay-citizens analytically fruitful, as generalised research-knowledge found relevance in the dialogical incursion into the young participants' reflections. Their inner experience developed as analytical work, and the concrete action provided substance to the generalised knowledge about problems related to segregation. By providing the connections crosscutting sectorial divides and policy domains, and unearthing the challenges in taking action from an integrative lifeworld-horizon, this process becomes exemplary for how to provide content into the what of future sustainable urban environments.

As Nielsen (2024) has recently pointed out, it is crucial to understand that 'school concepts' might capture a certain pointed complexity, but when dealing with a concern like transformative change, it is truly everyone's concern. Engaging in deliberations about societal transformation, much like democracy, does concern how we want to live, and necessitates processes open to pluralistic understandings that can accommodate a 'crooked' city, and better allow the experts of the ville to encounter and be challenged by the cité. Of course, the question of young people's urban landscapes and living environments can be reduced to specific traits of blue- and green spaces in and around their neighbourhoods. But expanding the scope, like in the current investigation, can help to facilitate expanded democratic processes that can help also young people pinpoint what kinds of urban environments societies should strive to create in the first place. This contrasts and complements the kinds of 'striving' for inclusive planning and governance that is often implied for urban green spaces (Fors et al. 2021), by expanding the scope of processes and relationships between actors. The lived, critical reflection offered by CUAR means that the participatory and collaborative 'co-' in co-design, co-creation, much hailed in green urban planning discourses (e.g. Albert et al. 2019, Larondelle et al. 2016), must be made concrete, and engage with messier process of question-framings that cut across policy-domains and established governance areas, levels, and

actors. The examples from Malmö, focusing such work around framings of 'care', as described in Paper 3 are illustrative, but also encounter structures problems around the democratic and discursive ambiguities around practitioners' mandates. While more established, participatory methodologies might generate more directly workable outcomes and congeal more easily with both budgets and recognised working procedures within landscape planning and governance, they also often risks failing to engage meaningfully with marginalised and otherwise stigmatized experiences in society. The young participants' analytical move from a question about urban landscapes and living environments, to the encompassing frame of 'Project Society', proved necessary for the landscape to become relevant to them.

This dissertation suggests that this is because the goals established within conventional public deliberations and divisions of policy and professional practice into separate domains and sector do not encapsulate a relevant diversity of experiences nor allow for contestation and strongly diverging perspectives. Thus, extensive participatory processes are likely to clash, or become irrelevant if the foci from facilitating researchers- or practitioners is too narrow. While this general realization is not particularly new, and reflect much critical social- and political theory in later decades (e.g. Fraser 1990) as well as theories of landscape democracy (Egoz et al. 2018) and more radical spatial planning (Friedmann 2011), the particular discursive shift offered in this analysis expands on the original point. On could of cause argue, that the young participants simply do not have a landscape interest as this is to be conventionally understood. But the more profound learning from Project Society is that landscape interests are currently, predominantly perceived and enacted within a too limited scope, divided into expert-areas and thinned of substance by a generalised notion of public interest. This in turn gets reflected when functionalistic frameworks prevail, and blue-green infrastructure, ecosystem services, or nature-based solutions merely becomes add-ons to urban policies and plans that favour local economic priorities related to especially housing- and mobility infrastructure development (Tavilzadeh et al. 2017, Gressgård 2016, Holgersen & Malm 2015). As for the young participants' prioritization of 'segregation' as a predetermining factor for engaging with notions of 'sustainability', this suggest an insistence on critically reflexive participatory processes, also as a central dimension to not revert to ideological functioning like Metzger et al. (2020) have shown for urban sustainability policies. When it comes to

marginalised populations, scholarship on urban environmental justice and green segregation, Anguelovski et al. (2020) warn that practical alliances around urban sustainability risks being directly adverse to their lives in the first place.

Overall, this dissertations' contrast- and complementarity to increasingly open governance framings comes from the critical theoretical import that, in its' practical, participatory approach that keeps the thin line between knowledge- and power in view. Thus, while alliances with existing practice, tools that strengthen relations, efficacy, and empower citizens can be meaningful objectives within both research and practice, it also risks a too strong affiliation with current structural arrangements that taint what can be understood in both society and nature. Underlying epistemological categories like non-identity (Adorno 1972) that influence this work allows more radical perspective shifts, that in this dissertation have been pursued as openings towards transformative kinds of participation in research (Paper 1) and increasing democracy in professional practice (Paper 3), and with an insistence on a utopian, transgressive vision between young citizens and action research (Paper 3 and ch.5).

Pointedly, for the purposes of this dissertation, participatory practices that leave out key democratic questions about the what, and the why, also prohibit the landscape (as it is managed in municipal policies, planning and design) from coming into relevance for groups like the young participants in this study. The relevance that emerged in the FCWs, filling gaps in existing participatory practice with lifeworld and action (Paper 1), and exemplifying how to enact a new democratic channel in an ambiguous governance territory (Paper 2), is best conceptualised as a discursive shift. What gives meaning to the urban landscape in professionalised practices and visions is functional interconnections and technical expertise. Furthermore, these are described as taking supplementary roles to existing priorities in urban policy established by economic interests, and generalised notions of public interests. While raingardens, green roofs, urban parks and meadows, and street tree-health are clear, beneficial (and benign) key priorities in these frameworks, the notions of participation for example in Malmö's plan for blue-green environments are understandably vague. In the discursive shift established by a critical-utopian facilitation and the young participants' analyses, allows a different landscape-concern to appear. What gives meaning to their landscape is the possibilities to feel able to take part in existing societal

goods, finding comfortable and unprejudiced places to meet and develop, finding pathways to education and jobs, and importantly is constantly underscored by the experience of not having access to any of these things. The meaning-making in contemporary professional planning practice oriented towards sustainable urban landscapes does not alleviate any of these elements for the young participants, and the words I first met them with, shaped by these discourses, appeared profoundly irrelevant. Thus, the landscape, in predominant contemporary discourses, is something far-fetched from the lived entity in Olwig's descriptions (1996). It is also far from the participatory aspirations of the ELC to understand it, also insofar as it is perceived. Thus, the critical point to take away from the young participants' discursive shift is that the landscape, as it is currently envisioned in professionalised practice is largely irrelevant to them and their struggles for future livelihoods.

While this can be considered tragic in a part of the world where the landscape has historically been a unique frame in which to understand emplaced social and ecological interconnectedness, it can also be seen as a wild and utopian challenge to policy-makers, planners and practitioners. Framing this dissertation in terms of 'landscape democracy', with its' allusion to diversified notions of public interests playing a role in new fora around urban landscape architecture, land use decisions, practices of planning, management and maintenance gives a critical edge to considerations of participation in emerging, open governance arrangements. It is also an appeal to the best intensions of the new, functional frameworks for understanding urban social-ecological interconnections like ecosystem services, blue-green infrastructures, and nature-based thinking and solutions. These frameworks increasing allow specific landscape perspectives and expertise to come into view in urban spatial- and land-use planning for the future. They also risk being ephemeral frames that can apply only in as far as they congeal with policies aimed at economic development, rather than wider social-ecological sustainability. Frames like mosaic governance can highlight alliances of these frameworks with more grounded, social ambitions, and biocultural diversity with a breadth of cultural life in specific places. This dissertation introduces critical-utopian thinking into participatory practices as a way to evoke landscape democratic qualities with young people as a starting point that also allow peripheral, marginalised, or otherwise unrecognized citizens ways to substantiate local sustainability

discourses. The final section will discuss how this critical utopian perspective shift contrasts and complements emerging open governance framings in more practical terms and dialogue with prevailing models for participatory practice.

7.3   Implications for practice

This dissertation has engaged with questions around young citizens' increased participation, and worked with notions that extend this concept beyond conventional practice where young citizens 'get to' participate in higher-level, often formalised processes run by officials and other adult professionals to develop understandings, plans and practices related to the urban landscape. It thus challenges and complements emerging open governance framings by using the action research process to look beyond existing actors and into the lifeworld of young citizens, to iterate basic democratic discussions as they appear beyond established practice. While the critical analytical tools for participation, such as the 'ladders', at the very least in Arnstein's case (1969), orient itself towards a norm of self-governance, this is not a given ideal within the CUAR framing. Here, democratisation can take many shapes and nuances depending on the subject matter and localised context (Nielsen & Nielsen 2016, 2007, 2006, Egmose 2015, Bladt 2013, Tofteng & Bladt 2020). Indeed, for the young participants in this study, it is still an open question, who should take responsibility for the changes they propose. For the young participants' own part, they have already taken an impressive social responsibility that went beyond the framing offered in the FCWs, and created visions and taken action to create welcoming and respectful urban environments for others than themselves. Not just by leaning on their expertise and knowledge of local organisation to recruit other young people in their neighbourhoods for the Triathlon, but also by experimenting with a recreation yard for people younger than themselves, as they saw this as the most acute need. The question about how open the gate to the alternative recreation yard should be, thus also becomes a symbol for the question of how much they can extend this social responsibility, and how far beyond their own immediate social groups and neighbourhoods they can and will work to create opportunities for all to find joy and freedom to be oneself in their urban environment. Their reluctance to meet with otherwise well-willing practitioners point to a pervasive ambivalence, as

well as of democratic channels to find autonomy to partake in shaping their own living environments, and finally to what Hagen & Lorentzen (2024) recently described as structural constraints to a necessary 'ethics of care', in participatory work with young people. This gives a concrete exemplification of current challenges to renewal of urban landscape democracy.

Critical scholars concerned with urban planning and transformation call for localised forums and arenas for deliberating political priorities and facilitate democratic dialogues that lift otherwise seemingly incompatible interests around local area development and sustainable transformations into mutual consideration and negotiation (Brenner 2017, Tavilzadeh 2015, Metzger et al. 2020). The FCWs show how many of these aspirations can converge in CUAR-facilitated processes with young people, and also how the framing of landscape can be opened and levied anew with discursive force that combines broad and intertwined challenges, experiences, and perceptions. The significance of the painfully looming go-kart centre, and budding prospect of the open recreation yard make marginalised forms of relating (or not) to the landscape visible. Such facilitation, judging from the findings in this dissertation would require current landscape planning and governance practitioners to develop new capacities to engage with citizens', and especially young citizens' lifeworld in diverse, and more radically open ways. Whiston Spirn (2005) and other scholars of participatory landscape practice (e.g. Escobedo et al. 2022) have created inspiring research examples by increasing young people and other lay citizens' 'landscape literacy'. This dissertation suggests (as also mentioned in Paper 1) the possibility for researchers and professional practitioners might develop a 'young peoples literacy', and from there establish relevant relation to their, or other underrepresented groups', urban landscapes. Such engagement with democratically peripheral and marginalised would also require new mandates in urban landscape practice to make decisions, take action, and levy resources based on diverse and possibly conflicting priorities. This, however, seems like a tall order given the given societal context where economic priorities seem front and centre, as well as in the governance context as it appears in Malmö, where such extended democratic processes to some practitioners seem dubious, and to others beyond their practical reach.

However, if current critiques of young people's disengagement from ongoing societal challenges like climate change (Ojala 2015), the

increasingly disjointed city-as-built as city-as-lived (Sennett 2018), or overall landscape alienation (Hailwood 2015) are to be taken seriously, such work must be attempted. This dissertation pokes at this question from an initial point of departure as a research project, but with an action orientation that goes beyond a purely academic frame of interest. The practical interest in Project Society from the local grassroots organisations, the libraries, the municipal leisure time administration and select sustainability strategists and urban planners, as well as vocal support from university 3rd task-oriented staff shows an openness that indicates shared concerns. Whether this concern aligns exactly with this research project's experiment with putting young people's lifeworld and actions in the driver's seat when thinking about future, blue-green environments and sustainable urban landscapes (and having this entire framing shut down by the young participants involved) is not clear. What is clear, is that the young participants' analyses and willing collaboration in the action research process shows at least some promise to counter-act expert cultures around urban landscapes getting increasingly out of touch with what life is like for a wider range of citizens, but also a strong need for critical-epistemological reflexive practices to become part of participatory processes.

When reflecting on how established practice has appeared, in interviews and practical arrangements around Project Society's experiments, it is clear that the line of questioning, and answers, generated by this research approach resonates the most with grassroots- and cultural work. In very concrete ways, a local urban greening group, the municipal leisure time administration, and local library have offered venues for the young people's experiments. Discussions about further collaboration have, as mentioned, fallen short, and thus tangible reflections about how the learning and actions from the FCWs could be put to work in other contexts are somewhat cut short. However, the fact that the municipal leisure administration recently published a report on unequal access to leisure time activities in the city of Malmö (Tahvilzadeh et al. 2023) might indicate a heightened awareness of how a diversified notion of multiple and conflicting public interests must, and can be put into practice.

In a more basic sense, however, the initial support for the research project came from small, local organisations. They had the will and capacity to facilitate meetings between young people in the selected neighbourhoods and a very contentious research idea. Thus, when thinking about prevalent

classifications of governance actors, this work resembles what could be considered 'grassroots-based co-creation' (Torfing et al. 2024). This provides a succinct framing within existing structural conditions.

However, the critical-utopian theoretical framing of the action research offers a more radical change perspective that appears in the search for mutual relevance in between the young participants and the wide-paned theories and reflections around landscapes and democracy. Rather, they appear as small steps on a long way towards establishing caring and democratic practices for people to relate to their own living environments. When developing CUAR both theoretically and methodologically, Nielsen & Nielsen (2016) have emphasised a plural- or life-based economy as a way to frame how counter-hegemonic movements can be thought and practiced and help reproduce transformative alternatives to predominant societal developments. The open-ended approach and FCW facilitation with the young participants is a standing invitation for a wider field of practice to engage with their change proposals and actions.

There is certainly a need to break with the predominant, grey infrastructure of their living environments, not least where the recreation yard so far has taken place. Diverse forms of practical knowledge could be brought into play with the ambition to facilitate better meetings places, and perhaps even joy, in their living environments. The advances in knowledge and practices around creation multifunctional blue- and green urban spaces could thus be brought to bear in dialogue with localised problems and priorities, as they also appear in young people's lifeworld. Certainly, the open ending point, and plethora of unused possibilities in Project Society begs the question asked by FCWs of a 'permanent workshop' (e.g. Bladt 2013, Egmose 2015) that can facilitate participatory practices including grassroots and other active citizen-groups as well as municipal and other professionalised practice around lay citizens' future sketches

Inspired by Bladt's (2013), and many others' transgressive work with young people in marginalised life situations, this dissertation concludes with a final appeal, exemplified in the young participants' analyses, future sketches, to anchor participatory change processes in critical utopian work, and allow perspectives from professional practice, research, and a mosaic of other actors to filter into young people's sketches for radically different futures as critical, caring and constructive engagement.

8. Conclusion

The multi-pronged approach of this dissertation has consistently had one, central ambition, namely to contribute to critical and nuanced understandings of questions surrounding young people's role in shaping the sustainable urban landscapes of the future. The main dynamic has been the introduction of CUAR and the FCW approach in related subfields concerned with young people's participation and landscape planning and democracy. While the FCWs with the young participants contribute with the main findings, the central questions were explored also by means of a scoping literature review, document analyses, and an interview study and analyses of governance arrangements around the question of young people's participation in Malmö, Southern Sweden. Thus, distinct conclusions were drawn from the separate papers, and from this compilation text.

Reiterating from Paper 1, the studied literature sample in the scoping review indicates that approaches labelled 'participatory' tend to have very limited possibilities for interaction on young people's own premises. It also indicates that participatory approaches that connect young people's lifeworld to urban landscape planning exist, albeit with limited dissipation. The pathways from perspectives and analyses to action in these participatory processes were sparse, which hampers transformative potentials in young people's participation. Lifting conceptual foci on lifeworld and action into established practice in this field shows possibilities to substantiate landscape democratic engagements around existing creative and diverse methodologies.

