



YOUTH EMPOWERMENT METHODOLOGY

UNGDOMSBUREAUET

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2019

Publisher: Ungdomsbureauet

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In collaboration with: The Youth Council of Sønderborg, the Youth Council of Narvik, the Municipality of Sønderborg, the Municipality of Narvik, and Project Zero

A special thanks to all our interviewees for their valuable inputs. Without their help this methodology would not exist.

Background

This methodology is developed by Ungdomsbureauet (Translated: The Youth Bureau) in collaboration with the Youth Council of Sønderborg, the Youth Council of Narvik, Project Zero, the Municipality of Sønderborg, and the Municipality of Narvik.

The methodology is linked to the project Attractive Nordic Towns¹. Attractive Nordic Towns aims to ensure green redevelopment, competitiveness in Nordic urban regions, and to create towns that provide the framework of a good life. The collaboration consists of small and medium-sized Nordic towns from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and Norway. The project is anchored in the following Sustainable Development Goals:

- Sustainable Development Goal 8: Good jobs and economic growth
- Sustainable Development Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities
- Sustainable Development Goal 17: Partnership for the goals. To create new innovative(green) businesses

The motivation for this methodology is that an engaged and empowered youth is needed to ensure the continued development of sustainable towns.



NARVIK KOMMUNE



Bright Green Business

ProjectZero



UNGDOMSBUREAUET

¹ Sweco (2018):

www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/8790c63ddb804757b5c556876ae2f73f/indicators_toolbox_attractive_nordic_towns_sweco.pdf

Introduction

It is vital that young voices are included in our society as young people are the citizens of the future and a central part of every democracy. It is a continuous task and a general responsibility to create a society where all citizens feel included and heard. Engaging young people is important and benefits more than just young people. It makes them care more for their local community, improves the quality of government services and creates a more democratic society in general. When young people are engaged in their local community it creates a coherent community in which all people feel represented and valued.

The empirical foundation for the Youth Empowerment Methodology consists of 24 individual interviews with both youth and stakeholders from the municipalities of Sønderborg and Narvik. Furthermore, we have conducted a workshop with young people from both cities participating, and 10 Vox pop interviews with students from Sønderborg Statskole. We would like to thank all the participants for their valuable inputs.

The methodology seeks to provide the reader with hands-on tools, and tips for the involvement and engagement of young people - whether you are a young person yourself, or a part of what we refer to as the "experienced generation". A culture of involvement and engagement needs support from young people, as well as from other generations. One of our interviewees phrases it:

"The task is to create an openness, and a belief that we can do something, create something. And the task is for everybody: We need to believe that we can do it, and the people working in the municipality or elsewhere... If they think we are just some stupid kids who don't know how to do anything, well, then we will be those stupid kids who don't get things done" (High School Student and a member of the Student Council).

This report consists of two parts: The first part contains a best practice "guideline" on how to engage and empower young people. The second part explains how we gathered our data, give the reader some theoretical insights and walk you through the analysis behind the guideline.

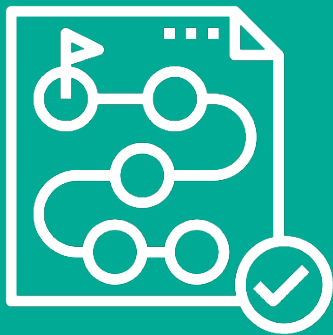
About Ungdomsbureauet

Ungdomsbureauet is a non-profit organisation dedicated to empowering youth and promoting youth engagement. We wish to strengthen youth influence in societal matters and political decision processes. Our mission is to give youth opportunities. Opportunities to form opinions, to be heard and gain influence. Be it in society at large, in political debates, or in local environments. The organisation's vision is to help foster one of the most civically engaged youth generations ever seen in Denmark - and hopefully in other Nordic countries as well.

We have more than five years of experience with problem solving as well as comprehensive know-how about youth engagement and participation. Our portfolio consists of a versatile range of engagement and involvement tools, such as workshops, pop-up democracy events, mentoring, future workshops and storytelling. We also specialize in analysis, books, and creative happenings. Our experience from working with youth shows that empowerment and engagement of young people require different approaches depending on both age, current level of engagement, and anticipated degree of involvement and influence.

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YOUTH EMPOWERMENT METHODOLOGY

Youth Empowerment Methodology

The methodology is a general and adjustable model applicable in different contexts. We outline various scenarios, choices and questions one must consider when involving, engaging, and empowering young people. We believe this to be the most sustainable solution, when looking for a methodology that can be applied across borders, cultural differences and in different political environments.

Furthermore, the methodology seeks to support a variety of different ways to engage and empower young people. Young people are not a homogenous group. Like adults, young people come from different backgrounds, have different interests and like to communicate and participate in different ways. The ways in which one group of young people get motivated and participate will not necessarily be the same for another group. Therefore, it is important that engagement is not simply offered in one format and that a variety of mechanisms and approaches are employed to reach a diverse group of young people. The mechanisms and approaches should always be employed with respect to the participants and the information sought from them.

