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**Just the Sprinkles on Top: Understanding children and
young people's participation in urban planning**

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Background and rational

This study set out to respond to the aim of analysing how on-going city-wide participatory planning tools designed to gather information about children's preferences and needs impact the decision making and design of a city. To do so, it answered research questions about the ways in which children and young people's inputs in participation are gathered and used and about the ways in which participatory methods are educational.

Methods

Data was collected in relation to six units of analysis within a single case study site. The case study site was Oslo, Norway and the units of analysis were each methods of children and young people's participation. This study involved 40 semi-structured interviews with youth council members, youth council secretaries, children's representatives, urban planners, teachers, urban designers, project coordinators, and architects from a geographical spread across Oslo. This data was triangulated with observations of a public space transformation involving small groups of local children and young people, and with textual analysis of print and digital materials such as participation reports, participation heatmaps, leaflets from neighbourhood transformation projects, as well as guideline and policy documents about children's participation in Norway.

Results

The findings chapters are thematically presented, drawing on data from all the units of analysis and referencing frameworks for measuring children and young people's participation - specifically Hart's Ladder of Children's Participation (1992) and The Council of Europe Handbook on Children's Participation. The first findings chapter begins to tell the story of children and young people's

participation from the perspective of young participants. It describes the conditions in which they participate and identifies signs of nonparticipation. The second findings chapter turns towards adult facilitators of participation, to present and discuss their experiences and additional signs on nonparticipation. The third findings chapter focuses on the translation process that adult facilitators engage in to make planning comprehensible to children and young people and to make children and young people's inputs accessible to planners. The final findings chapter examines the planning system in order to identify how the structures and mechanisms of planning allow and prevent participation with children and young people.

Conclusions

This thesis argues that there is a mismatch between the Norwegian state's evident commitment to children and young people's participation in planning and the delivery of meaningful participation with children and young people. It does not condemn anyone in particular, but rather observes (and offers recommendations) related to several critical logistical problems that are lessening the effectiveness and ethicality of participation with children and young people in Oslo. At the same time, it points out the reality of systematic barriers that exist because of the planning system which block the full realisation of the method and laws that Norway has created to strengthen children's rights and increase and enhance participation with children and young people in urban planning.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Printed Name: Taylor Sawyer

Signature:

Abbreviations

MLGM	Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation
MMP	Municipal Master Plan
PBE	<i>Plan, bygg og eiendom</i> [Planning and building Agency of Oslo Municipality]
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VPOR	<i>Veiledende planer for offentlige rom</i> [Guidance Plan for Public Space]

Chapter 1. Introduction: Children on Parade

1.1 Norway's National Day and the Beloved Children's Parade

Every year on the 17th of May, cities and towns around Norway celebrate their national day - *syttende mai*, formally called *grunnlovsdag* (Constitution Day) and sometimes also called *barnas dag* (children's day) - by gathering together for their local children's parade. The first children's parade took place in Oslo - then known as Kristiana - in 1890 under the initiative of one of Norway's most famous poets and cultural figures, Bjørnstærn Bjørnson and his friend the schoolmaster Peter Qvam. In that first year around 1.200 boys paraded up to the Royal Palace and sang before the palace balcony. In Oslo today, the children's parade treks through the city and culminates at the Royal Palace where the king and queen greet the children. Children, parents, and spectators wear their finest clothing, or their *bunad* (national costume), wave flags, and sing national songs (Kolstø 2006). *Syttende mai* is Norway's largest public and most emotional yearly celebration that draws "a majority of the population, including immigrants" (Buxrud & Fangen 2017, p. 770). The national news broadcaster NRK has reported in 2016 and 2017 that approximately 60.000 children from around 120 schools participated in the parade.



Figure 1-1 Image of children's parade
Children, some dressed in bunad the national costume with colours and design varying based on region of origin, at the barnetog in Halden (Credit: "17, mai i Halden" by jechstra is licensed under Creative Commons CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Norway's *syttende mai* is known for being unique among countries that celebrate a national day because rather than placing the military on display, or commemorating past battles and lost soldiers, it places children and childhood visibly at the centre (Tønnesson & Sivesind 2016;

Buxrud & Fangen 2017). It follows that children and childhood are fundamental aspects of Norwegian nationalism (Gullestad 1997), being viewed throughout the 1900s and still today as symbols of progress, hope, and promise for the future, essential to the reproduction of Norway's social democracy and local communities (Kjørholt 2002). While syttende mai is the liveliest example of children's role in the national imagination, one need not look far to find additional manifestations of it in policy and governance.

Along with its Nordic neighbours, Norway has a reputation for strong children's rights policies. Norway was notably the first country in the world to appoint a Children's Ombudsman in 1981 (Ministry of Children and Equality 2016). All Nordic countries were early signers on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in the early 1990s. Norway routinely ranks highly on international and European indexes of children's rights, which examine themes like health, protection, education, environment, and policy. For example, Norway ranked 7 out of 180 in Save the Children's *Global Childhood Report 2020*, 2 out of 31 in UNICEF's *Are the world's richest countries family friendly? 2019*, and 14 out of 182 in the KidsRights Index 2020.

Children in Nordic countries today generally have quite active, independent lifestyle (Mårtensson & Nordström 2017) and tend to be competent navigators of their city/town from a young age, with a high level of autonomy for example, it is not atypical for Nordic children to have a high level of independence and freedom, with children as young as nine or ten being allowed to venture out to community centres, cinemas, swimming pools, libraries, etc., on their own (Wilhjelm 2002). This level of independence and freedom which children and young people enjoy has been attributed to earlier planning systems which valued child-friendly cities and viewed children as competent actors, in addition to the incorporation of legal requirement in the 1970s and 1980s which mandated that children be consulted, or be considered in some form, when they were evidently going to be directly impacted by planning (Mårtensson & Nordström 2017).

That said, these strong welfare states have resulted in “highly institutionalized” childhoods and a high number of what Lefebvre would call “technocratic” spaces, or spaces which are tightly controlled by a group of elites with a particular expertise (Christensen & Mikkelsen 2013, p. 199) and Nordic countries’ longstanding democratic welfare models are experiencing pressure from increasing individualization and neoliberalism - there are now questions about levels of taxation, private schools, and regulations with regard to education and child care systems (Lund 2011, p. 149). While children and young people today are still benefiting from child-friendly city planning attitudes, social and economic shifts have been pushing planning priorities and changed power structures such that what might have become a robust model of participation with children and young people in planning is somewhat paralysed.

Norway is “part of a worldwide trend towards market-oriented planning in which market actors are increasingly the principal actors in urban development” (Falleth & Saglie 2011, p. 59). While Norwegian planning processes are similar to that of Sweden, Denmark, and Germany, the public planning administrations in these countries maintain much more authority and/or write most of the land-use plans themselves (Falleth & Nordahl 2017; Fiskaa 2005; Hofstad 2013). In recent years, more than 80% of planning projects in Oslo, and in other municipalities, have been proposals from private developers (Falleth et al. 2008; Andersen & Skrede 2017; Statistics Norway 2018). According to Hanssen & Falleth, who have written extensively on the Norwegian planning system during the last decade, “as one of a very few countries, Norway has formally given developers the opportunity to take a planning initiative and have the responsibility to formulate a plan” (2014, p. 420).

These changes have weakened the role of participation in planning. In recent analyses of participation in Norwegian planning, research illustrates that participation is often done to comply with legal requirements and to avoid conflicts more than with the with that citizens offer valuable opinions and ideas (Plöger 2001; Fiskaa 2005). Increased market-driven planning has also led to a decrease in creativity and inclusion (Nyseth 2011) and a new hegemonic thinking

around what makes an attractive place (Lysgård & Cruickshank 2012; Røe 2014). Within this, children and young people are viewed a resource needed to enact planning aims more than as competent actors in the planning system (Kjørholt 2002).

Returning to Bjørnsterne Bjørnson, the inventor of Norway's beloved *syttende mai* children's parade, it is important to note that he was not only a poet and cultural figure, but has also been described as a leftist nation builder (Elgenius 2011). The first children's parade was, in fact, a strategy to depoliticise and smoothen discord towards *syttende mai* (Elgenius 2011; Storsveen 2014) in an environment where the king and queen and upper classes had disavowed the 17th of May and instead celebrated the 4th of November. Countless scholars have explored the complex historical relationships between Norway and Sweden in the 1800s and early 1900s - however for this thesis, the fact that Bjørnson effectively used children to enact particular aims is a tantalising detail. It provides an example of how looking below the surface can reveal a more complex narrative about children's place in Norway.

This thesis explores and critiques what is below the surface of children and young people's involvement in urban planning in Oslo, with particular attention given to the experiences of young participants and to the facilitators of participation. The following sections provide a summary of the background for this study, identify the main aims of the thesis and foundational definitions, and describe the structure and chapters of the thesis.

1.2 Study background

The notion of a childhood and human development is a modern concept, though there are records throughout history to illustrate that 'adult' society has generally had some sense of the 'innocence' of children. For example, during the Anglo-Saxon period in England there were twenty-five "law codes related to the responsibility and protection of children" (Cockburn 2013, p. 2). When adulthood 'began' could be as late as the age of 25, when men in the Italian Middle Ages were allowed to be taking part in political life; as soon as a

person stops just imitating adult speech and began forming their own spoken sentences, like during the Roman Empire; or when a person could undertake independent labour and manual work, like among peasants and lower classes in medieval times (Cockburn 2013). Starting in the 1960s and 1970s there became some researchers and advocates who spoke out about children's liberation and argued that children should be afforded the same rights and responsibilities as adults. These arguments consider, for example, how even from birth, children are active participants in their own survival and development (Alderson 2008; Landsdown 2005) and they also contribute to their own health, welfare, and education (Qvortrup 2005). For instance, "schooling involves hard, unpaid work for long hours; this is not 'paid employment' does not mean that this work is not crucial for future economies" (Cockburn 2013, p. 10). There have been great differences between childhood development theories, with much criticism and revision along the way. Nonetheless, there remains the notion among adults that childhood is a route towards maturity and adulthood; children are seen as 'unready' and are thus treated differently from adults (Smith 2010, p. 25).

In Norway, past and existing laws illustrate a "long history of concern for children's well-being and rights" (Wilhjelm 2002, p 162). In recent decade, this can be illustrated by the assignment of the Commissioner for Children (also known as the Children's Ombudsman) first in 1981 and the quick uptake of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in early 1990s. Further, the National Policy Guidelines state that planners should consider how children will be affected by their actions and seek to ensure that children and young people are given opportunities to participate in planning (Wilhjelm 2002).

This thesis is particularly interested in children and young people in urban areas, a topic which already has foundation of research behind it. It is generally understood that children and young people's access and experiences with urban places vary based on their age (Pain 2001; Hopkins & Pain 2007). Children and young people's relationship to urban space has changed overtime - it has increasingly gone from being a children's space to an adults' space or a space in which children are accompanied by adults. While changes have not been the

same for all children in all neighborhoods, and changes have occurred at different rates, there is evidence to suggest that children now have less freedom to socialize, play, and explore public space (Valentine 1996; Karsten 2005; Béneker et al. 2010). In Scandinavia in particular, childhood has become highly institutionalized such that children's lives mostly take place in an 'institutionalized triangle' which includes home, school, and recreational spaces (Rasmussen 2004).

Today, there are certain spaces in urban areas designated as children and young people's places, and this brings certain implications for the users of these places (Pain 2001; Hopkins & Pain 2007). One can draw a distinction between "children's places" versus "places for children." Children's places are those places which children claim for themselves and create meaning within - these spaces are often invisible to an outside eye and cannot be identified without explanations from the children who use these spaces and who have assigned particular meaning to them. On the other hand, spaces for children are these institutionalized spaces which adults have produced for the use of children, for children to occupy. Sometimes children's spaces overlap with spaces for children, and sometimes children's spaces exist for a very short amount of time, depending on social circumstances, weather, the creation of new spaces, etc. (Rasmussen 2004). Some have found that that children and young people can "actively create and resist particular age identities through their use of space and place" (Pain et al. 2001, p.151). In some spaces, ownership and acceptable activities (for instance playing ball) are contested and yet still children will assert their power through reclaiming these spaces despite disapproval or dissatisfaction from other groups. In doing this, children "tell other stories of what [a] place is for" (Christensen et al. 2015, p. 597).

When it comes to what children and young people like and prefer in urban places, researchers have a clear-cut list. First, it is evident that children and young people are acutely aware of the threats facing public spaces in which they like to relax and explore, for example harsh rules such as no tree climbing or new developments that will remove wild spaces and wilderness, in addition to

being conscious about the lack of good public spaces in which they can play and explore (Hayward 2012). Places where friendship takes place, for instance lunchtime spots, football spaces, friends' houses, playgrounds, etc. is of high importance to children and young people - ideal places are those which are flexible and unique, while not being too restrictive or isolated. For younger children, it is important that there is enough to do, such as structures to climb on, and young people tend to need more places to hang out without too much adult supervision (McGlone 2016; Burke 2005; Morrow 2001). There is, of course, a gender element when it comes to children and young people in public spaces - girls have more limited access to public spaces compared to boys, parents tended to be stricter with girls, and girls generally feel less safe in public areas (Morrow 2001).

In their project the Teddy Diaries, Haldar et al. (2015) found that children in Norway, by comparison to their international counterparts, participate in more time out of the home, at places like shops, markets, restaurants, and friends' homes (Haldar et al. 2015). Another example from case studies in Trondheim reveal that, generally speaking, Norwegian children and young people enjoy a great deal of independence and freedom to move about the city. For instance, children as young as 10 or 11 are often allowed to venture out on their own to visit community centres, cinemas, swimming pools, libraries, etc. - after having told their parents where they planned to go and when they would be home (Wilhjelm 2002).

Children and young people notice when the urban areas to which they have access are not well maintained or well designed for them. Past studies have demonstrated children complaining that the parks and playgrounds they have access to are not well maintained, and some even complained about vandalism and graffiti (Hayward 2012). In other study about a park, children interviewed expressed annoyance about the traffic being too busy and near, and about the surfaces in the park being too rough (McGlone 2016). Traffic is presently a key item of concern among researchers and practitioner working on children and young people's spaces and rights in urban areas, with the existing knowledge

about traffic related dangers and increasing reports about the impact of exposure to high levels of pollution. The increase of traffic in the last several decades has reduced the number of public spaces in a way that has particularly negatively impacted children's access to outdoor spaces and mobility options (Christensen 2003; Béneker et al. 2010). Even in the 1960s and 1970s, the issue of traffic for children and young people and cities was highlighted by Keven Lynch, namely in his *Growing Up in Cities* project which produced the specific policy recommendation that traffic should be reduced or eliminated in the areas where children reside, as children spend most of their time outside of school exploring the blocks around where they live (Chawla 2002).

Notions of children and childhood have been in flux through history and this exploratory study is of course situated in the context of the recent decades in terms of childhood development, human rights, urban densification, and heightened awareness and thinking about participation as a part of democratic society. This section has summarised some of some recent significant developments and ideas in the research and practice world of children and urbanism to set the scene for the thesis. The following section will directly describe the impetus for the central focus of the research.

1.3 What are the core justifications for this study?

Chapter 2 will explore in more depth the recent research on children and young people's participation, however here several of the key gaps in this research will be set out. First, despite participatory planning's forty years of evolution, there is still no set method or tool that has dominated a planning system and successfully acted to realise its capacity to redistribute power to citizens (Horelli 2002). In too many instances, bogus participatory tools and methods - either involving too much jargon, taking place too late in the process, or generally just being uninterested in incorporating citizens' values - have produced mistrust among those attempting to enact participation (Innes & Booher 2004). Even in places where there is genuine interest in participation, a lack of knowledge about possible tools, or knowledge about how to successfully

use tools, can act as a barrier (Horelli 2002; Ampatzidou et al. 2018). Nevertheless, there is still an on-going push to develop and improve methods and tools for participatory planning (Horelli 2002). This makes participation in planning generally a fascinating area to study and one which still requires deeper comprehension.

Second, children's rights and children and young people's involvement in planning is also continuing to be reconceptualised, with the information age and development of new technologies opening more doors (Horelli 2002). That said, the majority of examples provided in literature are one-time projects within very specific contexts. While one-off projects provide valuable insights about children's experiences and preferences in cities, and may indeed yield positive physical results for urban sites, there is a need for more cases sustained and regular "discussion, developments, and decision-making processes" with children in urban planning and design (Heinrich & Million 2016, p. 69). Further, much existing research sets out to understand children's actions and movements, or to discuss the theory and practice behind involving children, but there is a lack of research findings which elevate children's opinions, needs, and preferences (Bishop & Corkery 2017; Wilhjelm 2002). For this reason, the thesis focuses its lens on methods of participation with children and young people, and more specifically those which are methods that can be used over and over with different groups of children and young people in different settings around the city.

Regarding the case of Oslo, literature describing Norway's planning system and children's participation in the context of Norway will be set out in Chapter 3. Here, however, some of the reasons for the selection of Oslo will be described.

First, private developers in Norway, in particular, have a high degree of power in the planning process and despite child-friendly city policies and policies regarding participation in planning, there are numerous barriers to making planning a democratic process for adults and children alike (Falleth et al. 2008). Oslo is a growing city, seeking to densify and maintain the green wilderness that

surrounds it, but this means that there is a great deal of planning, development, and building happening. According to Wilhjelm (2002), the rapid urbanisation in Norway produces a situation in which more research into the reality of how planning and participation legislation is manifested is needed. Despite Norway's positive reputation for being one of the utopian Scandinavian states with high quality of life and strong children's rights policies, there has not been a tremendous amount of recent research on the effectiveness and realities of children and young people's participation in planning. Tønnesson & Sivesind (2016) wrote that the *syttende mai* national day was and is not only about celebrating the constitution but also about "the formation of a society where school-children were socially and culturally encouraged to acknowledge, understand, and mediate the history and values for developing as a citizen." This backdrop of a growing and densifying city, and a history of upholding children's rights and established participation methods for involved children in urban planning, plus the nation's keen attachment to children, makes a case which can yield rich and transferable knowledge and recommendations.

1.4 Study aims and questions

This thesis set out to contribute to growing literature about participatory planning with children, within which there is a need for more investigation of "best practice, how is it done and what does it look like" (Bishop & Corkery 2017, p 238), as well as understandings about children experiences in cities (Mårtensson & Nordström 2017; Heinrich & Million 2016). The research was situated within these gaps, looking especially at tools developed to lessen inequalities (Beaumont & Nicholls 2008), considering that barriers to enacting participation can be because of a lack of knowledge about possible tools and/or knowledge about how to successfully use (Horelli 2002; Ampatzidou et al. 2018) - with special focus on emerging technology-based tools, which is an area needing more research (Wilson et al. 2017; Hanzl 2007). From a series of interconnected literature reviews drafted during the first year of the thesis, the following research aim was identified:

- Analyse how on-going city-wide participatory planning tools designed to gather information about children's preferences and needs impact the decision making and design of a city

Originally the thesis had two aims - the one stated above and a second aim to assess the educational dimension of involving children in participatory planning and design. At the start of the fieldwork, it became evident that there would be sufficient data available for a PhD thesis to address fully the first aim and the secondary aim to focus on the educational dimension became integrated into the questions, as a means of expanding the breadth of discussion in answering the primary research aim. It was evident during the fieldwork that the overlap between children and young people's participation and education was a point of interest among those working in the field, though not a large amount of work had yet been produced. One key development that happened shortly after the fieldwork period was the updating and roll out of a new national curriculum in Norway, which highlighted the important of participation and being involved in real ways in order to learn about democracy and citizenship. In the writing up years of this thesis, the Barnetråkk website received an update, detailing the specific curriculum points to which it connects - had this been developed and available at the time of the fieldwork, it may have enabled the aim of exploring the educational dimension of children and young people's participation in urban planning to be a much larger part of the thesis as was originally intended.

