

# The Strength of Codesign: Citizens as Community Builders

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**Abstract** Transdisciplinary research, integrating practice and academia, and including citizens as knowledge producers in urban development processes can lead to successful community empowerment in urban design. In such approaches, citizens are considered *community builders* and therefore are invited by the authorities to build knowledge by codesigning artifacts in urban space. This paper will present experiences from a Swedish project in the context of stigmatized outskirts of metropolitan areas, where inhabitants have been involved in codesigning a stage in a local park, to be built during the winter 2012/13. The project is carried out as part of a municipal project called 'Development Gothenburg Northeast' funded by the European Union and supported by a research project called 'INTERPLACE—The interplay between citizen initiatives and invited participation in urban planning' funded by Formas.

## Background and context

This paper discusses the early outcomes of a project called 'INTERPLACE—The interplay between citizen initiatives and invited participation in urban planning' ([mellanplats.wordpress.com](http://mellanplats.wordpress.com)), a transdisciplinary interaction research project with one of its roots in the architecture and planning realm to which I belong. We have focused on citizen participation and empowerment issues in a specific context: the stigmatized outskirts of European metropolitan areas. One of our case study areas is Hammarkullen, situated in the northern part of Gothenburg, Sweden, in an area called Angered. Here, almost half of the 48,000 inhabitants were born abroad, as compared with the corresponding figure for Gothenburg of one-fifth. The population is also very young compared with the rest of the city. Among Hammarkullen's approximately 8,000 inhabitants, nearly 40% are under 25 years of age.

The architecture is characterized by grey and white high-rise buildings in the centre, surrounded by semidetached houses and villas. Public transport to the inner city is provided by trams and takes about 15 minutes. Hammarkullen is often labelled – by the mass media, scholars, municipal employees and the public – 'peripheral' and 'different', and attributed a 'territorial stigma' (Wacquant 2003). Today, Sweden is experiencing a severe education problem related to housing segregation: a considerably larger proportion of pupils in lower secondary school in stigmatized suburban centres in Sweden (sometimes as high as 70%) do not pass the subjects of maths, English or Swedish. This means they do not qualify for admission to upper secondary school. Moreover, the socioeconomic and educational gaps in Swedish society are increasing alarmingly. Related to these problems, rapid changes are taking place in society that are leading to a weakened public sector, which finds it difficult to tackle the complex challenges posed by the current organizational structures and strained financial situation.

The present article does not focus on stigmatized suburbs as a problem, however, but instead on trying to understand the possibilities of increasing citizen participation in urban development processes. The overall reason for this interest is that citizens' rights have not been taken sufficient advantage of in governance processes related to urban planning and city management (Stewart and Taylor 1995). This is a great mistake, as it has been stressed by planners and designers that architecture does not only have the potential to be a vehicle of empow-

erment through community participation (Marschall 1998) but also that inhabitant participation can enhance the quality of our cities and make them more human (Gehl et al. 2006), develop new aesthetic ideals (Blundell Jones et al. 2005) and lead to real future building development initiatives (Lyons et al. 2001). What all of these processes have in common is the concept of 'empowerment' (Andrews et al. 2006) – and a belief in the great value of empowerment in the planning and management of local communities and in inhabitants serving as key actors in governance processes aimed at developing the city (Swyngedouw 2005; Faga 2006). Our focus derives from our long history in the study area of Hammarkullen and our way of approaching the local community. After many years here, we have become part of the continuous dialogue taking place within and between groups, organizations, companies, the local public sector and the political sphere.