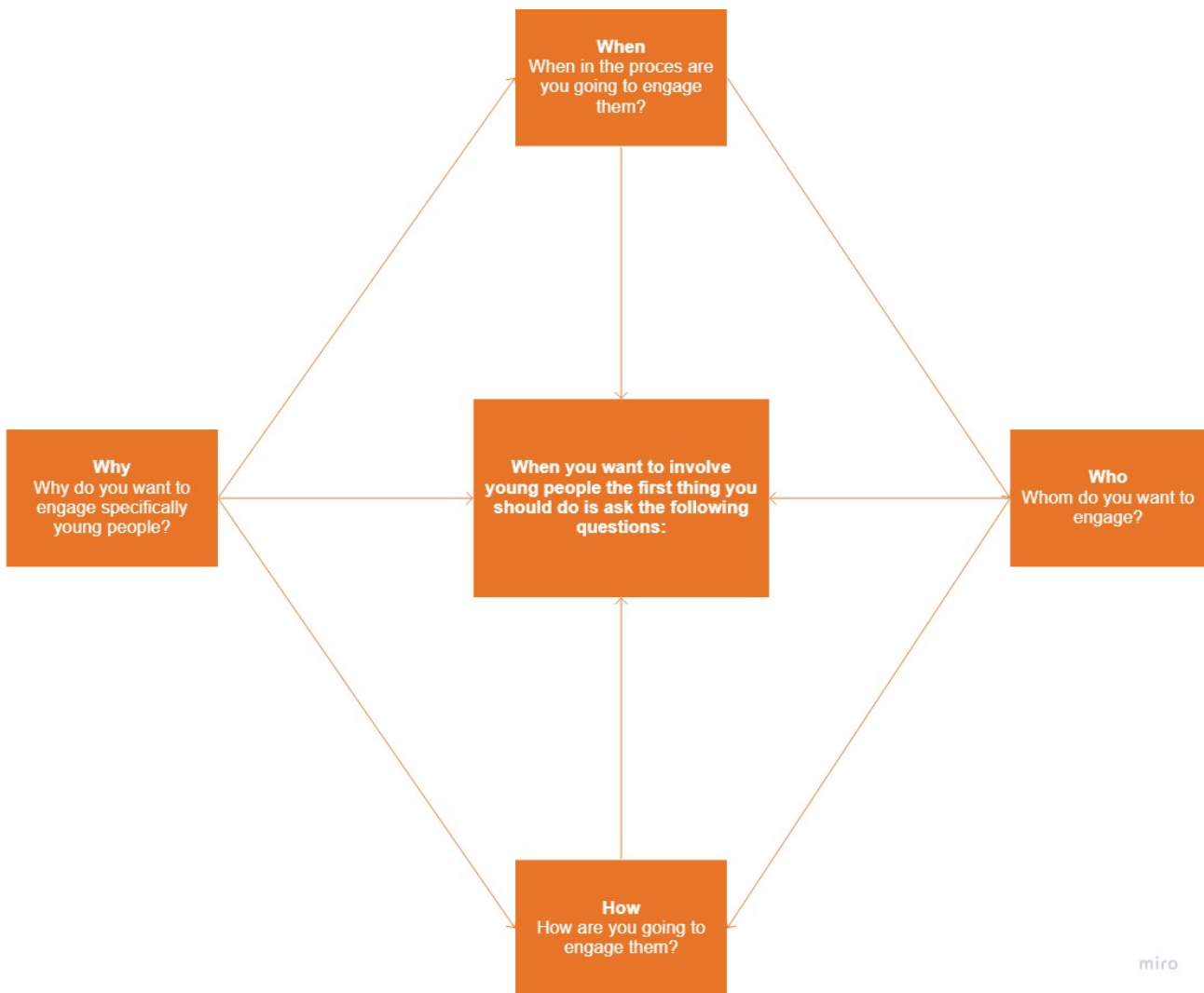
Reading Guide

The first chapter contains do's and don'ts on how to engage and empower young people. First, you will find a step-by-step guide and a checklist with important questions you need to consider when engaging young people in your project. Second, we present concrete and easily applicable tools that you can apply to support youth engagement.

The second chapter contains the background analysis for the methodology, and our approach will be presented.

Why, When, Who and How?

When you first think of involving young people in your project there are always four questions you should ask yourself: Why, when, whom and how.



Why?

When you wish to engage young people, the first question you should ask yourself is 'why?'. You need to reflect beforehand on why you want to involve young people, and what they add to your project. Furthermore, you need to make your reasons clear to the participants, so they understand your reasons for reaching out. Young people most likely have valuable inputs that will strengthen your project, however sometimes it simply does not make sense to involve young people, e.g. if young people are not *actually* able to have any real influence in the process. Therefore, you need to consider why you are engaging young people in the first place, what they add, and if the framework of your project supports actual participation.

When?

When in the process does it make sense to engage young people? Is it early or late in the process?

Early Stage

The early stage is where ideas are being generated and the project is taking form. Involving young people early on can contribute to a feeling of empowerment for the participants, as their input can shape and form the project from the very beginning. This also provides a sense of ownership among the participants. However, when involving early in the process it is vital to realize that some young people prefer to engage in a shorter timespan so make sure to discuss the process with your participants; how long do you need them to participate, and what kind of process do they prefer themselves? When involving early in the process it is also important to remember to give frequent feedback and make sure that it is transparent how their inputs and efforts made a change.

Late Stage

The late stage is where most decisions have been made. Being engaged at this point is sometimes frustrating because of limited influence on the

direction of the project. Engaging at this stage requires a rather clear-cut defined distribution of responsibilities to make it transparent and to ensure that everyone knows their role. If possible let young people take charge of the agenda and project, but with the boundaries you set. This will still ensure that the participants feel empowered even though a lot of decisions have been made, as they will still be able to influence the process.

Temporary Engagement

When engaging young people, it is important to realize that some people are having a difficult time committing over a long period of time. Young people are in a phase of life where they are still forming their identity and get introduced to new things constantly. They also have to make a lot of important life choices e.g. future education and work. Furthermore, young people have a lot of obligations to school, work, friends, family and so on. Accommodate this by letting people participate over a shorter period. Otherwise, you can apply a flexible framework approach, so that participants can sometimes spend less time or put in a smaller effort that fit their schedule and other obligations, and at other times put in more time and effort.

Who?

Whom do you want to recruit? Remember that young people are a catch-all description and that young people are just as different as any other age group.

Consider what is more beneficial to your project - to engage young people formally or informally. Are you reaching out to people in your network, or are you recruiting through a formal organisation like a student council, or through the educational system?

Network

We advise you to consider your own network when you need to find participants as this tends to be the most effective form of recruitment. Also consider the network of people you surround yourself with e.g. co-workers or fellow students. You can also tell young people about your project face-to-face at places where young people are present.

Social Media

In some cases social media are a useful platform to reach out to young people, but because of the information overload on these platforms, most social media groups, events, or posts should not stand alone. Rather, they need the support of more analogue forms of interactions for reaching out.

Educational System

If you need a wide range of opinions and people, consider recruiting through the educational system. Reach out to headmasters or teachers. If you have the resources, you should aim for more than one type of school. For example, do not by default only recruit high school students, but try to include students from vocational educations as well. Feel free to reach out but keep busy exam periods in mind and be careful not to put a lot of extra work to the teachers already busy schedule.

Organisations

You can also find organisations and recruit through these. This can lead to a lot of already engaged and involved young people who might want to put some hours into your project as well. However, people who are already active in an organisation are sometimes very busy so make sure you clear time expectations with the potential participants when reaching out.

How?

When you consider engaging young people, you should have a clear-cut plan. How are you going to let them participate? Will they be involved through surveys, workshops or volunteering? What is the aim? Will you collect inputs, or will you do actual co-creation where everyone, regardless of age, is an equal participant? How will you make contact and recruit the participants? How will you provide feedback? How will you compensate them for their expenses?

Communicate in Eye Height

Young people are sometimes more informal than older generations. It is not to be rude, different generations simply have different ways of expression. Remember to convey your message in simple ways. You should not need a higher education to participate and remember that what is common knowledge for one person might not be it for another.

Freedom within Framework

Trust goes a long way to ensure participation and empowerment. You need to provide freedom within the set boundaries of the project. Too much control or bureaucracy risks creating a feeling of burnout. We advise that you have a quick workflow and use the here-and-now momentum when your participants wish to act or be engaged in something. If it drags out due to e.g. bureaucracy the momentum might be lost. Also remember to give feedback on how their inputs has contributed, as this will make them feel more invested since they are making a difference.

Sustainable Relationships

Developing long term relationships is important for sustainable volunteerism. Spending time building and developing these relations means prioritizing

social arrangements, helping young people learn new skills and showing them trust.

Young People as Equals

Treat young people as equals and remember that 'youth' is a catch-all description. Be attentive and listen to their words and actions and understand that not all young people are the same. Do not neglect someone's inputs based on age. Also do not be over-excited for young people's input. They are no different from other people's inputs and should be treated with respect and consideration. Keep in mind that the goal should not be for you to benefit off young people, but rather there should be a mutually beneficial relationship. Offer something for their commitment, e.g. letting them be in charge, let them have responsibilities or maybe teach them something new.

Time Management and Output

When engaging young people, ask how much time they can spend on the project and explain how much time you expect it to take. Respect their schedules and help them plan their time. Young people sometimes have a hard time not going all-in on projects, so make sure you regularly ask how much work they have on their plate. If not, they might burn out or their school will suffer.

Coordinate Logistics

Young people find the logistics to be one of the central and most common issues when engaging in a project. Bear in mind that young people often have school lasting all day. It is not possible for them to attend during school hours and you should factor in some time getting from the school to the project location without being stressed. Also remember to

have a dialogue about exams or upcoming assignments so you can schedule around it. Provide a schedule for transport to and from the location of the meeting and end the meeting in due time, so it matches the bus and other practical factors. Make it as easy as possible to participate as it will encourage young people to become involved. This also means compensating for project-related expenses which involves transport to and from location, and that you will compensate them for food bought on the way or provide it during the meetings. Meetings are more productive with some food or snacks especially if they are held right after school hours or during the evening.

Check List

Below you will find a check-list for things you should consider when engaging young people. When you have considered or done what we propose you can make a checkmark.

When you need the assistance of young people have you...:

- Asked yourself 'why', 'when', 'who' and 'how'?