With the central research aim in mind - to analyse how on-going city-wide participatory planning tools designed to gather information about children's preferences and needs impact the decision making and design of a city - several research questions, inspired by past studies and a critical observation of where this thesis could make a contribution, guided this entire PhD thesis. These questions are as follows:

- To what extent and in what ways are the opinions and ideas of children in participatory projects used in planning and design?

- In what ways are data about the needs and preferences of children being framed, organised, and shared?
- To what extent are participatory tools and methods educational versus to what extent are they in place principally to collect data and opinions about children and young people's needs and interests?
- To what extent do participatory planning methods steer children's thinking and minimise children's agency ("citizens in the making" to be shaped)?

To answer the research questions, and to ultimately address the research aim, this thesis examined six methods of participation with children and young people. The research questions are designed to be asked of all the six instruments, referred to later in the thesis as "units of analysis," in order to uncover cross-cutting findings that fulfil the research aim and that offer scholarly and practical contributions to the field of children and young people's participation. Some of the instruments were explicitly designed to work within the urban planning system and others were established to engage children and/or young people in a variety of social and political themes. Some of the instruments engaged children and/or young people in direct participation and others were more representative. While the instruments studied differed in nature, purpose, and institutional context, what underpins them and what brought them into this thesis was their function. Each served as a method of participation to engage children and/or young people in urban planning and/or to ensure that the needs and interests of children and/or young people are safeguarded in urban planning and transformation processes. To address the research aim and answer the research questions as completely as possible, the analysis holds in mind the institutional context of each instrument. As such, in addition to the cross-cutting themes, there is attention given to findings related to where in the planning process each unit of analysis sits and how each is seen in terms of intended outcomes.

1.5 Thesis structure

The thesis is organised into two halves, the first focusing on the relevant background literature and thinking that has been developed to date on the subject of children and young people's participation and the Norwegian planning system, as well as the methods. The second half delves into the thesis findings, which are presented in four chapters, followed by the discussion chapter.

The first of the literature chapters is focused on children and young people's participation. It commences with an overview of the literature and a concise background on the origins of children and young people's participation as it is understood today, presents the frameworks for measuring participation, outlines the key rationale for children and young people's participation, presents the common methods of participation, and then discusses the main known barriers to participation with children and young people. The second literature chapter shifts the focus onto urban planning, looking first at urban planning in Norway and in Oslo, and then to children and young people's participation in the Norwegian planning system.

Following these two foundational chapters in which the relevant literature is brought forth, the methods chapter refocuses the thesis back onto the research questions and how they were answered. First, the methods and reason for their selection is described, then the ethical considerations are discussed, afterwards the data management and interpretation process are described, followed by an explanation for the case site selection and a summary of each of the units of analysis (which are participation methods for involving children and young people in planning).

The finding chapters begin with a spotlight on children and young people's experiences and then moved outwards to examine the experiences of adult facilitators, then to the processes adults engage in to translate between young participants and the planning world, finally zooming out to examine the wider planning system in Oslo and how and where participation sits within it. The first finding chapter, Chapter 5, looks at the topics on which young people and

children are invited to engage with through participation, the ways in which children and young people are prepared to participate, the accessibility and child-friendliness of participation, and signs of nonparticipation. In the second findings chapter, Chapter 6, the focus is on the adult facilitators of participation with children and young people are and their background and motivations, adult facilitators' concerns about the logistics of participation, and finally their disappointment and frustrations with the existing methods and outcomes of participation. The third findings chapter, Chapter 7, examines the translation process that adult facilitators must conduct in order to make planning comprehensible to young participants and to make young participants' ideas and inputs understandable to planners and architects. It looks at the ways in which children and young people's inputs are gathered, organised, and shared; the educational elements of participation; and what comes out of the translation process. The fourth and final findings chapter moves up to the level of planning and considers the relationships between adult stakeholders such as politicians, landowners, and the planning and building administration; where children and young people's participation sits within the planning process; and the broader planning system.

After the findings chapters, the discussion and conclusion chapters explicitly bring together the answers to the research questions, identifies the cross-cutting themes of the thesis, notes the study's strengths and limits, and then discusses the overall contribution and practical recommendations resulting from this thesis.

Chapter 2. Getting children and young people's right to participation right

2.1 Introducing and researching children and young people's participation

The research that has been carried out on children and young people's involvement in urban planning falls across a wide range of fields and sources - from human geography and urban design journals, to youth and childhood studies journals and from comprehensive reports and guides published by Save the Children, UNICEF, and other international agencies involved in advancing the practice of involving children and young people in urban planning, to books published by small architecture and design firms. Research and practice of children and young people's participation is entangled with research and practice on play and risk (Gill 2007), use of space (Rasmussen 2004; Lima & Calabrese; Barton 2010; Christensen et al. 2015) children's rights in urban contexts (Carroll et al. 2019), as well as children's participation in design, place, community, and environmental planning (Hart 1992; Dudek 2011; Corkery 2017; Derr & Tarantini 2016).

The attendee lists of the two largest conference opportunities for academics working on children and young people's participation (*Child in the City International Conference* and *European Child-Friendly Cities Network Conference*) reveal that the legion of people working in the field include researchers from architecture, design, urban planning, landscape, sociology, childhood studies, youth studies, transportation, psychology, and policy, as well as architects, planners, designers, play workers, mayors, city council members, community activists, and even parents with professions wholly unrelated to the field, but with a great concern for the lack of quality, safe outdoors space for their children. It is within this diverse and energetic context that the research and practice of children and young people's participation in urban planning exists. This chapter attempts to synthesize thinking from both the research and practice worlds, and across a range of disciplines, in order to piece together a strong story about children and young people's participation in urban planning.

This chapter commences with a discussion of the common rationale for children and young people's participation. It then describes the various types of methods that have been used for engaging children and young people in urban planning, design, and transformation. Following this, is a section unpacking the key barriers to good participation with children and young people in urban planning. The final section is a description of the different tools that have been created to measure the types and qualities of participation with children and young people.

2.1.1 Scope and characteristics of literature

The literature selected for this review includes journal articles from the disciplines of youth studies, childhood studies, geography, human geography, urban planning, and urban design. The articles selected in some way present findings about children and/or young people's experiences, needs, preferences, and rights in urban settings and/or about children and/or young people's participation in urban planning, architecture, or design. The reason for the broadness and interdisciplinarity of the literature is to identify the common themes and to provide a strong foundation for this thesis, which examines a range of participation methods that take place on different levels of planning and urban transformation.

This body of literature is, overall, optimistic and in favour of children and young people's participation. These studies described in the literature result in recommendations for increasing and enhancing children and young people's participation, justifications for children and young people's participation, and overall seek to highlight the supposed promise of children and young people's participation. The most commonly studied themes are children and young people's safety and mobility in public space, particularly focusing on the visibility of children and young people in urban places and how they feel about their own safety and mobility (Ataol et al. 2020). Common methods employed by the research reviewed in this chapter include co-research with children and young people, focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and observations. In some cases, the research design and rigour of the investigations are weak,

written more in a reporting style and without connection to broader planning and public administration literatures or topics like neoliberalism and austerity.

2.1.2 Children and young people in literature on participation

As was described in Section 1.2 and as will be touched upon in the upcoming Section 2.1.3, the origin of children and young people's participation as a distinctive field and practice has to do with the different level of independence in, access to, and uses of urban spaces that adults have compared to children and young people. This has and does vary according to place, as has been pointed out by cross-national, cross-cultural studies such as those by Lynch (1960) and Chawla (2002), and according to time, as has been presented by Karsten (2006) and Gill (2007; 2018). It is, however, unusual in literature about children and young people's participation to discuss the concept of generation, the idea that an age range of people generally have a similar way of feeling and relating to life because of a shared experience with a particular social, political, and economic context. (Selwyn 2009; Woodman & Wyn 2015; Pruitt 2017). Additionally, the literature does not often differentiate between "children" and "young people" as distinctive categories.

This is, firstly, because the field of participation with children and young people is particularly interested in the fact that participants are below the age of 18 and therefore, typically, have no or limited voting rights, legal say, or power to impact the decisions made for their life and the world around them. The first article of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which underpins and is cited in much of the literature on children and young people's participation is, in fact:

Article 1 - Definition of the Child

Everyone under the age of 18 has all the rights in the Convention.

Whereas the concept of generation can be utilised to understand better the ways in which inequalities such as those related to gender, race, and class are "being made afresh in contemporary conditions" (Woodman & Wyn 2015, p.

1408), literature on children and young people's participation is more, in a sense, interested in age as the inequality.

Secondly, much of the literature about children and young people's participation focuses on the practicalities of facilitating participation and/or on the outcomes, findings, and uses of participation. Children and young people's participation, having roots that link back to understandings about human development, considers individual ages or levels in school to identify what types of participation activities are most suitable based on the capacities of children and young people of different ages. In Hart's *Children's Participation*, he clearly states that different levels of participation will suit different ages more than others (1992). Additionally, two of the core principles of *The Council of Europe Handbook on Children's Participation (2020)* are that participation must be "relevant" and "child-friendly" meaning that participation activities should be age-appropriate and connected to the lived experiences and concerns of participants. Practitioners must hold in mind that young participants "will need differing levels of support and forms of involvement according to their age and evolving capacities" (*The Council of Europe Handbook on Children's Participation 2020*, p.20).

The idea of using different methods or adapting methods based on the different capacities of different ages is prevalent in literature on children and young people's participation. A strong example of participation activities being tailored to different ages comes from the Growing Up Boulder project. Derr & Tarantini (2016) in an article about the project present a table - shown here in the thesis as Figure 2-1 showing the different participation methods used with different age groups, all towards the shared goal of making a child-friendly civic area. The 4-5-year-olds, for example, were able to give a presentation to the city council, whereas the 14-16-year-olds were able to have a dialogue with city leaders and the public. Crucially, an approach like this gives careful attention to the sometimes quite drastic difference that just one or two years can make when it comes to access and use of public spaces, independence of movement in urban places, and preferences and concerns about urban infrastructure.

**Figure 2-1 Growing Up Boulder Participation Example. Colorado
(Derr & Tarantini 2016)**

Table 1. Summary of engagement process and methods, 2012.

Group	Ages and numbers of students	Goals	Methods
Pre-kindergarten: Boulder Journey School	Ages 4–5 14 students	Envisioning a child-friendly Civic Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field trips • Drawings on photographs • Drawings • Presentation to city council • Participation in community meetings • Participation in design competition
Middle: Casey Middle School Leadership Elective	Ages 11–12 1 class, 25 students	i. Envisioning a child-friendly Civic Area ii. Flood mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field trips • Photogrids • City as play • Sketch up • Digital presentations
Middle and Secondary: I Have a Dream Foundation	Ages 12–15 12 students	i. Envisioning a child-friendly Civic Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field Trips with photovoice • Presentation and dialogue at public meetings
Secondary: New Vista High School	Ages 14–16 1 class, 24 students	i. Envisioning a child-friendly Civic Area ii. Exploring history of Civic Area iii. Flood mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field trips • Photogrids • Dialogue with city leaders
Secondary: Boulder High School AVID Program	Ages 14–16 16 students	i. Envisioning a child-friendly Civic Area ii. Exploring history of Civic Area iii. Flood mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field trips • Interviewing a family member • Photogrids • Presentation by urban designers • Dialogue with city leaders and the public

In more recent studies, the methods used in participation projects will have updated their resources - for example children and young people would be given smart phones not disposable cameras - and the tools may be updated - for example paper mapping may be replaced with digital mapping that allows geotagging. This is a necessary response to changes in technology and norms, but the general principle of creating and adapting participation methods based on the capacities of different ages remains.

The way in which this thesis refers to “children and young people” is reflective of the literature which informed the research, paying particular attention to the UNCRC framework and the general split between adults versus children and

young people, and to the accessibility and relevance of methods of participation to different ages.

2.1.3 In brief, the emergence of children and young people's participation in urban planning

Since the 1960s, participation in planning - what it is, why do it, and how to do it - has been a point of much discussion among planners and academics (Horelli 2002). Around the same time, the idea of participation with children and young people in urban planning, as a separate process and with somewhat different aims, was also emerging.

Kevin A. Lynch - An American urban planner and author most well-known for his 1960 publication *The Image of the City* - launched a UNESCO research project called Growing Up in Cities, with the aim of researching the growing up experiences of children in low-income urban neighbourhoods around the globe. It was to be first major investigation of its kind and serve a starting point for further research and practice in children and young people's participation in urban planning and management. The project was not fully realised because, primarily, "the dominant attitude among authorities [was] that children's views were irrelevant" (Chawla 1997). Lynch did, however, manage to publish a book in 1977 under the title *Growing Up in Cities*. It summarised that 1) areas near a child's home provide opportunities for psychological stimulation, independent activities, play, and new experiences but that 2) these areas are too often unsafe or inaccessible, and that 3) "children lack an opportunity to participate in adult activity, or to be responsible for managing and shaping the environment" (Lynch & Banerjee 1977, p. 284). These foundational ideas have guided the research and practice agenda on children and young people's participation, though it took nearly two decades before researchers and practitioners began really building upon it.

Other early studies included those by Moore (1986) on play and recreational spaces, Matthews (1992) on cognitive mapping, and Hillman et al. (1990) on how traffic impacts children's mobility (Christensen & O'Brian 2003). Another figure

whose work has been highly influential to the practice community is the late anarchist writer Colin Ward who in 1978 published a book about children's street culture titled *The Child in the City*. He was additionally the editor of the *Bulletin of Environmental Education* that helped to spread the importance of the built environment for children's wellbeing and quality of life (Horelli 1998).

The distinctive line of research and practice on children and young people's participation in urban planning came in the mid-1990s when, finally, the *Growing Up in Cities* project was resurrected by UNESCO under a new name - *Growing Up in an Urbanising World*. Research projects with 10-to-15-year-olds in low-income areas took place in Argentina, England, Australia, South Africa, India, Norway, the United States, and Poland in the latter half of the 1990s. Initially it was, in fact, brought back to life by the Norwegian Centre for Child Research and the University of Oslo based Childwatch International in 1994. The results of this comprehensive project were published in 2002 in a book title *Growing Up in an Urbanising World*, with Loise Chawla as editor, alongside David Driskell's accompanying book, *Creating Better Cities with Children and Youth: A Manual for Participation*. Chawla's *Growing Up in an Urbanising World* provided the research community with several comprehensive, comparative, international case studies that resulted in a set of indicators for what makes a good place, according to children and young people, and a series of recommendations for "establishing programmes for engaging children and youth in improving their own life conditions and in creating more liveable cities" (Chawla 2002, p. 219). Driskell's manual (2002), aimed at both researchers and practitioners explained why and how to organise children and young people's participation, tips for starting, and included a toolbox of methods. These two texts effectively set into motion the research and practice which has been taking place during the last two decades.

2.1.4 Restating definitions

The notions of childhood, youth, and adulthood are fluid, constructed phases which are understood within particular political, locational, historical, and social

contexts to roughly categorise specific age groups and the activities in which they are able to and are allowed to engage (Furlong 2013; Wyn 2014). The amount of agency that children and young people have and the amount to which they are invited and encouraged to articulate their needs and preferences, as well as to take responsibility, is shaped by the social and cultural views about children and young people and their rights and capacities (Taylor & Smith 2014). Children and young people, as defined in the introduction, include persons ages 0 to 18. In the context of this research, children and young people refers to persons ages 7 to 18, keeping in mind that different ages have different needs, would be engaged by different types of participation methods, and that age is just one identity demarcation which does not account for other identities such as ethnicity, nationality, religion, socioeconomic, ability, gender, race, and sexual orientation.

In a broad sense, the word participation refers to the act of taking part in a process or activity. In a research and practice setting, participation means to take part specifically in decision-making (Thomas 2007). More precisely, according to Creighton (2005), participation involves a deliberate process of interaction between decisionmakers and participants, beyond just providing information, that impacts/influences administrative decisions in some way. Or, to put it simply, as Hart did in his influential 1992 essay *Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship*, participation is “the process of sharing decisions which affect one’s life and the life of the community in which one lives” (p. 5)

Planning, in the case of this thesis, refers to municipal master planning and zoning planning, while also encapsulating architecture and thematic planning for traffic, public space, cycling, and other urban transformations.

2.2 Frameworks for defining and measuring participation

There are a few established tools that researchers sometimes use to classify and measure participation with children and young people. Typically, these are displayed as a spectrum, while also acknowledging that different methods and strategies, while they may be the highest level of participation, are not always

suitable (Hart 1992; Hart 2008). Researchers agree that the circumstances such as the age of the children and/or young people involved, timeline, and scale of planning project must be considered when knowing for which level of participation to aim (Hart 1992; Morrow 2002). At the same time, there are some agreed upon shared characteristics of ‘nonparticipation’ which could be on the low end of a spectrum.

This section of the chapter presents the classic ladder model created by Roger Hart (1992), inspired of course by Sherry Arnstein (1969), as well as a couple of more recent models designed to account for additional factors and details, and recently published *Council of Europe Handbook on Children’s Participation* (2020).