Reiterating from Paper 2, the FCWs showed how messy processes that allow for ambivalence and conflict can eventually lead to a break and new understandings of the role of a segregated urban landscape in young people's lives. The young participants' analyses and interventions furthermore showed forward-looking pathways focused on nuanced understandings of how inequality can operate in contemporary urban environments, and how a focus on equalizing opportunities to feel safety and joy can reinvigorate participatory urban landscape engagements.

Reiterating from Paper 3, young people's opportunities to participate in shaping future urban environments in Malmö's planning and governance context is hampered by gaps in coordination of central and decentralised processes, and is lacking resources and overall vision dedicated to a

pluralistic and democratising engagement with a diverse and stratified public in contemporary practice. However, a range of experimental-, site-specific, and project-based openings, often led by activist engagements of individual practitioners provide glimpses of a foundation upon which new democratising platforms for young people could build.

Finally, this compilation text hones in on the central finding of this research, namely the discursive shift that gives meaning to the urban landscape for the young participants', which appears in between the extensive collaboration, and the theoretical and methodological framings offered by the papers and earlier chapter. Integrating sustainability discourses into broader discussions of how young people want to live showed a strong divergence in terms of the im- or explicit goals of urban development. The young participants' insistence on change that counteract the felt effects of segregation in their urban environments provides a critical mirror for established practices around urban landscape sustainability and greening, by focusing on the stratified opportunities to feel joy and safety in existing urban environments. Further deliberation and action around these goals with established practice thus shows potential for substantiating a landscape democratic engagement with young people.

8.1 Future research

The dissertation, much like its methodology, tries to pose an open question. What if the purpose of visions, plans and developments for a blue-green future was to, right here, make these young people's utopia a little more real? Not as a mostly theoretical 'service' or 'function' of new alterations in the neighbourhoods' outdoor spaces, but as the main point? This would entail a divergence from the overarching development trend of making blue-green solutions that fit existing housing- and mobility solutions. It would be more akin to the spontaneous creation of a construction-playground and nearby pocket park close to where the young people live. But yet also a bit different from these interventions driven by local professionals and idealists. Instead, it would open up a corridor of democratic experimentation with making the thought- and care-ful meetings between lifeworld and landscape accessible for anyone, and especially Malmö's young citizens. Surely, such an expanded democratic agenda looks difficult in the current societal situation where the distance between, for example,

young citizens and the relevant practitioners and authorities seem vast, and the structural conditions favour a blue-green development mostly insofar as it aligns with economic goals. However, the young participants in this study showed possibilities in seeking out a radically different, transformative utopia. Now, they need the arena where adult expertise focused on landscape planning and architecture, and interconnections between the social and ecological aspects can come into play. The 'research workshop' has been suggested in CUAR as topical way to pursue these questions (Alarcon 2016, Nielsen & Nielsen 2016, Bladt 2013). The question remains whether contemporary urban landscape planning practice has capacity to meet such alternative openings in kind. Since the ambitions of the current project fell somewhat short in trying to address this final question, it begs for further, action driven, investigations that aim to bring the actual dialogue between young participants and practitioners further forward.

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Popular science summary

In the adult-world's attempt to address the spiralling sustainability crises in relation to the rest of nature, both high hopes and promises are often attached to young people. Nevertheless, young people today have limited possibilities to shape even their own living environments. The urban landscape is important in order to understand how human societies relate to the rest of nature, and has a high concentration of interests compressed into mutual interaction and conflicting perspectives. This makes the urban landscape an ideal microcosm in which to understand how social lives and living environments relate, important ways in which they do not, and how this might be problematic in multiple ways. New frameworks have inscribed landscape-perspectives deeper into urban policies, planning, and developments, for example by highlighting the potential around development of blue- and green infrastructure, ecosystem services, and nature based solutions. These frameworks can help improve living environments, address local environmental problems, and inspire visions of urban livelihoods in tune with the rest of nature. They describe and highlight social- and ecological interconnections and understandings of the urban landscape, and are presented as an opportunity to increase citizens' participation in co-creating their own living environments. It is, however, often clearer in these frameworks, how physical changes and functional interconnections can be established, than how citizens' might partake. This dissertation explores barriers and potentials for increasing young people's participation in locating problems, shaping visions, and taking concrete actions. Young people find themselves in the periphery of democratic citizenship, and are therefore a both interesting and relevant group with whom to investigate potentials for new democratic change-processes oriented towards sustainability. The main approach of this dissertation is a critical-utopian action research process with a group of young people, aged 15-20, living in Malmö, Sweden (Paper 2 and compilation text). This is supported by a literature review (Paper 1) and an analysis of governance arrangements that pertain to young people's participation in Malmö (Paper 3). These literature review and analysis of governance arrangements and discourses provide a context for the specific way in which the action research workshops were conducted contrast and complement existing methods, and

for the structural preconditions for increased youth participation as they appear in professional practice.

Over the cause of three years, I have facilitated workshops where the young participants have analysed their urban environments, both critically, with a focus on perceived problems, and in a utopian sense, focused on creating collective sketches for the future. This have led to change proposals, concrete initiatives, and experimental actions in Malmö. The workshops showed early on, how ambivalent the framing around 'sustainable urban landscapes' was for the young participants. A part of the critical action research framing was to dwell on, rather than avoid, such an ambivalence. As Paper 1 shows, methods that allow young people to understand the urban landscape on their own, often conflicting terms, are relatively rare. The workshops allowed the young participants to give the collaborative project a substance of their own choosing. Gradually through the analytical work and experimental actions, they created a shared understanding that infused the landscape around them with new meaning. They started calling our collaboration 'Project Society', and through this, broader framing, they could make sense of the problems and potentials they saw. They expressed how factors like freedom to be oneself, the possibility to feel joy, and having places to gather underpinned their experience of the landscape. In this shift in understanding, the landscape assumed new relevance for them, and also appeared in the agonizing light of missing these important factors. Their utopian vision gravitated around a future urban environment with equality of joy and freedom to be oneself. This was concretized in change proposals for an activity day against segregation of joy, and an open recreation yard where one cannot get kicked out. The possibilities to further enact these changes, must be contextualised by current governance arrangements around young citizens' participation. Here, temporary projects and activist practitioners who go above and beyond their formal roles have been crucial for giving young citizens a voice (Paper 3). More stable structures are hampered by ambiguities about practitioner roles and democratic mandates to work with specific groups of citizens. Project Society have offered an example of an open, participatory process where the urban landscape became relevant to young people by breaking with prevailing norms and divisions of field of study and practice, but instead let concerns for socioeconomic segregation, cultural prejudgements, and leisure time activities become relevant in envisioning the sustainable future of their urban environment. This can

provide new substance to landscape-democratic engagements with young people, contrasting and complementing existing ambitions for opening up planning and governance processes to citizens' participation in shaping future urban landscapes.

Populärvetenskaplig sammanfattning

I försöken med att lösa miljöproblem och den samhällsskapade hållbarhetskriserna fäster den vuxna världen ofta båda löften och förväntningar på unga människor. Ändå har unga människor bara ett begränsat medbestämmande, även över sina egna livsmiljöer. Stadens landskap är viktigt för att förstå sammanhang och dynamiken mellan samhälle och natur. Här finns en hög koncentration av intressen och olika perspektiv på en begränsad plats. Staden blir därmed ett bra mikrokosmos för att förstå hur människors liv hänger ihop med deras livsmiljö, och hur det i dagens samhälle på många sätt inte gör det, vilket leder till båda små- och storskaliga problem. Nya ramverk har bidragit till att lyfta landskapet inom stadens politik, planering och gestaltning, till exempel genom att lyfta potentialen vid utveckling av blå-gröna miljöer, urbana ekosystemtjänster, och naturbaserade lösningar. Dessa ramverk har visat praktiska möjligheter för att förbättra människors livsmiljöer, åtgärda lokala miljöproblem, och väckt visioner om ett annorlunda sätt att leva både i staden och i naturen. Dessa ramverk skapar samband mellan den sociala och ekologiska förståelsen av stadens landskap, och lyfts ofta också som en möjlighet för bättre medborgardeltagande i gestaltning av livsmiljöer. Det är dock ofta tydligare hur den fysiska miljön kan förändras, än hur olika medborgare kan vara med att samskapa framtidens hållbara stadslandskap, inom dessa ramverk. Denna avhandling utforskar hinder och potential för unga vuxnas utökade deltagande i att förstå problem, skapa visioner, och ta del i konkreta förändringsåtgärder. Unga vuxna befinner sig i periferin av demokratiskt medbestämmande, och är därför både en intressant och viktig grupp för att utforska potential för nya demokratiska processer inriktad på hållbar omställning. Huvuddelen av denna studie består av en aktionsforskningsprocess med en grupp ungdomar på 15-20 år, från Malmö i södra Sverige (Paper 2 och kappan). Därutöver har det genomförts en litteraturstudie (Paper 1), och en analys av hur förvaltningssystemen förhåller sig till ungas utökade deltaganden i Malmö (Paper 3). Litteraturstudien och analysen av förvaltningsstrukturer och diskurser ger en kontext för de specifika metodvalen, och strukturella förutsättningar för ungas deltagande i den kommunala praktikens ögon. Genom tre år har jag faciliterat en rad framtidsverkstäder där ungdomarna har analyserat stadsmiljön, både kritiskt, med fokus på vilka problem de unga upplever, och

utopiskt, med fokus på vilka visioner de tillsammans kan skapa för framtiden. Detta har lett till en rad förändringsförslag, konkreta initiativ, och experimentella interventioner i Malmö. Framtidsverkstaden visade snabbt hur ambivalent hela ramverket kring 'hållbara stadslandskap' var för de unga. En del av aktionsforskningens metodologi är att fokusera på, istället för att undvika, sådana ambivalensen. Paper 1 visar att metoder som på detta sätt fokuserar på de ungas livsvärld, och försöker att skapa en konkret förändring är inte typiska inom planering och utveckling stadens landskap. I framtidsverkstäderna beskrivna i paper 2, skapades en grund för att de unga ska kunna ge egna inspel till projekt-inriktningen, och gradvis genom det analytiska arbetet och experimentella handlingar forma en egen, gemensam diskurs där deras stadslandskap fick ny relevans. De unga började kalla det för 'Project Society', och i denna, bredare ram tonade landskapet fram. Härifrån kunde de belysa svårigheter de upplever i stadsmiljön, och deras förhållanden till gator, parker, torg, och även den lokala go-kart komplexet blev satt i ett sammanhang. Här uttryckte de unga underliggande faktorer för deras förhållande till stadsmiljön, såsom frihet till att vara sig själv, möjligheten till att känna glädje, och hitta ställen att umgås med andra unga. I denna, framtonande diskurs blev landskapet relevant, och framstod också i ett smärtsamt ljus där upplevelsen av segregation i stadsmiljön förklarades vid avsaknaden av dessa faktorer. De ungas utopiska vision rörde sig då runt en framtida stadsmiljö med jämställd glädje och frihet till att vara sig själv, och konkretiserades i förändringsinitiativ kring en aktivitetsdag mot segregation, och en öppen fritidsgård där man inte kan bli utkastad. Möjligheterna för att skapa denna förändring ska dock förstås i en kontext för planering och förvaltning i Malmö, där tillfälliga projekt och beroende av eldsjälar i praktiken bestämmer möjligheterna för utökat deltagande av unga (Paper 3). Mera stabila strukturer försvåras, trots många goda förhoppningar, av tvetydigheter kring demokratiska mandat till utökat deltagande för specifika medborgargrupper. Project Society har bjudit på ett exempel på en öppen deltagande process där landskapet fick ny relevans för unga genom att bryta med existerande ramar och vuxenvärlden- såväl som den professionella praktikens logiker. Detta kan ge nytt innehåll till landskapsdemokratiskt engagemang, vilket kontrasterar och kompletterar ambitioner om nya öppningar för medborgardeltagande i planering- och förvaltning för framtidens hållbara stadslandskap.

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REVIEW ARTICLE

Young people's participation in urban landscape planning and transformation: a scoping review of interactive approaches

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Abstract

This article presents a review of methodological advancements and transformative potential in participatory processes with young people in urban landscapes. It offers a framework understanding of current types of participatory processes in relation to urban landscape planning, and underlines lifeworld and action as two key components in transformative participatory processes with young people. The two-step scoping review of a literature sample (n = 44 studies) finds a prevalence of less-interactive approaches to young people's participation in urban landscapes, and subsequently analyses openings for lifeworld and action in the more interactive approaches described (n = 17 studies). The interactive methods described demonstrate opportunities to facilitate young people's own articulations of lifeworlds within the urban landscape, especially in extended processes deploying multiple creative methods. The relatively few examples of actions and interventions resulting from participatory processes points to the need for further development and the ambition to include young people in transforming urban landscapes towards increased sustainability.

Keywords Young people · Participation · Urban landscape · Planning · Sustainability · Lifeworld · 1. Young people's participation in urban landscapes

Large-scale environmental crises like climate change and biodiversity loss strike young people of today with marked differences. An abundance of scholarship (Hilder and Collin 2022; Marquardt 2020; Molder et al. 2022; Parth et al. 2020; Sloam et al. 2022; Corner et al. 2015) describes the protests and activism of young people and underlines their potential as a critique of the largely insufficient answers of political establishments. Meanwhile, disillusion, disinterest, and downright scepticism about the significance of these crisis tendencies have also been widespread amongst young people (Ojala 2015; Uba et al. 2023), and have been strongly linked to societal powerlessness and a lack of inclusivity in broader social processes (Ojala 2015, p. 1145). According to the UN (2010), young people should be key actors in transformation processes moving towards sustainable societies, yet they have very little say in the planning and development of their own living environments and conditions (Walther

et al. 2020, p. 1; Percy-Smith 2015, p. 5 of 18). In later decades, the environmental protests and activism of young people have risen to global attention. This warrants positive recognition, acknowledgement, and further action from politicians and practitioners involved in decision-making and planning. Patterns of disinterest and disillusion, however, also suggest a need for a broader participatory practice that engages with young people to take part in renegotiating basic socio-ecological relationships in their daily lives and on their own terms.

In a rapidly urbanising world, the urban landscape is a central stage for young people's struggles and dreams, and for taking part in negotiating socio-ecological relationships (Elmqvist 2008, p. 3666). New frameworks show the potentials of the urban landscape to improve human wellbeing as well as ecosystem functioning. Urban ecosystem services (Albert et al. 2020), blue–green infrastructure (Benedict et al. 2006), and nature-based solutions (Eggermont et al. 2015) provide new frames for understanding how values and benefits can flow from living ecologies to society. Such frameworks are present in urban planning horizons and governance discourses, aimed to maximise the environmental benefits of green, blue, and other open spaces in the city

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(Jansson and Randrup 2020; Albert et al. 2020). However, implementations of these approaches have also received sustained criticism of top-down implementation and a lack of meaningful integration of diverse urban populations' needs, activities, and perspectives (Kiss et al. 2022, p. 257, Langemeyer and Conolly 2020, p. 2 of 14). Remme and Haarstad (2022, p. 5 of 12) argue that even advanced participatory methodologies such as co-designing nature-based solutions tend to be ultimately subordinated to instrumental goals and fail to address inequality and power differences that hinder a just distribution of benefits. Contemporary urban landscape practice lacks fine-tuned participatory approaches to engage with diverse groups of citizens, both from an environmental justice perspective (Spirn 2005; Kotsila et al. 2022), and from a broader green space governance perspective (Fors et al. 2021; Rutt and Gulsrud 2016). 'Nature based thinking' has been proposed as a more open and inclusive framework in urban planning and development that calls for new ways to understand and articulate socio-ecological relationships with diverse groups of citizens (Randrup et al. 2020). While providing guidance for governance actors, 'nature-based thinking' remains relatively untested as a framing also of participatory practice with diverse groups of citizens.