When communicating with young people have you...:

- Made sure that you convey your message in a simple and easily understood way?
- Asked the participants how they prefer to communicate and receive messages? E.g. do they prefer texting instead of using Facebook or e-mail?
- Had a talk about expectations? Both in terms of the project-goal, and what they hope to get out of their participation?

When planning meetings have you...:

- Provided participants with practical information, and shared your contact informations?
- Provided participants with food or a snack?
- Made sure that your meeting does not collide with the participants school hours, and other important logistics? If you do not know when their school finishes make sure to ask.
- Let the participants plan part of or the entire agenda? If not, have you thought about why?
- Reminded the participants of which project-expenses will be compensated and a guide on how to do it in practice?

When working with young people have you...:

- Have you checked in on the young people you work with recently and discussed the work burden?
- Have you recently made an informal social arrangement or included time in your meetings to develop a relationship between you and the participants?
- Let them handle the agenda recently?
- Given them freedom or control of part of the project recently?
- Made sure that it is possible to engage in a shorter amount of time which makes space for spontaneous young people?
- Provided your participants with regular feedback? About the development of the project, and the output of the participants work and effort in general?

Tools to Support Empowerment and Engagement

In the following chapter we present a list of tools and methods to support youth empowerment and participation. We recommend using those in addition to the above-mentioned questions 'why', 'when', 'whom' and 'why'. These tools and methods should be understood as a guideline and for inspiration. They should not be followed blindly but applied with audience in mind.

There are many different tools for different purposes. Consider how the chosen tool connects to the larger goal of empowerment. Be open about the tool you are using and what output you are hoping for. If it is a matter of co-creation point this out: "Now is the chance for direct influence" however, if you are more interested in just collecting inputs and collect ideas make sure the participants know this, and do not expect e.g. co-creation. We separate between four types of tools:

1. Divergent Tools

Divergent tools help you explore and collect ideas from your participants. These tools are useful for involving young people in the early stages of a project.

Be aware: Do not overstate your participants saying in the final output. The main purpose is to get inputs, be inspired, and get knowledge of what your participants think about a certain theme, however, you cannot promise that their ideas will lead to concrete changes or projects afterwards.

Advantages: Divergent tools help empower in the sense that the participants gain a feeling of being taken seriously, heard, and listened to.

Divergent tools can be helpful in early stages of a project to make sure that your participants support the project or help point the project in a direction supported by the participants.

2. Convergent Tools

Convergent tools help select ideas and are useful for decision-making. Convergent tools are useful if you already have a selection of ideas or options that you want the participants to choose from.

Be aware: If the participants have not been a part of the prior process the options can seem arbitrary or worst-case irrelevant to the participants.

Advantages: Divergent tools help empower in the sense that the participants feel that they have an actual output and saying.

3. Co-creation Tools

Co-creation tools make all participants a part of the final result. Inputs based on co-creation tools can often be implemented directly. In processes of co-creation it is important that the output is co-created and not changed afterwards.

Be aware: If you aim for co-creation be aware of honoring this. In order to co-create the facilitator need to let go of some autonomy and accept whatever input the participants bring to the table. Also make sure that what they co-create seem meaningful and relevant to the participants. Furthermore, co-creation-processes demand a high degree of reflexivity for the facilitator to make all participants contribute.

Advantages: Co-creation tools are useful for empowering the participants and make them feel listen to, involved and like autonomous contributors. The concrete output can also provide a feeling of pride and self-reliability.

4. Tools for Listening

Listening-tools aim to get inputs for further investigations and analysis. The aim here is not necessarily to have the participants formulate concrete ideas or get a direct saying, but rather that the participants are being carefully listened to and asked about relevant topics and themes. Afterwards these inputs are being analysed and interpreted.

Be aware: Of how you communicate. Make sure to meet your participants in eye-height and without prejudgments.

Advantages: Divergent tools help empower in the sense that the participants gain a feeling of being taken seriously, heard, and listened to.

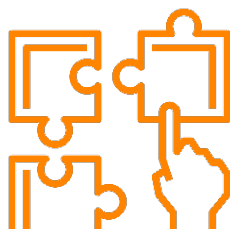
Find a list of concrete tools for youth participation and engagement in the appendix.



**Analysis:
Youth Participation
and Empowerment**

Analysis: Youth Participation and Empowerment

The following analysis is the foundation of the youth empowerment methodology (part one of this paper). This chapter provides an analysis on how to support empowerment and engagement of young people, based on an examination of youth participation and involvement in the Danish city of Sønderborg and the Norwegian city of Narvik. We present some best-practice examples of youth participation and empowerment, but also highlight some of the central obstacles young people and stakeholders mention when asked about youth involvement and provide concrete solutions to these.



Logistics

Making the right choices concerning logistics is crucial when it comes to engaging young people. All the young people we interviewed mentioned the importance of well thought out logistics. If the logistics are not thought out, young people are not able to participate or are inconvenienced every time they do participate.

Timing: While some consultations work better during school hours, it is often necessary to undertake the engagement after school hours or during the weekend. Regular office hours just do not work for most young people since young people generally are in school during that time slot. Furthermore, be aware of holidays and exam periods when planning, since few students will be able to attend in these periods of time. Also take into consideration that different schools have different schedules. The structures on a STX high school and an EUD vocational school is different, and they are busy at different times of the year. Ask the people you want to work with for their schedule and make sure the date or dates fit.

"I have been to some events or meetings that was organised during school time which is just plain stupid. Of course, we cannot join in councils and those sorts of things if we get noted for absence in our obligatory classes" (High School Student).

Getting your absence registered can be a huge frustration when you are both encouraged to and want to be involved in your local community but cannot because of logistics. Therefore, you need to make sure you accommodate the participants' schedules when you plan meetings or contact the school to see if an arrangement can be made.

Location: If there is limited public transportation, make sure the time fits the participants, so they do not have to wait too long to get to or from the location.

Both Sønderborg and Narvik have a greater hinterland, and some young people travel far to get to school or the city center. Try to accommodate and include them by making sure location and timing fits.

"We are an outer area which means that our students sometimes come from far away. If you have a long commute you just want to catch the first bus back to your place, to avoid getting home too late" (Stakeholder, Municipality of Sønderborg).

A question to consider is how locally anchored your project should be. For example: Should you get mini-youth councils instead of a main youth council for your city? A stakeholder in Narvik is worried that the urban aggregation in the Narvik area will keep some young people from the hinterland from participating in meetings held in the city center:

"My hopes are that the Youth Councils continue to be closely connected to their local community. And this could be in danger if young people have to travel to get to the meetings, and it gets centered around Narvik centrum" (Stakeholder, Municipality of Narvik).

A reoccurring issue that young people face is lack of meeting facilities. Some of the more spontaneous and bottom-up youth driven activities often lack a set meeting place, resulting in having to spend time finding a new place every time they want to arrange something. This is both bothersome and time consuming.

"If you could get some help or maybe a place to be, then that would be ideal. It differs a lot where we meet right now because we don't have a fixed meeting place. It would be nice if we had somewhere, we could go and get assistance, where we could also have our meetings" (High School Student and member the Student Climate Council).

In Sønderborg municipality they are building a new youth house which has support among the young citizens of Sønderborg. The house has potential to become a gathering place, where young people can meet and hang out.

“My hope for the new house is that it will become a meeting place for young people with all sorts of interests. Maybe it will also provide a platform for organisations, as a meeting place... But it should also support self organised activities. If the house becomes a success, it should specifically support self organised activities. It is this segment that needs a gathering, a facility, the other organisations already have facilities” (Stakeholder, Municipality of Sønderborg).