2.2.1 Hart’s ladder

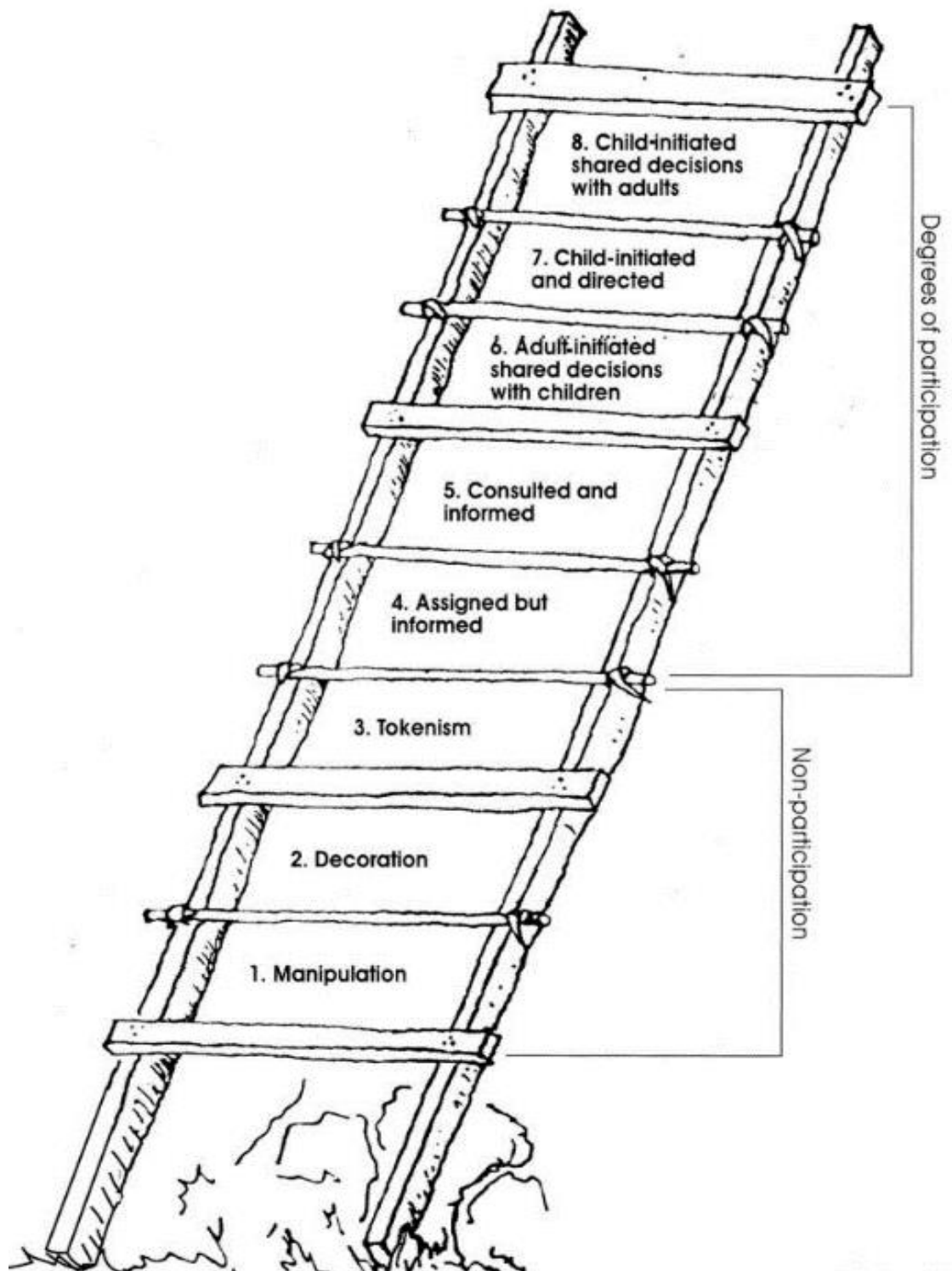
Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of participation provided the well-recognised metaphor that Hart (1992) used to develop his influential ladder of children’s participation (Corkery 2017). Still today, though Hart himself has written that it may be time to retire the ladder and reimagine new tools of measurement (2008), it is the most recognised and simple framework for evaluating children’s participation. The bottom three rungs (manipulation, decoration, and tokenism) are to be avoided, while the top five rungs (assigned but informed, consulted but informed, adult initiated and shared decision with children, child-initiated and directed, and child-initiated and shared decisions with adults) are all degrees of acceptable participation. These top five levels in more detail are:

- ‘Assigned but informed’ is the lowest level of participation and can be characterised by situations in which children are informed about the goals of a project, about the reasons and person(s) behind their involvement, and about their [non-decorative] role. Additionally, they must volunteer to participate after having been informed of these details.
- ‘Consulted and informed’ is a process which is “designed and run by adults, but children understand the process and their opinions are treated seriously”

(p. 13).

- ‘Adult initiated, shared decisions with children’ are projects which are not designed for a particular age group and seek to involve participants of all ages, and thus make special accommodations to involve children who might otherwise be unable to participate.

Figure 2-2 Hart’s Ladder of Children’s Participation



- ‘Child-initiated and directed’ projects are those created and managed entirely by children, and which are entirely uninhibited and undirected by adults.
- ‘Child-initiated and shared decisions with adults’ are projects which are instigated, directed, and managed by children which get supportive input from adults and/or which get approval from adults (such that proposals and ideas are able to be realised or expanded).

The idea behind Hart’s model is not to suggest that all participation should aim to be as high as possible on the ladder, but rather to map different degrees to which children and young people may participate. It is not always necessary or even ideal to have all participants on the top rung. In some instances, there will be various children and young people with different abilities and desires, and so different levels of participation could suit some more than others. For example, Hart (2008) reflected that the top rung of the ladder “Child-initiated and shared decisions with adults” would suit participation with upper secondary aged young people much more than for example primary school aged children. Further, “child-initiated and directed” can be easier to realise with upper secondary school-aged young people, because adults tend to interfere and direct the activities initiated by primary school aged children more. This can be explained by the fact that the amount to which children and young people are encouraged to act with agency is dependent on the social and cultural expectations around their supposed, and real, age-bound capacities (Taylor & Smith 2014).

On the whole, Hart’s model offers a framework for examining and classifying different tools and methods of participation, to view the degree to which children and young people are active participants. This model served as a key framework for the analysis process of this research.

2.2.2 Other models

Other models have been developed, inspired by Hart or in an effort to create sometime totally new. For example, Landsdown (2001) categorised types of participation processes and practices; Gal & Duramy (2015) considered more fully the specific factors that vary from child to child, like the family, human rights norms, cultural values, and state structures that affect participation; and Richards-Schuster & Elliott (2019) discussed the roles young people might play in a participation process. A more general model called the Public Participation Spectrum was created by the International Association for Public Participation's (IAP2). It places participation on a spectrum from low to high impact, with each type including a 'promise to the public' and a 'public participation goal.' With this model, practitioners can more easily consider their objectives for participation and realistically understand and hold themselves accountable.

Shier (2001) sought to reimagine Hart's ladder to make it simpler and to eliminate the idea of a top rung to show a greater range of possibilities for children's participation (Corkery 2017).

His five-level model includes:

- Children are listened to
- Children are supported in expressing their views
- Children's views are taken into account
- Children are involved in decision-making processes
- Children share power and responsibility for decision-making" (Shier 2001, p. 110)

In addition to this his five-level model, Shier discusses the role of adults in children's participation and proposes a three-stage path for institutions to assess their own readiness and capacity for facilitating children's participation. These stages are 1) openings, 2) opportunities, and 3) obligations. The opening stage involves an intention to engage with children's participation. The opportunity

stage is when an institution moves beyond intent and has the capacity to enact children's participation. In the final state of obligation, an institution has an on-going policy requirement to facilitate children's participation.

A comprehensive and practical work, *The Council of Europe Handbook on Children's Participation* (2020) sets out nine basic requirements of effective and ethical participation with children. The influence of Hart's Ladder is evident, while providing more details. It states that for participation with children to be effective and ethical it must be:

- transparent and informative, meaning that the purpose, possibility for impact, goals, and role of the participants has been made clear;
- voluntary, meaning that participants have been given time to consider if they would like to participate, their schedule is respected, and they know they can stop participating if they choose;
- respectful, meaning that participants are free to express their views and experiences and that those are treated as valid contributions;
- relevant, meaning that participation activities should be age appropriate and connected to the lived experiences and concerns of participants;
- child-friendly, meaning that the methods, information, and location are suited to the participants, and that facilitators have the time, resources, and capacities;
- inclusive, meaning that there is no kind of discrimination or exclusion;
- supported by training for adults, meaning that facilitators have the training, support, tools, and expertise to carry out participation with children and to work with other adults/facilitators involved in the process;
- safe and sensitive to risk, meaning that safeguarding, procedures, and careful planning is in place to avoid any sort of harm or abuse; and finally
- accountable, meaning that participants are involved as early as possible and clear and rapid feedback and updates are given.

For this thesis, Hart's model and The Council of Europe's nine requirements will be used in the findings and conclusion to identify signs of nonparticipation and to understand the extent to which effective and ethical participation is taking place. It is true that, as indicated above, some choose to use or reinvent models for evaluating children and young people's participation. The similarities between The Council of Europe's nine requirements, published in 2020, and Hart's ladder model, from 1992, however illustrate that the degrees of participation described by Hart three decade ago are still a strong foundational evaluation tool. Further the simplicity and flexibility that these tools offer make them useful for examining a series of different participation methods with various age groups across varied settings, as this thesis does.

2.3 The rationale for participation with children and young people

This section of the chapter departs from the ways that participation can be measured to examine the common reasons why participation with children and young people is carried out. In the start of this chapter, a concise summary of the evolution of thinking about children and young people as a unique group with specific needs and rights came into being. The following subsections expand on this, presenting one by one the most common rationale that are used to justify and motivate participation activities with children and young people.

2.3.1 Why should children and young people participate in urban planning?

A question frequently asked by those outwith the research and practice bubbles related to children and young people's participation is, "why would children and young people participate in urban planning?" The answer is taken almost for granted and skipped over in some research and practical publications on the topic. In this thesis, however, the rationale for why children and young people should be involved in urban planning varied among research participants in fascinating ways. It is evident that the rationale one holds in approaching a participation activity not only determines the choice of methods, but crucially the resulting outcomes (or lack thereof). It is thus essential to interrogate the common rationale present in existing literature, to be able to make sense later

in the thesis of the attitudes held by adults operating in the world of children and young people in Oslo.

To understand the successes and failures of participation, and how it plays out in real life, it is essential to understand the common rationale for doing it. This is partly because it helps to understand the motivations that an adult facilitator might bring with them into the process of participation, opening up potential discussion on how motivations help or hurt the success of participation with children and young people. Another useful reason for considering the common rationale for children and young people's participation is to consider the disconnect between these rationale, documented in literature, and the real motivations shared by participants in this thesis, presented later in the findings chapters.

Looking at literature on participation generally (focused on adults), the classic rationale are as follows. According to Innes & Booher (2004), participation:

- enables decision makers to learn the preferences of residents,
- improves decisions by incorporating otherwise unknowledge local knowledge,
- gives underrepresented groups an avenue to speak up for their interests,
- increases the legitimacy of decisions made by governments, and
- ensures the planning department and/or government is in compliance with legislation (mandating that participation take place).

In essence, participation is a tool for decision makers to know the preferences, needs, and localised knowledge of citizens, particularly, in theory, in marginalised communities, to ensure they make better, more legitimate, decisions and are act in accordance with the law.

The rationale for participation with children and young people, as presented in research literature and as promoted by advocacy and practice groups, has some similarities to the rational for conducting participation with adults, but overall

has a rather different tune. The last two decades have produced and evidenced several key arguments for local governments to institutionalise children and young people's participation. Within the research literature, these arguments can be grouped into four different areas:

1. those which highlight children's and young people's right to participate;
2. those which focus on the positive impact of participation on children and young people;
3. those which focus on the positive impact onto the built environment; and
4. those which focus on the legal requirements.

The following subsections will present and discuss these.

2.3.2 Children and young people have the right to participate

Thinking about participation in terms of children's rights follows the logic that since children and young people's lives are affected by planning processes, they have the right to be viewed and treated as participants (Knowles-Yáñez 2005). Research in this line of thought is predominately underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child (UNCRC). The UNCRC was adopted in November 1989 and by the end of 1991 the majority of the conventions now 140 signatories had signed and ratified it. Today, it is "the most widely ratified human rights treaty in the world" (UNICEF, How we protect children's rights). The document consists of 54 articles, covering the political, social, economic, civil, and cultural rights to which children (ages 0 to 18, by their definition) everywhere are entitled.

Regarding children and young people's participation, the UNCRC has played an important role in three specific ways. First, it spurred the *Child Friendly Cities* movement as a model for sustainable urban development and planning (Malone 2018), which has resulted in a tremendous number of academic articles, reports, blog posts, news articles, measurement tools, workshops, etc. which has greatly helped bring attention to, create conversations about, and make space for children and young people's participation in urban planning. Second, there are a

few countries that have adopted parts or all of the UNCRC into state, regional, or local law in order to enforce children's rights on the ground - this is the case with Norway, as will be explored more deeply in the next chapter. Finally, and most pertinent to the rationale behind participation, the UNCRC has served as a credible reference point for practitioners and researchers working with children and young people's needs, experiences, and participation in urban settings (Bishop & Corkery 2018).

The section which are most relevant to planning and thus most often cited are articles 3.1 - actions which concern urban planning and design are actions which concern children - and 6.2 - children's development is affected, for better or worse, by the built environment. Additionally, they connect to articles 12.1 and 13.1 which state that children have the right to express themselves freely and to have a say in issues that affect them. The exact wording of these articles read:

UNCRC Article 3.1 In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

UNCRC Article 6.2 States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.

UNCRC Article 12.1 States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming their own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

UNCRC Article 13.1 The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.

2.3.3 Participation benefits children and young people

The idea that participation benefits children and young people is multifaceted. It includes the notion that children and young people learn about the function of

planning and government first-hand, and that they develop a sense of their role as a citizen within a society. For others, what children and young people learn through participation is about the development of their sense of place and belonging to a neighbourhood. The following two subsections outline and discuss these two lines of thinking around the notion that participation benefits children and young people.

2.3.3.1 Participation as educational for children and young people, developing citizenship

The idea that participation is educational for children and young people is the idea that they learn through being participants (Knowles-Yáñez 2005). The dominant narrative in terms of *what* children and young people stand to learn through being participants is one of citizenship, democracy, and society. In his seminal work *Children's Participation*, Hart argued that,

only through direct participation can children develop a genuine appreciation of democracy and a sense of their own competence and responsibility to participate. The planning, design, monitoring, and management of physical environment is an ideal domain for the practice of children's participation; it seems to be clearer for children to see and understand than many social problems." (1997, p. 3)

Since then, several scholars have argued that involving children in urban planning and design is a way for them to be involved in and/or to learn about democratic and civic processes, tolerance, and contributing to society as a citizen within it (Haider 2007; Le Borgne & Tisdall 2017; Heinrich & Million 2016; Kjørholt 2002; Driskell 2002). Figure 2-1, earlier in the chapter, showed an example of an established participation programme that focuses on developing children and young people's knowledge about urban planning and capacity for engaging with urban decision-making. The danger in viewing participation as an educational tool is that it can go hand-in-hand with the sentiment that children and young people are in preparation to become citizens, rather than independent beings with their own real local knowledge about their own needs and preferences (and about the needs and preferences of their peers and siblings) in the urban environment. In this way, children and young people are

seen as citizens-in-the-making (Cockburn 2013) or are viewed as 'unready' to make real contributions and to speak on their own behalf (Hayward 2012), and that participation is way of preparing them to become members of society.

Some studies suggest that participation should be a two-way interaction (Innes & Booher 2004), with children and young people learning about planning, while planners and architects learn about children and young people's lived realities and in doing so reconceptualize what they know and understand about the built environment in which they work. In other instances, however, the adult facilitators aiming to educate children and young people through participation, treat young participants as what Freire (1968) would describe as empty, knowledge-less receptacles of information, rather than engaging with them in a process of co-knowledge development and seeing young participants in experts of their own localized experiences and needs in the urban environment (Creighton 2005; Innes & Booher 2004; Skogheim & Atkinson 2013).

For some researchers, this poses a serious concern - if adult practitioners come bearing notions about developing citizenship and democratic thinking, they may impose idealised or elite visions of what it means to be a 'good citizen.' (Kennelly 2011) which can sometimes equate to obedience more than critical thinking and active participation (Hayward 2012), effectively neutralising and disempowering potentially radical thinkers before they reach adulthood.

Another perspective is that educationally-minded participation activities can be a way for children and young people to learn about the planning process, the urban environment, and the constraints and possibilities that exist (Knowles-Yáñez 2005). While this is certainly not meritless, there is a risk that planners, architects, government officials, researchers, etc. in using participation as an educational vehicle are unknowingly placing limits on the imaginations and potential of children and young people. In doing so, they fail to encourage young participants to develop their own values and opinions, often in the act of imposing what *they think* children and young people should care about such as recycling, playing outdoors, garden projects, etc. (Hayward 2012).

Participation being educational for children and young people is not explicitly a characteristic of quality participation, according to the ladder model of Hart (1992) or the *The Council of Europe Handbook on Children's Participation* (2020). This argument however is tangentially linked, as quality participation involves children and young people who have been informed, who understand what is being asked of them, who understand the goals and expect outcomes, and who learn about the impacts of their engagement. To fulfil these processes there are naturally moments of learning. Further, in accordance with the Council of Europe's handbook, adult facilitators of participation must have the adequate training and resources to ensure these activities are properly carried out. Therefore, the rationale behind participation as an educational experience for children and young people aligns with the frameworks for defining and measuring participation.

2.3.3.2 *Participation develops young people's sense of place and belonging*

The second way researchers and practitioners argue the benefits of participation on children and young people is the way it connects to sense of place, neighbourhood, community, and belonging. The idea is that when children and young people are given *meaningful opportunities to be involved in urban planning* and to think reflectively and creatively about life in the city, it helps them develop a relationship to their surroundings and an interest in their greater community (Mårtensson & Nordström 2017).

From a young age, children are able to understand and to begin participating in creating shared meanings and social understandings (Cockburn 2013). Participation in urban planning, design, and transformation can foster identification with a neighbourhood (Heinrich & Million 2016) as well as a feeling of self-efficacy and feeling of control over their own environment (Wilks & Rudner 2013; Benninger & Savahl 2016; Severcan 2015; Morrow 2001). For children and young people, the experience of being taken seriously in the process of participation, seeing their views taken into account, can increase

their sense of ownership and the feeling of being involved in the neighbourhood and in broader society (Heinrich & Million 2016; Hart 1992; Frisk et al. 2014).

Further, the social experience of participation and the process of thinking about one's own needs and their community can develop a feeling of belonging to a community and a relationship with public space (Hart 1992; Pooley et l. 2005; Watson 2009; Thompson & Travlou 2007; Fincher & Iveson 2008; McGlone 2016). (See Figure 2-3 for an example of a participation programme that involves

Figure 2-3 *The City of Tomorrow (A Vila do Mañá) Participation Example*
Developed and implemented by PØSTarquitectos in A Coruña, Spain

This participation example illustrates an education centred participation approach. While not linked directly to urban planning processes, it expertly uses different methods and tool for difference age groups and focuses on the young participants' comprehension and invites deep engagement with place.

The City of Tomorrow is a five-day educational and outreach programme that has involved 150 young participants (ages 3 to 15) in towns around Galicia, Spain, and in São Paulo, Brazil, exploring six concepts - perception, scale, space, city, landscape, and sustainability - through playful, sensory activities. During the five days, the city becomes a “game board” and “experimentation laboratory” (González Álvarez 2020, p. 164). Activities make use of cardboard boxes, paint and drawing materials, photographs, barricade tape, chalk, movement, and samples of materials like artificial grass and stone.

Young participants are asked questions like “What is your city? What elements would you highlight?” and asked to show their answers through photography and an empty frame. Another activity involved using carboard boxes to construct walls, block paths, and create pop-up rooms, in order to explore scale and how the feeling of space changes when boundaries are constructed. The aims of these activities include testing how urban space operates when it is made safe for and occupied by children, to teach children about urban space so that they will value local heritage and care about the quality and sustainability of the future city, and to give architects the opportunity to learn first-hand about children's perception of urban space and to gather ideas and inputs for the city (González Álvarez 2018; 2020; 2021).

children and young people in activities that challenge them to engage with the built environment in different ways, to see their place in it, and to start thinking about their preferences and needs in the urban environment.)