Young people's participation in shaping public spaces has long been a topic in both grassroots- and academic work in urban planning and development (Frank 2006; Heinrich and Million 2016). It is commonly observed that the value young people ascribe to their everyday environments play at best a marginal role in planning and decision-making, (Percy-Smith 2015, p. 8 of 18). Especially 'older' young people are invisible in most urban planning contexts, as noted in Johansen's study (2017, p. 70). Typically, they appear in a deficit discourse, or are conflated with children (ibid.). This means that instead of being supported in taking up new roles and responsibilities, 'older' young people are seen as problematic elements in public space (ibid.), or as 'unfinished citizens' (Bourdieu 1978, p. 96). Thus, young people's participation provides an interesting case for how broader participatory approaches can strengthen the role of diverse groups of citizens.

Formal channels for youth participation in education, community-planning, and welfare service development have also been introduced over several decades; for example, in Europe (ibid.) and in the US (Cushing 2016; Derr et al. 2013; McKoy et al. 2021). In the US, a strong legacy has also been left by Karl Linn and other's (see e.g. Linn 2007; Hester 2006) who have pioneered 'hands-on' approaches by collaboratively designing and building community gardens and skateramps (Goodman 2019). While many examples can be found in Europe and North America, Roger Hart's emphatic report on children's participation brings attention to processes across the world where young people participate extensively in "the process of sharing decisions which affect one's life and the life of the community in which one lives" (Hart 1992, p. 5). Hart's wide conception of young people's participation encourages us to look beyond more institutionalised and formal processes of participation into the various everyday life practices through which young people shape living environments and conditions.

Both theory and practice are needed to conceive of young people's activities as forms of citizenship that can be acknowledged and bolstered to garner new visions of sustainable transformations in urban living environments. As Schusler et al. (2003) argue, new forms of social learning between citizens and institutions are crucial to sustain practitioner's collaborative work around natural resources. Young people's participation has been shown to depend extensively on situating problem definitions, visions, and outputs in their lived experience (Percy-Smith 2015). This involves practitioners' approaching them as active citizens, already engaged in social contexts, rather than as users of specific services (ibid. p. 13 of 18). When allowed to take part in defining shared project goals, young people have been shown to be deeply engaged in changing immediate living environments and basic societal services (ibid., Tofteng and Bladt 2020), and to develop transformative visions for more sustainable forms of social and spatial organisation (Bladt and Percy-Smith 2021). Participatory approaches that favour experiential knowledge from everyday life, and integrate an action orientation, can help to elucidate the current struggles of young people's participation in urban landscape planning. The next section outlines how these understandings can expand the analytical vocabulary around participatory approaches with young people in relation to urban landscape planning.

1 Methodological lens: participatory approaches, lifeworld, and action

Engagements between groups of citizens and urban planners and landscape professionals can broaden the scope of relevant stakeholders (Reed et al. 2009), shape public policy (e.g. Arnstein 1969) and urban green spaces (Fors et al. 2021), and lead to various types of open co-governance arrangements (Arnouts and Arts 2012). However, as Arnstein (1969) and many others have pointedly argued, citizens in participatory processes rarely get to influence anything beyond the narrow parameters afforded them by the relevant authorities, and the processes often amount to manipulation or tokenism. Arnstein's ladder of participatory approaches has been widely applied in both youth participation contexts (Hart 1992; Botchwey et al. 2019) and in relation to the governance of urban open spaces (Fors et al. 2021). Fors et al. (ibid.) describe an overall typology of participatory approaches, and describe a spectrum ranging from more hierarchical- and closed, to more

open governance arrangements. This spectrum outlines the degree to which citizens have an actual chance of influencing planning visions or outcomes, and serves as a valuable starting point for understanding interactive participatory processes.

As an initial analytical frame, the spectrum outlines which types of approaches can be considered more interactive, i.e. involving, partnering with, or supporting young people in articulating their perspectives and in taking action in relation to urban landscapes. This spectrum is a starting point that helps us explore approaches that indicate a higher degree of interaction between young people and practitioners and scholars. We have replaced the final category of empowerment (5) in Fors et al. (2021) with a notion of 'transformative participation', as suggested by Bladt and Percy-Smith (2021). This shifts the attention from how well participants manage to engage with existing social- and governance systems they are embedded in, and to a methodological framing that incorporates attention to their lifeworlds and actions.

Also in the urban landscape field, Spirn (2005), for example, have argued for the need to foreground citizens' dynamic, experiential understandings of neighbourhoods. In her study of urban neighbourhoods, Spirn (2005, p. 396) poignantly notes: "… planners' and designers' maps are usually static snapshots of current conditions, narrowly framed". Spirn have instead demonstrated the power of engaging with young people's own jargon and metaphors to unveil otherwise hidden aspects of entwined spatial and sociopolitical landscapes in the city. In Spirns case (ibid. p. 403), the young people's articulation of their neighbourhood as 'the bottoms' became an organising phrase to integrate geographical, ecological, political, and cultural-historical understandings of the landscape. This helped articulate otherwise hidden environmental justice conflicts, and generate new planning visions (ibid.). In addition, human geographers have long emphasised the notion of the lifeworld as an antidote to abstract understandings of spaces. Thus, it has been applied as a conceptual tool to properly recognise the integrative, rather than compartmentalised, ways different preferences and problems in relation to outdoor environments appear outside professionalised practice (Seamon 1979). The concept of the 'lifeworld' brings attention to the lived, communicative understandings of citizens' daily practices as starting points for further understandings of shared reality (Svensson and Nielsen 2006, p. 36). This can help scholars and practitioners overcome theory–practice tensions (Forester 2020) in collaborative and democratic learning processes that address epistemic and power hierarchies (Svensson and Nielsen 2006; Fricker 2013).

Action research methodologies have underlined the importance of lifeworlds in participatory processes with young people, such as in youth participatory action research (Percy-Smith 2015), critical utopian action research (Nielsen and Nielsen 2016; Tofteng and Bladt 2020), or transformative participation with young people (Bladt and Percy-Smith 2021). In his approach to youth participatory action research, Percy-Smith (2015, p. 3 of 18) utilises the notion of lifeworld to make a distinction between formal- and de facto participation. Formal participation refers to institution-led practices that typically look for input or citizens' preferences in relation to a specific planning question or development project. Established methods such as surveys, hearings, or focus groups can fulfil this role. However, formalised methods rarely succeed in capturing and addressing the integrated and diverse life conditions young people actually live under. Percy-Smith (ibid.), Jans (2004) and others (e.g. Tofteng and Bladt 2020) have turned attention to lived citizenship practices that emphasise social dimensions of participation in informal contexts, and capture: "the multifaceted ways in which young people participate more fully in everyday community spaces through their actions, choices, relationships, and contributions" (Percy-Smith 2015, p. 3 of 18). Young people's spatial practices, such as nondescript 'hanging out' have been shown as crucial in constructing a sense of citizenship (Gray and Manning 2022, p. 1401), but have also often been perceived as adverse by adults (ibid. p. 1408).

These practices could also be referred to as 'active citizenship practices', but as Kallio and Häkli (2011) point out, young people's active citizenship practices are often not recognised as such. They are either left unnoticed or constitute a problem to local practitioners, for example in municipalities. To overcome the prevalent lack of recognition, action researchers have developed methodologies to create free spaces for young people to share and relate experiences from everyday life and generate future visions (Tofteng and Bladt 2020; Bladt and Percy-Smith 2021). Percy-Smith points out the need for (2015, p. 8 of 18): "a situated social learning activity involving the negotiation of knowledge and meaning as well as an individual's own position in any given context of values and power". Only when this is established can participatory practice improve young people's chance to affect their own living environments. Methodological advancements in action research have shown efficacy and social learning arise in participatory processes that simultaneously work with citizens' lifeworlds and lead to concrete actions and interventions. They can reveal and challenge central power dynamics and real-world dilemmas and a sense of responsibility and citizenship around shared living environments (Egmose 2015; Tofteng and Bladt 2020; Bladt and Percy-Smith 2021). Concrete collaborative actions in participatory processes bring collective iterations of problems and visions into broader public discussions and can lead from informal spheres to wider social learning that builds and extends democratic citizenship practices (Percy-Smith 2015). Percy-Smith demonstrates (2015, p. 11 of 18) that a transformative participation necessarily goes beyond merely

allowing young people a voice in adult processes, and onto active collaborations with adult practitioners. Working with a notion of lifeworld that also links to social learning and action can thus lead to better outcomes and allow young people to derive meaning from the participatory process.

The possibilities of making concrete changes and instigating new forms of meetings between practitioners and young people have been shown to be particularly important to reaching marginalised groups in society. As Karl Linn's landscape architectural practice on neighbourhood commons demonstrated in the 1960s, hands-on approaches to designing and constructing spaces like urban gardens can help lift those who experience little access to formalised channels of decision-making and power to new recognition (Goodman 2019). As further noted in contemporary action research, when facing current and historical patterns of marginalisation, young people's participation is likely to depend on incremental changes (Bladt and Percy-Smith, p. 277). Such changes can amount to as little as an increased openness from scholars and practitioners about meeting places and times that correspond better to young people's daily lives, to providing food, to co-creating spaces in which to meet in the first place (ibid. pp. 280–281). Young people's actions and interventions in such processes have revealed complex relations around unequal access to care- and leisure time needs in young people's everyday environments and resulted in democratically organised meeting places for young people in several geographical contexts (Bladt and Percy-Smith 2021, pp. 281–285).

Hands-on approaches and action, when linked to young people's own understandings of problems and priorities, can thus lead to increased recognition of them as active citizens. This, in turn brings with it new possibilities for urban landscape practice to engage in fruitful dialogue and collaboration with young people. This perspective does not serve to distinguish which method is more efficacious in reaching young people. Rather, it considers which aspects of participation are needed to engage with diverse young people in collaborative action for transformative change. Transformative participatory processes grounded in an integrated understanding of lifeworld and action can interrogate how practitioners, academics, and other adult professionals might find ways to support citizens—active and maybe not so active—in diagnosing problems, pursuing visions, and taking action for transformative change (Nielsen and Nielsen 2016; Tofteng and Bladt 2020; Bladt and Percy-Smith 2021). A developed understanding of these dimensions could alleviate the concerns about tokenistic processes and top-down structures in participatory processes around urban landscapes, and activate new potentials to discern problems and articulate alternative visions between young citizens, scholars, and practitioners.

2 Aim and objectives

Earlier conceptual frameworks have focused on guiding adult practitioners, for example by providing handbooks for participatory processes (Driskell 2002), and outlining methods for engaging young people as experts in their own living environments (Bishop and Corkery 2017). Frank (2006) of empirical cases eloquently shows potential impacts of participation with young people, and aims to guide effective action. Frank's review (ibid. p. 366) advises planning practitioners to extensively adapt participatory processes to young people's life conditions by adopting 'youthful styles of working', while emphasising educational and capacity-building elements to empower young people (ibid. p. 366). It also reaffirms the need to address widespread tokenism (ibid. p. 370). Meanwhile, methodological developments in participation in urban landscapes have been conceptualised broadly in relation to urban open- or green spaces (Ambrose-Oji et al. 2011; Fors et al. 2021), and focused on building citizens' landscape literacy (Spirn 2005). The emerging examples from action research shows possibilities in going a step further. They evidence how young people, supported by scholars and practitioners, can develop alternative visions and change living environments (Percy-Smith 2015) and basic societal functions (Tofteng and Bladt 2020) in accordance with those visions. This shows the transformative potential that can arise from a combined methodological focus on lifeworlds and action that can reinvigorate relationships between practitioners and citizens and avoid tokenism (Bladt and Percy-Smith 2021).

We review a sample of literature using these developments in action research as a methodological lens for understanding key aspects of participatory approaches with young people in relation to urban landscape planning. In order to take stock of current developments in the field (also after Frank's review in 2006), the study aims firstly to investigate firstly (RQ1): What types of **participation approaches and processes** with young people in urban landscape planning have been described in the academic literature? The types of participatory approaches described and evaluated in current academic literature provides a reference frame for the ways practitioners engage with young people in relation to urban landscapes. Rather than strictly practical guidance, this paper aims to establish key conceptual focal points in young people's participation in urban landscapes. Thus, instead of devising specific methods for practitioners, we outline the implications of various types of methods in terms of facilitating and sustaining interaction with young people around urban landscape planning.

Secondly, this study investigates (RQ2): how do existing approaches to participation allow young people to articulate problems and visions for the urban landscape in the context

of their experiential **lifeworld**? We therefore consider the ways young people have been asked to provide input in relation to their living environments (and beyond), and to what extent they have been asked to shape the problem definitions, processes, and outcomes to be more meaningful in relation to their lived realities. The analysis aims to help scholars and practitioners involved in participatory practice related to urban landscapes to conceptualise engagements with young people and practically bridge formalised knowledge and frameworks for planning and development to young citizens' experiential knowledge (Table 1).

Finally, we investigate (RQ3): how do these approaches provide openings for concrete **actions and interventions** related to planning processes and the urban landscape? An action orientation allows participatory processes to show potentials arising from engagement with real-world problems, working towards desired futures, and for new relationships between citizens and practitioners to emerge in the process. As a final analytical step, we investigate whether the participatory approaches lead to concrete actions or interventions in processes pertaining to the urban landscapes of the young people involved. The review thus aims to show broad, methodological pathways to incorporate lifeworld and action into planning urban landscape transformation with young people.

3 Reviewing academic literature on young people's participation in urban landscapes

3.1 Types of approaches described in the academic literature

This review outlines how the literature sample was systematically collected (Randolph 2019), and examined more closely in a scoping review (Munn et al. 2018). We conducted a range of parallel online searches through academic databases (Scopus, Web of Science) for relevant studies, in order to distinguish prevalent types of participatory approaches. We searched broadly on young people's participation in urban landscapes and environments, and included specific terminology related to emerging frames for sustainable socio-ecological dynamics such as urban ecosystem services, green infrastructure, or nature-based solutions. We decided to narrow this down to three Boolean searches in Scopus (Table 2), as several of the initial searches yielded very few hits, or very large quantities of irrelevant hits. A simple search (1) of the most basic elements under scrutiny generated some relevant hits. As the number of studies was deemed insufficient, we expanded the search parameters with added terms (search 2), and finally also included a search for studies that did not necessarily deal explicitly with landscape, but focused on change and transformative processes

Table 1 Young people's participatory spectrum, roughly referring to existing frameworks inspired by Arnstein's ladder (Hart 1992; Botchwey et al. 2019; Ambrose-Oji et al. 2011; Fors et al. 2021)

Observation/information (1)	Consultation (2)	Involvement (3)	Partnership (4)	Transformative participation (5)
Considers whether young people are passively studied, observed, or merely informed in relation to planning or development processes	Considers whether young people have a chance to provide viewpoints, preferences etc. in relation to a planning or development process	Considers whether young people are involved in sharing decisions related to participatory process, plans or outcomes	Considers whether young people and practitioners engage in active collaborations where young people can initiate and influence process, plans, and outcomes	Considers whether process supports young people in finding possibilities to effectuate societal change based on their own-problem definitions and visions for the urban landscape

Table 2 Search terms

Search terms	Urban context	Frame for understanding socio-ecological change	Demographic group	Process	Limitations to subject areas:
Search 1	urban	landscape	young AND people	planning	social science (SOCI), environmental science (ENVI), arts and humanities (ARTS), psychology (PSYC), agricultural studies (AGRI)
Search 2	urban OR cit* OR suburb*	landscape	youth OR young OR adolescents OR teenagers	participat* OR engage* OR action AND research OR involve* OR inclusion OR perspective*	
Search 3	urban	transition OR change OR transformation OR sustainability	youth OR (young AND people)	planning OR participation	

Asterisk refers to truncated use of word i.e. unknown letters that secures that the result contains other relevant variations of the word

and urban socio-ecological sustainability (3). While many studies showed up in more than one search, each of the three helped identify relevant studies included in the review.