It is important when creating a place for ‘youth’ that you remember that ‘youth’ is a catch-all description and does not actually describe the diversity of young people. A youth house has a lot of potential, but it is important that it encompasses all youth and not just a specific segment of young people or the stereotypical understanding of young people. It is vital to keep an open mind and have a dialogue with a lot of different young people to make sure your gathering place accommodate all.

Accessibility: Make sure that there is easy access to your location e.g. with public transportation. Also look for places that are accessible for people with physical impairments or at least communicate if it is not.

Some people feel insecure about new places and around people they do not know. Make it as easy as possible for the participants to join in, e.g. by planning an easy meeting place or by explaining which bus the participants should take. It is also a good idea to share your contact information so you can assist if needed.

Out-of-pocket-expenses: If possible, avoid that the participants have expenses by attending. For example, offer to refund travel expenses and make sure the refund is easy and accessible. Getting money refunded is often a bureaucratic process, which creates frustrations. If it is right after school or during dinnertime provide food for the participants. Some young people may have either a low income or no income and may only be able to participate if suitably compensated. Our interviewees highlight that they can have a hard time concentrating without a snack, especially if they come straight from school.

Resources: Make sure you have the required resources to complete your project. This includes financial resources, competences, and people. The young people we interviewed highlighted how resources like funding provide them with a feeling of having a mandate and being autonomous. E.g. when being asked if they felt like the student council had an actual saying, a high school student and member of the student council answered:

"I definitely feel like we have a saying. We almost always get money when we apply for something. Also, we gain insights in how the school works" (High School Student and member of the Student Council).

In contrast to this quote a member of Narvik youth council tells how their budget was being cut, and that this gave the young people volunteering a sense of not being valued or prioritized by the politicians or the town hall officials. This leads to a lack of empowerment and discourages future engagement.



Time Issues and Output

One of the central issues that was brought up during the individual interviews, the vox pop, and the workshop was time and time management. In modern days, stress is on the rise among young people and especially among students. As one of the young people put it:

"Most people just think about getting through the school day and then get home to relax. (...) There are a lot of pressure already in school... (...) It is really hard to have that extra thing when you are also going to school. I feel it too sometimes... when we are doing a project my schedule is really tight. If it is something you have a passion for you still do it, but that is probably the hardest part" (High School Student and member of the Student Climate Council).

Young people need to do homework, spend time with their family and their friends, and a million other things. When engaging young people, you need to have a dialogue about how much time they can be available for the project, and that dialogue needs to be reoccurring. Young peoples schedule changes a lot, e.g. because of exams and that can cause a lot of stress if they mismanage their time. And sometimes it can be difficult for young people to say 'no' to a project or an assignment.

Therefore, when engaging young people it is important to understand that they have the same number of hours available as everyone else. Furthermore, consider that the stakeholder's participation in a project probably is during work hours and the young people's participation probably is part of their spare time. As a member of the youth council described it:

"That is sometimes the problem. They say "well, here is a project and we want to include young people". If we said "now we want to include the municipality" then the municipality would feel like they had to do something extra... Like "oh wow, do we have to be a part of that? How do we get the resources to do that? How can we finance it?" It is the same with

young people. Now the municipality have an extra assignment and: "wow, do we have to be a part of that?" Some might find it interesting, but you have to consider what the young people actually want. Give us more lax boundaries and support us in what we want to do" (Member of the Youth Council).

Be Respectful of Time and Energy Spend: It is important to be respectful of the time and energy your participants put into the project. When working with volunteers, it can be tempting to try and quickly give them more and more responsibilities. Getting responsibilities creates a sense of empowerment, however, it can also lead to time mismanagement and burnout in the end:

"That is why I consider it a lot before saying yes to anything because I know it can be really stressing and people like me, people who acts like a catalyst and takes responsibility, we can easily burn out. It is simply too much work considering the value I gain from it. No one follows up on your involvement and can take away some of that responsibility down the road, it only increases" (University Student).

When you get the feeling that it is difficult, just being partially involved in something without committing 100% it can make you hesitate when it comes to joining new initiatives. Although it is of great significance to offer the possibility of more responsibilities, do it with respect to the target group and make sure you describe how much more time you expect the added responsibility will take up. And explain that if it is too much responsibility, you will find a solution and help alleviate some of the responsibility.

Make Sure that Your Project is Meaningful and Clear: As the quote above mentions, you need to make sure that your project is meaningful for the participants. The content should be something that matters to young people, or at least the young people involved, or something they believe in and feel like they can influence. Your project is also more likely to be a success if your project or activity has a clear purpose. It should be easy for young people to figure out if they want to get involved or not.

Give Feedback: A way of ensuring a feeling of meaningfulness and empowerment is to give feedback frequently and follow up on your participants. The young people we spoke to asked for a follow up, and to see the concrete results of their work. As one them said:

“When you spend a lot of time on something it is very important that it leads to something” (Member of the Youth Council).

When young people dedicate their spare time to something, it is fundamental that they experience some kind of output. Therefore, you need to remember to give feedback on the results of their hard work. If they end up feeling like they spend a lot of time on something which does not lead to anything, then they might lose their motivation or burn out, due to their increased responsibility and their time put into the project does not match the outcome. The output is vital when working with young people:

“There needs to be a balance between time and energy put into something and then the result. Young people are very result-orientet. We keep considering what to participate in and part of it is also “Okay, so what do I get out of this?” (Member of the Youth Council).

Keep in touch and make sure that you keep your participants informed about the process, including what happens subsequent to the engagement. Young people will be more likely to engage in the future if they understand how their contribution made a difference.

Provide the Participants with Concrete Tools: Another output that was valued by the young people we spoke with was getting practice and experiences with how to present or argue for a case in a professional way. Also, in this case feedback is being valued. Often young people are met with expectations of giving their inputs but remember to also think what you can offer them. E.g. concrete tools or being in charge of a certain project. Providing youth with responsibilities foster a feeling of empowerment and ownership.

A member of Sønderborg Youth Council puts it this way:

“The important thing is to feel like you have a saying. You want to have that feeling, that it matters that you are there and can contribute. Secondary, it is also a learning process, and it is nice to discuss some matters, and learn techniques or rhetorical ways to argue your viewpoints” (High School Student and member of the Youth Council).

The output is important for young people, but the process is just as important. Young people want to learn new skills, so consider what skills you can help develop. Ask what the participant hopes to get out of their engagement and discuss how you can support that.

Ensuring that young people have the skills to undertake the activity or will be trained in the required skills is also crucial, so they do not feel overwhelmed and disconnected by the project.

Community: Having a community connected to your participation was one of the aspects that was rated the highest when asked in interviews, vox pop, and the workshop. It is one of the primary and most important reasons that young people choose to remain involved. It is important to support this community. For some young people, their primary social life is found through the projects they engage in, and others need help balancing their time between being engaged in a project and in other social arenas.

“There is also this social aspect. The student council and other organisations are like communities. And then after a meeting we have a beer together or something” (High School Student and member of the Student Council).

Factor in time for a bit of fun and socializing too. When your arrangement is complete remember to appreciate and highlight what you got out of it. Being thankful and articulating why their inputs were valuable is another way of making the contribution meaningful for the participants. This will support developing meaningful and long-lasting relationships. Networking is important both for younger people and older generations and your facilitation should support this. Good relations also foster more communication, and communication is key in a good collaboration process.

Avoid Bureaucracy: As a young volunteer it can be frustrating when even small things must be approved by the administration and it can feel like unnecessary bureaucracy. As a member of the youth council described it:

“I feel frustrated with how much the administration is participating in everything. Of course, it is their money so they have a stake in how they are used, but right now everything has to be ratified by the administration, the entire administration, before you can just get an ‘okay’ even if sometimes the issue is just getting another stack of papers” (High School Student, member of the Student Council and the Youth Council).