The focus on understanding possibilities rather than problems does not imply the absence of a critical perspective. This paper thus starts off with the difference between, as sociologist Mustafa Dikeç expresses it, *noise* and *voice* (2007: 153), which means being aware of the power aspects determining what information is seen as trivialities and what is perceived as the 'people's voice'. Furthermore, awareness of the concept of *space making* (2007: 172) implies an understanding that it is the government that can define spatial order, as it is the authorities that investigate, identify, name, categorize and put a denotation on different parts of the city – thus distinguishing 'included' from 'excluded'. Understanding possibilities hence implies incorporating this kind of social knowledge into the making discipline of planning and architecture – and in our case also focusing on stigmatized suburbs built in the 1960s and 70s. Planning researcher Lina Olsson, referring to Lefebvre's *Right to the City*, describes it well:

” The modern city is a place where everyday life is divided into fragments, both spatially and temporally, and the feeling for the city as a collective work has been lost. Most people live in residential enclaves – high-rise areas and suburbs – where the residents got a place to stay (habitat), but are hindered to live socially (inhabit). The homes are objects with an exchange value rather than use value, thus housing has been reduced to a kind of unproductive consumption (Olsson 2008: 67).

The kinds of neighbourhoods this paper focuses on thus have a double weakness considering citizen participation: the people in them suffer from not being heard due to social exclusion and from living in a fragmented modern city built mainly for market and production reasons rather than for social life – one might say that they seem to have been built not to be heard from. As is obvious to many inhabitants living in suburbs like Hammarkullen, this is fortunately not the only perspective on local life, however, this type of knowledge is still important to consider and include in disciplines that focus on the physical environment. As sociologists Callon and Latour put it: the physical environment / the material / the artefact exercises power in itself – it speaks to the surrounding world (Callon and Latour 1981: 284). In everyday life, this is not hard to grasp. For example, if one goes into detail, it is quite clear who has the power over the park spaces in New York where the benches tip forward if anyone lies down on them.

## A transdisciplinary approach

The continuous dialogue in Hammarkullen mentioned above began 25 years ago in the 1980s when the University of Gothenburg initiated field-based education in the northeastern part of the city – starting with university students in social work and continuing with art and teaching students. In 2008, Chalmers followed with a place-based Master's course for architects and other designers entitled *Suburbs—Design & Future Challenges* ([suburbsdesign.wordpress.com](http://suburbsdesign.wordpress.com)). In the course, participants learnt to codesign with citizens to develop a basis for their urban design proposals. The field-based design education employs a transdisciplinary tradition, in a close and intensive dialogue with citizens and employees in the area; networking with people outside the area is also of great importance. The university students play an important part in this dialogue. As a result of these experiences, in 2010, the University of Gothenburg and Chalmers jointly started the Centre for Urban Studies in Hammarkullen ([www.chalmers.se/urban](http://www.chalmers.se/urban)), the aim being to advance our knowledge in three specific areas: widening participation in higher education, promoting professional and organizational development, and focusing on the role of citizens in urban change. The strategy was to work in a transdisciplinary manner – creating links between education, research and public outreach.

One of the research projects associated with the Centre is called *Urban Empowerment: Cultures of Participation and Learning* ([www.urbanempower.se](http://www.urbanempower.se)). This is a pilot project spanning the period 2010-2011, funded by Mistra

Urban Futures ([www.mistraurbanfutures.se](http://www.mistraurbanfutures.se)), an international transdisciplinary centre for sustainable urban development in Gothenburg (2010-2022). With its participatory approach (Argyris and Schön 1995; Krogstrup 1997) and project partners from spheres of the university as well as the municipality, the overall aim of Urban Empowerment has been to develop capacity-building processes that include citizens, analyse how these processes have worked, and critically reflect on how such capacity-building processes could be implemented and supported. The project resulted in ten capacity-building processes per se – in elementary schools and with NGOs – and contributed to built artefacts such as an exhibition hall at the tram stop and plans to build a covered meeting place in the square to prevent continued degradation. The primary and concrete result of the project was its support of and involvement in the capacity-building processes per se. However, the way these capacity-building processes functioned has also been analysed as case studies, leading to critical reflection and theory development on how such processes can best be implemented and supported. On a broader scale, society needs to undergo a change we chose to call institutional *transformation*, which may be considered the social counterpart of the generally accepted environmental concept of *transition* (Stenberg et al. forthcoming). The INTERPLACE project has been involved in the further implementation of the results, e.g. it has led to the employment of a person who in 2011-2013 will work on informing city district staff of what the pilot project has taught us about citizen participation. The same person was also given responsibility for implementing the covered meeting place in the square. This paper will focus on the last-mentioned initiative and our role in the INTERPLACE project, which has been to support it in different ways and also to learn from it in an interactive way.