We added a range of limitations to delineate fields related to the urban landscape and change in an integrated sense, and avoid hits from, for example purely ecological or medical sciences, where 'participation' is less likely to describe the social scientific aspects we interrogate. Reviewing titles and abstracts from the three searches, we decided to filter out hits that did not follow the central criteria for relevance: Being about young people's participation or inclusion in planning or changing the urban landscape. Large amounts of this literature only had vague connections to urban landscapes and planning. Another step involved excluding studies primarily focused on younger children. Figure 1 illustrates how we generated the literature sample.

The search for approaches (RQ1) is not meant to be exhaustive, but the scoping searches leading to the 44 studies included in the review provide a sufficient sample of an emerging topic. Furthermore, it generated a range of studies that were deemed relevant for our extended review and the conceptual, methodological lens detailed below.

A first analysis[1] of the sampled literature included background information such as:

– Geographical context of where the described participatory processes take place
– Age groups, and how the studies identify and signify specific age groups
– Number of participants in the processes
– Participatory approach; processes researchers/practitioners use to engage with young people
– Temporal perspective; if the process reflects a shorter or longer time span of engagement

– Study scale; if the process relates to an urban landscape in the perspective of a building block, neighbourhood, city, region, or nation.

All the categorised literature that described participatory approaches (44 studies) with young people were organised along the five types of approaches (Table 1). Methods/case descriptions were analysed to determine which type of participatory process was in question. The key distinctions here were the degree to which young people were involved in, and had a say over, basic aspects such as initiative, planning, design, and
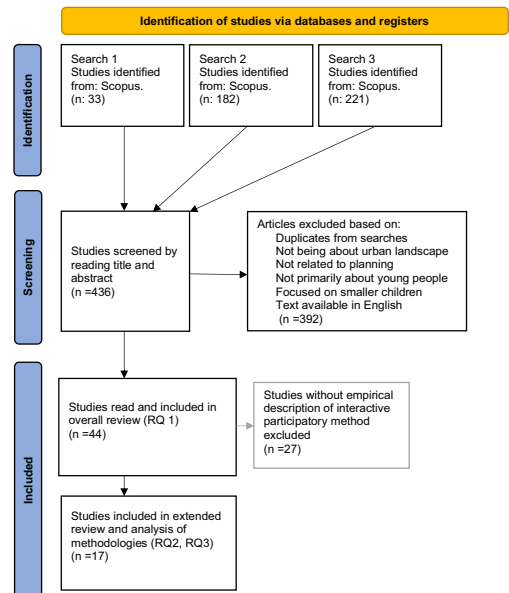
Fig. 1 Diagram of the literature search process

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[1] See Appendix A.

output (see also Fors et al. 2021 spectrum for a more functionally oriented division of processual phases in relation to participation in green space governance). The more passive forms of participation—for example in observations, surveys, and structured interviews where adult professionals maintained control over both problem definitions and visions for the urban landscape—were labelled accordingly (e.g. 'observation' or 'consultation'). At the more interactive end of the spectrum, studies might involve young people in defining key aspects of the study (involvement) or in sharing decision-making power over process and outcomes (partnership).

3.2 Lifeworld and action in the literature

We divided the analytical phase into two separate steps in order to distinguish approaches that brought young people's experiential lifeworld to the forefront of the participatory process (RQ2) and showed pathways for action (RQ3, see also Fig. 1). The first step aimed to provide an overview over participatory approaches. The second paid attention to methodologies and case descriptions in the 17 identified studies describing longer-term, qualitative approaches that allowed considerable interaction between young people and scholars and practitioners. This second part of the analysis looked more closely at two aspects of the studies falling into the more interactive categories (involvement, partnership, transformative participation). Special attention was given to descriptions where the investigative and analytical processes were driven by participants' experiential knowledge and therefore facilitated their working with their own problem definitions and understandings of the urban landscape. We also looked for openings in existing approaches that allowed young people to take action and intervene in relation to the urban landscape. This was meant to distinguish processes that describe young people having increased authority to influence decisions or take action. The analysis therefore emphasises methodologies that allow these processes to unfold within young people's problem definitions and visions while also engaging with—and constructively challenging—existing practice around urban landscape planning. This involved looking through process descriptions and results to see whether there were explicit pathways encouraging young people to take action related to a lifeworld-grounded analysis of the urban landscape.

4 Methodological advancements in young people's participation in urban landscapes

This section presents our review of current approaches described in the 44 included studies, and goes on to analyse how specific methodological advancements generate

lifeworld- and action perspectives for young people in urban landscapes in the 17 interactive approaches (involvement and partnership types of approaches, according to the participatory spectrum).

4.1 Types of participatory approaches

In order to address what types of participatory approaches appeared in the literature sample (RQ1), we categorised the processes described in the 44 studies by both the listed overall parameters, and the degree of interaction suggested in our analytical framework (Appendix A). We used the five categories (see Fig. 2) loosely adapted from the spectrum of participation in urban green space governance and the engagement of young people. However, for a large number of studies, such a typology was not applicable. Either this was due to a mostly conceptual focus on policies without detailing specific participatory approaches, or the studies did not contain substantial descriptions of interactive processes between young people and scholars and practitioners. An example of this is Freeman and Riordan (2002) who discuss the ambiguities of working with skaters in urban settings, who often utilise public spaces differently from what was intended by practitioners' planning and design. They show how this poses challenges and opportunities in existing planning approaches, but does not include any forms of specific engagement with actual young people. Due to the specific methodological focus in this study, these studies were not included in the review of interactive approaches, but were read and integrated into the framework and discussion, where applicable.

Of the 30 remaining studies, 13 could be described as having a lower level of interaction with young people, who were consulted as respondents to surveys or interviews (11 studies), or appeared mainly to be observed (either directly or via social media), or informed about urban developments (2 studies). The number of young participants (see Appendix A) in the processes varied widely, ranging from 5 (Cilauro
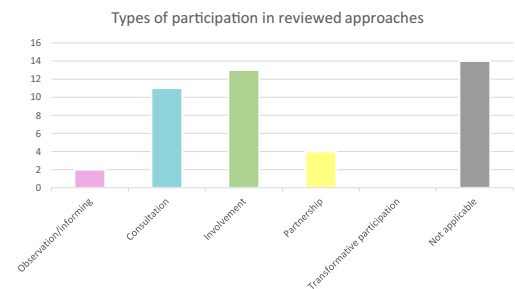

Fig. 2 Numbers of studies exemplifying types of participatory processes with young people in the landscape planning literature

2015) to 2000 subjects (Woolley 2000). Several studies described tiered approaches; for example, starting out with larger scale surveys (170–2000 respondents) followed up by interviews, focus groups, or other interactive formats with a smaller number (10–24) of participants (e.g. Derr et al. 2013; Drummond 2007; Kamete 2006).

The approaches categorised as involvement or partnership typically involved fewer (5–30) young people, for example in focus groups or workshop activities. The larger numbers of young people included (over 40 young people) was found for studies carrying out observations, interviews, digital mappings, and surveys.

Seventeen of the studies describe substantial engagement with young people in various parts of the participatory process and provide at least some chance for them to freely explore the topic, or influence the process or outcomes. These approaches[2] included classical research methods such as surveys, interviews, focus groups, walking tours, or photo-elicitation, and followed these up with public exhibits or discussions. In Kettunen's recent study (2021), for example a mix between observations and in-depth interviews provided a rich ethnography that documented diverse citizenship practices of young people. In addition to the observation of young people during school strikes, the semi-structured interviews in informal settings led young people to reflect freely on their experiences and motivations for participating—or not—in environmental activism. This helped practitioners address young people as political and environmental actors, but offered no distinct way for further involvement for the young people participating in the study.

Several approaches had multiple stages and included participatory planning or co-design, planning games, PPGIS, public participatory art, or community mappings. These frequently included creative methods such as drawing, using picture cards, or photo-elicitation, sometimes combined with more classical research methods such as interviews and focus groups (e.g. Davison and Russell 2017, Strachan 2018, Osborne et al. 2017). These managed to involve young people further by allowing young people's own spatial understandings to be developed, considering differences in social capital, and for institutional attention and resources to be redirected in dialogue with the young participants. Some of the studies described open processes where young people could influence problem definitions, goals, and aims, and be considered partners in the development of processes, plans, and/or outcomes. Two of these applied creative methods—a writing workshop and public participatory artwork (Breitbart 1995; Hill et al. 2018)—and two consisted of long-term, mixed method participatory planning and design processes (Derr et al. 2013; Osborne et al. 2017).

The scale of involvement or partnership approaches in the reviewed studies varied between being limited to the neighbourhood, planning at the city-level, or covering larger urban areas. Only one study (Benze and Walter 2016) described a combined process that related explicitly to both neighbourhood and city-level planning. In all cases except one (Cilauro 2015), researchers and young people were the key actors (see also Appendix A + B). Researchers typically initiated the process, and in some cases connected to existing processes led by larger institutions such as municipalities. In most cases, other actors like local grassroots organisations, artists, schools, university students, or municipal departments played a role in the participatory processes. Local youth organisations or special interest groups such as art collectives served as partners in a range of studies, conducting environmental justice education (Santos et al. 2019), initiating a writers club (Hill et al. 2018), or creating ethnographies of young people's landscapes (van Ingen et al. 2018). Schools were common partners in both more structured and creative approaches among researchers and young people, and often collaborated in processes with an educational focus with more adult leadership. Local municipalities were actively involved in facilitating some approaches. The latter cases most explicitly related to the formal planning system, such as the planning games described by Benze and Walter (2016), and the participatory planning in Boulder (Derr et al. 2013; Derr and Kovács 2017). The majority of processes described the involvement of several actors, speaking to the broad range of actors potentially interested in young people's participation in the urban landscape.

The studies containing descriptions of youth participation in urban landscape planning are more prevalent in North America, Europe, and Australia (see Fig. 3).

The studies represented both small and large cities, but larger urban areas such as state or country capitals were more common than smaller-sized cities, and the result accordingly becomes more indicative of approaches taken in larger urban areas and in more economically privileged countries.

It also became clear that the term 'youth', or 'young people', even in this limited sample, is by no means homogenous. Age groups are mainly reported either as a specific age range (that varies) or with a term. The terms used for the participants included: children and young people (2); children and youth (1); young people (5); youth (2); young activists (1); school-aged (1); teenagers (2); young adults (2); and adolescents (1). Two of the studies did not define the starting age for the group (under 18 (Rigolon 2017) and up to 21 (Cushing 2016)). Overall, 'youth' and 'young people' included age ranges between 8 and 25 years, as shown in Fig. 4. This spans somewhat wider than the primary age range under concern here, but is still included due to the overlaps in age spans for the various approaches with the

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[2] See Appendix for overview-table.

Fig. 3 Location of studies: Blue markers for single cases, red markers for multiple relating to the same urban area/state/region

'older young people' that are often invisible in planning (Johansen 2016). The results of our analysis do not offer a clear picture of how different approaches vary among age ranges. Everything from design, mappings, and to surveys seem to span most age ranges included in the studies. A slight preponderance of the lower age ranges does seem to occur in consultation methodologies, while interactive approaches including action perspectives span all age ranges (see Appendix A).

Contextual factors like varying age-span, poor geographical distribution, number of participants, and time and resource investment from various actors complicate a succinct analysis. Specific methods also span different types of approaches. Focus groups and educational efforts, for example appeared in some cases to be primarily consultation approaches (e.g. Derr 2018; Passon et al. 2008) and in others led to further involvement (e.g. Santos et al. 2019; Šakaja and Višnić 2011). However, it is evident that consultation and involvement processes involving multiple actors are most prevalent in the sampled cases. The methods that facilitate consultation, such as interviews and PPGIS mappings established initial contact and provided baseline information for further involvement e.g. in creating more extensive youth ethnographies or discussing issues pertaining to the urban landscape in focus groups. Despite the contextual complications, these patterns in methodological developments made it possible to pinpoint the 17 studies that described interactive approaches.

4.2 Articulating young people's lifeworld perspective on the urban landscape

All but one of the 17 more interactive studies described some openings for participants to develop understandings of the urban landscape on their own terms, i.e. how each approach allowed young people to articulate their experiential lifeworld (RQ2). A number of studies accentuated

lifeworlds through either the openness or diversity of the methods applied. Several studies took the young people's spatial practices as a starting point for developing lifeworld perspectives on the urban landscape, but also tended to leave the outputs of the processes in the hands of adult professionals (Robertson and Burston 2015; Šakaja and Višnić 2011, van Ingen et al. 2018). Other studies show how processes facilitated by artwork (Breitbart 1995), writing (Hill et al. 2018), and other creative outputs (e.g. Derr et al. 2013; Drummond 2007) led the young participants to discuss the urban landscape in their own terms. Examples of an experiential lifeworld articulation occurred in processes ranging from consultation to partnership, depending on the level of control retained by adult professionals, educators, etc. Derr et al. (2013[3]) describes one large-scale project applying a very wide set of both classical and more creative and interactive approaches. They integrated methods into school curricula, built on young people's informal everyday practices, and allowed them to express a wide scope of experiences, perceptions, and priorities in multiple ways; through artwork, storeys, photos, youth mappings, and community assessments. Breitbart's ethnography (1995) moved from involvement to an actual partnership as the young participants increasingly broke with the adult-defined sequence of events by suggesting research activities that allowed new problem definitions to appear. This created 'a space for mutual learning' and ultimately affected local authorities' decision-making and changed public perceptions about their neighbourhoods (Breitbart 1995, p. 39).

In five of the studies (Benze and Walter 2016; Derr and Kovács 2017; Drummond 2007; Osborne et al. 2017; Robertson and Burston 2015), there were some openings to develop a lifeworld perspective. Follow-up interviews, focus groups, and critical lines of questioning allowed young people to insert landscape questions into broader understandings of their lives, and to express priorities and ambiguities in relation to the urban landscape (e.g. van Ingen et al. 2018, Strachan 2018). However, several of these studies described adult-led methodologies that followed classical research-designs and applied methods like questionnaires and focus groups that allowed young people little say over processes and outcomes. Processes centred around games and artwork (e.g. Cilauro 2015; Benze and Walter 2016; Drummond 2007) also provided pathways for young people to use their skills and experiences to develop new and independent narratives, critiques, and visions for the urban landscape that in some cases contrasted those of adult professionals (Breitbart 1995).

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[3] Derr et al. (2013) and Derr and Kovács' study (2017) describes participatory processes related to the same project, but the former describes the overall project, and the latter a subset of methodologies for neighbourhood planning (mostly with children).

In Breitbart's study, the moment of lifeworld expression and mutual learning occurred when the young participants decided a new course for the walking tour. They traversed a fence (along with the researchers), and while technically trespassing, connected the initial critique of there being very few things to do in the neighbourhood with the landscape. Accessing the barred-off riverfront provided a moment of fun, and nourished a curiosity about the local river and other life forms (pondering about eels, rocks, etc.) that had never been mentioned in initial discussions (Breitbart 1995, p. 39). At this point, the researchers got an image of an urban landscape that, for the young participants, is lacking in amenities and basic access to alluring elements like the local river. They are also afforded with an integrated understanding of how curiosity about the local environment is tied to the ability to engage in playful activities within the local landscape.