Bureaucracies make young people feel like they have limited influence which might cause them to lose their passion for volunteer work. Meaningful participation is based on mutual trust and a partnership approach. The young people are not going to keep volunteering if they feel frustrated and often the process can be more fluid if they feel empowered to make the decisions themselves.

“I think that a lot of young people feel like everything in the municipality takes a lot of time. And if there is one thing people don’t have, it is time. This is especially true when it comes to young people. We are used to being very changeable and do everything

quickly. We can't even plan a week ahead because what if something even more interesting present itself? (...) so, if you receive an idea from a young person then you better strike immediately" (Member of the Youth Council).

We advise for quick workflows, and to catch the momentum when it comes to support of youth involvement and empowerment. There are some prejudices about especially municipality and townhall-bureaucracies which need to be addressed in order to change these.

"I'm having trouble scheduling too much. Like, pop-up events really work for me. I'm quite spontaneous so even during an event, things can change if I suddenly get a new idea. It works well for me; however, I do like to work with people who might have a bit more control over the process" (High School Student and member of Student Climate Council).

When understanding engagement, it is important to realize that a lot of young people are finding it difficult planning the future and their engagement is of a more spontaneous sort. A lot of the young people we spoke to explained how they preferred to work on a project for a shorter period:

"Sometimes I like to just work like crazy on something. Other projects I work on for a couple of months, but then my energy and engagement becomes more low-key. If the project last much longer my drive kind of dies and I lose my motivation" (High School Student and member of Student Climate Council).

Accommodate that some people have a difficult time committing over a long period of time due to different factors. Young people are in a phase of life where they are still forming their identity and get introduced to new things constantly. They also have to make a lot of important life choices e.g. future education and work. Furthermore, young people have a lot of obligations to school, work, friends, family and so on. By letting people participate over a shorter period of time you can accommodate more temporary forms of engagement. You can also apply a flexible framework approach, so that participants can sometimes spend less time or put in a smaller effort that fit their schedule and other obligations, and at other times put in more time and effort.



Reaching Young People

Ask Yourself What Makes More Sense: If you need inputs from a representative sample of young people, school classes can be a good way to go, but if you want to engage young people as volunteers the recruitment process is often more difficult.

One of our stakeholders explained:

“The easy thing is to go to the schools and ask the young people there what they think about a certain theme. The hard part is to make them give their input in their spare time”
(Stakeholder, Municipality of Sønderborg).

School Classes: There is some potential to recruit through the school system. It is an “easy way” of reaching many young people, and if you arrange with the headmaster or a teacher you can sometimes make your workshop or talk as a part of the class.

Furthermore, we find that there is a potential for better representation when engaging through schoolclasses. By recruiting through schoolclasses, you can gain insight from young people who would not otherwise contribute to the agenda or be heard. One of our interviewees reflects:

“I think everyone need to get introduced to engagement somehow. It should be formed early on in your upbringing or early school days” (Member of the Youth Council).

However, be respectful of the teacher’s time, as they are often busy, and get a lot of requests for people who wish to reach their students. Our recommendation is to reach out, but keep in mind that some school periods are busier than others.

Reaching Volunteers: As a ground rule, you should communicate where young people are. Set up a meeting using a gatekeeper and meet up in person. Often face-to-face meetings provide a better way of reaching young people as you can direct your message directly to the one you are talking to, and exchange contact informations on the spot if the person is interested. The people we spoke with highlighted the relational and personal aspect of recruitment.

It is also an option to recruit young people through organisations. This is a good platform to reach people with a certain agenda or interest. Find an organization that supports your project or idea and reach out.

Use Your Network and Friends: Your project turns out better if you have a good collaboration with others. Think of people in your own network, who you would like to work together with and who could support your project.

“In general, find other people to collab with who share your interest. Maybe you have an idea for a new boardgame-café, then you need to find others who share your enthusiasm for boardgames” (High School Student).

Social media has made it easier to connect and plan. Keep an open environment and let people do what they wish to do.

“Just figure out what people like to do and are good at. I use my friends for all sorts of stuff. One makes posters, one is more of a talker like me...” (Volunteer at different pop-up events and member of Student Climate Council).

Peer-to-Peer: The idea that young people are the best candidates when it comes to reaching and recruiting young people is often promoted. Peer-to-peer approaches do have a great potential for empowering young people due to identification factors. However, this should not be the default-setting, as young people often experience frustrations when it comes to recruiting others:

“There were some of the other students who were really critical when we came... They are not always very open minded (...). It is really difficult for us reaching everyone” (High School Student and Member of a Climate Council).

While young people have an easier time reaching other young people it is not always easy for them to make other young people listen. Therefore, you should match expectations with your participants about how they feel about different tasks, including recruiting-processes. Support flexible and varying ways of engagement and discuss with the young people you work with if they would prefer reaching and presenting material for young people themselves or if they would prefer a stakeholder to accompany them.

Incentives: Sometimes, it can feel hard as a stakeholder recruiting young people. The young people we spoke to believe that incentives work. However, be aware not to overdo it. It can create a feeling of not being taken seriously if it seems like you think people only shows up for the offered incentives. Also, people who do not have the motivation for participating except for the goodies can be annoying for the ones who actually shows up because of the case. Find a good balance and think of how you communicate the incentives.

One of our interviewees who is a part of his student council at the highschool explains how incentives “lured him” in to the council:

“I was in doubt whether I should join the student council (because I felt like it was a waste of time in primary school), but then they lured me in with cake at the first meeting here at school, and I thought to myself: Okay, I’m gonna see how it is here”, and then I have been a part of the council ever since” (High School Student and member of the Student Council).

Even though incentives like food can lure some, we suggest recruiting by letting potential participants know what they can gain by joining. Be clear about what the potential gains are: Project output, personal output, network and community and/or maybe new skills.



Communication

Avoid Adultism: Adultism is prejudice and discrimination against someone simply because they are young. Young people are often being ridiculed based on their age by either being seen as less capable, less intelligent, less insightful, less valuable, and less able to participate in decisions that impacts them. Most of the young people we spoke to described how they felt frustrated being called children, boys or girls, and that their input was neglected simply based on their age. As one of the young people put it:

“Don’t judge me on my age, judge me on my words and actions” (Member of the Youth Council).

In one end of the scale of not taking young people seriously there is the “adultery”, where young people feel overheard or are being cut off:

“Listen to what we say instead of cutting us off as “childish” and “unknowledgeble” (Member of the Youth Council).

No matter your age, when you spend time on something you want to see the output of your struggles. It is not enough to include young people in e.g. boards, but you have to find a meaningful way of including everyone in the board – no matter what age – in the decision making process. Therefore, make sure initiatives and contributions of young people are being taken seriously. Accept that mistakes might be made, and engagement may bring mixed results.

At the other end of the scale of adultism we have the over-excitement about having young people participating which leads to an overly positive or recognizing attitude that also make young people feel like they can say anything, and the crowd will cheer:

“I don’t need a standing ovation, I need you to listen” (Member of the Youth Council).

It is important that you do not end in either end of the scale. Find the middleground and take the contributions of young people serious. Listen and care about the arguments and not the personality or age. The quality of listening is not to be underestimated. Recognising and valuing the contributions of young people as members of your community is an integral part of developing respectful and insightful engagement with young people.

Be Genuine and in Eyesight: When communicating it is key that you are genuine and in eyesight. You should treat young people as equals, and show that you appreciate their inputs, knowledge, and experiences. Take a partnership approach where young people are equal partners to the other stakeholders. A partnership approach provides participants with a feeling of ownership, empowerment and motivation for further participation. However, do not try too hard to be catchy or 'young-ish' in your style of communication if you are not in fact young. It only makes the communication seem forced, condescending, or ridiculous.