The notion that children and young people's sense of place, neighbourhood, community, and belonging are developed through participation is sometimes discussed in terms of their future as adult users of the city. For example, some have found that when children have a positive experience with place, it makes them more likely to choose to be involved sustainability and environmental initiatives in their adulthood (Chawla 1998; Mårtensson & Nordström 2017). A case in Sweden identified that young people with a stronger knowledge and awareness of places increased their confidence and ability and willingness to navigate urban areas (van der Burgt 2015). Further it appears that developing children and young people's familiarity with urban places and travel options affects their future habits and skills for living in urban spaces (Weston 2010). Like in the last section, these hopes to improve children and young people's sense of belonging and place through participation, while not ill intended, risk imposing certain ideals and limits.

Overall, the case studies and research that discuss children and young people's participation resulting in increased sense of place, neighbourhood, community, and belonging are most often small-scale, well-designed, hands-on, one-off projects. The knowledge resulting from such studies cannot be generalised to larger-scale more institutionalised methods, such as all but one method examined in this thesis. Assuming such results will come from, for example, a one-time two- or three-hour mapping activity would be wishful thinking; factors such as budget, time, facilitators, preparation of young participants in advance, setting, and what is being asked are all essential details to consider if young participants will have an increased sense of place, neighbourhood, community, and belonging after having participated.

2.3.4 Participation with children and young people benefits the built environment

There is a shared notion among researchers and practitioners that participation with children and young people is a way to “offer children a place in our societies... enrich our cities, and... improve outdoor urban spaces” (Nordström 2017, p. 159). One of the foundational ideas behind participation overall is that each person is an expert in their own everyday life and, as participants, can contribute unique knowledge and ideas for their city (Innes & Booher 2004; Creighton 2005; Skogheim & Atkinson 2013; Benze & Walter 2017), whereas actors like architects and planners bring technical expertise and more general knowledge about urban agendas. In participation, children and young people can be therefore seen as ‘competent political’ actors (Sacré & De Visscher 2017), with their own exceptional experiences with and knowledge about their local areas.

The driving idea behind this rationale is that participation with children and young people can give planners, architects, and other urban decisions makers a richer and more complete understanding of the concerns and priorities of a community (Hart 1992) which in theory results in better informed choices and plans (Driskell 2002). Actively involving different groups within a city in the process of planning produces urban environments that suit the needs of all groups in a society (Heinrich & Million 2016). This is the reason why numerous participation activities are designed with the intention of gathering information about the needs and preferences of and/or the way particular spaces are used and perceived by young urban dwellers.

When it comes to smaller scale urban transformations, and in particular architectural plans for school buildings, it is said that children and young people’s participation has a high capacity to result in better design outcomes, in comparison to designing without them. Architects who have worked with children and young people, to understanding how they use space and what would result in higher quality spaces, refer to having improved their designs and plans

based in invaluable knowledge provided in participation sessions (Clark 2010; Dudek 2011).

How much and in what ways children and young people's participation in *urban planning*, particularly larger projects, improves the built environment is a question being asked in research and in practice, as solid evidence of positive outcomes would grant merit to participation activities, particularly in settings where budgets and/or will is limited. Evidence of impact of children and young people's participation on urban planning and its physical outcomes are, however, sparse (Wilks & Rudner 2013). This fact must be underscored - on one hand, the notion that children and young people's participation can improve the built environment is a recognized and cherished rationale for participation and there are established methods built on this concept. On the other hand, research offers little to no evidence confirming what is assumed. This tension is explored in this research, in the latter half of this thesis, as it could be blamed for having resulted in ineffective methods of participation with children and young people leading to disappointing results and disillusioned facilitators.

2.3.5 Children and young people's participation is a legal requirement in planning

In most European countries today, participation is to some extent legally required (Innes & Booher 2004; Skogheim & Atkinson 2013) and this is a globally growing trend, with more and more countries not only making participation mandatory in the planning process, but with longstanding laws in some countries being recently strengthened and clarified.

Some advocates for children and young people's participation have set out to ensure that participation is enshrined in law as a way of having a legal backing for their aims. Scotland, for example, is presently aiming to adopt the UNCRC in its entirety into national law (Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills 2020). In Norway, where the entire UNCRC is national law, parts of the UNCRC have

been more explicitly written into particular areas of law, and where the national planning and building act has required participation with children and young people since 1980, acting in compliance with ‘the rules’ is in the minds of planners and decision makers when they facilitate participation. The finer details of Norway’s planning legislation and the rules regarding participation will be explored in the following chapter.

The need to comply with laws about participation have backfired to a certain extent in some instances. In general literature about participation, scholars have discussed the reality that sometimes participation can slow down planning processes and increase costs (Innes & Booher 2004). This can be a reason why some planners, decisions makers, and developer may choose to avoid participation or perform the bare minimum. At the same time, some scholars have also argued that participation can also lead to decreased costs and to speed up planning processes (Creighton 2005; Innes & Booher 2004). This idea behind this is that *when there is evident and good compliance with planning legislation mandating participation*, planning administrations and/or politicians will be quicker to approve planning applications. This appears to sometimes be the case in Oslo, as it was reported by some of the research participants, however it also appears to have resulted in the uptake of methods that sound reasonable on paper but can easily be carried out with minimal effort resulting in essentially no meaningful outcomes and could therefore be classified as non-participation.

There is agreement in literature that local and national policies are crucial for the normalised and successful implementation of children and young people’s participation in urban planning and transformation, though research on real instances of policy leading to the development of participation methods and happenings is significantly lacking (Ataol et al. 2020). This is one key area in which this thesis fills a research gap.

2.4 Methods for involving children and young people

This fourth section of the chapter now turns to the different types of methods that are most often used in children and young people's participation. After an overview of these methods, the section also engages with literature on what does and not work in reference to examinations of past participation processes and with opens the topic of the role of adults in these processes.

2.4.1 Range of methods

Over the last few decades, the research and practice communities working on participation with children and young people have generated an assortment of methods for different settings, age groups, types of planning, and timelines. Chawla and Driskell's texts, referred to earlier, list what would be considered the more classical examples of participation methods such as drawings, daily activity schedules, role-play and drama activities, child-led walking tours, photographs taken by children and/or young people, and map-drawing. In addition to these, interviews, workshops, questionnaires and surveys, observations, and group discussions are also used, often made to be more child/youth-friendly in language and format and used in partnership with other methods (Driskell 2002; Chawla 2002). With the evolution of technology, some classical methods are being upgraded - such as substituting tablets or mobile phones for cameras, using mobile phones during walkabouts to document information about feelings and preferences along the way, or using digitalised maps instead of paper maps. New methods involving mobile applications that allow users to take photos, drop geotags like stickers or notes onto a digital map, track their commuting habits, and/or make collages or reimagine a public space have also emerged (Dudek 2011; Cochrane et al. 2014; Zhou et al. 2016; Ampatzidou et al. 2018). Additionally, while not well represented in academic literature, it is increasingly popular, especially among participation-keen architecture and design firms to involve children and young people in designing and making pop-up or temporary installations, using materials like cardboard, wood, and paint.

Various case studies have examined some of these methods. For example, Bartos (2013) and Burke (2005) tested out giving children cameras to document spaces and objects that are important to them and used these images to build interviews and small discussions. Some have asked children to create drawings used these images to initiate interviews and small discussions, in addition to analysing images which appeared most often (Béneker et al. 2010). McGlone (2016) conducted interviews with children in the site they were researching (a pop-up park) and during interviews invited children to draw if they felt it would enable them to express their ideas. Some have web-based participatory mapping to enable children to identify their perceptions of places and their physical activity (Zhou et al. 2016; Christensen et al 2014; Christensen & Mikkelsen 2013) or to assess walkability of neighbourhoods.

Before his recently published book *Urban Playground: How child-friendly planning and design can save cities* (2021), Tim Gill published the report *Building Cities Fit for Children* (2017) which detailed current approaches to creating child-friendly cities adopted in the cities of Calgary, Ghent, Antwerp, Freiburg, Oslo, Rotterdam, and Vancouver - some of which involve participation with children and young people. For example, Antwerp has implemented an online mapping tool, with customised content for each area, in which children (ages 6 to 14) routinely provide information about the quality and accessibility of play areas. In Freiburg there is a project that rotates from neighbourhood to neighbourhood every year involving 100 - 200 pupils from the local schools in walkabouts and diaries as well as neighbourhood walks and hearings with local officials. In Vancouver, the municipal Children, Youth and Families Advisory Committee includes child and youth members who are involved in consultations about urban design, housing, parks, and public spaces. These are a selection of numerous projects taking place around European cities through the initiation of cities governments, design and architecture firms, and community groups.

2.4.2 What works and what doesn't work

Research over the last few decades has focused more on the process of children and young people's participation more than the results and outcomes - in fact, for some, the educational and practical outcomes for both children/young people and adults was viewed as more important than physical outcomes for the built environment (Ataol et al. 2020; Bishop & Corkery 2017). That is to say, there is consensus about what works and what does not work generally for participation with children and young people.

Children and young people prefer hands-on direct participation methods such as building interactive models, field trips, and discussing with peer and creating presentation boards (Derr 2013; Derr & Tarantini 2016). The methods, tools, and setting(s) of participation should be adapted to the target age range. If it is the case that a wide range of ages is to be included in participation activities, it is crucial that different ages engage in a way that is relevant to them in terms of what they know, what they can do, and what they care about (Council of Europe 2020; Derr & Tarantini 2016).

The use of paper and digital maps with children and young people is favoured by planners because it easily translated into planning language or data and ideas that can easily be incorporated into a planning process. Research illuminates that qualitative mapping with children and young people can yield rich information about the physical activity spaces which children and young people use: namely about the prejudices and preferences children and young people develop with regard to issues like safety and usability (Christensen et al. 2015). That said, it can sometimes result in thin knowledge, or surface level information without important context and explanations (Hanssen 2019). Though easier to implement because they are more within the realm of typical research methods used by adults, traditional interviews and inviting children and young people to complete surveys and attend public meetings can be alienating, especially for non-native speakers - this is in large part because such methods involve unfamiliar rules, spaces, and conventions (Derr 2013).

Typically, research on a participation method with children and young people appears to involve a participation method that has been initiated by the researchers. In a recent, comprehensive, review of literature on children's participation, the three most common approaches to participation are identified as 'participatory planning research,' 'participatory action research,' and 'co-production' evidently all taking place in connection to a research project (Ataol et al. 2020), rather than being participation processes initiated by local governments. Further, there are almost no studies that examine participation methods with children and young people *specifically* in urban planning. Most are exploring methods in the context of a park, school, or public space redesign. Some are not connected to an official urban, building, or design plan in any way, but exist simply to test a method.

This thesis approached existing participation methods, initially with the focus on urban planning, but ultimately branching out to include methods that partly or entirely also are linked to smaller scale transformations; the study looks critically at methods that are already established and being used, rather than at one-off cases or cases that are highly controlled by a research team. In this way, the thesis is able to assess how participation methods situate themselves in real urban planning and transformation processes and consider the very real actors and forces that limit, promote, direct, and realise participation with children and young people.

2.4.3 The role of adults

Participation in planning is almost always organised and facilitated, so understanding participation with children and young people involves critically looking at the role and identities of the adults who do the organising and facilitation. That said, there is not a huge amount of literature focusing specifically on this topic in practice.

There are instances in Norway and other places of young people organising themselves in protest of, for example, the development of a water treatment plant on a beloved section of seaside. The ongoing Fridays for Future climate

strike action worldwide is an excellent example of young people taking initiative to speak on their own behalf on a topic they selected. This thesis is however addressing more traditional models of participation in which local government, planning administrations, and/or planning/architecture firms plan participation sessions based on their specific planning projects and aims.

Careful collaboration between several parties - like planners, architects, researcher, youth workers, and/or other civil actors - to create space for children's voices and to translate the ideas and values of children into useful policy ideas and projects, is essential (Wilks & Rudner 2013). Indeed, children and young people's participation in planning would not and could not exist if it were not for strong adult advocates (Robbé 2017). Collaboration between children and/or young people and adults to design and plan elements of the built environment involves a process of translation in which the adults can make design decisions based on the preferences and needs of young participants (Dimoulas 2017). Ideally, experts with technical knowledge and skills can support and educate children and young people as participants (Wilks & Rudner 2013), while children and young people can engage with planning and give meaningful contributions. To successfully enact participatory planning, there must be some balance of involvement with various stakeholders invested in listening to and including children (Wilks & Rudner 2013; Derr & Tarantini 2016; Nordström 2017).

The 'right' adult to involve in participation with children and young people is one who knows how to guide young participants while is also open to learning from them in the process (Hart 1992). Facilitators, if they are an independent figure in the process, may serve as a bridge between children and young people and the planning world to ensure that the needs and preferences of young participants are not lost in translation or misused (Alparone and Rissotto 2001). Some studies found that without someone operating as 'translator,' children and young people's preferences, needs, and ideas would have been inaccessible to planners and decision makers (Clark 2010; Alparone and Rissotto 2001). It was also evidently important that that figure translate 'adult language' and create

links for the children and young people involved to be able to engage with the planning processes (Alparone and Rissotto 2001; Ataol et al 2020). See Figure 2-4 for an example of when a team of experienced researchers and facilitators created a meaningful participation process for a group of children and young people, while also ensuring that the participation resulted in meaningful outcomes for the redevelopment of a public square.

Figure 2-4 Children’s Audit Participation Example. Auckland, New Zealand

This participation example shows sustained engagement with a targeted group of young participants who were able to interact through creative mixed methods. It is an example of close collaboration between adult facilitators and the young participants, to generate quality outcomes in the form of designs and inputs for a square re-design.

After a four-year project called Kids in the City, with 253 nine- to twelve-year-olds, the research team was approached by the Auckland Council’s Community Development team to conduct a child-audit of Freyberg Square. The hosted three workshops with 11 children from 7 to 13 years old, some of whom had been in the Kids in the City project. The workshops involved taking photographs of and discussing what they liked and disliked in the square; jumping, balancing, cartwheeling, and leaping, around different areas; envisioning and discussing how they might like a new fountain, seating, areas, and trees; and sending feedback to a design team and engaging in discussion with them about their proposed sketches for the square development (Carroll & Witten 2017).

The ‘wrong’ adults enter participation with children and young people, underestimating the competence of young participants, while patronisingly expecting them to further their own cause (Hart 1992) - in this study, that would be, for example, moving a planning project forward by ticking off the participation with children and young people box. Sometimes adults enter a

participation space with children and young people with the attitude that they, as a professional and expert, know what is best for children and young people (Dimoulas 2017) and this too is problematic if the intended aim is to meaningfully engage children and young people.

A problem for children and young people's participation, related to the adults involved, particularly in places like Oslo where it is widely required, is a lack of practitioners with the essential skills and knowledge to carry out participation effectively. This can be due to issues like lack of training opportunities for youth workers, lack of a children and young people's participation consultant, and lack of architecture and design teams with experience and willingness to work with children and young people (Dimoulas 2017). There is a need for more adults to be trained in how to "allow children to represent themselves" in participation (Ataol et al. 2020).

In one recent systematic review of literature on children's participation in planning, parents were identified as important figures because their feelings about public space influence where, how, and how often children spend time in urban outdoor spaces (Ataol et al. 2020).

2.5 Barriers and challenges of participation with children and young people

This final section in the chapter focuses on the most commonly identified barriers and challenges associated with participation with children and young people. Earlier the frameworks for measuring participation were described; some literature present in this section used these frameworks or something similar to assess the quality, effectiveness, and outcomes of children and young people's participation and resulted into some documentation pointing towards why participation all too often falls short and classifies truly as nonparticipation.

While children and young people's participation has been growing over the last few decades there is consensus among researchers and practitioners that significant barriers have prevented it from becoming integrated fully into planning systems - rather than it being institutionalized or "business as usual"

within the planning process (Bishop & Corkery 2017). In some instances, the failure of participation appears to be due to logistical shortcomings and uncertainty about the best methods to use or how to use them effectively (Mårtensson & Nordström 2017). Even in places where there are resources and enthusiasm for participation with children and young people, a lack of knowledge about the right tools and methods, and how to use them successfully, can serve as a serious barrier (Horelli 2002; Ampatzidou et al. 2018). Every year, however, more and more resources like guidebooks, trainings, workshops, and publications are available online for those seeking to increase their knowledge and skills related to carrying out participation with children and young people. More localised support and resources, and more research, would aid those looking to facilitate more, better participation processes with children and young people, but there are other types of barriers.

Another barrier to participation, including with adults, are negative and sceptical attitudes, sometimes based on prior experiences, of different actors in the planning and participation processes. For instance, there is the longstanding and sometimes true idea that participation slows down the planning process and result in poor decisions (Innes & Booher 2004). Other times participants are unwilling to engage because they fear that their concerns will not be heard, disagreements will not be resolved, their voices will have no influence, and/or that the participation is merely a box-ticking exercise (Innes & Booher 2010; Jones et al. 2005).

When it comes specifically to children and young people, another barrier is a problem of mindset. Adults place limits on children and young people - Cockburn notes that “children’s perceived passivity and the constant marginalisation and devaluation of their activities render them invisible to many” (2013, pp 224). While childhood and youth have been viewed differently at different times in history, children and young people have always in various ways contributing to their family and society through, for instance, attending school and learning, caring for older family members and younger siblings (Qvortrup 2005; Cockburn 2013), yet the views of children and young people are often trivialised or

ignored. In urban planning today, children and young people's views and experiences lack legitimacy their voice is either not heard or is silenced in the majority of urban planning processes (Wilks & Rudner 2013).

Innes & Booher (2004) argued that participation would "remain contested" until it proved itself to be of value on a wide scale and despite the ongoing research on children and young people's participation, featuring deep knowledge about methods, what children and young people value, and rationale, there remains scepticism and perhaps oddly slow uptake and success in the public realm. In a small-scale setting, particularly one controlled by researchers, setting up an age-appropriate, well-resourced, well-facilitated participation with children and/or young people can yield meaningful results to various extents. When examining, larger scale, on-going participation projects, taking place outside of an academic context and which involve a multitude of actors, interests, and capacities, structural issues can both bar such fruitful participation and, even in the case of a well-designed and resourced participation method, mean that the outcomes or participation do not ensure beyond a tokenistic online blog post in the local planning administration's website, or at best, appear as a few paragraphs summary within the planning proceedings for decision makers to see that indeed at some points children and young people were involves in some way.

This section of the chapter presents and discusses two main structural barriers associated with participation with children and young people, as identified by Heinrich & Million (2016).

2.5.1 Adult oriented processes, not child- or youth-friendly

The first systematic barrier for children and young people's participation is the adult orientation and technical complexity of planning processes and communications. Urban planning, building, and design are multifaceted processes involving formal structures, laws, and hierarchies. When all of the

people involved in planning are adults, namely adults with technical and industry expertise, jargon, and processes designed to taking planning from point A to point Z, integrating and accommodating children and young people can be a challenge, not to mention finding ways to make use of their inputs once participation sessions have taken place.