For us in the Urban Empowerment project, coming from different institutions, working in a transdisciplinary way has implied, as Callon and Latour would put it, exposure of each others' *black boxes* (1981). This is where certain elements are put that do not need to be re-negotiated from scratch all the time. We use these taken-for-granted assumptions hidden in black boxes to win new negotiations. Challenging these to get to know them, understand them, question them, interfere with and, perhaps, help to develop them is time-consuming, but this is what is needed to work with wicked planning issues such as widening gaps between rich and poor, and increased inequality, housing segregation, social exclusion, gentrification and stigmatization. In addition, for us, working in a transdisciplinary way has implied including inhabitants/citizens in this knowledge-building process.

## The strength of visualization

When Chalmers Architecture joined the University of Gothenburg with students in Hammarkullen we realized the strength of visualization. Students in social work and teaching had been involved in community outreach activities with local practitioners and inhabitants for many years before we came, and most people were not aware of their presence. When architects and other designers presented their design proposals based on citizen participation dialogues, however, they had immediate impact and interest locally. Sociologist Bruno Latour might explain this by stressing that artefacts make it possible for the participants to act from a distance (Latour 1998). The most powerful tools for dialogue by the students were models and other three-dimensional expressions such as photo montages, perspective drawings and aerial photos – floor plans and sections were generally worthless because the inhabitants did not understand them. This effect is not unknown by designers. Here, planning researcher Nabeel Hamdi describes the strengths of visualization when the inhabitants built models of their dream houses and how this made them go through a critical reflection process and learn:

” When all the models were made, we laid out a big site plan (same scale as the models) on the floor and asked everyone to put his/her cardboard house on the plot. Suddenly, we had a community in front of us. /.../ When I asked the people whether they would like to live in this community, there was a chorus of unhesitating 'No's'. Then they started talking about how their new community should be. I did not have to tell them anything, no lectures about density or open space or setbacks. /.../ A set of site rules began to emerge (2004: 30).

With this kind of exposure, we initially experienced a period of much interest from the inhabitants in Hammarkullen and great newly awakened focus on the physical environment – the buildings and outdoor urban space – deriving partly from complaints of long-term maintenance neglect of the stigmatized housing area and interest from the people living there, most of them immigrants, in becoming community builders of their society. Their intention was to solve urgent problems and to further develop the society in a direction the inhabitants thought would be sustainable. The strength of visualization thus implied open doors locally and, in this way, the design students functioned as engines for urban empowerment (Stenberg and Fryk 2012). However, the visibility also led to problems: high hopes arose that the students' seductive images would be realized. The inhabitants

thought these were realistic expectations as nice environments such as these were to be built in the harbour areas of the city centre, so why not in a stigmatized suburb when the government had stressed for so long that it would make every effort to solve the problems? The students' work in itself thus empowered the inhabitants to discuss what the right to the city should mean in their environment. The problem was that such a discussion – if not transferred higher up in society – would just hit locally. Hamdi labelled this kind of understanding of the profession *action planning*:

” The rationality of action planning, the workshop, street work and plan-making, lies in the proposition that once sufficient work is done at the neighbourhood level, pressure begins to build up to act at city level and emergence to take place (Hamdi 2004: 101).

We therefore realized quite quickly that the design disciplines obviously could not handle this situation on their own. This was one of the reasons for the interest in the transdisciplinary work, including collaboration with the students and their teachers in social work and teaching, and the outreach activities they had had for many years in the area. Their didactics applied very well to action planning:

” This cycle of doing and learning, learning and doing, acting and reflecting involves a kind of 'activist pedagogy' which is systemic to becoming skillful and wise. The purpose, then, of teaching, given this setting 'is fundamentally about creating the pedagogical, social and ethical conditions under which students agree to take charge over their own learning, individually and collectively', to create their own knowledge, much in the same way as later, in practice, we would expect people to take charge of their own development (Hamdi 2004: 127).