Be Supportive: Lack of support can lead to a lack of connection to the activity, this can occur at different levels - if young people are not supported as individuals and members of the group, they will be less likely to connect to the activity or spend time investing in follow-up activities. If young people are not supported to undertake activities, they may not be enabled to participate.

Be Inclusive: Be aware not to communicate in an exclusive manner: The first thing our workshop participants mentioned when discussing how to communicate was the importance of keeping it simple:

"Make it simple. You shouldn't need a higher education to participate and understand"
(High School Student and member of the Youth Council).

To support empowerment of young people, your main job is to assist the participants in understanding the process, their level of influence, and their responsibilities. Good communication includes checking that you understand and that you have been understood by your participants. You need to understand that young people are not all the same, so ways of communication depend on who you want to engage. If your speech is too pretentious you might end up making your audience feel inadequate and worst case, you might scare them away. Avoid jargon and acronyms (unless you provide a list of what they mean).

Also be aware that certain words or phrasings can alienate some people from your project. E.g., are some young people refraining themselves from becoming a member of a board as they have certain connotations with the concept of a 'board'. To get around this you should try to phrase the content of the task or project as concrete as possible to avoid alienation. What might seem like common-knowledge to one person is not necessarily that for another one.

Be Concrete and Articulate the Greater Goal: In general, all the young people we spoke with shared that "articulated directions" are useful. With this term we mean: Be concrete, precise, and articulate the greater goal of the project or the gathering, so everyone is on the same page when it come to the expected output.

"Our experience shows that we should present young people to things and tasks in a concrete way, and thereby little by little give young people an insight in what it means to be a part of a board or an organization" (Stakeholder, Municipality of Sønderborg).

Listen: You need to know who you are working with. Do not make assumptions about the participants. Assumptions can have a negative impact on participation and on the relationships within. Avoid making assumptions about their personal life, interests or how much time young people have available. It is better to get to know young people and find out who they are, and what is important to them.

What motivates young people - just like all other age groups - is very different. Know who you are talking to in order to motivate and support their participation. Some people prefer concrete tasks and frameworks, whereas others prefer more loose approaches and likes to be consulted in the early stages of a project. If you are in doubt, ask how the participants prefer the facilitation - or if they want to take over completely.

As a facilitator, it can be hard to know how much you should prepare before and how much you should let the participants influence the agenda.

"When we have student council meetings it is mostly the teachers who set the agenda. Most of the time, we are just invited to participate, speak our mind about their suggestions, and then they invite you to do something with the ideas. The agenda is always set beforehand, so we don't really do anything" (High School Student, member of the Student Council and the Youth Council).

In this case, the students felt like they had no saying or autonomy on what is on the agenda. They described how this did not make them feel empowered. In this case the top-down facilitation made the students feel like the project did not concern them and that it was the administration who was making all the decisions in the end.

A member of the Sønderborg Youth Council described exactly why it is important to co-create:

"If you are a part of the project you show up and take on a bigger responsibility" (Member of the Youth Council)

However, he also describes how he had positive experiences with a quite controlled top-down managed involvement as well.

"Sometimes it makes sense to be included later in the process of a project. E.g., Sønderborg Youth Council helped choose how the new Youth House should look. We had two drawings to choose from. I think it was a nice and very concrete way of being included" (High School Student and member of Youth Council).

How to include and involve is a matter of the project and the person/people you want to engage.

"Accept and understand that the youth is just as diverse as "grown ups" (High School Student and member of the Youth Council).

Remember to listen to the participants, and ask them how they prefer to get feedback, what they hope to get out of the project, and what tasks they want you to support more, if any.

Where to Communicate: The best way to communicate details or simply give a reminder is to send an sms-text. Texts are simple and efficient. Do not email, as many young people rarely check their mails. Meet up in person or reach out to a contact person e.g. a teacher. Digital platforms have some potential; however, young people use a lot of different digital platforms and receive a lot of spam on said platforms. The young people we spoke to think the analogue way, or texts are more effective.

Print out material instead of sharing it digitally and discuss with the young people which digital platforms to use, if any, to coordinate in the future. As one of the young people said:

"We have a facebook-group which I guess you could use to find the leader of the project. However, I don't think it is that easy to find online. Maybe we should be a little bit easier to

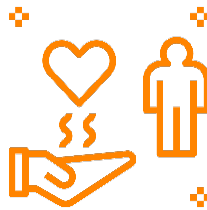
find, but I'm not sure how. Most of the time, going through the school is the easiest way"
(High School Student and member of the Student Climate Council).

And another one supplemented by saying:

"I think texts are better because people actually see those. Too much is happening on Facebook. When you receive a text, it is either your mom, your grandmothers, or the youth coordinator (laughs)" (Member of the Student Council).

There is a lot of noise on social media, because everyone believes that this is the ideal place to catch the attention of young people. The texting media has become obsolete for most people, which makes it a perfect place to contact young people because you will not be fighting for the attention of young people here.

Tip: There are many different tools for youth empowerment and participation. Different purposes often need different approaches or tools, whether it be co-creation, getting inputs or inspiration. Be open about the tool you are using and what output you are hoping for. If it is a matter of co-creation point this out: "Now is the chance for direct influence", however, if you are more interested in just collecting inputs and collect ideas make sure the participants know this, and do not expect e.g co-creation. We differentiate between four types of tools, and you can find the list in the back of this methodology. We also provide a list of concrete tools that you can look into if you need inspiration for empowering and engaging young people. Please note that the list is not a comprehensive list of all tools available, rather we urge you to search the internet for more tools, or develop your own method or approach for your project.



Outro

Engaging youth is important. Their voices are far too often forgotten when it comes to developing policies:

"We see young people as equals with all other citizens. But when it comes to public meetings then it is 'the grey gold' who participate and not the youth. So we need to do something extra to make sure the youth's voice is part of the equation" (Stakeholder, Municipality of Sønderborg).

Youth are the citizens of the future and an important part of every democracy. But becoming an active democratic citizen is not a skill you are born with, it is a skill you learn in practice. Young people can contribute a lot and they often bring a new energy and passion to projects. We hope we have inspired you to involve young people in your projects and given you some concrete and hands on tools for how to do so in practice.



Our Approach

Our Approach

This report focuses on how youth participation and empowerment can be supported. Drawing on a qualitative approach we aim to explore: 1) How some young people understand the concept of empowerment and participation. 2) What frustrations and possibilities do young people experience when it come to their participation.

The empirical foundation for the Youth Empowerment Methodology consists of 24 individual interviews with both youth and stakeholders from the municipalities of Sønderborg and Narvik. Furthermore, we have conducted a workshop with youth from both cities participating and 10 Vox pop interviews with students from Sønderborg Statskole. Both stakeholders and our young participants remain anonymous to get as unfiltered statements as possible.

In the following we present our cases and methodological approach and outline the keyterms for this methodology.

Cases: Sønderborg and Narvik

Sønderborg in Denmark is our main field of research, while Narvik in Norway functions as the secondary field of research. There are several cultural similarities between the cities, and both cities have ambitious plans for future growth, and urban development. The municipalities share an interest and a commitment in engaging and empowering young people.

Sønderborg and Narvik are both small- to middlesized cities. Sønderborg area covers about 500 km², whereas Narvik covers about 2.000 km². Both cities have a greater hinterland and spends a lot of time travelling to school and to the city center. Narvik is about to surpass urban aggregation with some smaller cities, which means that the area of Narvik and its surrounding hinterland will soon get even bigger.

Both cities offer several leisure activities for young people, E.g. sports facilities or membership of an organisation, youth club, etc. Sønderborg also have a new "House for Youth Activities" scheduled. Narvik, as well, has a number of activities for young people, however, one of the interviewd stakeholders said:

"There are options for sure. But I think there could be more public places to hang out, to provide an actual alternative to the mall" (Stakeholder, Municipality of Narvik).