The ‘adult-oriented institutions’ (Heinrich & Million 2016) that rule urban planning generate participation involving language and processes that are not child- or youth- friendly (Cockburn 2013). While children typically do not have the language to discuss or conceptualise macro-level discussions about climate, economic, and cultural politics, they do have complex interactions daily with these issues on a micro-level in their neighbourhoods, homes, and schools (Hayward 2012) - which is what planning stands to gain from participation. Good communication with children and young people in participation is active and it is explanatory (Alparone & Rissotto 2001) throughout the whole process of participation, including the preparations and follow-ups. Even when it is active and explanatory throughout the process, the power difference between architects and planners and children and young people can add a ‘stumbling block’ in the participation process (Clark 2010). Effective communication is, however, absolutely critical to the success of participation with children and young people (Alparone & Rissotto 2001; Derr & Tarantini 2016; Horelli 1997).

In addition to communication difficulties, adult-oriented institutions and complex planning processes sometimes means there is not time or resources for ‘good’ participation activities. Participation tools and processes that are oriented towards children and young people, like drawing, taking photographs, hands-on building, child-led walks, etc. are typically initiated by researchers and youth workers. A study through the European Commission by Rand Europe and Eurochild (2021) found that such methods are well suited for producing ideas. The information learned, however, sometimes does not get translated into technical planning ideas or it does not get directed to the right people, because there are not established channels for which such information can reach the right people in planning (Morrow 2011). Indeed, the Rand Europe & Eurochild

(2021) study also found that adult-initiated participation with children and young people usually lack mechanisms to show their impact, so it is unclear what are the long-term impacts of participation for children and young people and for the built environment.

In a planning system that is dominated by adult- and technically-oriented communication and processes, the reality is that participation is not always appropriate, when the situation is such that other stakeholders and their interests, budgets and resources, political will, and/or possibilities for participation to influence decision making will result in an instance of nonparticipation (Innes & Booher 2004). Pushing forward participation activities, for example by strengthening legal requirements and inventing and strengthening methods, cannot truly result in quality participation processes and outcomes if the adult structures and institutions in the planning ecosystem do not make changes, such as becoming more flexible in their processes and being open to different ways of thinking and communicating; these are transformations that would not come about easily and which would not only serve to improve the opportunity for children and young people's participation, as it would be in connection to some sort of shift in power. That said, there are larger urban agendas that planning serves, like the very real need for more housing, infrastructure to support economic development, or sustainability transformations, that cannot suddenly or effortlessly adjust their timelines even if the end results would somehow be better for the majority (Levy 2016). More research would be required to examine exactly what this could look like and how it might take place. In the meantime, the reality is that planning systems as they exist now are suffocating and thorny environments for anyone working to enact good participation with children and young people, essentially thwarting the majority of participation processes from resulting in any serious outcomes for the built environment and modest to no outcomes, at least as far as this thesis is concerned in Oslo, for the children and young people involved.

Adult initiated participation activities, according to Hart (1992) are not fundamentally considered a type of nonparticipation. As mentioned in the last

subsection, Hart himself (1992) and other (Wilks & Rudner 2013; Derr & Tarantini 2016; Nordström 2017; Clark 2010) note that the right kind of adults who involve themselves in certain ways, can be beneficial to ensuring quality participation processes and outcomes. When the orientation of participation is, however, too heavily leaning towards adults in terms of the communication and processes, as described above, there is a risk that the transparency, respect, child-friendliness, inclusivity, sensitivity, and accountability required for effective and ethical participation according to The Council of Europe's Handbook on Children's Participation (2020) falls by the wayside.

2.5.2 Overrepresentation of economic interests

The second systematic barrier for children and young people's participation is the overrepresentation of economic interests in the planning process (Heinrich & Million 2016). Landowners, private development companies, investors, utility and transportation providers, and/or the local government are looking to generate economic gains from the planning process. One clear example of how economic interests can sabotage children's participation is from research on Child Impact Assessments (CIAs) which are sometimes used in Sweden to assess children's needs and interests in the physical environment to determine if and in what way they might be impacted by proposed changes in urban environments. (See *Figure 2-5* for a short description of CIAs.) One key element that determines the success of a CIA, in terms of its outcomes and influence in planning, is who initiates the CIA (Nordström 2017).

In Norway, and many other countries, private developers in particular have gained a great deal of power in the planning process. This evolution has diminished existing participation methods such that they can be rushed and done to a bare minimum (Fiskaa 2005). With more than 80% of planning applications - i.e., area zoning plans and detailed zoning plans - in Oslo are drafted and submitted by private developers (Statistics Norway 2018). The planning and building administration in Oslo is now primarily reactive, in other words they fulfil a procedural role by reviewing and approving or rejecting planning

Figure 2-5 Child Impact Assessments Participation Example

The following example shows a participation method that has been adapted to fit into the planning system. Its outcomes in terms of impact on planning and the built environment have been questioned because of the reality that the planning system involves a wide range of actors with their own priorities.

Child Impact Assessments (CIAs) are processes, which can be done in different ways, that results in knowledge about children's needs and interests in a site where planning and building is to take place. It is specifically imagined as a tool to ensure compliance with the UNCRC and aims to improve the living circumstances of children (Ombudsman for Children in Sweden, no date).

The process can involve a series of activities such as mapping, describing, and analysing a site from the view of children, looking at themes such as where children like to play and how potential planning and building may disrupt those areas. Another approach is to use a checklist with questions - in a yes/no format, with space for remarks after - such as:

- Does the decision mean that children's and young people's best interests are made a primary consideration?
- Does the decision mean that children's and young people's social, economic and cultural rights are considered?
- Does the decision mean that children's and young people's right to good health is considered?
- Have children and young people been given the opportunity to express their views?
- Have the needs of children and young people with physical or mental disabilities been given special consideration? (Ombudsman for Children in Sweden, no date)

CIAs are compulsory neither in all municipalities nor in all planning and building projects in Sweden. There has been much discussion about the effectiveness of this tool because its success can be dependent on who initiates it (and the amount of power they hold), the way in which the CIA is conducted, and what the outcomes of the CIA are (Nordström 2017).

applications submitted to them by private firms, rather than drafting their own zoning plans and proactively planning for society (Hofstad 2013; Falleth et al. 2008). Norway's planning system and Oslo-specific context will be discussed in more depth in the following chapter, however, but the point there is that the public planning administration's power to ensure regular, quality participation with children and young people, in accordance with their own laws and guidelines, is extremely limited.

With developers having so much power, removing power from both citizens and public planning administrations, there exists a lack of transparency in the planning process (Falleth et al. 2008). This has directly decreased creativity and inclusion (Nyseth 2011). It has also contributed to a hegemonic view of what makes an attractive place (Lysgård & Cruickshank 2012; Røe 2014). From many, there is a call to reinvent participation so that economic factors do not dominate planning and so that citizens can gain new opportunities to be active participants (Nyseth 2011; Lysgård & Cruickshank 2012; Skogheim & Atkinson 2013; Falleth et al. 2008). The right to the city (Lefebvre 1968) cannot take place without urban transformations which would require radical system change (Harvey 1973).

With the focus on economic gains from planning, stakeholders in the planning process are keen to lower costs, where possible. In recent research on children's participation in Sweden and Denmark, not having sufficient finances was identified as a key "problem or limitation in orienting... more toward children" (Jansson et al. 2020). In other words, children and young people's participation is viewed sometimes as an undesirable cost or an activity that does not deserve the funds necessary to carry out good participation.

Finally, this barrier - the overrepresentation of economic interests - can be connected to the reasons for urban planning (to be discussed more in depth in the following chapter). Planning takes place either to address particular problems that an urban area is experiencing or to anticipate for changed needs in an urban area (Levy 2016). The responsibilities of planners vary depending on

the needs of an area. For instance, if an area has a problem with low-employment, planners might focus on spaces that encourage economic development. If an area is expecting great population growth, planners might focus on creating sufficient housing and transportation infrastructure to support the population increase. More and more, planners are encouraged to consider ways to make areas more sustainable (Levy 2016). ‘Economic interests’ that limit children and young people’s participation are not always a problem of private developers and greedy landowners. Sometimes, a city’s agenda to build housing or increase the number of local businesses, with the aim of lowering unemployment, accommodating a growing workforce, and decrease poverty are the factors that dominate planning. This is not to say that participation cannot find its place within planning’s objectives, but if planners find participation to be a task that slows or derails their primary objectives - to address an issue and/or to plan for the future - they may avoid participation or conduct bare-minimum participation activities (Lysgård & Cruickshank 2012; Skogheim & Atkinson 2013).

2.6 Chapter conclusions

This chapter has carefully presented tools for measuring children and young people’s participation, considered the common rationale, discussed the various types of methods that are used, and examined the key barriers.

Participation methods can be digital or paper, one-time events or multi-year projects, and creative or traditional. They can be orchestrated by adults or directed by young people, focused on children and young people’s use of space or focused on children and young people’s ideas, and integrated into the planning process or taking place independently from it. When it comes to choosing the right method(s) for involving children and young people, understanding local context is crucial.

Importantly, in this chapter, the framework of Hart’s Ladder of Children’s Participation and of *The Council of Europe Handbook on Children’s Participation* have been introduced as a tool for unpacking themes such as the role of adults in

participation with children and young people, the necessary conditions for effective and ethical participation, the level of support and resources that participation necessitates, and signs of nonparticipation.

The next chapter will delve into the nuances of the Norwegian planning system and of Oslo Municipality in order to continue the story of the local context surrounding this study. This shift from children and young people's participation towards the mechanisms of Norwegian planning enables the following chapter later naturally flow into the place of children and young people's participation specifically within Oslo's urban planning world in order to set the stage for the presentation of the methods and findings.

Chapter 3. Urban planning and participation in Oslo, Norway

3.1 Introduction

Norway is a long, mountainous country with an extremely intricate coastline of fjords. The sixth largest in terms of land size in Europe (with 305,470 km² of mainland), it has the second lowest population density of all European countries with approximately 5.1 million inhabitants. About 80% of the population live in or very near urban areas (MLGM 2014b). By the year 2060, however, Norway expects to see its overall population swell to about 7 million inhabitants, with the largest amount of growth occurring in and around Oslo (MLGM 2014b). That said, Norway is traditionally quite a rural country, with planning and building innovations and styles from other parts of northern and western Europe slow to reach and be implemented in its relatively small urban areas (ARL, n.d.).

While Norway is known internationally today, in the world of building and planning, for unique sustainable and Nordic architecture, there is not a large range of literature detailing Norwegian urban planning, leastwise delving into the nuances and tensions in the planning systems. This chapter draws on academic articles and books both English and Norwegian, as well as country reports from OCED and other international authorities, in order to provide a comprehensive picture of urban planning in Norway, with a focus on Oslo, the capital city and by far the country's largest urban area.

The chapter begins broadly, defining urban planning generally, then moving into Norwegian urban planning history and its series of building and planning laws, and finally moving down to the level of Oslo Municipality, which is the specific site of this thesis. Ultimately, the aim of this chapter is to describe Oslo's urban planning and to understand both the broad tensions that plague the planning system and the role of children and young people's participation. Describing the landscape of planning in Oslo is a critical part of understanding the context surrounding children and young people's participation, which cannot be divorced from analysis involved answered the research questions and aim.

3.2 Understanding urban planning in Oslo

The first half of this chapter is dedicated to painting a clear image of urban planning in Oslo. It begins by broadly defining urban planning and how urban planning evolved in Norway, looking at its planning objectives and the national planning and building acts. It then delves into Oslo, presenting and examining the different types of plans and typical planning processes, main actors, and key challenges and tensions within the planning system.

3.2.1 Understanding urban planning

In the first half of the 20th century, planning in North America and Western Europe was seen largely as just a physical design process with blueprints and master plans (Horelli 2002). Theories about the procedures and methods of planning were based on a linear process involving surveying, analysing, and then planning, as set out by Geddes (1915) and debates revolved around modernist and traditionalist ways of planning (Couch 2016).

The social and economic changes brought by the Second World War ushered in a new age in which planners began to view cities and regions as dynamic entities consisting of interconnected parts, in which changes to one part or aspect of a part would impact the other parts (Couch 2016; Horelli 2002). As Lynch & Hack reflected, “what we do to our habitat has an enduring effect on our lives” (1984, p. 2).

These ideas have evolved with time, such that today urban planning, generally speaking, involves managing land based on the projected needs of a population and the goals of the local and regional government and understanding the potential uses of land involves understanding the complexity and interconnectedness of what could take place on that land. Plans are sometimes anticipatory and based on projects for certain areas or, other times, plans are based on addressing particular problems an area is already having (Levy 2016). The scale of planning today ranges from city-wide plans like municipal master

plans, with agendas alongside it and plans within smaller areas, to planning for a small group of new housing, to building plans (Lynch & Hack 1984).

A guiding idea of planning today is that, without it, cities would sprawl into the countryside and develop into an “inefficient patchwork” of interconnected areas, making the provision of services more expensive and could unfairly disadvantage some groups of people. Planning therefore serves, in theory, to make the urban patchwork more seamless, allowing for the better provisions of services, to decrease potential inequalities among people living in a city, and to conserve natural resources and historic environments (Couch 2016). The details of a planned site ultimately have a “biological, social, and psychological impact” when they “limit what people can do, and yet also open new opportunities for them” (Lynch & Hack 1984, p. 2).

The role of planners today therefore varies depending on the needs of an area. For instance, if an area is expecting a high rate of population growth in the near future, the focus of planners may be on creating sufficient housing and transportation infrastructure to support the population increase. Another example is if an area has difficulties with low employment rates, the focus of planners might be on spaces that enable and spark economic development. Additionally, the topic of sustainability is becoming increasingly important, and planners are encouraged to think of new ways to make places more sustainable (Levy 2016).

The process by which cities are planned today varies by geographic location, size, population, government involvement, and numerous other factors. There is, however, a typical flow of events that one could expect to see in planning. First, once those responsible for planning have established objectives, more details such as identifying sites and specialized plans for those sites can start to be developed. After, the respective parties - which could include for example private developers, landowners, transportation sector representatives, and/or municipal planners - draft budgets, create projective timelines, and allocate the required resources. Negotiations between planners and the group(s) paying for the

planning of a site (e.g. a government and/or private developer) take place, and, at certain points in the process, architects, designers, and citizens are involved to varying degrees (Lynch & Hack 1984). Throughout this process, planners serve a largely advisory role, drawing on expertise and statistics from economics, transportation, environment, law, and mapping, to support the planning process, often editing their plans multiple times based on changed circumstances, new information, and/or the requests made by developers and/or citizens (Levy 2016). Depending on the scale of the plan, it may involve multiple planners at different moments throughout the process, in order to plan on the more general large scale and to also plan detailed sections of the city (Levy 2016). In the end, plans become highly detailed and specific - detailing, for example, road size, materials, and actual costs - until plans are finalized and construction begins (Lynch & Hack 1984).

3.2.2 Understanding urban planning in the Norwegian context

With this general picture of urban planning in mind, the following subsections will examine the specifics of urban planning in Norway. The first subsection starts at the highest level of planning authority in Norway, the national building and planning acts and their defining characteristics, as well as the types of planning the most recent act has set out. The second subsection focuses on Norway's municipalities and their significant place in country's urban planning. The final section outlines how planning works in Oslo, identifying key actors and priorities and the typical planning processes.

3.2.2.1 A short history of Norwegian building and planning acts

Though a historically rural country with relatively small cities and towns, Norway has seen various forms of land-use planning through history. As early as the late 1200s, some urban regulations existed about the separation of living areas and polluting areas. Urban planning as it is recognised today evolved through the course of three phases in Norway.

The start of the first phase is marked by the independence in 1814, when most of the country's population lived in rural areas, but the existing small urban areas had general land use plans (ARL, n.d.). In 1838, the municipality system was created, granting self-governance to 369 areas (called *formannskapsdistrikts*), 25 of which were designated as town municipalities (Derry 1973). In the 1840s, a state planning law came into force starting that the largest of the town municipalities needed to create town plans to regulate the implementation of building projects and urban infrastructure. With this, came formalised planning committees, which consisted of managers of planning and managers of infrastructure sectors (ARL, n.d.).

The second phase of urban planning evolution started in 1924, less than two decades after Norway the second independence in which the Norwegian state became independent from Sweden and entirely its own autonomous kingdom and modern nation state. During this phase, a new building act was brought to life and more and more rural areas began engaging in formal land use planning. With a growing population and technological advancements in transportation, planning collaborations among bordering municipalities began taking place, with the aim of orderly land use and quality provision infrastructure. A 'plan' at this time resembled a sort of zoning plan that detailed future developments for an area (ARL, n.d.).

Finally, the third and current phase of planning began in 1965 when the national government introduced the first building act to encompass the entire Norwegian mainland, creating three planning levels - the state, the county, and the municipal (ARL, n.d.). The Building Act of 1965's central objective was to improve and develop business, industry, and infrastructure through the coordination of economic and spatial planning (Falleth 2012; OECD 2017). It introduced three different types of plans - those to be used at a municipality level, at a country level, and at a connected county level. Uptake was slow, as planning committees and municipalities needed time to adapt to the new structures and types of plans; following the act, not one plan was produced and approved until 1971 (Fiskaa 2002). This sluggishness has been credited to an

overall lack of planning guidelines, expertise, and finances during the years following 1965 (Arge 1977; Falleth 2012). That said, while not officially approved, and without connection to the rules set out in the 1965 act, about 70% of municipalities did have some sort of formal planning taking place by 1986 (Falleth 2012).

The planning system saw a transformation in 1985, with the introduction of the Building Act of 1985, bringing more comprehensive regulations on land-use planning in different geographical areas and for transportation systems (OECD 2017). Another important feature of the modern planning system, ushered in by the 1985 legislation, is the municipal master plan, which must include both a land area part and a social part (Falleth 2012). These plans were approved by municipalities themselves, which has resulted in a significantly faster planning process because previously municipal plans had to be approved on the national level (Falleth & Stokke 2010). The Building Act of 1985 granted private developers the possibility to author plans and submit them to municipalities for approval (OECD 2017), an action which has resulted in increasing private sector control of land-use planning and decreasing public sector control of planning (Falleth 2012).

The third and most recent planning legislation is the Building and Planning Act of 2008. Significantly, it transferred the responsibility of determining which areas shall require planning to the counties and the municipalities, with a Regional and Local Planning Strategy above them offering guidelines and priorities. It also formalised the process of submitting zoning plans through the introduction of procedural requirements (OECD 2017), slightly strengthened participation laws, and introduced more guidelines sustainable and green building (Falleth 2012).

Now today, formalised planning processes, in accordance with national guidelines, are well established in the municipalities (Falleth 2012). Norway has what its own government describes as “a high level of planning activity,” meaning it sees about 2,000 to 3,000 plans (including land use plans, zoning plans, and municipal master plans) yearly, in recent years (MLGM 2014b). The

following section steps down to examine planning on the municipal level, where the majority of planning takes place.