Thus, a lifeworld starts to appear (also for the researchers) through the open process that allows diverse factors like the high temperatures on the day of the tour, prior discussions, and spontaneous ideas to integrate. Ultimately, this process along with the creative work with aesthetic forms of expression laid the ground for the young participants becoming partners with a strong voice and sense of authority beyond the pre-defined project. They ended up discussing with local officials, influenced educational curricula, and challenged policy processes related to their own living environments (ibid.). This provides an example of how the ability to influence the research process and freely make connections between topics is crucial to providing full and nuanced accounts of young people's relationships with the urban landscape. In other processes, young participants were awarded substantial decision-making power, but this related exclusively to concepts and categories developed by adults and professional organisations in pre-existing educational material, such as pre-defined lists of preferences or interventions (e.g. Derr and Kovács 2017; Santos et al. 2019).

While the effort to award decision-making power to young people is democratically laudable, the ability to include a lifeworld account that moves beyond pre-defined categories and builds on their experience and active collaboration substantiates the contextualised relationships between young people and their urban landscapes. Overall, the 17 studies showed diverse and robust ways of facilitating young people's lifeworld perspectives, but also shortcomings in moving from the articulation of these perspectives to young people having a substantial say over processes and outcomes.

4.3 Action orientation with young people in urban landscape participation

A few approaches showed openings for young people to take concrete action or make interventions in relation to the urban landscape (RQ3). Two of the studies clearly described young people initiating actions and spatial interventions influencing decision-making in relation to the urban landscape. Derr et al. (2013) describes the progression from initial explorations and analyses to concrete actions with public artwork, youth training, political campaigning, and facilitated discussions with the city-elected officials and administrators. The research design in Derr et al.'s study included action groups for the young participants as a key element, and in this case, both spatial changes and changes in relationships between young people and local authorities came about because of the young people's critiques and activities. The sheer amount and diversity of methods applied secured a situated social learning that brought different groups together. In consequence, policies as well as school curricula were adapted in dialogue with young people's concerns and wishes. The young people's particular concern for homeless people's status in the streets and parks was lifted into the city's overall goals, evidencing the poignant role of young people in combining spatial issues with social justice (Derr et al. 2013, p. 501). In evaluations of the work of the action groups, four years after the project end, the participants and researchers concluded that a key outcome was the participants' sense of being needed and valued in providing change. While the tangible changes showed limited impact in urban policies, they did serve to diversify the range of voices and issues in public discussions dominated by older adults (Derr et al. 2013, p. 502). Meanwhile, Osborne et al. (2017) showed young people's interventions in policy processes related to urban inequality by working actively with notions of diverse social capital in co-design processes. This process showed a change in power dynamics in local policy, but the change had fewer tangible connections to outcomes in the urban landscape.

In the case of Santos et al.'s 2019 study, young people were invited to an after school science programme, beginning with education in environmental justice and resulting in the construction of the young people's chosen intervention—establishing a community garden. While the choice of content in this intervention was more strongly facilitated by adult professionals, this was also one of few studies that described a concrete landscape change and intervention decided by young people. Some studies described processes where young people developed narratives and clarified their identities in relation to the urban landscape (e.g. Hill et al. 2018; Breitbart 1995). Others described community evaluations that protested the lack of influence of young citizens on their own living environments (Kamete 2006; Laughlin and Johnson 2011; Osborne et al. 2017).

The writers' club showed promise in encouraging young people to put into writing individual narratives about a sense of self, connected to their mixed feelings about the neighbourhood, and onwards to community programmes

for neighbourhood revitalization (Hill et al. 2018, p. 160). The few efforts to encourage action also allowed for a wider political discussion about structural obstacles to arise, albeit without further action from the young participants. The action orientations in this sample show relatively few pathways to young people's actions and interventions, and these appeared in creative and artistic actions. Other examples included more direct discursive intervention in planning and policy processes, but only in one case did they directly describe changes in the urban environment as a result of a facilitated effort to articulate young participants' lifeworlds (Derr et al. 2013). Overall, the 17 studies show only a sporadic focus on actions and intervention as an integral part of young people's participation in the urban landscape.

5 Nuancing interactive approaches to young people's participation: literacy, free space, and pathways to transformation

The approaches in our literature review show a field where less-interactive participatory methodologies prevail. When facing new demands to include young people, this leaves urban landscape practitioners' with little support from scholarship to overcome the challenges of tokenistic participation and little real-world impact. The overview (Appendix A) shows a majority of less-interactive or conceptual studies, which testifies to the limited, established practices for including young people in a strongly professionally driven field and discourse. The prevalence of approaches that observe or consult young people might be indicative of the less flexible governance arrangements that often hamper more inclusive processes, as for example those described by Fors et al. (2021) in relation to urban green spaces. This points to the urgent need for methodological developments, especially to avoid the gentrifying effects of green urban planning- and developments (Anguelovski et al. 2018) that push marginalised groups further away from participating in societal developments.

The relatively high degree of conceptual and theoretical works, along with the skewed geographical distribution of studies appearing in the search speaks to the lack of widely dissipated methodologies, and of a prevailing narrowness of participatory vision in the urban landscape field. This resonates with Hart's critique (1992) of a bias towards affluent countries' governance and organisation around participatory practice, and consistent lack of recognition of the myriad of ways in which young people participate in shaping landscapes in less affluent countries. It also resonates with Mercado et al.'s calls (2024) for more open approaches to urban landscape governance that integrate alternative forms of knowledge, and sociocultural forms of organisation in the global south. The methodological lens outlined here does not solve this bias, but does offer a frame for conceptualising participatory efforts with young people in ways that might reach a wider range of citizenship practices than is currently appearing in the literature. This could lead to increased recognition of young people's citizenship status, and ultimately to landscapes that provide wellbeing for citizens at the margins of current public discussions and decision-making.

Most of the reviewed interactive approaches showed meaningful ways to integrate lifeworld in creating new understandings and informing practice around the urban landscape. Some methodologies, like community mappings (Laughlin and Johnson 2011), or certain participatory planning efforts (Derr et al. 2013), offered ways of working with young people's experiential knowledge and alternative visions in land-use planning, although further implementation of their ideas and visions fell short in formalised processes (ibid.). In several processes, young people influenced aesthetic outputs. Working with young people in creating public art or other spatial interventions seem like promising starting points, but also shy away from allowing engagement in the complexity of basic land-use discussions in cities and neighbourhoods. Along this line, several of the reviewed cases demonstrated a problem of merely 'giving voice', as pointed out by Percy-Smith (2015). Without active collaboration, young people's perspectives falter and the up- and out-scaling remains firmly seated with adult professionals, with the risk of losing the critical and participatory edge that engagement with citizens' lifeworld can provide (Svensson and Nielsen 2006). An action orientation in participatory urban landscape planning helps address the tension between theory and practice that often lies in the complex and fluid settings in which practitioners find themselves, with considerably diverging and ever-changing imperatives from political as well as environmental factors (Forester 2020). In line with Forester's call for participatory improvisation to unique and changing settings (ibid. p. 118), Egmose (2015) eloquently shows how facilitating a free space for citizens to take action in their urban environment can provide practitioners a free space of their own to explore, and redefine their internal and external relationships to better meet the new urban challenges.

However, action-oriented approaches were rare in our reviewed literature, and adult professionals like researchers or practitioners from larger organisations typically defined and steered the actions and interventions. This can also be considered an inherent danger of a more exclusive focus on the processual benefits of hands-on approaches, with little prior investigation of young people's lifeworlds. Co-designing and constructing a community garden or a skateramp might have many benefits for the landscape and the people involved, but do not necessarily offer pathways for deliberating broader questions of what life is like for diverse young people in

urban landscapes. This would seem a prerequisite to unfold the transformative potential of bridging lifeworlds and action in processes of mutual learning between citizens and institutions. Looking across the reviewed approaches, it is evident that contemporary participatory processes tend to initiate with educational components where young people 'learn to participate'. Spirn (2005) has shown the multitude of advantages of building up young people's 'landscape literacy' to overcome conventional obstacles to participation, and work for environmental justice. While building literacy offers many advantages in emerging urban sustainability frameworks, the pre-defined frames of problem iterations and answers can limit the possibilities to engage with citizens' lifeworlds and experientially grounded, integrated understandings (Kiss et al. 2022).

This concern also appears in transformative visions of participation, where the educational relationship is turned on its head. The crux of this methodological lens is to start participatory processes with young people's own actions and iterations, and encourage scholars and practitioners to learn from the young participants' articulated experience of lived, urban landscapes. While 'landscape literacy' seems crucial to build local understandings of landscape, a new participatory ethos might entail scholars and practitioners developing a young people's 'literacy' by engaging humbly with their lifeworld as horizon for change, and courageously with their citizenship practices and actions in new collaborations. This would further substantiate the legacy of progressive landscape architects such as Karl Linn, to truly work *with* communities and subordinating professionalism to the lifeworlds of diverse groups in new forms of practice (Goodman 2019, p. 811). The reviewed approaches show some promise, and some headway to be made in contemporary practice around young people's participation. Figure 5 offers a tentative introduction to ways of thinking about aspects of lifeworld and action in participatory processes by organising existing approaches along two axes.

This is not meant as a succinct mapping of approaches, but as a generative model that can inspire future approaches. It reveals how similar approaches can have different implications. Public participatory art can involve young people without giving them substantial say over the output, or, surveys and focus groups can follow a more or less predetermined course and range of potential answers. Similarly, a relatively small effort like a writing club can eventually lead to substantial action and enable young people to articulate their own perspectives and challenge policy agendas. The 17 studies describing more interactive approaches (involvement: green labels, and partnership: blue labels, see also Appendix 1) can thus be loosely mapped as below. Emphasising these dimensions can hopefully inspire future endeavours to build an action-focus onto processes that emphasise young people's lived experience through the use of creative mappings or other related methods. While none of the approaches reviewed constitutes transformative participation, this should not discourage others from exploring the transformative potential that lies in moving up these axes. If anything, it should emphasise the need for such aspirations, and be a recognition of the structural obstacles to 'participation' that meaningfully link lifeworlds to higher levels of democratic decision-making and governance of urban landscapes (Fig. 5).

Participatory processes in the urban landscape has the potential to scale localised, community driven efforts up and out (Buijs et al. 2016, 2018). This potential is hampered by recurring dangers of projectification of urban change (Torrens and Wirth 2021), such as lacking structures for organisational learning uptake and long-term visions in otherwise meaningful participatory processes. The move towards an increased acknowledgement and collaboration with young people's citizenship practices offers a frame to view participation as an ongoing learning process for organisations involved in urban landscapes, such as municipal planners. Perhaps best exemplified in the Growing Up Boulder project

Fig. 4 Age of participants in studies that specified a range; see also Appendix A

Reference	Country	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Derr & Kovács (2017)	US																		
Derr (2018)	US																		
Berglund & Nordin (2007)	SWE																		
Laughlin & Johnson (2011)	CAN																		
Seeland, Dübendorfer & Hansmann (2009)	SWI																		
Drummond (2007)	VIE																		
Santos et al. (2019)	BRA																		
Davison & Russell (2017)	UK																		
Jane Strachan (2018)	UK																		
Robertson & Burston (2015)	AUS																		
Duzenli, Bayramoglu & Özbilen (2010)	TUR																		
Derr & Kovács (2017)	US																		
Lopes, Cordovil & Neto (2018)	POR																		
Hill, Thomas-Brown & Shaffer (2018)	US																		
Kamete (2006)	ZIM																		
Berglund & Nordin (2007)	SWE																		
Kettunen (2021)	FIN																		
Osborne et al. (2017)	AUS																		
Šakaja & Višnić (2011)	CRO																		
Lagerqvist (2019)	SWE																		
Hernández & Christlieb (2013)	MEX																		
Passon, Levi & del Rio (2008)	US																		

Fig. 5 Mapping of interactive approaches (involvement: green labels, and partnership: blue labels, see also Appendix 1) with added lifeworld dimension to the participatory spectrum
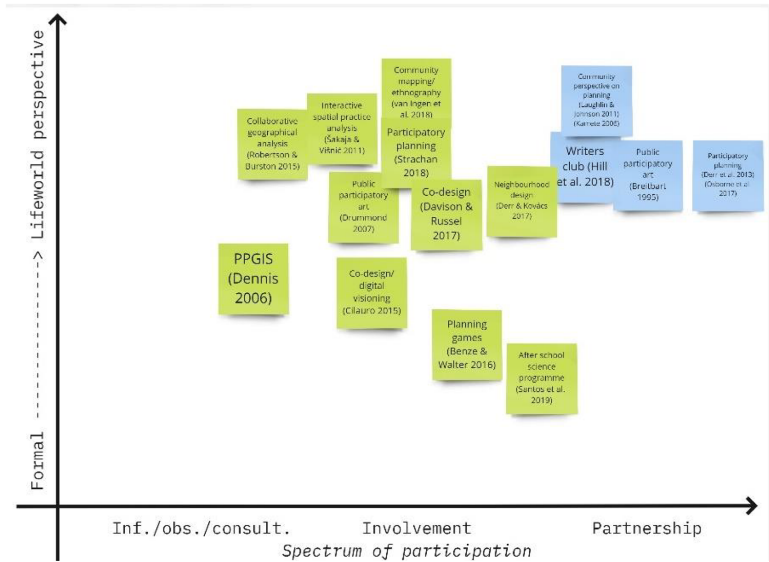
(Derr et al. 2013), which has been gradually worked into public and private institutions over several decades. Arguably, such engagement requires substantial time investments from multiple stakeholders, and its tangible impacts on landscape planning can be ephemeral (ibid. p. 501). However, the relationships built between practice and citizens, not least driven by the action groups based on the initial analyses of participants' lifeworlds, have at times offered pathways for underrepresented groups, and especially for young people, to effect change. They have been shown to have both a meaningful voice and tangible impacts in urban landscapes, and perhaps more crucially, create a culture of inclusivity around landscape planning to meet the challenges of the future in more democratic and just ways.

As recent studies have shown in the case of NBS, even advanced participatory methods tend to be subsumed in instrumental governance processes (Kiss et al. 2022), which bar the transformative potential that a deeper inscription of our cities into nature can have (Remme and Haarstad 2022). Our review of young people's participation in relation to broadly framed urban landscape agendas shows some promise. It also shows much work ahead for integrating the headway made into broader participatory agendas in building sustainable cities, as emphasised by both the European Landscape Convention (European Commission 2000) and the UN (SDG 11.7). A plethora of historical and emerging examples gives concrete guidance to practitioners deliberating about methods for young people's participation (Hörschelmann et al. 2019; Frank 2006). With this discussion, we hope to move from collating examples to building broad and

consistent platforms that strive to always include lifeworld and action orientations in young people's participation. As we have shown, a conceptual lens including these aspects can provide critical nuance, and demonstrate the use of theoretical concepts in practice and vice versa, to work towards a democratic socio-ecological practice with young people in urban landscapes.

6 Advances in current practice and new orientations

Our review deliberates on the existing pathways (and challenges) for young people's informal citizenship practices to enter into dialogue with urban landscape practitioners. The 44 reviewed studies showed well-established tools for more passive forms of engagement in consultations, observations, and other, less-interactive forms of involvement. This, however, does not allow young people a substantial say over problem definitions, visions, and outcomes. The varying contextual factors appearing in the reviewed studies, however, complicate a succinct analysis of the overall sample. More acutely, the 17 studies labelled as 'interactive' showed well-grounded and diverse methods for engaging with young people's lifeworlds in urban landscape practice. The sporadic focus on young people's actions and interventions shows limited possibilities for young people's lifeworld perspectives to actually be developed beyond a project basis, or in tokenistic forms of giving voice that has no further consequence. This hampers

socio-ecological practitioners engaging with young people around urban landscapes. Thus, for young people to play a substantial role in urban transformations towards increased sustainability, practitioners need a continued focus on diverse, creative methods, and to experiment with new forms of action orientation grounded in young people's lifeworlds.