Integrating physical and social aspects at the most local level in Hammarkullen was rewarding. For example, in one specific workshop on participatory architecture, led by a highly skilled South African architect, the students acted as assistants in co-designing a café that ten unemployed women wished to start as a cooperative business in an empty building in the square. The teaching and social work students in each group took on the role of translators, and the architect students took on the role of designers – of the ten unemployed women's ideas. The translation carried out by the teaching and social work students was not about ethnic languages but about helping the designers understand what the women wanted to happen, with the building in focus and vice versa, as they soon discovered that architects and inhabitants clearly did not speak the same language when trying to communicate about the physical environment. The students brought to the workshop was the skills in supporting cultures of participation and learning that they had acquired in their respective courses.

As part of the outreach approach, one local social worker took part in the workshop. He had done his training as a social worker in one of the field-based classes in 1986, and the specific project he was in charge of, the women who wished to start a café, was his way of further developing his skills, linking spatial and social aspects of the women's ambitions. When inhabitants become co-actors in urban governance and development, they also become producers rather than mere consumers of the urban fabric. Empowerment thus releases and redirects energy and, to a certain extent, can also be considered a source of new energy. What the actions of the social worker gave to the women was time to learn some of the skills they lacked. Thus, he made it possible for them, while on welfare, to acquire training in catering, business economy and health issues. In addition, this training was organized to empower them as a team, which was why he had decided to take part in the workshop with the design students in the first place. In this way, he also made it possible for the social work and teaching students to be part of the learning process – which was very much in line with the learning objectives of their courses.

As is hopefully obvious above, the integration of physical and social aspects in education, research and outreach activities opens up opportunities, not only to make use of visualization in urban design processes but also to use the strength of *codesign* as an engine for urban empowerment to take place.

## The strength of codesign

This concept brings us back to the focus of this paper: the employment of a person whose work is to inform city district staff of what we learnt about citizen participation in the earlier mentioned Urban Empowerment project and the implementation of building of a covered meeting place in the square. Both activities were part of a much larger mission of 11 million euro in Angered called Development Northeast ([www.utvecklingnordost.se](http://www.utvecklingnordost.se)), funded by the European Union through the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth. The woman who

was employed to carry out this mission in Hammarkullen was both an architect and a social worker, moreover she had recently been deeply involved locally as a student in social work, an intern at the Centre for Urban Studies and responsible for a project in which youth as paid summer jobs were working as researchers. Her ambition was therefore high: she was going to carry out the square project in a codesign manner and intended to learn from it not only for herself but also for her colleagues in the city district administration.

What then is codesign? The concept of codesign (*medskapande* in Swedish) may have been used earlier in various ways by designers and researchers but was first mentioned in Hammarkullen as a result of a lecture and workshop carried out by the South African architect Carin Smuts, mentioned above ([csstudio.co.za](http://csstudio.co.za)), when teaching participative design methods to students. With Carin Smuts's interpretation, codesign implies architects and inhabitants *designing together* and the design process being shaped in a way that *empowers* the participants (Lyons et al. 2001). In Smuts's view, as she often works in poor townships, this means becoming involved as an architect also in the funding of the building project because it would not be empowering to carry out codesign and then not build it – the state/municipality in South Africa does not often invest in buildings in townships. There are close points of similarity with Sweden when talking about investments, at least the inhabitants in exposed suburbs such as Hammarkullen tend to see some likeness. We will return later in the text to the importance of actually building something after codesigning it.