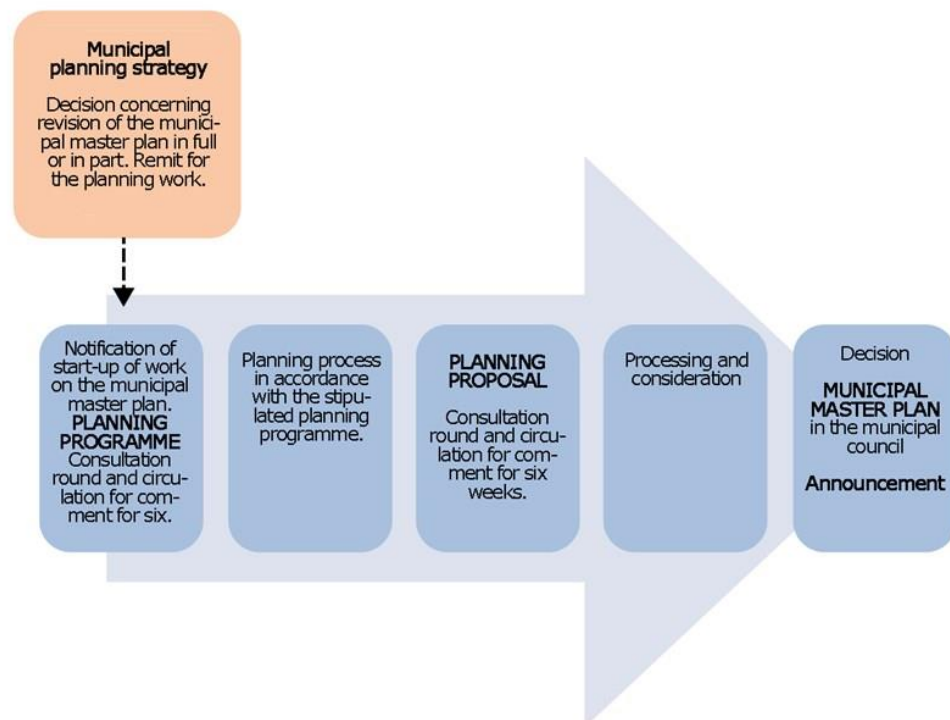
3.2.2.2 *Municipalities*

While today 82% of the country's population live in urban areas, only 7 of its municipalities having a population greater than 100.000 people, and nearly 250 of the 356 municipalities having fewer than 10.000 people (Statistics Norway, n.d.); there is relatively little urban planning taking place and almost no highly developed municipal planning and building departments. Oslo stands out as an exception, one of Europe's fastest growing capital cities (Andersen & Skrede 2017), with around 650.000 (Oslo Kommune n.d.a.) residents in the municipality (nearly triple the next largest city Bergen) and an estimated 1 million in the greater metro area (Statistics Norway 2020) or roughly a fifth of the county's population.

Norwegian municipal governments cooperate with the county governments in managing different services; for example, the primary schools are managed by municipalities while the secondary schools are managed by the regions (Mønnesland & Naustdalshid 2000). In 2020, most of Norway's counties endured a merging process, taking the number of counties (fylker) from 19 to 11. At the same time, some of the municipalities (kommuner) within the counties were merged, reducing the number of municipalities from 422 to 356 (Kommunereform 2020).

The main planning authorities as designated by the building and planning law, are the municipalities, which are responsible for preparing and approving planning strategies, municipal master plans, and zoning plans. Although, it is important to note that the majority of *zoning plans* are prepared by private developers or sectoral authorities, with municipalities processing and approving the plans in advance of submitting them to local politicians for political approval (OCED 2017). Figure 3-1 illustrates how the Norwegian government envisions the municipal planning strategies and municipal master plans flow into and connect with other elements of planning such as zoning plans and planning programmes.

Figure 3-1 Relationship between the municipal planning strategy and the municipal master plan process. Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation (2014)



3.2.3 Urban planning in Oslo

Oslo is one of Europe's fastest growing European capitals (Andersen and Skrede 2017) with the projected population of Oslo reaching 816,000 by 2040 (Syse et al. 2018). The geographic area of Oslo covers 450km² with two thirds of that being recreational area or protected forests (URBACT 2017). Oslo is the most populous Norwegian city¹ with the recorded population at the end of 2018 of Oslo Municipality at 681,067 with nearly a million if surrounding regions are included (Statistics Norway 2019). Oslo geographically sits fairly south in Norway, at the northern tip of Oslo Fjord and is bordered by hilly, rocky forests

¹ The next most populous cities are Bergen with 281,190 inhabitants and Trondheim with 196,159 inhabitants (Statistics Norway 2019).

and farmland. This geography makes outward urban development difficult in the sense that necessary infrastructure costs would be quite high and because both the forest and farmland is heavily protected by national law (Næss et al. 2011).

Historically speaking, Oslo is the oldest Scandinavian capital city, dating back older than 1000 years. The Danish King Christian IV rebuilt the city after the Great Fire of 1624 and formally named it Christiania. Through the 1600s and 1700s the city developed because of its role in domestic and foreign trade - namely exporting timber. In the late 1800s, Oslo grew even more thanks to increasing industry, particularly along the Akerselva River and on the eastern part of the city. It was in 1905 that Norway became a nation independent from Sweden, and in 1924 Christiania was named Oslo, it's original name before Danish rule (Nystad 2004).

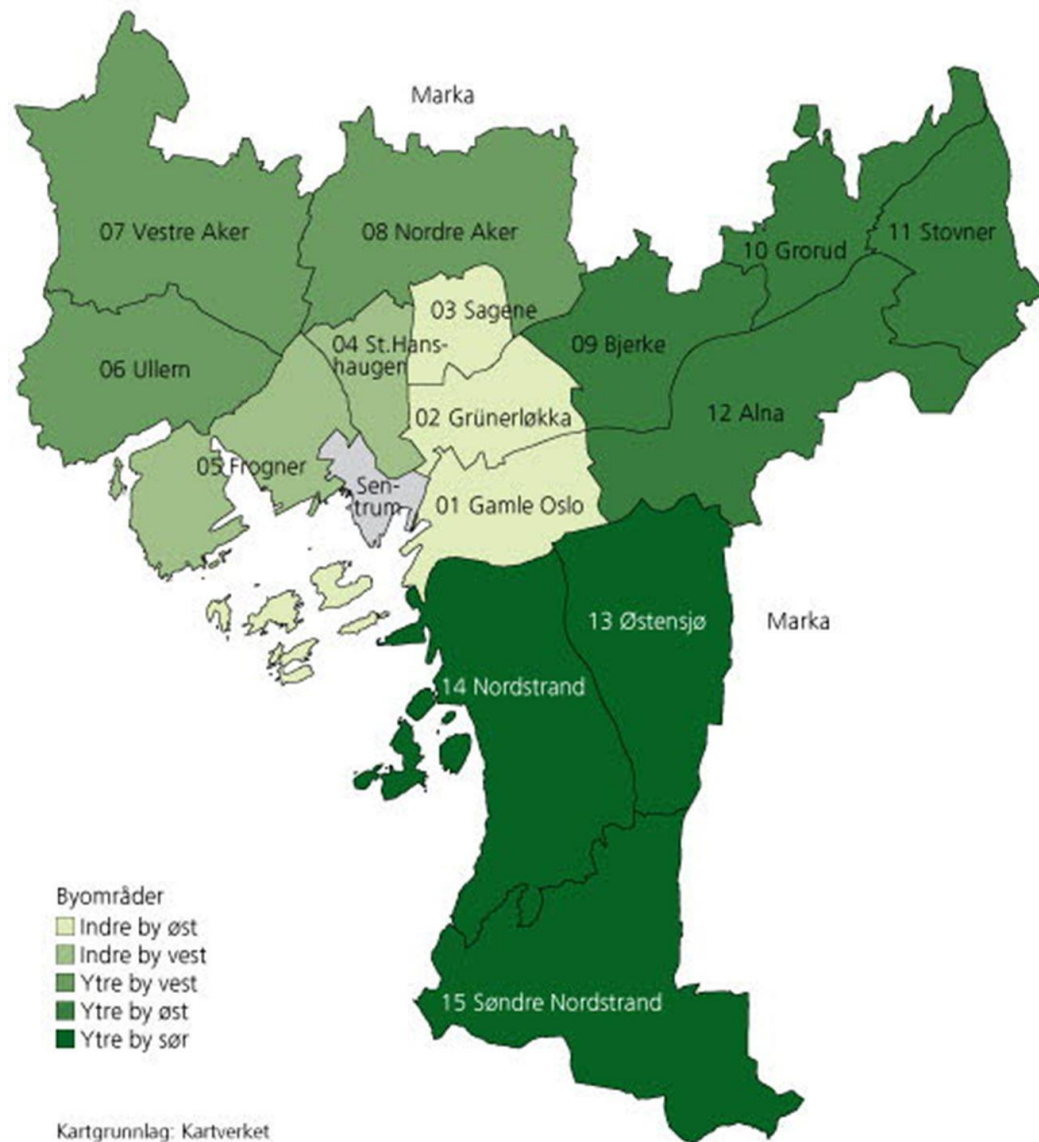
Within Oslo, there are 15 districts (*bydel*) which are responsible for managing primary health care and social services, school leisure spaces, local parks, transportation for the disabled passengers, and some financial housing subsidies (Nordal 2018). See Figure 3-2 for a map of Oslo's districts.

Since 2015 a left-leaning coalition government has focused heavily on cutting emissions, banning private vehicles in the city centre, and creating the largest car free zone with parking redeveloped into public space in all of Europe (Carmona et al 2019). Despite some discontent among certain residents, which even reached international news sites, the Labour Party, Green Party and Socialist Left Party collation was re-elected in 2019, to remain in power until at least 2023 (Oslo Kommune n.d.b)

For more than fifteen years, Oslo's extensive waterfront has been significantly transformed with the aim of rebranding the city: changes include the creation of the Barcode financial district; the construction of the Opera House and Modern Art Museum; the more recent move and reopening of the main public library, the Munch Museum, and the National Museum; as well as the creation of new high scale neighbourhoods with a range of new shops, restaurants, and water recreation areas (Røe 2015; Carmona et al 2019).

Figure 3-2 Map of Oslo, showing city districts

The sea lies in the south and the north, west, and east are bordered by forest and countryside. The colour coding indicates if a district is considered inner or outer.



From the point when Oslo was first established in 1624, city officials regulated planning, construction, and built environment projects (Andersen 2014). In modern times, Oslo began experiencing high population growth coupled with increased building stock, public transport, and road system expansion, through the 1980s, all while avoiding urban sprawl and preserving the greenbelt forest areas bordering the city. Since then and to this day, “the compact city has obtained hegemonic status as a model for sustainable urban development”

among Norwegian planners (Næss et al. 2011, p. 136), as well as being seen as the solution to population growth (Andersen ^ Skrede 2017). Since the 1990s urban planning in Oslo has been characterised by concentrated and compact development and in particular the associated sustainable mobility needs - with considerable investment made in both public transportation and roads (Næss et al. 2011). With the growing population of Oslo, there is increasing pressure to build both more high-density housing and top-quality outdoor public urban spaces (Lipton 2004; Guttu ^ Schmidt 2008). The municipality, however, operating with a tight budget, sold off much of its property to state actors such as the national railway, harbour authorities, and public transport operators - the income from these sales was used to create needed new and renovated social infrastructure, but left the municipality with limited open land, just as the city is becoming more and more compact. Because of this, the municipality relies more than ever before on the market to provide quality public spaces in Oslo and order to mandate this has invented its own unique (in Norway) planning system (Selvig 2015; Sirowy 2015; Carmona et al. 2019)

Today, Oslo has the most complex and developed building and planning administration in Norway that has come to be known as the ‘Oslo Model.’ The following section will describe the Oslo Model, its key differences from the planning set out in the planning and building act, and the rationale and concerns associated with it.

3.2.3.1 The Oslo Model of urban planning

To truly understand how and where children’s participation is situated within urban planning, it is critical to examine the planning process itself and for this thesis, this means taking a focused look at the Oslo Model. Oslo’s planning system is called the Oslo Model [*Oslo-modellen*] because it deviates slightly from the planning structure identified in the planning and building act. This section will give an overview of the types of plans in Oslo, the typical planning process, and the key actors who are typically involved in planning. Though the planning and building act sets out a fairly flexible system for planning, Oslo Municipality’s

relatively high levels of growth caused it to want a system with more flexibility that would allow for, theoretically, faster planning with less hierarchy and procedural checks (Holsen 2020). The first paragraphs of this subsection set out the normal types of plans, which exist across Norway and in Oslo, and the end of this subsection identifies and discusses the innovation which Oslo has brought into its planning system to address the aforementioned concerns about planning hierarchy and slow timelines. *Visit Appendix 3 at the end of this text to see a table with the plans which are identified in the following subsections.*

3.2.3.2 Statutory plans

There are three types of land use plans that, once approved by the planning and building administration and the politicians in city hall, are statutory documents that must be done according to the details set out within them. These, which exist in across Norway as in Oslo, are the land use section of the municipal master plan, area zoning plans, and detailed zoning plans, all to be defined below.

First, at the highest level, there is the municipal master plan, which is created by the planning and building administration and serves as a framework for the development of the municipality and the management of land use. For over 50 years, Norway has considered a strong, comprehensive municipal master plan to be the most important plan in the planning hierarchy (Holsen 2020). The drafting of Oslo's municipal master plan takes many months and involves a significant range of stakeholders and citizens at different points in the process. The document, in the end, sets out what shall or shall not be built and where, identifies areas that require zoning plans or plans for the use of public space (*Veiledende planer for offentlige rom (VPOR)* or Guidance Plan for Public Space, in English - which will be explained shortly). Oslo's municipal master plan, like

all municipal master plans in Norway, include two parts² - one that details the land use, which becomes legally binding, and one focused on society and how the master plan should strengthen community, access to social services, educational aims, accessibility, mobility, etc. and describe long-term challenges to the environment holistically speaking (MLGM 2013a).

Once a municipal master plan is installed, smaller scale planning within the master plan can be initiated. There are two types of zoning plans [reguleringsplan], whose function is to regulate the use and protection of land, buildings, and waterways and seaside (Hanssen and Falleth 2014).

Area zoning plans [områdeplan] are the larger of the two, involving a map and corresponding information about what specifically shall be built (or not built), where, and when. An area zoning plan will identify where it is necessary to create a detailed zoning plan [detaljregulering], of which there are typically 4 to 6 per area zoning plan (MLGM 2014). Detailed zoning plans [detaljregulering] are similar in nature to area zoning plans, the difference being that they offer a greater level of detail and cover a smaller geographical space within an area zoning plan and are almost always prepared by private firms then submitted to the PBE (*Plan, bygg og eiendom*, the Planning and building Agency of Oslo Municipality) for processing before being sent off the city hall for approval and becoming statutory (Andersen & Skrede 2017; Falleth et al. 2008; OECD 2017). Technically speaking, both area zoning plans and detailed zoning plans may be drafted and submitted for political approval by public planners, private firms, and/or any individual person (MLGM 2014).

² The societal section is called *samfunnsdel og byutviklingsstrategi* and a land use section is generally referred to as *arealdelen av kommuneplan* in the 2008 Planning and Building Act, but in Oslo referred to as the *juridisk arealdel*.

3.2.3.3 *Introducing the VPOR (guidance plan for public spaces)*

In the last several years, the PBE in Oslo has at any given time been in the midst of processing around 100 detailed zoning plans (de Vibe 2015). These zoning plans (which typically have a scale of 1: 5 000 or 1: 10 000 (OCED 2017)) have come from numerous private planning firms: there are a couple big players, but any type and size of firm can submit a plan, and plans from many different firms are accepted every year. Detailed zoning plans that are submitted by private firms must ensure their plans comply with the main goals and limits of the area zoning plan above it, or, if there is not one, the land use section of the municipal master plan (Holsen 2020). This is where the Oslo Model becomes relevant.

The largest and fastest growing Norwegian urban area, with an increasing need for dense housing and quality outdoor public space, Oslo Municipality has taken the liberty of pushing outside the parameters of the building and planning act by creating a new type of plan called the VPOR. This is the defining feature of the Oslo Model, which aims to decrease the amount of zoning planning done by the planning and building administration and allow for a high amount of zoning and building plans to be quickly drafted and submitted by private firms, while ensuring a certain level of quality in the plans and in the structural outputs.

A VPOR, which is the Norwegian abbreviation for *Veiledende planer for offentlige rom*, or in English a Guidance Plan for Public Spaces, is a type of non-statutory guidance plan, generally meant to facilitate a holistic development of public spaces and infrastructure (Kind & Lozancic 2017) and *can take the place of an area zoning plan (which would be statutory)*. A VPOR must be approved by the city hall but are not, notably, statutory documents (Holsen 2020). Oslo developed the VPOR for a few key reasons and its usage has come with both approval and scepticism from researchers.

The rationale behind making VPORs rather than area zoning plans is to increase the speed and flexibility of the planning process in order to decrease conflicts and accommodate for the rapid growth of Oslo. VPORs are drafted by the PBE as

essential guidance documents, to direct what shall be built where and how, in the way that an area zoning plan would, but once finalised by the PBE they are not legally binding plans like areas zoning plans. What this means is that detailed zoning plans submitted for the areas within VPOR planned areas need not adhere to every point within the VPOR, allowing for - or what VPOR advocates argue - more flexibility and speed and less conflict in planning (Holsen 2017; Kind & Lozancic 2017).

Additionally, the thinking behind VPORs is that it gives the municipality higher capacity to demand development of public areas, since VPORs are created by the PBE rather than private developers (Selvig 2015; de Vibe 2015). This is because privately drafted area zoning plans, which would exist in place of a VPOR, may intentionally exclude public spaces, since they would not earn as much as privately owned areas. Whereas the PBE can require public space development, including the construction of new preschools, square, and parks, within areas identified as needing detailed zoning plans (Holsen 2020). Though VPORs are not legally binding, the city hall is sympathetic to the guidelines set out in VPORs and can decline privately drafted area zoning planning applications that defy the public space development needs described in a VPOR.

There is one notable study that expresses scepticism about the above-mentioned rationale for using VPORs in place of area zoning plans. It found inconclusive evidence to support the idea that there is less conflict or less time involved in planning for areas with VPORs, meaning that the processes are actually not made faster. In the planning cases examined in their study that demonstrated lower than average conflict and time spent, it appeared that other factors such as the number and types of people involved in the planning process could have been the key to less conflict and a faster timeline (Kind & Lozancic 2017). Beyond Kind & Lozancic's study, there has not been much research exploring the functionality of VPORs and if they succeed in forcing more public space development. In 2020, Holsen released a study comparing four planning processes, two of which used a VPOR and two which did not use a VPOR, involving two experienced developers in Oslo. It similarly indicated a lack of

clear-cut evidence to support the use of VPORs, concluding that negotiations among stakeholders involved in planning would work differently but with more or less the same processes and outcomes without or without a VPOR (Holsen 2020).