Both cities have active youth councils, consisting of 16 young people in Sønderborg, and 13 in Narvik. The youth council in Sønderborg has existed since 2015, and in Narvik since 2016, however the Youth Council has not been active for the entire period of time. The youth councils are for young people who wants to be engaged and having a saying in the development of their local community. In Sønderborg much coordination and planning is anchored with one fulltime employee in the municipality who is the "go to" when you want to involve young people. In Narvik they have a part time employee who works actively in involving the youth council. However, 20 % of a workweek is not enough time for both engaging, supporting and following up on youth projects.

Both cities have several options for education. E.g. high schools, vocational education and a university. Though, both cities have several options for further education they face some difficulties attracting and convincing young people to stay. Often specific wishes for education and work attract young people to bigger cities as they grow older. This is a common issue for small- and middlesized cities, as they generally speaking do not have as many options and activities for young people as the bigger cities have.

This creates certain challenges for youth driven initiatives in two ways. The first challenge is a lack of motivation when it comes to putting energy into a project you are leaving within a foreseeable future, and the second challenge is that existing youth driven initiatives are forced to find replacements when people move away and those lack the existing volunteer's network:

"(...) so, this is some kind of collaboration and is 100% driven by me. But the moment I leave then there is nothing to continue it. There doesn't exist a format for it right now "
(University Student).

Obstacles connected to people only being a part of a project for a limited number of time, however, are present in many youth driven initiatives in bigger cities as well. Youth engagement and participation often takes form of pop-up-engagement and time-limited activities. As one of the young people put it:

"I would like to keep living here. It has a lot to do with my involvement in the city. The city has been very open regarding me being part of projects related to the municipality. What I like about this city is that I can see where I can make a difference and be part of that

difference. It is very important to be able to be invited to meetings and see what happens. Understand what is going on in your city. I have also created network and is part of a strong community here in the city” (University Student).

Being engaged in their local community might encourage young people to return to or settle in the city because they have a special affiliation and network from when they grew up. Therefore, supporting participation can lead to young people returning to the city, however, creating a more democratic local community with active citizens should be enough of a goal.

Interviews

We have conducted qualitative individual interviews with 12 young people from Sønderborg and Narvik, and 11 stakeholders from the two cities.

During the interviews, we practiced a respectful, open and acknowledging approach. It has been important for us to create a space where everyone involved felt safe, comfortable and were able to talk freely.

Young People from Sønderborg and Narvik

Our empirical data consists of qualitative interviews with young people aged 15-25 years from Sønderborg and Narvik. Our primary focus has been youth aged 15-20, and less so the young people between 21 and 25 years. This means that our primary target group are young people who probably did not move away from home or graduated yet.

We conducted both individual- and group interviews with members of the Youth Council of Sønderborg and the Youth Council of Narvik. Furthermore, we spoke to several students with different educational backgrounds to consider how different young people highlight different approaches to engagement. We have conducted interviews with both high school students at STX (highschool), EUD (vocational education) in Sønderborg, and with a student at SDU (university) in Sønderborg. Most of the young people we interviewed are already participating in several activities, providing them with a lot of hands-on knowledge that gives us a nuanced and detailed insight into when young people feel engaged and empowered.

The interviews provided us with insights on questions such as:

- How youth are engaged in their local society
- What challenges they face when participating in projects
- How to communicate with youth
- What narratives engage youth

Local Stakeholders from Sønderborg and Narvik

With stakeholders we refer to people who work for institutions, organisations or companies who take an interest in youth empowerment and youth participation, and who can help shed light on the issue. Our primary focus has been townhall officials, and secondary stakeholders working with young people, e.g. individuals working within the educational system or organisations. These interviews provided us with empirical knowledge about experiences with involvement and engagement of youth in Sønderborg and Narvik, and what obstacles they face in doing so:

- How they currently involve youth in urban development projects
- How the "experienced generation" interact and communicate with youth
- In what degree they wish to involve youth and how they give responsibility to youth
- Challenges and possibilities in youth involvement

Vox Pop

We have conducted 10 vox pop-interviews with students at Sønderborg Statskole. Vox pops are short and informal individual interviews that are not scheduled in advance. The strength of vox pop is that it collects inputs from different people in a short period of time. Longer individual interviews have the risk of ruling out a young people who is not already participating in a number of activities such as being a part of the Youth Council, young people who are spontaneous in their planning and have a hard time scheduling, or simply students who does not have a lot of spare time. Vox pops accommodate these young people and help us shed light on how different high school students think of their ability to create change. During the vox pop we asked the following questions: 1) Are you volunteering in anything? 2) Why? / Why not? 3) Have you thought about something you would like to change? How would you do it?

Workshop

As part of the meeting for the Attractive Nordic Towns project we facilitated a workshop for 4 people from Sønderborg's and 2 people from Narvik's Youth Council. During the workshop we discussed the best parts about being young, how they understood the term empowerment, how being empowered feels, and what achievements the participants were proud of.

Second half of the workshop dealt with common obstacles for youth participation and empowerment described by the participants. We reflected upon how to support and increase empowerment and participation for young people. This part of the workshop was structured around the creation of a board game which acted as the conduit for knowledge generation. The game board and post-its was brought by us, the facilitators, and was filled out by the participants. You can find the result of the game creation in the back of this paper.

Key Concepts

In the following chapter we elaborate on the key concepts used in this project: Participation and empowerment.

Participation

Participation can be described as: *“The process of sharing decisions which affect one’s life and the life of the community in which one lives. It is the means by which a democracy is built, and it is a standard against which democracies should be measured”*².

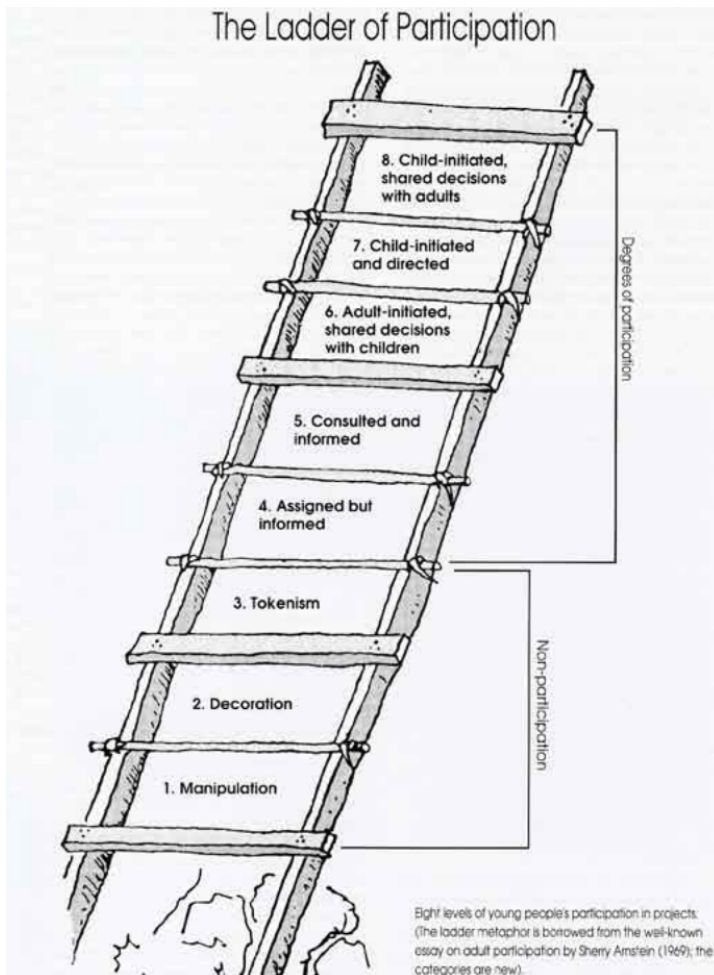
It also *“(…) enables the various political, social, religious and ethnic groups to participate in the decision-making that will affect them”*³.