In the following, I will be describing what the process looked like when the project leader implemented her tasks. She started the process by carrying out about 15 in-depth interviews in March-April 2012 with local actors – employees and inhabitants. The unison message was: do not build a covered meeting place in the form of a tent in the square, which was requested in the funding application, because it will be burnt down immediately. The proposal had not been anchored enough when the application was sent in more than a year earlier and, after that, heavy cuts/reorganization of the local schools had been decided on by local politicians to be carried out during the spring – so there were many inhabitants who were extremely angry and frustrated about the situation in Hammarkullen. Just building the covered meeting place would have been an example of what tends to happen in our fragmented society: 'jumping to solutions – reorganization, replanning – without spelling out what the problem was or if there was one' (from Popper quoted in Hamdi 2004: 12). Changing the use of EU funding is not easy, but the project leader succeeded even if it took some time. In the beginning of the summer, she had anchored at all levels that the funding could be used for building 'something' in the park instead, which had been asked for recently, as the municipality just the year before, to the people's great frustration and as a result of a new law for public companies (an EU adaption it was said), had withdrawn a refurbishment initiative in the neglected park in the middle of the housing area. The new project became labelled the 'patio' and had a total budget of 220,000 euro.

After that, the project leader had engaged two part-time architects to carry out the design process of the 'patio'. They were two former students from the Suburbs Master's studio and they formed a process that started in May and ended in October. The aim was codesign of the 'patio', thus the whole process was to be capacity-building, hence empowering the involved actors and improving the urban space of the park. The design process consisted of a number of tools that were put together:

- May-June: *Interviews* with more local actors (inhabitants and local employees at the youth centre, schools etc) about the park and what activities people were interested in doing there.
- June: *Information and invitation* to the inhabitants to take part in the design process via email and posters put up in the area, and to a very large extent also word of mouth through all the local associations (there are 46 of them in Hammarkullen), which informed their participants in various ways, some via social media but most of them by word of mouth, which seemed to be the most effective way to reach out in Hammarkullen. There was also intensive information and lobbying before each activity.
- June-July: *Interviews* with municipal actors who needed to be involved in the design and building process, and traditional information collection about the prerequisites.
- August 19: Public '*idea party*' in the park on a Sunday when nine different tools were used during the day to collect information and hold a dialogue with the inhabitants:

- *music* (rap, break-dance, pop, rock) from a stage to attract people to come and stay
- *refreshments* in the form of salad, coffee, tea, juice and fruit also to attract people to come and stay
- *'storytelling tent'* with old photos and people knowledgeable about the history of the area and the park aimed at hearing more stories from the inhabitants
- *'your say map'* on which people could mark with stickers what they used the park for today, what they wanted to be safeguarded and what things could be taken away – they could also propose new functions by writing them on post-it notes and putting them on the map
- *'idea wall'* which was a) an exhibition with design proposals for the park, b) inspirational photos from other urban spaces – a and b both consisted of pictures with ideas from former architect students and the aim was to hear what people liked and disliked (they put red and green sticky notes on them), and c) a place for free comments on post-it notes
- *roundtable conversations* with the aim of hearing in more detail what activities people would prefer in the park and for them to discuss them between themselves
- *'treasure hunt'* for children 5-12 years old with the aim of hearing what they liked and disliked about the park (they were given tasks related to the senses in certain places, which made them explore it and comment on it, and in the end they found the treasure)

In total, about 200 inhabitants were involved to some extent, of which 50 were children, and quite a few passers-by took a quick look without staying as the park is in the middle of the passage between the tram stop and the housing.