Appendix A

See Table 3.

Table 3 Overall sample

Interactive approach	Spectrum of participation	Number of participants	Age-group	Location	Reference
Participatory planning, multiple parallel processes	Partnership (4)	Multiple cases	'Children and youth'	Boulder, USA	Derr et al. (2013)
Writers club, interviews, focus groups, writing workshops	Partnership (4)	14	14–20 year olds	Detroit, USA	Hill et al. (2018)
Participatory public art	Partnership (4)	30	Teenagers	Holyoke, Massachusets, USA	Breitbart (1995)
Co-design, mixed methods	Partnership (4)	Various, 7 in extended interactive process	15–17 year olds	Sunshine Coast, Australia	Osborne et al. (2017)
Community assessment, semi-structured interviews, focus group, follow-up critique	Involvement (3)	104	14–25 year olds	Harare, Zimbabwe	Kamete (2006)
After school science programme, mixed methods	Involvement (3)	23	11–14 year olds	Sao Paolo, Brazil	Santos et al. (2019)
Community mapping/ethnography, mixed methods, for example walking interviews, follow-up critique	Involvement (3)	14	'Young people'	Redcrest, Canada	van Ingen et al. (2018)
Community assessment, mixed methods, follow-up critique	Involvement (3)	12	10–16 year olds	Toronto, Canada	Laughlin and Johnson(2011)
Co-design, co-programming	Involvement (3)	5 (in focus group)	'School-age'	Melbourne, Australia	Cilauro (2015)
Survey, focus groups, follow-up	Involvement (3)	Approx. 24 in focus groups (645 in initial survey)	12–14 year olds	Melbourne, Australia	Robertson and Burston(2015)
Survey, focus groups, follow-up	Involvement (3)	10 in focus groups (170 in initial survey)	15–18 year olds	Karlovac, Croatia	Šakaja and Višnić (2011)
GIS Mapping	Involvement (3)	6 groups of 4–6	'Youth'	Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA	Dennis (2006)
Neighbourhood design	Involvement (3)	16	8–9, and 14–15 years olds	Boulder, USA	Derr and Kovács (2017)
Participatory public art, youth-survey, workshop and art exhibit	Involvement (3)	250	10–25 year olds	Hanoi, Vietnam	Drummond (2007)
Participatory planning, mixed methods incl.: mappings, picture cards, diamond ranking	Involvement (3)	Initial survey of 55 of which some were included in further work	11–18	Newcastle, UK	Strachan (2018)
Planning games	Involvement (3)	Not specified	No specific age-group	Berlin, Germany	Benze and Walter (2016)
Co-design, workshops, mixed creative methods including drawing, photo-elicitation, etc.	Involvement (3)	106	11–14 year olds	Belfast, UK	Davison and Russell, (2017)
Survey	Consultation (2)	480	12–18 year olds	Trabzon Province, Turkey	Duzenli et al. (2010)
Environmental education	Consultation (2)	Not stated	8–13 years	Boulder, USA	Derr (2018)
Mixed methods/conceptual study, quantitative/qualitative, observations, interviews, survey	Consultation (2)	19	16–24 year olds	Pachucha, Mexico	Hernández and Christlieb (2013)
GIS Mapping	Consultation (2)	82 students total (40 / 42)	10–12 year olds, 15 year olds	Stockholm + village, Sweden	Berglund and Nordin (2007)

Table 3 (continued)

Interactive approach	Spectrum of participation	Number of participants	Age-group	Location	Reference
Interviews	Consultation (2)	47	16–19 year olds	Stockholm, Sweden	Lagerqvist (2019)
Survey, focus groups	Consultation (2)	198 in survey / not stated for focus groups	17–18 year olds	California, USA	Passon et al. (2008)
Survey	Consultation (2)	437 students	10–17 year olds	Zürich, Switzerland	Seeland et al. (2009)
Conceptual study, interviews policy role of informal practices,	Consultation (2)	Larger, nondescript group	'Young people'	Hobart, Australia	Stratford (2002)
Survey	Consultation (2)	148 high school students	Teenagers	Toronto, Canada	Van Vliet (1983)
Mixed methods, observations, interviews	Consultation (2)	47	15–16 year olds	Finland	Kettunen (2021)
Survey, SoftGIS, web-based surveys	Consultation (2)	145 6–9th graders	9th graders	Lisbon, Portugal	Lopes et al. (2018)
Conceptual study, observation, social media use	Observation/Informing (1)	278 unique observations, participant number unclear	'Adolescents'	New Orleans, USA	Shirtcliff (2015)
Practitioner outreach	Observation/Informing (1)	Wider population (2000 confirmed in survey)	'Young people'	Several towns, UK	Woolley (2000)
Review, conceptual study	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Western societies	Bishop and Aminpour (2019)
Review, co-design	Not applicable	Not applicable	'Young people'	Various	Bishop and Corkery (2017)
Informal landscape practices, conceptual study	Not applicable	Not applicable	'Young people'	US	Carr (2010)
Review, participatory planning, youth master plans, multiple cases	Not applicable	Not clearly stated 41 communities,	Up to 21	USA	Cushing (2016)
Relational space approach, conceptual study	Not applicable	Not applicable	'Young adults'	Zürich, Switzerland	Demant and Landolt (2014)
Review, multiple cases, various (55 projects)	Not applicable	Multiple cases	'Youth'	Germany	Heinrich and Million (2016)
GIS Mapping, digital tool development	Not applicable	Not applicable	Under 18 year olds	Denver, USA	Rigolon (2017)
GIS mapping, park quality index	Not applicable	No youth representation, only professional planners	'Youth'	New York/Denver, USA	Rigolon and Németh (2018)
Review, multiple cases	Not applicable	Not applicable	'Youth'	various	Frank (2006)
Conceptual study	Not applicable	Not applicable	'Children and young people'	N/A	Freeman (2006)
Review, empirical studies of children and young people in planning	Not applicable	No youth representation, only professional planners	'Children and young people'	New Zealand	Freeman and Aitken-Rose (2005)
Informal landscape practices, conceptual study	Not applicable	No representation, only professional planners	'Young people'	South Island, New Zealand	Freeman and Riordan (2002)
Informal landscape practices, conceptual study	Not applicable	Larger, nondescript group	'Young adults'	Oulu, Finland	Kallio and Häkli (2011)
Storytelling/urban activism, conceptual study	Not applicable	Unclear	'Young activists'	Hong Kong	Lam-Knott (2020)

Appendix B

See Table 4.

Table 4 In-depth review articles

In-depth reference:	Participatory approach	Lifeworld-grounding	Transformative action/intervention	Spatial analysis (scale/planning lvl)	Key actors
Benze and Walter (2016)	Planning games	Partly, some games applied more educational, adult-determined	Partly, societal role clarified, but only in hypothetical scenarios, no action/interventions to change their urban environments	City–neighbourhood	Municipality, researchers, youth
Hill et al. (2018)	Writers club	Yes, broad discussions grounding process in youth's experiences with social life in urban public space	Partly, increased writing proficiency, giving 'voice'; strong focus on 'identity', no further intervention described	Neighbourhood	Researchers, local grassroots, youth
Breitbart (1995)	Public participatory art, mixed methods (quest. + fg)	Yes, open research methodology in dialogue with participants, various creative/interactive methods	Partly, initial educational process, supported interventions in urban environment	Neighbourhood	Researchers, youth, art school?
Kamete (2006)	Squatting	Yes, upside-down critical assessment of participatory planning practices	Partly, testing and validating squatters critical analysis of participation in the urban landscape, but action not related to emerging participatory processes	City, urban planning system	Researchers, students, squatters
Derr et al. (2013)	Participatory planning	Yes, large-scale project, multiple interactive methods such as photo-elicitation, interviews, mappings, community assessments and storytelling	Yes, some examples of youth-led actions/interventions towards societal change: collab. artwork, youth-trainings for research, political campaign oriented towards local businesses	City	Researchers, students, municipality, schools, politicians,
Derr and Kovács (2017)	Participatory planning	Partly, integration of creative/educational methods for city planning into school curriculum, questions decided by adults. Several occasions for open discussions	Partly, providing interactive space for YP to meet high-level officials/decision-makers, no possibility for making tangible changes	Larger urban area (60 acres)	Researchers, students, municipality, schools, politicians,
Cilauro (2015)	Planning games	Partly, method inspired by already-existing practices of local YP	Unclear, new relationships between YP and libraries, only digital change	Library, digital space	Librarians, youth

Table 4 (continued)

In-depth reference:	Participatory approach	Lifeworld-grounding	Transformative action/intervention	Spatial analysis (scale/planning lvl)	Key actors
Dennis (2006)	Participatory GIS	Yes, individualised input from journals, photo's, etc. and subsequent collective discussions and narratives	Partly, GIS process shows some indications for supporting youth in taking action, but little concrete change and data mostly filters into adult agendas	Neighbourhood	Researchers, students, local youth org. workers, youth
Drummond (2007)	Public participatory art, mixed ethnographic methods	Partly, artworks took direction from survey responses, experimental methods interacting with artwork added to lifeworld-substantiating dialogue	No, decision-power for youth to guide artists, but little processual power or control over outcomes	City	Researcher, artists, museum-workers, youth
Laughlin and Johnson (2011)	Mixed ethnographic methods (quest. + fg)	Yes, multiple explorative methods to draw out youth's lifeworld perspective on youth life in the neighbourhood	Partly, developing shared understanding/vocabulary for youth perspectives on neighbourhood, but no pathway to taking action, and no control over outcomes for youth	Neighbourhood	Researchers, youth
Osborne et al. (2017)	Mixed ethnographic methods (quest. + fg + mapping)	Partly, strong methodological guidance from adults, but some openness for youth to describing the maps drawn on their own terms	No, classical data collection, no attention to youth's process around engaging in the research, all outcomes researcher-controlled	Neighbourhood	Researchers, school, youth
Robertson and Burston (2015)	Mixed ethnographic methods (quest. + fg)	Partly, open, collective, longer-term focus group discussions but little method description	Partly, facilitated presentations and giving voice, no described pathway to taking further action for youth	Larger urban area	Researchers, schools, youth
Šakaja and Višnić (2011)	Mixed ethnographic methods (quest. + fg)	Yes, extensive survey + focus groups with participants draws out lifeworld perspective ie. sets the urban area in context of the youth' lives	No, classical data collection, all outcomes researcher-controlled	Town	Researchers, schools, youth
van Ingen et al. (2018)	Mixed ethnographic methods (interviews, mappings, walkalongs)	Yes, extensive collaborative exploration to explore and define neighbourhood on youth's own terms	No, classical data collection, no attention to youth's process around engaging in the research, all outcomes researcher-controlled	Neighbourhood	Researchers, students, youth organisation, youth
Santos et al. (2019)	Env. justice education, community gardening	No, educational focus, teaching youth/assessing knowledge focus of initial discussions	Yes, youth-elected actions, related to societal challenges	Neighbourhood	Youth centre, researchers, youth

Data availability The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, [FAH], upon reasonable request.

Declarations

Conflict of interest On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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'Can we Mec the Municipality?' Emerging voices of young people in a segregated urban landscape

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ABSTRACT

This article details the failure and success of an action research project that experiments with foregrounding young people's perspectives in visions of future, sustainable, urban landscapes in Malmö, Sweden. In a range of future-creation workshops, the author, an assistant, and 34 young people aged 15–20 from two low-income neighbourhoods developed analyses, visions, and concrete change proposals for meaningful interventions in Malmö's urban environment. The primary contribution is the young participants' analyses of the subjective experience of a segregated urban landscape, the facilitation and contextualisation offered by the action researcher, and the integrative visions and actions that arose. The open-ended approach allowed participants to accentuate both diverse experiences and gathering points (such as a shared metaphor). The article highlights the discursive limits encountered by participatory processes related to urban landscape planning, as well as the methodological openings offered by critical utopian action research to experiment with overcoming these limits.

Landscape democracy: setting the scene with reluctance

There is a near-total silence among the young people in the meeting room, as the researcher–facilitator writes "Sustainable Urban Landscapes of the Future—According to Young People in Malmö" on a long piece of paper stuck to the wall. As the rustling of the pen over the paper settles, the brief glances from the young participants quickly turn down towards phone screens or disappear inside the hoods of jackets. Despite substantial encouragement and insistence that the content of the project is for them to define, the young participants seem reluctant to engage. When prodded, one asks "Landscape…what?" and another declares she is "tired of sustainability", as she had been part of a sustainability-related project before and it had not seemed relevant to her at all, and she got nothing out of it. They have been invited from two nearby neighbourhoods to help work out alternative visions for what the future of the urban landscapes they live in might look like. As the researcher–facilitator realises that this was never going to be the title of a project that the young participants could feel ownership over, the meeting turns into a collective brainstorming of what could be a title of a project related to the built and natural environments that these young people inhabit. When they discuss elements of their lives around the streets and parks and squares, along waterways, under trees, and in buildings in their neighbourhoods, participants agree to call it their "urban environment" (stadsmiljö[1]), and are suddenly alive with ideas. With this new term and some further remarks about what could be key themes ("safety!", "mental health!", "having fun!", "clean water!", etc.), all 34 young people sign up to participate in a series of workshops over the coming year.

Around the world, attempts at greening urban landscapes have produced forms of exclusion and marginalisation (Anguelovski, Connolly, & Brand, 2018; Gulsrud & Steiner, 2019). Despite profound efforts to improve social sustainability and highlight environmental justice at the highest policy-level, Anguelovski et al. (2018) argue that current agendas for 'greening' the urban landscape often risk locally unwanted land use, and fosters more disengagement between citizens and planners and practitioners. In Malmö, where the research project in the above vignette takes place, agendas for a more green and sustainable city have been shown to prioritise economic growth and technical landmarks, while patterns of segregation go mostly unmentioned (Holgersen & Malm, 2015). The city is Sweden's youngest, but the outlook on life and living environments (and even life expectancy) varies markedly, depending on which area you grow up in (Salonen, Grander, & Rasmusson, 2019). Meanwhile, expressive agendas for sustainability have materialised in visually enticing and affluent areas close to the coast such as Västra Hamnen, which has become the new mascot for green planning in Malmö with its green roofs, innovative stormwater solutions, and energy-efficient housing, all of which blend seamlessly into the urban lives taking place there (Jönsson & Holgersen 2017). Broader visions of social sustainability in this region have been shown to falter when faced with private landownership and development agendas (Baeten, 2023), leaving a more diverse public deliberation about key priorities in future sustainable urban landscapes largely absent. Greening agendas for the urban landscape in Malmö and elsewhere fail to foster broad democratic deliberation and action, and remain confined to functionalistic, technical planning and policies, which risk perpetuating current social sustainability problems posed by segregation and other societal challenges (Rutt & Gulsrud 2016). A more inclusive democratic process for deliberating and planning future urban landscapes needs to start with key interest groups—such the young people above—who must live the longest with both the consequences of and answers to the multiple sustainability crises faced by society.

In contemporary scholarship and professional practice, landscape is a key nexus for understanding the interaction of natural and human life (Görg, 2007), not least in cities, which provide an ideal microcosm for understanding socioeconomic drivers of change, and the way human lives and nature are inscribed in them (Elmqvist, Alfsen, & Colding, 2008). The European Landscape Convention states that 'landscape' is an area shaped and perceived by people (Council of Europe, 2017). In this sense, landscape points to something which people have in common, which should help to ensure everyone's wellbeing (Egoz, Jørgensen, & Ruggeri, 2018). Egoz et al. (2018) emphasise how understanding differences in political power and social- and economic capital are fundamental to a democratic engagement with landscape. How the meaning of, and common interest in, the landscape is established—and by whom—are contested questions which span deeply subjective and large-scale societal experiences and interests. In the Swedish context, young people are broadly considered an 'unruly' and often problematic group in state- and market-led agendas for urban- and landscape development (Dikec, 2017; Pries & Qviström, 2021). Pries and Qviström (2021) show how visions of leisure planning and welfare landscapes to address also young people's needs have appeared, and gone, in different historical moments, and how it is likely that broader social ideals for urban landscapes remain elusive for large groups of citizens.