In 1992 sociologist Roger A. Hart made a guide to youth involvement published by unicef. The ladder below is a visualization of youth participation. The three first steps are forms of non-participation, where young people are included in a project, but do not really have an actual saying. The rest of the steps show varying degrees of youth participation where the higher you get the more influential are the young people².

² Hart, Roger A. (1992): *“Children’s Participation – From Tokenism to Citizenship*. Unicef. Innocenti Essays no. 4

³ Sweco (2018): *Attractive and Sustainable Nordic Towns and Regions*. Link:

https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/8790c63ddb804757b5c556876ae2f73f/indicators_toolbox_attractive_nordic_towns_sweco.pdf



Shared decision-making is the top three steps of the ladder. Hart believed that in order to create citizens of the future you had to engage young people from when they were young and let them share in decision-making.

The middle steps are **consulted/assigned** but/and informed. Here young people understand the point of the project and are either consulted or simply has a meaningful role.

Tokenism describes the instance where young people are part of a project but have no real opportunities to affect anything. They are a symbol and nothing more.

Decorations and **manipulation** are the lowest steps. Here young people are not informed enough to make real decisions about anything, and they only act as figureheads.

Participation in local communities is essential in creating a democratic society where citizens feel empowered and have a sense of ownership in the local community. As Hart argues: *“Children need to be involved in meaningful projects with adults. It is unrealistic to expect them suddenly to become responsible, participating adult citizens at the age of 16, 18 or 21 without prior exposure to the skills and responsibilities involved. An understanding of democratic participation and the confidence and competence to participate can only be acquired gradually through practice; it cannot be taught as an abstraction”*⁴. Participating and learning how to participate in practice is important to create citizens of the future.

⁴ Hart, Roger A. (1992): *“Children’s Participation – From Tokenism to Citizenship*. Unicef. Innocenti Essays no. 4

Empowerment

Empowerment is a process and a feeling where the included or participating individuals both are and feel equal and as real contributors. When individuals are empowered, they are more likely to make positive differences to their own lives and to the area in which they live. A key indicator of empowerment is the extent to which people feel they can influence decisions affecting themselves and their local area. It is not something which can be created easily rather it is a question of creating an empowering culture where the individual feels stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one owns life which also enhances and empowers the community.

During our workshop we asked our participants what empowerment meant for them. The participants highlighted factors like:

- Selfworth
- Being listened to and heard
- Community
- Being taken seriously
- Being seen as an equal

Furthermore, the participants pointed out the distinction between being included, and maybe listened to, and having an actual saying. The latter creates a stronger sense of empowerment as having an actual saying provides them with a feeling of autonomy and self-reliance.



Appendix: Concrete Tools

Appendix: List of Concrete Tools

In the following chapter concrete tools to youth engagement will be presented. These tools and methods should be understood as a guideline and for inspiration. They should not be followed blindly but applied with audience in mind.

Please note that the list is not a comprehensive list of all tools and methods available, rather we urge you to search the internet for more tools or develop your own method or approach for your project.

Interviews

Most interviews take form of semi-structured individual interviews where the conversation is based on a guide which has been developed in advance. However, it is important to only loosely stick to the guide and be willing to listen and be interested in what the interviewee is presenting. The goal of this method is to get an insight of the interviewee's everyday life and can help developing a deeper insight on a certain problem-area.

Vox-pop Interviews

The vox-pop interviews are short interviews (often 3-5 questions) with interviewees that have not been selected prior to the vox-pop. The strength of this method is to gather information from a lot of different sources and from a lot of different places to provide you with a more nuanced insight in to whatever you are researching. The weakness is that the information you gather is very limited because of the short time span.

Focus Groups

A focus group is a sort of group interview, however, instead of an interviewer there will be a facilitator who sets the scene, but only asks questions when needed. The goal is for the participants to take lead on the discussions. The goal is to gain knowledge from the group conversation, -interactions and -dynamics, e.g. what topics or ideas the group debate, and which topics or ideas are consensus based.

Surveys

A series of questionnaires which collect data on a certain topic. Widely used and an effective strategy of gathering a lot of inputs quickly.

Future Workshops

Future workshops are a way of structuring group work. It places the participants experiences and their wishes for the future in centrum. This method is useful when planning for changes e.g. in local community or in a workplace. The method has three steps:

- In the first step the participants identify problems. It is a phase where critique is in centrum and you highlight all the negative.
- The following phase is the utopia-phase. In this phase the participants describe their wishes for the future and what e.g. their local community *ideally* look like. No wishes or ideas are too far-fetched!
- The final phase is the reality phase. Here you describe how to make the fantasies and wishes for the future real and anchor them in concrete projects.

Social Laboratories

In a social laboratory a diverse team of people with different backgrounds and competences are put together to discuss complex issues that need a holistic approach. The team identifies the issue, and then develops and test out solutions.

Featured Article Relay

A competition in the local daily press where young people are invited to write debate articles about whatever topic relevant for your project.

Speeches

Creating a platform where young people give speeches about something that is on their mind relating to your project. The workshop participants suggested that young people are invited to throw speeches at the Town Hall in the City Council. This might contribute to make young people feel included, empowered, and reduce the distance between the authorities and young people.

Study Trips

The young people from our workshop suggested that schools went on study trips to the municipality. Again, this might help reduce the distance between authorities and young people. In general, inviting participants to certain areas, organisations, or physical sites connected to your project strengthens the participants' understanding of your project.

Art and City Installations

Let young people express themselves through art or other creative forms of expressing ideas. Put up physical interactive city installations e.g. by the city hall and invite young people to share

their inputs about a certain topic. However, be sure that the installations are well thought through: What is the main goal with the installation? Does it need to be facilitated or does it speak for itself? Should the installation itself be made by young people?

Digital Platforms

Digital platforms such as social media have a great potential as almost every young person uses some sort of digital platform already. However, it is not an easy fix. Several of the young people we interviewed critique an over-use of Facebook as a main platform for communication. You need to have good reasons to use social media as a platform of communication, and if the goal is to have an active group it needs a lot of maintaining and groundwork.

Online Community

A forum where young people can gather and provide inputs on certain issues. However, be aware that if you want to present a new platform to a group of young people it can be difficult to make this platform a part of their everyday online routines. On the internet the information flow and eye-catch are intense, and the competition is tough. So, make sure you do not use digital platforms as an easy fix because you think 'that is where the young people are present'.

Voting or Digital Voting

Voting on social medias, a website or an idea-app where young people can pick the ideas, they like the most in regard to different ideas. It can also be through SMS/text consultation. It is also a way you can see if there is support for your idea: Get more people to stand up for the case and prove how many supports this by signatures or by more creative ways or means.

Young Ambassadors, Youth Councils and/or Citizen's Jury

Young ambassadors or youth councils often consist of a formal group of young people who are able to influence decision processes within the municipality. These councils work varies a lot and the young people act both as facilitators of social events and as political councilors. You can also let a random selection of young people consider and make decisions on a certain topic. This is called citizens' jury.

Youth Secretaries

Youth secretaries are units with a budget to initiate and support projects. They have autonomy in realizing goals in regard to a certain issue.

Dogmas

Dogmas are a set of rules and principles which need to be fulfilled. Depending on the context some projects can benefit from having some clearly defined values to help you phrase your project. It can be regarded as a check list to help decide which initiatives or decisions to prioritize.