☑ August 28: *Workshop*, three hours with 13 adult inhabitants with mixed backgrounds who had volunteered and formed a focus group. There were 5-6 other participants, including me, who followed the process and staff from the park and nature administration who will later take over responsibility for building the 'patio' – they followed almost every activity in the process. Sandwiches and coffee/tea were served at the start. The theme was what *activities* to focus on when designing something in the park. The architects guided the group through a common selection process in which five groups of activities were finally chosen out of the large number suggested earlier and during the evening:

- sit and rest, converse, watch the greenery and people, listen to the water
- paint, draw, graffiti
- dance, listen to music, climb, have coffee, barbeque, eat
- swing, ice-skate, play chess, watch a film
- play beach volleyball

☑ August 29: *Open discussion* for a couple of hours at the youth centre. The architects used *inspirational photos* for communication and the youth liked the electronic equipment such as lights in ground plates to step/dance on. Overall, they stressed the need for outdoor spaces to 'hang' in and also thought the park should be better designed for barbeques. Two of the girls became deeply involved in the design process of the 'patio' and came up with detailed suggestions for the form *sketched on post-it notes*.

☑ September 2: *Workshop*, three hours on a Sunday with the focus group again, this time with 11 adult inhabitants of whom 7 were new (which was not presupposed but solved by the architects briefly running through the previous process). The theme for the day was feelings: what would the place feel like and what should it express? *Inspirational photos* were used for the dialogue and the discussion ended by choosing five photos with *descriptions of feelings* that represented the group. On this day they also focused on which place in the park to choose for the 'patio'. Based on all the previous activities, two places had been chosen and the group *went out to inspect* them. Then they went through a minor *swop analysis* together, putting pros and cons on the table. They agreed on one of the places as probably being the best choice.

☑ The two architects continued the design process on their own, with *'ordinary' design tools*, as they had done between the workshops all the time.

☑ September 15: *'Test party'* in the park. The aim was to present a midway design proposal for the inhabitants involved and discuss it with them. This was presented on a Saturday afternoon as a *full-scale model* in the park, in a place constructed by chicken wire and corrugated cardboard. Passers-by were also informed about the 'patio'. The shape of the curved seating area had been inspired by the Gaudian sofa in Parc Guell in Barcelona.

Afterwards, 13 inhabitants, this time adults and children, quite a few of whom were new to the process, sat down indoors for a relaxed and not very controlled *discussion* of the proposal. Overall, they liked the 'patio' but also came up with disruptive proposals for changing everything. Many of the inhabitants emphasized the importance of lighting if the place were to be usable in evenings and in winter time. They also discussed whether the large trees were in the way.

☑ September 19: *Workshop* with the focus group, three hours in the evening. The South African architect Carin Smuts happened to be in town and had planned the workshop together with the two architects. There were many more people than expected, 21 inhabitants, the majority of whom were new to the process, and the tools for the evening had to be changed hastily. The idea was to go into detail on the design, and focus on colour scales and pattern, but instead it became quite a chaotic process in which the inhabitants in three groups *sketched* what they wanted the 'patio' to look like. One '*dream place*' was thus drawn by the youth group, one by a group of children and adults, and one by a group of local artists.

Perhaps the most interesting outcome of this workshop was that it was obvious to all participants – including the project leader and the employee from the park and nature administration – that many of the inhabitants would like to be part of the actual building process of the 'patio'. This had been discussed earlier as a definite possibility but was heavily stressed this evening by the local artists as they came to the workshop very annoyed that they had not been involved in the recent process of adding art to the underground tram stop in the area. At the workshop, even though they thought the 'patio' would be much better placed in the square, they participated and contributed much of their knowledge and aesthetical views to the design process of the 'patio' in the park. The workshop was thus organized in a way that gave them a voice, and their critical opinions were listened to and used creatively. This was an interesting (perhaps subconscious) example of how a so-called *deep democracy* approach ([deep-democracy.net](http://deep-democracy.net)) handles negative voices. This approach emphasizes that every voice matters and by including the knowledge of the no-man/woman, it avoids not only being stabbed in the back afterwards (which is what policy-makers most often refer to as the meaning of citizen participation: avoiding appeals) but more importantly the decision is wiser. This happens because the no-man/woman expresses a fear that he/she shares with everyone else, but it is hidden in the subconscious of most people. Inviting a no-man/woman thus opens a black box. In this way, conflict is a trigger for learning (Krogstrup 1997) and release of knowledge production.