Combining the words 'landscape' and 'democracy' helps materialise social processes into concrete questions about shared living environments (Egoz et al., 2018) Thus, the notion of 'landscape democracy' have helped underline the landscape as an important and tangible democratic arena for practicing rights and freedoms in public deliberation. In Europe, there has long been a strong emphasis on public deliberation, consensus-building, and the procedural elements of democracy, while increasing attention in later decades has been paid to elevating marginalised experiences and voices that are typically repressed in the public sphere (Fraser, 1990). This is also reflected in scholarship on spatial planning, where Knudtzon (2018) has noted how conventional liberal understandings of democracy and participation become 'too thin' when pluralistic and contradictory interests are at stake (p. 13). She argues for the need to experiment with and include more transformative approaches to in-depth democratic deliberation on basic spatial priorities.

This would entail new and varied responsibilities for planners and practitioners to facilitate deeper democratic processes, and wider recognition of the effects of inequality and marginalisation (Friedmann, 2011). Young people are a key demographic for exploring new democratic processes and ways for practitioners and citizens to take collaborative action on key democratic priorities for a transforming city. Young people stand at the edge of full, formalised citizenship rights (Bourdieu, 1993), but are often neglected as an interest group (Johansen, 2016), and remain peripheral in decision-making processes regarding their own living spaces (Percy-Smith, 2015). Participatory processes with young people therefore offer rich potential for exploring alternative means of democratic collaboration between citizens, practitioners, and scholars.

Young people's struggle for participation in public space is on the rise in policy agendas and has been increasingly well-described in research (Walther, Batsleer, Loncle, & Pohl, 2019). Bruselius-Jensen, Pitti, & Tisdall (2021) demonstrate both new opportunities arising in young people's participation in a European context, but also how austerity policies and structural inequality keep large groups of young people locked into trying to get by, and largely preclude the possibilities for young people to effect change. Conventional participatory frameworks and procedures fail when it comes to engaging with young people who have experienced marginalisation (Bladt & Percy-Smith, 2021). Other procedural factors also inhibiting meaningful participation for young people include tokenistic processes and a deficit-oriented perspective that makes their participation conditional upon the young people participating in a way that is exclusively defined by adults (Pohl, Batsleer, Loncle, & Walther, 2019). In short, young people rarely have a substantial say over processes or outcomes, and are considered in need of education by adult professionals before their input can be taken into consideration. While citizens' involvement and participation—for example in public hearings and consultations—has become an increasingly important priority in landscape planning, the focus remains mostly procedural and allows for continued expert-dominance (Calderon & Butler, 2020). This limits young people's chances of developing a sense of citizenship in relation to urban landscapes, and risks leaving the people working with landscapes and the young people who inhabit them increasingly irrelevant to each other. An inclusive agenda for sustainable landscape transformation needs to bridge the practical and experiential gaps between municipal decision-makers, planners, investors, and those who live with the effects of segregated cities and socioeconomic inequality. The open and explorative question tackled by this paper is how collaborative planning processes for sustainable landscapes can become relevant in the context of young people's lives. Inspired by critical action research, the paper explores methodological arrangements, which allow sustainable urban landscape transformation processes to come into dialogue with citizens' own deliberations over problems and visions for the future of their living environments.

Action research and landscape democracy from the margins

Social theorists have long argued against participatory approaches that pre-determine citizens' roles, arguing that the result is a 'managed' and 'passive' citizenry who only fulfil predefined roles dictated by experts and practitioners (Sennett, 2003) and fail to address fundamental questions of inequality in participation in the public sphere (Fraser, 1990; Sennett, 2004). Scholarship concerning young people's participation has developed framework understandings such as youth-adapted 'ladders of participation' (cf. Botchwey, Johnson, O'Connell, & Kim, 2019; Hart, 1992) which can serve as critically reflective tools for scholars and practitioners considering methodological choices and limitations. Meanwhile, emerging approaches grounded in young people's participation have adopted radical democratic and transformative stances which, for example, foreground conflicts and protests, or begin by exploring young people's experiential horizons and own analyses of problems and priorities in their lived contexts (Walther et al., 2019; Bladt & Percy-Smith, 2021). Youth participatory action research and critical utopian action research have provided in-depth perspectives and action in renewing basic democratic

institutions; especially in social, educational, and cultural work (Bladt & Percy-Smith, 2021; Percy-Smith, 2015; Tofteng & Bladt, 2020).

Action research projects have strived to allow problem definitions that appear in everyday life enter into dialogue with more generalised concerns, and develop citizen capacity to take on increased responsibility for common affairs—a democratic task, which mainstream society largely neglects at the expense of limiting citizens to consumers, clients, or users of particular services (Svensson & Nielsen, 2006). Starting with what Nielsen and Nielsen (2016) call 'the basic democratic question of how do we want to live?', Critical Utopian Action Research (CUAR) has been established as a methodology that experiments with deepening democratic processes by introducing terms of social learning and imagination as essential for democratic renewal and sustainable transformation (Egmose et al., 2020; Paaby, Nielsen, & Nielsen, 1988).

CUAR has found relevance in experiments with democratic governance of nature (Nielsen & Nielsen, 2006), participatory processes with marginalised young people (Tofteng & Bladt, 2020), and in overcoming conventional obstacles to democratic participation to envision transformative change with young people in marginalised life situations (Bladt & Percy-Smith, 2021). These examples have shown methodological pointers for a systematic, analytical engagement with 'prefigurative political engagement', which Waterman (2018) ties to democratic landscape citizenship. Inspired by CUAR, this study consists primarily of a range of future creation workshops (Paaby et al., 1988) and thematic workshops (Bladt & Nielsen, 2013) leading to concrete change proposals and interventions led by the young people taking part in the process. Following a progression from critical analyses and the generation of utopian ideas followed by an action-oriented realisation phase, the future-creation workshop (FCW) format (Jungk & Müllert, 1987) has proven to be a fruitful space for maturing everyday life experiences and ideas, and providing 'free spaces' (Bladt & Nielsen, 2013) where the power hierarchies structuring influence in society can be paused.

The experiment explores how substantive or radical democratic dimensions (Calderon & Butler, 2020; Castiglioni & Ferrario, 2018; Jones, 2018) of democratic participation can be facilitated in landscape planning with citizen groups. Nielsen (2024) underlines this potential in CUAR by drawing lines from Bakhtins' theory of dialogue and space for plural voices to Negt's theory of democratic learning. Spaces with plural voices necessarily contain conflict, if it allows the substantial difference between individuals and their particular life experiences to be expressed. Deeper democratic deliberation that aims to lift plural voices depends on what Nielsen and Nielsen (2016) call a 'capacity for tolerating ambivalence' between individual and collective (and ultimately societal) expressions of problems and priorities. They argue that a substantive social imagination and alternative, democratic visions for future scenarios can only arise when participants can express—and start to address—central ambiguities and problems in their livelihoods. Furthermore, the open use of language is crucial, as authoritative words in professionalised discourses can act as tools of top-down power with people who have not had a chance to make them their own (Nielsen, 2024). Language and key terms in collaborative work can, on the other hand, acquire new meanings to the people involved, and provide new forms of autonomy and control over one's own life conditions when kept open for deliberation among the participants (Nielsen, 2024).

These conceptual tools have been central to the development of future-creation workshops as an action research methodology (Egmose et al., 2020; Jungk & Müllert, 1987; Paaby et al., 1988), consisting of three primary dimensions: critique, utopia, and action, along with a few procedural rules which are discussed and negotiated in an initial collaboration contract. The purpose of the various phases and procedural rules is to collect individual experiences that eventually form collective and democratically negotiated analyses of the phenomenon in question. This serves as a common basis for taking action towards realising the stated utopian ideas. Nielsen and Nielsen (2016) describe how these steps encourage participants' 'social imagination' that can mature hopeful and creative—but also negative and ambivalent

subjective—experiences and form collective ideas for change and action regarding the common affairs of society; i.e. the urban environment. The following section describes how the process and outcomes were developed and negotiated in collaboration with the young participants in this study, and the methodological and practical arrangements that arose during the process.

Future-creation workshops: critique, utopia, and action

…A few weeks into the process, the researchers' introduction of a workshop was followed by a hesitant silence from the participants, until one of them declared: "it is impossible". While the researcher wrote this on the wallpaper as the first, critical keyword/phrase, the assistant asked whether the participant could elaborate briefly on what he meant. He looked around and explained that it was "impossible for us to change anything" in relation to the urban environment we had been discussing at the initial meeting.

The exclamation above is of course a very understandable reaction, both given the somewhat unusual situation of being offered a space to talk more holistically about the young participants' lives in society, and how they relate to the urban environment. This central ambivalence never left, but as the workshops progressed through critical and aspirational discussion of their urban environments, the young participants eventually developed concrete change proposals and started bringing them to life. The section below details the context and specific methodological arrangements that applied to the young people's work with the possibilities and impossibilities in taking on increased responsibility for their urban environments.

For over two years (Oct. 2021–present), a PhD student and a research assistant have been engaged with a group of 34 young participants aged 15–20 in Malmö, Sweden to explore the possibilities and barriers for them shaping their urban environments. Over the course of the project, the 34 quite different young participants have been involved to varying extents, but in all cases, more than once and in key analytical moments. We held bi-weekly workshops for more than a year, with everything from 2 to 25 participants showing up, and the work on realising their change proposals is still ongoing, with around 16 young participants actively involved. The workshops have played out in multiple locations, primarily in- and around the neighbourhoods of Seved and Hermodsdal, where most of the participants live. The neighbourhoods are relatively close, but both are characterised as low-income (socioeconomically vulnerable, in municipal wording) and experience territorial stigma (Shahrad, 2023; Wacquant, 2008). Both neighbourhoods also have a lack of services such as libraries or other public facilities where meetings might take place. Several of the female participants remarked that it might be hard for them to be allowed by their parents to go too far from their homes and schools, especially if the meetings were to extend into the evening, so finding a place and time to meet have at times has been an almost insurmountable obstacle. Several meetings have been outside, occasionally held in a falafel restaurant, but often in more institutional spaces where the researchers could lean on previous contacts to gain access.

The analytical workshops detailing critiques and utopias all followed a basic structure, beginning with a brainstorming session involving thematic processes where key themes were distilled from the initial spectrum of keywords and phrases written on the wall. This happened in an open discussion where the young participants located which key experiences and ideas were (at least somewhat) shared by more people in the room. The verbal character of these workshops was contrasted by interspersed aesthetic exercises, such as sketching and small pantomime plays to investigate aesthetic and embodied aspects of the points they brought up. Several smaller walks in the surrounding neighbourhoods, and spontaneous mappings of amenities and discomforting factors contributed to participants' reflective processes.

For each phase, the young participants went through rounds of voting to elect which critiques and utopian ideas they considered the highest priority. Out of the elected themes, a

rough (but also acute) utopian vision for their urban environment arose. In the following discussions, the vision was turned into change-proposals and actionable steps that the young people could start taking themselves, with some support from the action researcher and assistant—primarily to arrange meetings and ensure analytical consistency with the critiques and utopias the young participants had themselves established. In the later, action-oriented workshops, the researchers tried to encourage the participants to gradually take more ownership over the meetings themselves. In dialogue with the young participants, the researcher's role gravitated from one of facilitation to increasingly taking on supporting roles (Svensson & Nielsen, 2006), and especially as acting as 'project memory'; i.e. asking questions about the initial critiques and utopian visions as the change-proposals took shape and started being put into action. This methodological approach serves to both open up the basic conceptualisations of landscape as more than a discrete, tangible, objective unit of analysis, but rather as a democratic field of deliberation, conflict, and negotiation in a dialogical process with young citizens.

Findings from the limits of a landscape discourse

Urban landscapes and environments take on distinct meanings in different social groups, and with the group in question, the term 'landscape' had no apparent meaning at all, hampering meaningful engagement with a theoretical or professionalised agenda. The young participants' resistance to being drawn into a more focused and expert-driven discourse of 'landscape' is underlined by the edgewise and fragmented way the environment enters into the participants' work and considerations. As they showed the researcher around their neighbourhood, there was no place to sit down and discuss things or plan their actions. There were no welcoming green spaces, and when asked about specific sites, the young participants complained about traffic noise, the lack of outdoor furniture, and just looked abjectly at the concrete and barren grass of the inner yard of an apartment complex where some of the young participants live. The latter is, according to them, 'ugly, shitty, and boring', but was nevertheless chosen as the best place to sit down for a bit. Halfway through the meeting, the young participants decided we had to leave, because someone was glaring at us from a third story window, making them uncomfortable. Out in the street again, we stood in front of an abandoned industrial complex that now holds a go-kart track and a huge, paved parking area right in front of the building block where they live. Without exactly walking a mile in their shoes, the practical obstacles to something as simple as sitting down and talking about something outside in their neighbourhood served as a powerful reminder of the central ambivalence the young participants had expressed from the start. The acute alienation from the local landscape, and their own willingness to try to move beyond it and create something relevant and meaningful out of a seemingly irrelevant project prompt became only more elaborate in their conceptual, as well as practical and action-oriented experiments.

'Segregation of joy' and freedom to be oneself

After the initial brainstorming sessions and investigative exercises, the young participants discussed and elected the two critical themes they thought were most central and important. The first theme considered 'being judged by your background/appearance instead of by who you are' (empirical material, 2022[2]). This critique applied to urban environments ranging from schoolyards, to streets, parks, and even when going shopping (although some disagreed that in this case it felt less so). A few cited experiences of being kicked out of school and loosing access to the yard and opportunities to meet with friends that they knew. Others talked about how it was uncomfortable being out in public space because they almost always felt judged by the

people in that space by their look or behaviour. In a small pantomime play, the young participants acted out how one girl walks through the city while others walk up to her and put post-it notes on her jacket saying things like: 'troublemaker', 'criminal', 'poor', 'Muslim', 'terrorist'. The girl then walks away, crying, and as she exited the stage, all the post-it labels fluttered off her jacket, in an unintentionally poetic moment that the young participants did not fail to remark upon. When discussing this exercise afterwards, they discovered how there was nowhere on the stage—i.e. in the urban environment—where she could just be herself—she had to disappear for the labels to go away. This led them to discuss spatial aspects of what they had initially described more in purely social terms, and to notice the lack of places where they felt free to be themselves.

The other main critique considered the 'unequal standard' of different neighbourhoods, including infrastructure such as the state of bike lanes, schoolyards, and spaces for outdoor recreation and activity in general. Participants were concerned, as they saw other parts of the city undergoing renewal and becoming more attractive and nothing really happening in their neighbourhoods. They discussed, and showed in their pantomime play, how unfair it feels when seemingly more tax- and investment money goes to already well-off neighbourhoods while they witness disrepair and a lack of basic services and opportunities to have fun. They also described how these problems compounded and how many felt unsafe moving about in public spaces. Overall, they agreed that there seemed to be a large mismatch between needs in various urban environments, and the available resources to alleviate them. The discussion also returned to the large building complex housing the go-kart centre in one of the neighbourhoods—a complex none of them had ever been inside. When the researchers joined the group discussing this critique in depth, they explained that they shared experiences of a lack of access and exclusion, often with money as the mediating factor but also prejudice and location, and they had been reminded about the word 'segregation' that had been previously brought up. Looking at how they expressed this critique they had agreed that, for them, segregation had to do with the opportunity to find amusement, and to feel joyful in their lives, and especially while out in their urban environment. The combination of a more technical concept (segregation) and the common vernacular Swedish word for amusement (*nöje*), allowed them to unite their lived experience with broader understandings of structuring factors in their urban environment.