Figure 3-3 Context Box: When public space is private space

In Norway, like in much of Europe, outdoor urban public spaces are often privately built, owned, and managed. There is an entire literature exploring this trend, and while there is not space to explore it in this thesis, it is important to note that Oslo is, like many European cities, experiencing tensions because of the public/private overlap. One example of this is presented in a study about the neighbourhood Tjuvholmen, a new, high-end neighbourhood, built protruding into Oslo fjord and nestled around the new Modern Art Museum. The private management of this neighbourhood swiftly removes litter and graffiti, and meticulously maintains the green areas and ensure everything is in good repair (Murphy 2017). The swimming facilities on the fjord in this neighbourhood are open to the public, but in 2015 complaints from neighbourhood dwellers resulted in the swimming areas to be closed to the public by 8pm. Due to public debate and a newspaper campaign, however, the neighbourhood was made to amend the public swimming area's closing time to 11pm (Carmona et al 2019). Such cases are not uncommon in Europe and this example serves to connect the situation in Norway to these broader tensions related to the public/private overlap.

This thesis is heavily interested in VPORs, as they are the type of plan which most frequently involved children and young people in established methods of participation. In the making of the municipal master plan children and young people around Oslo are involved in different ways, and sometimes more time and resources than normal are available to facilitate high quality participation activities, however the methods employed are customised rather than those examined in this thesis which are repeatable and used all around Oslo. Detailed zoning plans, which are the most numerous types of plan, are mostly made by

private firms, which typically engage in the most minimal forms of participation, rarely those methods which are at the heart of this thesis.

There are three other planning related documents of importance in the Oslo Model and of importance to this thesis because they engage children and young people relatively often, though are non-statutory plans. The first are thematic strategy documents which are drafted by different government ministries to visualize, prioritize around topics like cycling, green spaces, quality public spaces, building material quality, etc. Being thematic, these can be more accessible to children and young people than a the more technical zoning plans, for example. The second are impact assessments which are drafted by the PBE, and sometimes by private firms either of their own initiative or in partnership with the PBE, to understand potential impacts of building or not building particular infrastructure in particular areas. The third are planning programmes (*planprogram*), which can be simply defined as a plan for a plan. These serve as a sort of formal guidance plan in areas with complex planning needs to set out guidelines, standards, and priorities to consider when drafting zoning plans.

The Oslo Model appears to operate similarly to Western European counties which proopt having plan-led planning but in practice have more development-led planning; despite the intention to making planning flexible while still holding private firms accountable to the municipal master plan, the amount of discretion allowed in practice is notable and perhaps more than planning system itself assumes is taking place (Holsen 2020; Muñoz Gielen & Tasan-Kok 2010).

3.2.3.4 Planning process

In very general terms, the planning process commences with the municipal master plan, which results in area zoning plans, VPOR, and thematic plans, which results in detailed zoning plans, impact assessments, and planning programmes, which result in building and eventual urban infrastructure and transformation.

When a new municipal master plan is made, there is a public announcement along with a planning programme that involves a strategy for what goals and themes should come into the municipal master plan, methods for assessment and for how to involve stakeholders, and a timeline. Once this is released, the municipality's planning administration investigates more deeply various details of the programme and drafts a municipal master plan. During this process, citizen participation and involvement from various stakeholders takes place; each municipality does this differently, but, at a minimum, comments and inputs in a public forum must take place at the start when the programme is released, and at the end, when the final draft is being considered for final approval (Wensaas 2016).

There are two windows of time when participation in the planning process must occur - after the first public announcement of the plan and before the plans are finalised for approval. What this means for children and young people's participation is that, in order for it take place, there needs to be someone in the process thinking ahead and finding the right people and methods to enact participation activities. How does this link to Hart's Ladder of Children's Participation (1992) and *The Council of Europe Handbook on Children's Participation* (2020)? These frameworks are in fact rather disassociated from planning processes, but Shier's model (2001), mentioned in Chapter 2, offers insight. These two moments in the planning process are what Shier would classify as not openings or opportunities, but obligations, because the state has an ongoing policy requirement to facilitate participation. If indeed the state has this obligation at two moments, it is then possible to turn towards Hart's ladder and the Council of Europe's handbook to consider the ethicality and the effectiveness of the participation that is in fact taking place in these moments of obligation. The findings and conclusions of this thesis will consider this, as well as participation activities that happen outwith these moments of obligation. Leaving aside questions about the windows of obligation for participation with children and young people, this subsection returns now to detailing the formation of municipal master plans.

Figure 3-4 Context Box: Critique of Oslo's municipal master plan

A central critique of Oslo's last municipal master plan was that densification strategies were primarily set to take place in the city's eastern parts, "not at the affluent west... with its detached single-family homes with gardens" (Andersen and Skrede 2017, p. 587, p.589). Critics argued that the east side is already suffering from over-congested traffic lines and the air and noise pollution caused by it; they insist improvements to the transportation must be made before planned developments take place but there is a lack of political will to secure the necessary investment in infrastructure (Andersen and Skrede 2017).

Participation in the making of Oslo's new municipal master plan

At the time of the making of this thesis, a new municipal master plan was underway and there had already been an initial draft drawn up which was undergoing debate and editing. Between 11 and 29 of May 2017, there were four participation meetings held - one for central borough [bydel], one of eastern, one for western, and one for northern (and to the south of Oslo there is the fjord). There were 40 registrants for the central borough meeting, 66 for the east, 127 for the west, and 60 for the south. The meetings involved three parts: an introduction to the new urban and social development strategy, a workshop focused on densification, and an open discussion plenary in which all present could speak their suggestions and objections to the politicians directly. Employees from the Oslo Building and Planning Agency [Plan- og bygningsetaten] were present at all participation sessions to direct participants in writing down their input on post-it notes, flip charts, and maps, and afterwards these inputs were registered electronically. The inputs have been summarized and published online for public viewing, and the Oslo Building and Planning Agency notes that they reference the information when they audit the progress of the municipality's urban and social development strategy (Maus 2018).

The topics of concern which emerged from this meeting were: creation of and preservation of green spaces and access to the fjord and river; too tall housing without character; lack of arts and non-commercial space to meet, access to public transportation, local sports facilities, places for young people to hang out, and separated bike paths; protection of wildlife; and noise pollution. These topics were brought up in connection to the central topic of densification: how to prepare for increasing population and where and how to develop the city (Maus 2018).

At the participation meetings, some participants expressed a lack of faith in the participation process itself. The report states, for example, some participants asking:

“What is the point of participation processes going forward when the inhabitants have clearly signalled that they do not want the development that the municipality is planning for?”

In addition to the concern that, “the municipality lets the developers run ahead of them, instead of [the municipality] managing the development themselves and upholding the policy they established.” (Maus 2018).

The municipal master plan draft must consist of area zoning plans (or, in the case of Oslo, also VPORs), thematic plans, and jurisdiction maps, as well as impact assessments. Other relevant illustrations of the thinking behind the plan, such as surveys and maps from citizen participation will also be attached (Wensaas 2016). Once the plan is drafted there will be a public hearing, after which affected stakeholders can present written evaluations and relevant regional and national agencies can make formal oppositions about the MMP draft. Written evaluations from stakeholders, however, do not have the legislative power to change the draft, and there can be no kind of formal complaints from landowners and organisations (Wensaas 2016). Eventually, the plan is approved, and the prescribed activities can begin to take place.

The three main actors in the average zoning plan process are 1) the private actors such as the landowner and/or developer who is initiating the planning process, 2) the municipality which must ensure the plans that have been drafted comply with regulations, and 3) the municipal politicians who in the end must approve the plans before planning can commence (Knudtzon 2018). The process involved in zoning plans is somewhat less clear than that for municipal master plans, since it is mostly initiated by private actors, and varies depending on the area and who is involved. *See Appendix 4 to view a table listing the most common actors in Oslo's planning processes.* Legally, the first step is that the public and any relevant public organisations and landowners must be notified through the both the municipality's website and through a publication in a widely-read local newspaper. If this first stage does not happen, activities that takes place after are invalid. Typically, the information provided is a simple description of the purpose of the area zoning plan itself, as well as a map indicating which areas are to be affected. In some cases, a there will also be a list of issues that shall be assessed in through the process of drafting the plan (MLGM 2014f). Through the drafting and negotiating process, environmental impact assessments and risk and vulnerability assessments must be a carried out if it appears that the zoning plan will make a significant impact on the environment and/or society (MLGM 2014h). Once the plan is drafted it must be made publicly available and circulated to landowners and other stakeholders in the area for comment. After this, the zoning plans can be sent to the city hall, or first to the PBE for review if the plan submission comes from a private firm, for approval after which is becomes a statutory document (MLGM 2014f).

The process of drafting a VPOR more or less the same as the process for zoning plans, since the VPOR serves as sort of guidance zoning plan. Since VPORs are not a part of the Norwegian Building and Planning Act, however, they are not necessarily required to follow the same planning process as statutory zoning plans. It is the PBE that determines officially what path a VPOR must take.

3.3 Children and young people's participation in the Oslo model

The above sections have outlined the plans and planning processes in the Oslo Model. Because the Oslo Model's frequently used VPOR is not a part of the Norwegian planning and building act, the place of children and young people's participation is not entirely clear. Through the journey of writing this thesis it became evident that children and young people's participation in Oslo, particularly within the PBE, is an increasingly popular topic, though there is uncertainty about how and when to facilitate it. Additionally, methods that can be used again and again in different areas of the city on different levels of planning, such as those studied in this thesis, were a topic of interest. Having delved in Oslo's planning system, this chapter zooms out again to examine the participation side of Norwegian planning and then focuses in on children and young people's participation in Oslo.

3.3.1 A short history of participation in planning and building acts

The requirement to involve the public in planning were introduced with the Norwegian land-use planning legislation in 1965 and have strengthened over time. The first formal participation after 1965 involved opening plans for public commentary without much thought about processes or reaching diverse groups of citizens. Through the 1970s there was growing concern about historic preservation and sustainability, leading some members of the public to protest and eventually contributing to strengthened participation legislation within the Planning and Building Act of 1985 (Falleth et al. 2008).

The 1985 act was the first official document explicitly to state that those affected by planning must be given the opportunity to participate in the planning process (Falleth & Hanssen 2012), viewing the public as worthwhile actors in the planning process, rather than just inhabitants who must be informed (Fiskaa 2005; Falleth et al. 2008). What defined 'those affected by planning' however was not clearly set out in the act and was a judgement left to planning authorities (Wøhni 2007). This particular problem has been somewhat

addressed and participation rules have been advanced by the latest legislation, the Planning and Building Act of 2008 (Falleth & Hanssen 2012).

The 2008 act placed higher demands on municipalities to host direct participation activities, whereas previously the act of elected politicians voting on plans was viewed as [indirect] and acceptable participation. The participation requirements now include publicising planning announcements in the local news, making planning documents publicly available online, and hosting consultation events where inhabitants may give input and feedback. Further, and importantly to this thesis, making opportunities for children and adolescents to participate became a requirement in the 2008 legislation.

Today, participation in planning is something central and inevitable in the Norwegian planning system (Fiskaa 2005; Hofstad 2013). The rationale for the right to participate in planning processes in Norway is twofold. The first is the idea that in democratic society, all groups have the right to voice their opinions (Falleth & Hanssen 2012). One key way in which this idea is manifested in Norway is that, while plans are prepared by professional planners either public or private, the local politicians, who have been democratically elected to represent the interests of their constituents, must approve them (Falleth et. al. 2010). In other words, this first rationale is realised through representative forms of participation. The second justification for participation is the belief that when inhabitants are involved in the planning process, plans become more efficient, easier to implement, and less conflictual (Falleth & Hanssen 2012), which constitutes more direct forms of participation.

These reasons are not agreed upon by all involved in the planning system, however. First of all, the meaning of participation, its qualities, and the way it is carried out can differ, when the term is understood and characterised differently by the various fields involved in planning such as developers, politicians, residents interest groups, etc. (Gunder & Hillier 2009). What is technically required by Norwegian planning law is in fact the delivery of one-way information, informing people and inviting residents to provide inputs. What

residents tend to understand as participation, however, is more of a dialogue and an opportunity to have influence. In this way, participation in the Norwegian planning context can be seen as an empty term (Knudtzon 2018). Secondly, views toward participation and the reasons for it vary - for example, one study reveals that 45% of private developers reported their primary reason for engaging in participation practices is to earn political acceptance so municipal leaders will more readily approve proposals (Falleth & Hanssen 2012).

3.3.2 Typical forms of participation and when in the planning process it occurs

The Building and Planning Act of 2008 generally sets out some additional details, nonspecific to an age group, about participation requirements according to the law. First, participation must be facilitated for all zoning plans³ and municipal master plans and it proves that participation has been carried out. Typically, one or two public hearings, with anyone who sees the public announcement and has time and interest to attend, are sufficient participation for zoning plans (MLGM 2008). Second, there are two moments when plans must be circulated for ‘public scrutiny’ - after the first draft has been made and before the final draft is sent for political approval. Third, it states that “steps shall be taken to facilitate electronic presentation and dialogue at all stages of the planning process” (MLGM 2008, section 5.2); what exactly this means is not stated. S

To understand participation more fully, the planning process, in terms of participation, can be broken into three parts: there is the early plan design phase, the formal plan phase, and the political process phase (Falleth & Hanssen 2012):

During the early planning phase, the idea for the plan emerges, a plan concept and concrete plan proposal is drafted. What is written here plays

³ It is unclear if the legislation on participation would apply to Oslo Municipality’s VPORs, since VPORs do not exist in Norwegian planning legislation and have not been formally approved. That said, one can see clearly in any VPOR that the PBE has conducted more than the average amount of participation.

a large role in what the final approved plan will be. The Planning and Building Act of 2008 emphasises that affected inhabitants must have the opportunity to participate in the early planning phase, but details about who and how are not given. The participation requirements are that inhabitants be informed of the plans (through newspaper at a minimum and with plans available publicly online) and that the developers (most often private) have a formal meetings [sic] with the local planning administration (public).

In the formal plan phase, plans are sent to the municipality for discussion and approval. In terms of required participation, there must be public consultation and details of finalising the plan must be publicly available. Most municipalities have a set practice for public consultation - often meetings pre-municipal council meetings for the public to be informed and comment.

For the final phase, inhabitants can make formal complaints and objections to the plans before they are finally approved by the local municipality and become legally binding.

Studies covering municipal practices regarding participation reveal that the vast majority of municipalities do not create participation activities beyond the bare minimum requirements (Fiskaa 2005; Falleth & Hanssen 2012) - even this sometimes does not take place - see Figure 3-5 for an example.

What stands out from the above literature is what was mentioned from the beginning - the categorical exclusion of children and young people from these studies about participation. That is not to mention that existing rationale for participation in Norway appears to have little in common with literature reviewed in Chapter 2, where we explored children and young people's right to participate and the benefits of their meaningful involvement in planning processes. Further, it is difficult to understand where in the three phases of planning set out by Falleth and Hanssen (2012) children and young people might fit in, especially keeping in mind that in most cases the very minimum is done to fulfil participation requirements.

Part three of this chapter started with a description of the history of participation in Norway. It then set out the Norwegian legislation for children and young people's place in land-use planning, with some unpacking and

Figure 3-5 Context Box: The role of law in enforcing the safeguarding of children and young people's interests

If a person is concerned that children and young people's right to participation has in some way been violated and/or their interests have not been safeguarded have not been taken seriously, and the case has been overlooked or rejected by the municipality and the county government, it can be taken to the Parliamentary Ombudsman. Public online archives of the ombudsman's cases date back to 2006, though the Parliamentary Ombudsman role has existed since 1962 (Barneombudet, n.d). The oldest case available online dealing with children and young people's interests in planning is from 2008 and it represents the path and outcomes of most other cases that have been raised between 2009 and 2018.

The case took place in Nittedal Municipality which sits on the northeast edge of Oslo, dealing with a zoning plan that allegedly had failed to protect children's interests. The case had previously been sent to the governor of Akershus County (of which Nittedal Municipality is a part, directly bordering Oslo Municipality) and was rejected based on supposed adherence to guidelines set out in the Norwegian Public Roads Administration's Handbook, according to the person who raised the case, who found this unacceptable.

The Parliamentary Ombudsman confronted the county governor and the municipality with concerns about the zoning case, asking if they had properly fulfilled their obligations under the 1985 planning legislation that safeguards children and young people's interests in planning. Their reply was that they had given the zoning case to the local children's representative and there had been concerns reported back to them. Citing national policy guidelines from September 1989 and a note sent from the Ministry of the Environment to municipalities in April 1989, which outlined the need to strengthen children and young people's interest in planning, the ombudsman judged that that county and municipality had been in the wrong.

“The fact that the children’s representative had been sent the planning material without giving a consultation opinion and had no objection, is thus not appropriate and may be suitable to cast doubt on whether the municipality and the county governor in this matter were fully aware of their responsibilities and adequately investigated and considered the relationship with children [and the zoning plans in question]”

In the end the governor and municipality agreed to improve their habits of communicating with the children’s representative and to create a special impact assessment for the zoning plan, focusing on outdoor play spaces and paths that might be affected to the detriment of local children and young people.

discussion about its limits. The last section reviewed the literature about how planning is justified and when in the planning process, primarily adult, participants can be involved in planning. Part three as a whole has brought together the history, legislation, and theories of participatory planning in Norway in order to set the stage for the following part in which we will examine some real examples of how participation works [or does not work] in practice.

3.3.3 Children and young people’s legal right to participation in Norway’s urban planning

There are four sections of the Building and Planning Act of 2008 that specifically mention children and young people’s relationship to and their role in planning:

1.1 The principle of design for universal accessibility shall be taken into account in planning and in requirements relating to individual building projects. The same applies to due regard for the environment in which children and youth grow up and the aesthetic design of project surroundings.

3.3 The municipal council shall see to it that a special arrangement is established to safeguard the interests of children and youth in the planning process.

5.1 The municipality has a special responsibility for ensuring the active participation of groups who require special facilitation, including children and youth. Groups and interests who are not capable of participating directly shall be ensured good opportunities of participating in another way.

12.7.4 Functional and quality requirements relating to buildings, installations and outdoor areas, including requirements for the protection of health, the environment, safety, design for universal access and children's particular need for play and public outdoor areas (MLGM 2008)

The parts 1.1, 3.3, and 12.7.4 are about building and planning with children and young people's needs in mind, but not about involving them as active participants. Part 5.1 is the key moment in Norwegian planning legislation that requires children and young people's participation. It is not clear from part 5.1 is what exactly qualifies as 'ensuring' active participation, what indeed is 'active participation,' what might 'special facilitation' look like, and what 'good opportunities' of participation may be.

The Council of Europe's report by Eurochild and Rand Europe (2020) found that the absence of children and young people's participation in legal frameworks is a significant barrier to participation. In Norway, children and young people's participation is enshrined in law. Past research on the Norwegian context, however, on adult participation, notes that the legislation is insufficiently direct and detailed in terms what participation must take place, the quality of it, and the way it must be done (Hanssen & Falleth 2014). In the case of children and young people's participation, the law is similarly vague.