☑ October 5: *Exhibition* held on a Friday afternoon at the tram stop, which is the only stop in the district and therefore many people pass – and many stopped to take a *sweet*, which was a useful tool for reaching not only children but also youth. The comments from people were generally positive. The woman from the park and nature administration also came with great news: they had decided to budget some money for refurbishing the park also around the 'patio' to give the limited effort, given the needs, a greater impact. There were also doubtful comments from inhabitants about the 'patio'. Some of the artists came and mentioned that they themselves would actually like to design a statue in the square – they thought it was wrong just to focus on the park when the square had so many problems. Another voice came from an employee at the youth centre who was extremely worried about the worsening situation for the youth with a significant local increase in drug dealers and threats to young people and adults who reported crimes. He argued that the 'patio' would become a place for the 'bad guys' if it was just built by a contracted company. Then again, those responsible for the 'patio' had reason to consider the building process and in fact an interesting discussion about 'social tenure' took place there at the tram stop – what it is and what it could be in Hammarkullen – and anything seemed possible.

I will return to social tenure/procurement later in this paper, it would just be very interesting to reflect briefly on why this quite free conversation took place at the tram stop. Partly it had to do with timing. The employee from the youth centre happened to be passing and left his comments just when the exhibition drew together a number of powerful stakeholders involved in the design and building process of the 'patio'. The reason for the timing, however, had to do with space. The exhibition was held in an urban space that was not 'owned' by any of the participants. It was a space for passing inhabitants and local employees in as much as it was the space of the two architects, the project leader, her boss, the employee at the park, the nature administration and the academics. Anyone could say anything without asking permission from anybody. There was no predicted agenda and no time constraints. The furnishing of the space gave no one ascendancy over another. The aural conditions were terrible if all those who attended the exhibition wanted to hear the others well, but favourable if someone want-

ed to say something informal to three or four persons. It was a place for spontaneity and for testing ideas. From a reflective perspective, these circumstances may be described as giving shape to an 'interspace' or 'interplace' (Stenberg and Fryk 2012) between different professional bases – such as the city district administration, the parks and nature administration, the municipal project funding the 'patio', academia and civil society. In the interspace/interplace, abilities such as listening, curiosity, respect, confidence-building and 'negative capability' (Keats 1899) – the ability to act in uncertainty and chaos – serve as a basis for the prevailing mode of communication.

☑ After the exhibition, the two architects *completed the sketches and turned them into CAD drawings*, and the project leader handed them over to the park and nature administration for tender and construction. The two architects worked on this assignment together for approx 700 hours. My description of the process stops here as it is still ongoing. The 'patio' was first planned to be built before May 2013 when the Carnival will take place in Hammarkullen, but as the project was widened with new funding it is now planned for completion of the building process in autumn 2013.

This description of a codesign process may be referred to as putting together certain tools in a toolbox suitable for a specific task. Knowledge of the tools is of course crucial for designers/planners, as Abraham Maslow put it: 'For those who only have a hammer in the toolbox, every problem looks like a nail'. There are hundreds of communicative tools to choose from (see e.g. Steyaert and Hervé 2005) and to become skilled in – in peaceful situations as well as in uncertainty and chaos. However, the tools cannot be considered on their own but as part of a process carefully designed for knowledge production in which all the actors are involved. This is what transdisciplinary work has been about for us: a knowledge view implying that all the actors, as well as the inhabitants, are knowledge *producers*, knowledge *bearers* and knowledge *users* – a strategy in which citizens together with the other actors *build* society and community as part of their everyday life (Stenberg et al. forthcoming). In this view, the question about domination of space is one about who has the right to put knowledge on the table in a design/planning process.