Visions of a city and a safe place

The utopia workshops played out over several instances, with very little participation in most, but after several attempts, most of the active participants had taken part and had the opportunity to contribute. The utopian themes that crystallised pertained to finding space in which one could feel 'free to be oneself' as well as mobility and easier access to places of education, jobs, affordable homes, and getting to feel joy and amusement in one's life. The utopian ideas matured from suggestions about everybody having guns, and total schoolyard privatisation, or making all of Malmö into a shopping mall, as the young participants discussed these proposals with each other. When prodded a bit about locating the utopias in the urban environment, two key ideas seemed to gather their perspectives. The first idea sprung from the utopian vision that everyone should feel free to be themselves somewhere in the urban environment, and not feel judged, but respected. Tangibly, the young participants envisioned 'an open indoor/outdoor recreation yard where you cannot get kicked out' and immediately formed a project group to start taking concrete step to make this idea reality. The second idea took an encompassing approach to making the urban environment accessible, and resulted in proposing an activity day that would offer young people from socioeconomically vulnerable neighbourhoods a chance to experience joy and amusement in different urban environments both active and outdoors, but also usually less-affordable, indoor activities like bowling and go-karts.

The open recreation yard

Opening a recreation yard in this environment was no small feat for the young participants. Their jaws dropped when they first arrived at the one feasible location (which did not require rent or an organisational number) we could find in their neighbourhood. It was an area around abandoned car garage offered to the group by Växtverket, a local NGO working with urban nature pedagogy and green space development. It was littered with construction materials, and the young participants declared that it could only be 'a catastrophe' to try to open a recreation yard here. After fifteen minutes of despair, they decided to try to make the most of it and engaged in a flurry of activity to clean- and tidy up the space for their opening event. A good ten hours later, they had successfully concluded their opening event, and were dancing around with vacuum-cleaners declaring it was 'the best day ever'. They had not just worked hard to create a welcoming space, but also been accomplished professionals both organisationally and pedagogically in running the day's event. They had made plans and budgets, advertised, given speeches, and arranged games and creative sessions as well as food and snacks and other entertainment for the 20+ young people, mostly from their own building blocks, who had shown up. The exact number of participants was a little hard to gauge, and several times throughout the opening event the young participants discussed and adjusted how to open the rolling gate to the area should be in order to be both welcoming, but also create a protected space where they could help others be more themselves and not face prejudice and exclusion. The experiment with this threshold related both to the painful experience of feeling unwanted in public spaces and simultaneous searching for a free space to 'be oneself' and feel safe, but also became an explicit symbol for the difficulty in- and desire to take responsibility for more than their own lives and create something lacking in Malmö's urban landscape.

The activity day against segregation of joy

The other change proposal was a recurring activity day that could counteract the segregation of joy and amusement for young people who normally have little access to the majority of free-time activities offered by Malmö's urban environment. The first experiment with this took the form of an activity day. Around 12 young people had been identified and invited via local grassroots groups (TiF, ZigZag). Their eyes widened as they walked into the sport- and recreation facility and they saw the trollies you could take to carry around various sports equipment. One of the participants asked, almost indignantly, whether 'this was what rich kids do on weekends'. The young project team experimented throughout the day with taking leadership, allowing more free activities, and after handing out prizes for participation at the end, they collected input from the participants. These underlined, not just the joy of having finally accessed the elusive but imposing go-kart facility and having had fun there, but also how the project team had made everyone welcome with equal parts respects and encouragement, which had excluded no one. Both the actions the young people took, and the phrasing and framing of them as actions to pursue a world without the 'segregation of joy' captures the struggle over words. The activity day became a wider learning experience, as the young people increasingly took charge by combining lived-in and professionalised discourses and created a concept that broke with existing barriers to pursuing a joyful youth in Malmö. The continuation of the activity day is, however, up for debate. While the concept was considered solid and successful in the initial trial, the dependency on further funding and actors with resources is a daunting factor, in addition to the strain that up- and out-scaling put on their daily lives to find time for meetings and developing proposals. Ultimately, the idea and need for support and funding begs central questions that are yet to be addressed about whose responsibility it is to address the underlying issues with mobility and equal access to the amenities in the urban environment.

A conflictual experiment and a gathering metaphor

Several times over the years, the work broke down completely. Central frustrations related to questions of gender and prejudice, and differing perceptions of safety and ability to be oneself and feel joy arose. The discussion gravitated, often in conflicting ways, around how much prejudice you face depending on the colour of your skin, or how much stigma different cultural backgrounds faced, or the different kinds of insecurity girls and boys felt in urban environments. In some cases, the researchers intervened, and reminded participants that we can not expect to have perfect and immediate solutions ready in the room to the diverse and important problems they brought up. These conflicts evidently showed how broader social tensions also arise in smaller, protected democratic processes, and eventually how the young participants found ways to handle the ambivalence they felt about working together. The researchers provided some methodological answers to breakdowns in the process that mostly consisted in dividing the group into subgroups that could find common ground and expression to then take stronger arguments to the larger group. In a creative use of a metaphor, the young participants themselves eventually ended up showing a more profound answer to the challenges with conflicting senses of identity and experiences with prejudice and powerlessness.

The central ambivalence around the change proposals' 'impossibility' arose again when the researchers proposed that it was time to present the project ideas to a wider audience and see whether there might be ways to begin constructive dialogues with relevant authorities such as the municipality to find support for larger-scale change. In the initial project design, this would start with a research-workshop where the young participants presented their analyses and change proposals to municipal practitioners, academics, and representatives from local interest groups. However, they considered this format too daunting, and the initial contact was cut short several times, as they refused to reach out to anyone outside the project team.

After one such meeting, the researchers and young participants walked to a nearby Burger King, where the young participants had requested a workshop-dinner (as we had had for all meetings that spanned afternoon and evening). The researchers suddenly found the young participants laughing and joking about someone who talked about having 'mec'ed' the school to get time off. None of the researchers understood what it was to 'mec' something, but the young participants explained how it meant to turn something that seemed adversarial to your advantage. At the next meeting, the word came up again, and to the young participants' collective joy, one participant loudly explained that he was going to 'mec' the municipality for everyone. The metaphor gathered the perspectives that they had at times forgotten that they shared, and gave them a joyful boost of confidence that diminished the uncertainty they felt about contacting local authorities to discuss their visions and change proposals for the urban environment. Instead of setting up a formal research workshop, the young participants decided to set out conducting their own experiments with the change proposals, and then to contact a few stakeholders at a time who might be able to contribute to their continuation.

Since then, initial dialogues have been started with relevant public institutions, and the recreation yard has, for example, secured a less 'catastrophic' venue for their next experiments with the help of the municipality's leisure-time office and a local library. The activity day idea has also been pitched to two local grassroots organisations, but the proposals and discussions at this point have mostly centred around concrete requests for support and collaboration. Any further engagement with relevant practitioners has been hampered by slow responses, as well as by the continued reluctance from the young people involved. However, the ongoing collaboration and engagement from the young participants evidenced that at least some level of mutual relevance has been established. The deliberations and actions pertaining to the future of their shared urban environments have been spurred on from its difficult outsets.

Landscape democratic deepening and ambivalent engagement

The young people's analyses included visual aspects of their environment, such as the industrial complex and parking lots they stare at every day; the perceived ugliness and disrepair of their neighbourhoods; and their sharp contrast to other parts of town, to sociocultural and political aspects of access, exclusion, and prejudice. These are determined not just by 'objective' factors of what is located where in the city, but by economic, cultural, and deeply subjective factors such as the painful experience of living in front of an entertainment complex for young people that you have never had a chance to set foot in. Following through on these analyses, participants developed their own articulations and alternative change proposals. As with their problem articulations, the change proposals do not mirror conventional understandings of landscapes or sustainable transformation. There are no particular visions for green structures or outdoor space preferences that lend themselves to climate change adaptation, no pertinent request for street trees, raingardens, or a biodiversity-rich urban meadow. The young participants' rejection of the landscape term, when taken seriously, led them to a relevant, collaborative project. In this, they point out how places to meet and feel freedom to be oneself without prejudice do *not* currently exist. They also evidence how segregation hampers them from accessing the possibilities for amusement, entertainment and feeling joy, which other young people can access. Castiglioni & Ferrario (2018) point out the importance of engaging with the immaterial elements of landscape, like the shared experiences and feelings that drove the young participants to establish a new conceptual place in an abandoned car garage, to evoke the democratic potential of landscape. The open recreation yard became a poignant, if fleeting, critique of the cultural, political, but also spatial preconditions that play into the experience of marginality and segregation, but also a utopian answer in that, at least for a while, a place existed where they did not feel wrong, and could not be kicked out.

These findings confirm Pries and Qviström's (2021) analysis on the fragmented character of Swedish landscapes' contributions to young people's welfare, but also add nuanced understandings of the methodological implications and developments for democratic and inclusive transformations of urban landscapes. Theorists and practitioners in landscape democracy have taken great strides in delineating democratic theories, framings, and procedures—especially by focusing on conflict and protest, and in urban settings often by emphasising the spaces to gather for demonstrations, political protests, and movements that insist on preserving citizens' interests in urban landscapes in contrast to those of the state and the market. Finding places where 'subaltern counter publics' can form, seem a prerequisite for deepening landscape democratic engagement. The last few decades' advances in democratic theory and action research demonstrate some possibilities to engage with currently muted and alienated experiences, what Calderon and Butler (2020, with reference to Chantal Mouffe) consider 'the antagonistic dimension of landscape'. The ideas of free space and ambivalence tolerance in CUAR shows pathways for muted, subaltern experiences to not just be articulated, but to become guiding lights in participatory processes with people pushed to the margins of a wider democratic discourse around landscape.

The participants' critiques and utopian sketches constitute a shift in the discourse at the micro level, where they took responsibility for defining key problems in- and visions for their urban environments. This contrasts participatory approaches in urban green spaces, which conceptualise citizens as merely users or customers receiving services in the form of solutions within externally defined criteria. The discursive shift allowed a situated, critical and utopian landscape analysis to appear. While more radical theorising of landscape democracy tends to emphasise the access to open spaces to gather and protest (cf. Jones, 2018; Yigit-Turan, 2018), the acute need for a public place to feel oneself expressed by the young participants indicates the need for more protection for those who experience marginalisation. The

fieldwork presented here demonstrates instances of both intergroup- and state–citizen differences (Calderon & Butler, 2020) which the work of the young participants expressively clarify and counteract. Over the course the project, these differences have flared up, softened, and given way to a range of openings. In Fraser's theorising of subaltern public spheres (1990), the need for initially protected forums for marginalised life experience to be expressed is crucial, and in the landscape context, these might require spatial equivalents, as evidenced in the negotiations around how open the rolling gate to the test-venue of for the recreation yard should be. While expressively organising a temporary space for young people 'to be themselves', the participants' newfound sense of freedom and responsibility for young people's place in the neighbourhood was at odds with the rest of the world outside, which could only cautiously be invited in and trusted to live up to the different social organisation of this place.

The reluctance of the young participants to engage with professionals and institutions working with their immediate living environments points to the difficulty in merging the experimental, democratic deepening with existing practice. The relation to adult professionals and formalised systems of urban landscape planning and governance, and the difficulty in achieving meaningful dialogues with practitioners, have been a continuous and contentious thread in the collaborative work. While action researchers can act as a democratic broker, as numerous action research projects evidence, it is uncertain what a scalable model for action research engagement might look like. A final difficulty therefore concerns the often temporary and fleeting character of the processes. A few pointers can be found in the idea of a 'permanent workshop', as a more stable structure for experiments on the democratic renewal of society (Bladt & Nielsen, 2013), and systemic action research experiments with scaling numerous simultaneous in-depth local processes towards systemic change (Burns, 2014). Meanwhile, a key character of the CUAR engagement is the in-depth process in local situations where societal dimensions in individual- and small-scale collective horizons can be explored in their given contexts. Such reality checks are crucial for a nuanced, democratic discourse that allows shifts in priorities that reflect diverse interests to occur; especially in a landscape planning discourse which is often structured at larger scales (cf. Görg, 2007).

In this project, we have yet to explore sustainability- and landscape aspects that extend beyond the sociocultural horizon immediately foregrounded by the young participants. In their experiments with 'Mec'ing' the municipality, the young people in this project have provided valuable insight to how meaningful work can be performed at the limits of a landscape discourse in a segregated urban society. The change proposals might not detail immediate solutions to the urgent sustainability problems Malmö and cities around the world are facing. What they do show are alternative priorities and answers to 'what needs to be sustained?' (Egmose, 2015), or whose landscape is to become transformed into something greener (Castiglioni & Ferrario, 2018). In the larger organisational and institutional realities where planners and practitioners around urban landscapes finds themselves, facilitating processes which allow for deeper democratic dialogues and alternative answers to the predominant policies might seem a distant dream. However, when given space (both literal and discursive), and a few analytical tools for stimulating democratic learning, the young participants in this study shifted a localised discourse on 'urban environments' back into relevance in their everyday life horizon, and showed potential to turn those *impacted by* into those *involved in* planning the urban environment. If landscape is to be more than a realm for those who develop disciplinary knowledge and professionalised practice around it, and become a basic democratic entity that engages everyone in deliberation and action around local and regional social–ecological development, such open forms of participatory processes show promise in raising pertinent questions that bridge the abyss that often arises between professionalised discourse and the lived experience of urban landscapes.

Notes

1. All Swedish–English translations were made by the author.
2. Empirical material gathered from 2022 to 2024 by the author and Ingrid Altamirano, accessible by contacting the author.

Informed consent

The participants' informed consent was acquired in the first information meeting where they signed up for participating in the workshops. A written form was provided, but as several participants seemed somewhat confused by this, I also brought up the key elements in open discussion, including anonymity and assurance that no sensitive data was to be gathered. This resulted in a collective note-taking paper, restating in simple terms the basic tenets of GDPR, explanations of how data was to be handled and published, the promise from the researcher to handle their input respectfully, and only pass on information that the participants agreed to. This process was presented to the University's legal team (SLU Juridik) who concluded that no further ethics approval was needed, given the data gathered did not include sensitive information and was of general public interest. As the project progressed and further research activities such as experiments in public space was included, verbal consent of parent and guardians of participants under 18 years of age was also acquired. Given the extensive time period that the project is running, the participants' have been periodically presented with the key research data and interpretations, and asked to confirm their consent to publishing the analyses and descriptions of events during the workshops and experiments.

Disclosure statement

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

Notes on contributor

Frederik Aagaard Hagemann is a Ph.D. student and action researcher with a background in philosophy and human ecology. His research interests include sustainable landscape transformation as a democratic process, and marginalisation as a lens for understanding societal relationships with nature.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, [FAH], upon reasonable request.

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Acta Universitatis agriculturae Sueciae

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This dissertation examines young people's participation in shaping sustainable futures. Through three years of future-creation workshops with young people in Malmö, Sweden, it explores potential barriers and opportunities in participatory urban landscape planning. The research highlights the scarcity of lifeworld-focused approaches and the lack of stable channels for young people's perspectives. By linking everyday struggles with broader discourses, the study promotes critical utopian action research and demonstrates how landscape-democratic planning can engage with young people in envisioning sustainable urban environments.

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SLU generates knowledge for the sustainable use of biological natural resources. Research, education, extension, as well as environmental monitoring and assessment are used to achieve this goal.