The handbook 'Methods for meetings' (Ranger and Westerberg 2004) includes not only a series of tools for collaboration and investigation but also a description of which tools are appropriate for specific phases of a project. The phases they mention are

1. Reflect on the prerequisites
2. Search for partnerships and be visible
3. Create togetherness
4. Produce a joint strategy
5. Go from strategy to action
6. Evaluate and learn from the project
7. Care about what happens afterwards

Quite often when architects and planners are involved as consultants for participatory design they are hired just for phase 4 of the process, at best phases 3-5. Professionals who are not skilled in participatory tools and process design may take care of the rest, or it may be left in a state of uncertainty, which creates a great deal of frustration and is an important cause of 'betrayal debates' afterwards. The first phase, reflection on the prerequisites, is crucial as this is when the consultants negotiate with the client the aim of the mission, which governs which actors to involve and how. Knowledge about participatory tools and process design is extremely important to include in this part of the decision-making. The same applies to the last phase, caring about what happens afterwards, which leads us to the final part of this paper: social tenure.

## **The strength of coproduction**

In the case described above, the project leader will most probably take responsibility for all seven phases, and, with her double competence in architecture and social work, she is quite knowledgeable in the area, even if she may not be as skilful as the two consultant architects who have taken part in the participatory design course mentioned earlier. The 'tunnel vision' or 'down pipes' approach of many municipalities when it comes to implementing projects is a threat, however, now that the park and nature administration take over responsibility for the project. Will the 'rain gutter' approach with crosswise communication and knowledge production remain?



Will they succeed in 'taking care of what happens afterwards'? The first difficulty, which was to actually build at all, which is important after a codesign process, seems to have been overcome – and with the extension of the project even more will be built in the park. The next step is to meet the needs and knowledge of the worried local actors mentioned earlier: Can the 'good guys' be involved in the building process and can the process facilitate them making the 'patio' their place? With the 'good guys', the youth worker meant local institutions having close cooperation with the surrounding society as part of their ordinary weekdays: youth and employees at the youth centre and in local schools, local artists, local NGOs, community-based social workers, local shop owners, etc. and including their knowledge in the building process through coproduction of the 'patio'.

To support such a development, the municipality recently changed its regulation for city district committees, and in 2011 it gave the ten districts far-reaching responsibility for citizen participation in urban design processes – thus decentralization of responsibility for the physical environment in the city has been implemented. Moreover, this strong focus on citizen participation has been stressed in the written budget documents for Gothenburg during recent years, and in 2012 the budget also stated that tenure of services with social considerations should increase. These facts are important as they actually go towards the EU Commission legitimizing tenure in a way that supports the view presented above: it gives the municipality the right to carry out social tenure (Upphandlingsbolaget 2012: 6) or, in EU language, SRPP – socially responsible public procurement (Europeiska unionen 2011: 7).

Social tenure can be many things, however, and the legal position in Sweden is developing. In Gothenburg, the municipality distinguishes between ethical standards and social responsibility, with the first-mentioned being about the production of goods and the other referring to our focus: it is about (a) supporting increased citizen participation in society and (b) facilitating the unemployed getting jobs (Upphandlingsbolaget 2012: 4). Examples of social tenure in stigmatized Swedish suburbs include the contracted company undertaking to either hire unemployed construction workers living in the area or involving youth from the area as interns during the construction phase. This kind of social tenure is thus legitimized to carry out when the construction of the 'patio' is being procured.

It would be very interesting, however, to search for knowledge locally of what the actors actually meant when stressing that the building process must involve 'the good guys' and saying that otherwise the construction of the 'patio' would contribute to the park being an even more scary place than it is today and increase the barrier effect it has in the area between the square/tram stop and the housing. If done as before in Sweden and to the extent we are talking about here, social tenure may actually just imply that one or two inhabitants get involved, which would be great for them if they get a job, but the effect on the community would be very limited. How can social tenure be implemented in a way that involves people more? Including many of the youth coming to the youth centre? Attracting all ten local artists? Inviting an entire class from one of the local schools? Involving all the students at the local music college? Including inhabitants and local employees as community builders and making use of their knowledge when changing public open space? What would such a tool in social tenure look like? How can it be scaled up? Developing this kind of knowledge would be the start of answering the question 'What is the strength of coproduction in urban empowerment processes?'

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