To address some of these concerns about the lack of specificity, it is possible to reference a document published by the Norwegian's Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation called *Children and Young People and Planning After the Building and Planning Act of 2008*. It states that municipalities shall:

- a. Assess consequences, for children and young people, of planning and construction proposals under the Building and Planning Act

b. Make an overall assessment of children and young people's growing-up environments to incorporate goals and measures in municipal planning projects

c. Prepare articles of association, regulations, and guidelines about the quality of areas and facilities that are important to children and young people to use as reference when considering how children and young people might be affected by proposed plans

d. Organize the planning process so that children and young people's points of view are able to come forward and that different groups of children and young people themselves are given the opportunity to participate (MLGM 2018, p. 8)

Again, three of these four points are not about children and young people's participation; they suggest the production of plan-specific impact assessments, a municipal-wide assessment of growing-up environments, and a set of guidelines for those involved in the planning process to consult and consider. The one point that proposes opportunities to participate indicates that the planning process itself should be organised in such a way that "children and young people's points of view are able to come forward."

3.3.4 Children and young people's participation in Norway

The *Children and Young People and Planning After the Building and Planning Act of 2008* identifies four specific ways of safeguarding children and young people's rights: through communication with children's representative, youth councils, crime prevention officers, or having a specially appointed person in the municipality to care for the issue. On the topic of active participation, they highlight encouragingly that 'many' municipalities:

- 1) consult with their youth council(s) on planning cases,
- 2) have planners with close relationships to local schools and thus the ability to consult with classes of students,
- 3) create special workshops, and/or
- 4) use Barnetråkk (a mapping activity to be presented in the following chapter, one of the methods examined in this thesis).

Figure 3-6 Context Box: Inputs from the Central Youth Council

In April 2017, a draft of a thematic plan, Oslo Towards 2040, was distributed to all inhabitants and community groups, who were invited to submit input electronically. All input was submitted alongside the final draft of the municipal plan and is still available for public viewing online. It does not appear that any district young council, youth club, or children's representative submitted written input. The central youth council, which is comprised of representatives from all district youth councils, sent their input on the draft.

In their inputs, the central youth council had a range of positive and negative points to offer. They begin by stating that the document is confusing and complex and it is difficult for young people to provide input. Nonetheless they point to topics that, in their view, should have been given a stronger focus, like green roofs, cycle lanes, leisure centres that are accessible to refugee minors, and good bus and tram routes to the edges of Oslo. They are agreeable towards densification and understand the need for it, but state that clear requirements about building heights and green spaces, and details related to life quality, should be in place. Additionally, they stress that zoning plans coming from the municipal master plan should include inputs from children and young people. These comments illustrate that of primary concern for the central youth council are urban life quality and the opportunity for young people to give good input now and in the future (Sammendrag og kommentarer 2018).

The final version of Oslo Towards 2040 does not explicitly state which inputs impacted the drafting process and in what ways, though reading through the document shows that in one way or another most of the central youth council's comments are in some way touched upon - some more than others. For example, in their input the central youth council mentions concerns about xenophobia and hostile architecture, which are not referenced in the final version of Oslo Towards 2040. There is however mention of transportation expansion, cycling lanes, leisure centres, green roofs, and other topics which the central youth council highlighted as important (Sammendrag og kommentarer 2018). What the central youth council thought about the final

draft of the municipal master plan is not known but their comments on the draft demonstrate one already known problem with the planning process in Norway.

Municipalities and planners do not create conditions in which persons with little or no planning expertise can participate (Falleth et. al. 2010). The central youth council states at the very start of their input that the draft is “confusing and complex, so it can be difficult for young people to provide input” (Sammendrag og kommentarer 2018, p 202). There is an evident problem with the accessibility of this participation method inviting inhabitants and community groups to read a plan draft and submit digital inputs - for young people in particular. Drawing on the classic framework of Hart (1992) for classifying types of children and young people’s participation, when participants experience difficulty understanding the subject and are not given a choice about how to participate and communicate, an activity can be classified as a form of nonparticipation.

There is one example of a special workshop, but otherwise no tips and instructions are provided regarding the implementation of these activities and there are not citations or percentages to support the notion that many municipalities are indeed carrying out such activities.

In a recent study, Hanssen (2019) found that 60% of municipalities in Norway do have a permanent, formal arrangement for representing children and young people’s interests in planning. Of those who have an arrangement, the most common methods are as follows:

- 59% utilize their children’s representative
- 23% communicate with their children’s councils and/or youth councils
- 11% have a checklist in place for developers during planning negotiations
- 5% involve schools systematically
- 4% conduct reports using Barnetråkk

Overall, *Children and Young People and Planning After the Building and Planning Act of 2008* does offer a stronger take on children and young people’s involvement in planning, but Hanssen’s (2019) study illustrates that municipalities [which have a permanent, formal arrangement for representing

children and young people’s interests in planning] primarily make use of what they call ‘advocacy planning’ through the children’s representatives rather than direct participation. Differences within children and young people as a group does not just cover a wide range of ages and developmental stages, but also of course rich diversity in terms of identities (Hagen 2017) making this especially an issue when considering children and young people’s participation.

3.4 Chapter conclusions

Norway is somewhat unusual in terms of its local governance and planning system by comparison to its culturally and historically similar neighbours in the sense that it has a high number of municipalities⁴ and a high level of private planning. While the planning process itself is similar to that of Sweden, Denmark, and Germany, the public planning administrations in these countries maintain much more authority and/or write most of the land-use plans themselves (Falleth & Nordahl 2017; Fiskaa 2005; Hofstad 2013). In recent years, more than 80% of planning projects in Oslo, and in many other municipalities, have been proposals from private developers (Falleth et al. 2008; Andersen & Skrede 2017; Statistics Norway 2018). According to Hanssen & Falleth (a Norwegian scholar and a Norwegian planner, respectively) who have written extensively on the Norwegian planning system during the last decade, “as one of a very few countries, Norway has formally given developers the opportunity to take a planning initiative and have the responsibility to formulate a plan” (2014, p. 420). Norway is characterised in existing literature as a country dominated by market-based urbanism (Røsnes 2005; Nordahl 2006; Falleth et al. 2008). What this means in theory and in practice will be elaborated upon in the following paragraphs.

⁴ With nearly double the population of Norway, Sweden has just 290 municipalities and 20 regions (Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting): recall Norway has 422 municipalities and 18 regions. Similar in population size to Norway, Denmark has just 98 municipalities and 5 regions.

The Building and Planning legislation passed in 1985 opened the door for private developers to submit zoning plans and since then Norway has been undergoing what Falleth et al. call “a large-scale neo-liberal experiment in urban planning” (2008, p. 3). Throughout the 1990s, the role of private developers became a formalized part of the planning system, whereas before municipal planners had more authority to draft and realize their own plans (Falleth et al. 2008). This, the government believes, can increase the legitimacy of private developers and their plans (Hofstad 2013). More and more public planning administrations have thus taken on a procedural role, to process and enact the proposals of private developers (Falleth et al. 2008).

First, market-based urbanism in Norway has created a public planning system which is now in a position to be merely reactive to what private developers are doing, rather than proactively planning for society (Hofstad 2013); this has, according to Hofstad, led to an overall loss of long-term quality in the built environment. Second, having private developers as the main plan makers has also led to less participation and worse quality of participation (Fiskaa 2005) - researchers cite specifically a decrease in creativity and inclusion (Nyseth 2011) and hegemonic thinking around what makes an attractive place (Lysgård & Cruickshank 2012; Røe 2014). Further, when participation takes place, it tends to be rushed and involve bare-minimum outputs (Fiskaa 2005); citizens are invited to participate only when a legal requirement mandated such involvement, usually to avoid conflict or dissent, but not in order to grant citizens any power in the process (Plöger 2001). Overall, market-based urbanism in Norway has led to decreased participation in Norwegian planning. Indeed, this has been a point of conflict, where citizens are questioning why they ought to bother participate at all when they appear to have been so systematically excluded, except for box-ticking (Falleth et al. 2008).

The findings in the previously cited studies are largely in reference to zoning plans drafted by private developers. Municipal master plans are drafted by the municipality, and not by private developers, but the responsibility for creating the zoning plans in areas set out for development, according to particular

standards, can be a problem. A study by Andersen and Skrede (2017) offers a useful example for understanding how market-based planning has created problems for Oslo's development. With the municipal master plan, politicians and urban planners have envisioned a sustainable regeneration and transformation of east Oslo. The responsibility to build, however, is largely in the hands of private developers - who have reported little interest in taking on such projects in east Oslo because they know there would be no profit in doing so:

“While the developers were willing to use more expensive materials in their constructions in the parts of town where the potential buyers had the necessary financial means to purchase more expensive properties, the developer did not consider it economically sustainable to do so in the East End. In other words, whereas the politicians and planners want a municipality that is both socially and environmentally sustainable, economic sustainability - or rather the need of making profit - had the final say for the developer” (Andersen & Skrede 2017, pp. 589-590.)

Financing is one of the largest problems when it comes quality urban development, with an overall lack of allocated funds “to satisfy the fundamental needs of urban transformation projects” (Plahte 2004, p. 81). It comes down to private landowners and developers to have the necessary means and desire to plan, yet no legislation exists to require the drafting of zoning plan. Once plans are submitted by private enterprises, the municipal planners and politicians have some power to demand certain infrastructure be included in the plans, but in most case the municipality is powerless to demand planning and building in areas where private developers simply do not want to operate (Plahte 2004).

In conclusion, the market-based planning system existent in Norway presents a series of problems for participation in planning, in addition to the quality development of urban areas.

Chapter 4. Methods and Cases

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is the axis between the literature and theoretical background of the thesis and the presentation and discussion of the empirical research component of the study. Creswell & Creswell's (2017) Checklist of Questions for Designing a Qualitative Procedure was used in the development of the research design and drafting of this chapter.

There are six main points that will be expressed in this chapter, to finish laying the framework leading into the analysis and discussion chapters. The first is the explanation of the methods operationalised for this study and the rationale for their selection. The second is an overview of the ethical considerations of carrying out this thesis. After this, is a description of the data management and analysis procedures. Fourth, the selection of Norway and specifically Oslo will be presented. Next, the six units of analysis that were researched for this thesis will be summarised. Finally, the study limitations and strengths will be reflected upon. With these final blocks in place, the chapter will transition into findings section of the thesis.

4.2 Methods

4.2.1 Overview

This study was exploratory in nature and therefore sought to answer “how” and “why” questions. It focused on contemporary events and utilised a variety of documents, interviews, and observations. These aspects made an explanatory case study a suitable choice (Yin 2003). Because there are not many research examples of the particular phenomena (that of on-going, city-wide planning tools for children and young people) and its prevalence and the case study represents a fairly unique research case, therefore it was sensible to develop a single case study. The case study model further operated as a fitting choice for this study because case studies are well suited for exploring processes and activities (Creswell & Creswell 2017), which were the focus of this study. Within

the case study, there were six embedded units of analysis, covering the full range of major participation activities with children and young people in a single city.

This study involved qualitative research, which past publications have described as research which takes place in a natural setting, in which the researcher is one of the key tools of the research, there are multiple sources of data, inductive and deductive analysis takes place, special attention is given the participants' meanings, the research process is emergent throughout the study, the researcher engages in reflective practices, and the final accounts aims to be wholistic (Creswell & Creswell 2017; Creswell 2016; Hatch 2002; Marshall & Rossman 2016).

Triangulation or the act of using multiple types of methods and data sources, was used in this study to ensure the outcome of rich, thick descriptions to convey the findings. As such, this study involved interviews, observations, documents, and audio-visual digital material, and involved participants and materials from each of the six units in analysis and from across the range of Oslo's city districts.

A variety of detailed information was collected over the course of the fieldwork, for which the researcher was stationed in Oslo for 10 months. Types of data utilised include in-depth interviews, focused interviews, planning reports, news articles, direct observations, government reports, planning reports, and other online or paper documents. Participants were recruited for this study based on their role in relationship to the six units of analysis in this case study. Each participant received an email, typically in Norwegian, explaining the study and what was being asked. Interviews were audio recorded.

As such, this study viewed children and young people as competent social actors who are experts in their own context and who actively contribute to their experiences and social world (Prout & James 1997; Morrow 2001). It recognised that "meanings are varied and multiple," and therefor sought complexity and

nuance in the views of participants by using broad, open-ended questions (Creswell & Creswell 2017).

The methods for this research were naturally designed to carefully ensure that the research aim - to analyse how on-going city-wide participatory planning tools designed to gather information about children's preferences and needs impact the decision making and design of a city - could be answered as fully as possible. When selecting the best methods, the processes of analysis, and the participation methods to be studied, the research questions, as stated in the introduction, were held in mind:

- To what extent and in what ways are the opinions and ideas of children in participatory projects used in planning and design?
- In what ways are data about the needs and preferences of children being framed, organised, and shared?
- To what extent are participatory tools and methods educational versus to what extent are they in place principally to collect data and opinions about children and young people's needs and interests?
- To what extent do participatory planning methods steer children's thinking and minimise children's agency ("citizens in the making" to be shaped)?

The following sections explain the use of the three data collection methods employed for this thesis - semi-structured interviews, observations, and text analysis.

4.2.2 Semi-structured interviews

The primary method of data collection used for this thesis was semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews facilitate a dialogic exchange between researcher and participants with the aim of eliciting personal accounts relevant to study aims. This method was chosen because it allows for the collection of thick descriptions, in other words data that is nuanced and complex. The

conversational format of semi-structured interviews was key as well, as it enabled flexibility and spontaneity in each interview.

Interviews have been criticised in academic literature for being an unnatural, contrived form of interaction (Thomson 2007) in which participants only share what they view as socially acceptable. In order to combat this, Mason (2003) suggests that researchers practice active reflectivity and thinking of interviews as 'co-productions involving researcher and interviewee' that generate meanings and perspectives (p.63). In this study ongoing reflection was practiced through field diary writing, where difficulties, ideas, connection points, and observations were recorded throughout the data collection and analysis processes. Peer debriefing, a tool to enhance and strengthen the validity of a study suggested by Creswell & Creswell (2017), was also used with throughout the fieldwork as a form of reflection.

Some academic literature problematises interviewing young people - which accounts for six out of forty of the interviews carried out for this study. In fact, out of the total fifty-two research participants who were involved across the forty interviews sixteen were young people (some elected to be interviewed in pairs or trios, particularly the young people). A key concern is the prescribed power and authority divide between an adult researcher and young participants. Mandell (1991) suggests taking actions to inhabit the 'least-adult' role, a tip which was used in this research - interviews took place around a shared table, teacher-like behaviours were avoided, and casual clothing was worn. Another concern is that young participants involved in interviews for research purposes do not generally have a choice about the location of the interviews, and this can be of particular importance as Scott (2000) argues that children's' personalities are context-dependant. In the context of this study, this was not of concern and may have even been beneficial because all interviews with young people took place in the physical location of their monthly youth council meetings, during or after their regularly scheduled meeting. In other words, they were in a familiar location in which they normally engage with adults and represent their peers.

In total, forty semi-structured interviews, as noted above, were conducted with youth council members, youth council secretaries, children's representatives, urban planners, teachers, urban designers, project coordinators, and architects from a geographical spread across Oslo. All youth councils, all youth council secretaries, and all children's representatives (of which there are 15 of each, one per district) were contacted via email and invited to be interviewed for the study. Those who replied were interviewed and those who did not were sent one follow up email - and in some case the original email was resent because the email address list that is publicly available online had not been updated to reflect a change in staff or change in email address, in a few districts. Planners, architects, designers, teachers, and project coordinators were contacted systematically based on their allocation with either a recently past participation event or an upcoming participation event within the scope of the units of analysis (methods of participation, to be presented later in the chapter); based on their involvement with one or more of the largest planning areas (identified by the research using the city's online dynamic map with all the current and upcoming planning activities); or because the researcher read about them online (through a systematic search) on the Oslo Planning and Building Administration's blog or in the local newspaper because of their involvement in participation with children and young people. All but five of the participants were recruited to be involved in the study this way - the additional five came as recommendations directly from participants themselves.

Semi structured interview questions varied from research participant to research participant. For some types of participants, particularly the youth council members, a standard set of questions was used each time as a starting point. All pre-prepared questions were based on the researcher aims and questions, with consideration given to their supposed experiences and knowledge - that is to say that, for example, questions were written slightly differently, and some questions were added or omitted for a youth council secretary participant verses an urban planner working in a private architecture firm. In the moment of an interview, spontaneous questions were added based on what a participant said, in order to gain clarity, examples, and elaboration.

All interviews were recorded except for one which took place over the phone because the participant was extremely busy and preferred to speak on the phone than to meet in person.

4.2.3 Observations

One site observation was carried out in a public square over two days, including observation of the inclusion of four local young people (ages 17-19) who had been hired to assist with building, a bench painting workshop with a group of eight girls (ages 8-12), the communication with local people passing through the square over the course of five hours one day, and the comments and responses of three local girls (ages 14-15) who had been involved in a consultation the week prior, then seeing the outcome of their inputs. No photos or recording were taken, however the researcher was introduced to those on the site, consent was granted, and detailed observation notes were taken. While on site for the two observation days, two of the [adult] designers working on the project were interviewed for this study as well.

A second site observation was conducted during a five-hour session of one of the units of analysis (Ungdomstråkk) with 65 young people (ages 15-17) at a youth club near a school. It began with a presentation from the session leader involving maps and illustrated timelines and hands-on drawing and paper mapping activities in groups of six to seven students. After this, the students went in these same groups for walks around the area to map their walk, geotag site where they saw areas of improvement, to interview locals, and to bring back new ideas and reflections. The session concluded with more paper mapping, discussions, and short presentations. No photos or recording were taken, however the researcher was introduced to those on the site, consent was granted, and detailed observation notes were taken. In the days following, three of the adult facilitators were interviewed for this study.

The original idea of the study was to observe two or three sessions of participation in school classrooms, but once in the field it became evident that this would be impossible because of the logistics in terms of how schools get

involved with participation. There was not a centralized person or place that could provide a notification of when participation would happen, because it was happening as a collaboration between a school and a planner and/or architect. For this reason, participants who had been involved in a participation event as a facilitator or as a participant were asked to give a summary of their experience. This of course yields different data than an observation could, however, it was necessary to be flexible and responsive once in the field and to gather as much valuable and relevant data as possible with the scope of the study and the ethics. An additional compensation made to account for having slightly fewer observations was to invest more time in gathering quality text sources.

4.2.4 Text analysis

During the fieldwork, several print and digital written materials were collected. This includes nine reports produced after the completion of Barnetråkk (2016-2018), two reports from Ungdomstråkk (2016-2019), thirty youth council monthly case documents (2017-2019), one depersonalised excel document with the reports and responses from 635 classes involved in Traffic Agent (since 2016), and three educational PowerPoint presentations from Traffic Agent. Additionally, print and digital materials from neighbourhood transformation projects, such as marketing materials and final reports, and guideline and policy documents about children's participation in Norway, city-wide or district plans for public space, cycling infrastructure, and other urban issues were collected. These materials served as background and validating pieces of information to support and understand the interviews and observations, as well as to gain contextual knowledge about the planning system and participation activities.

Overall, it should be noted that Oslo and Norway have relatively advanced infrastructure and a high level of transparency in terms of making information like planning documents, public sector meeting notes, participation session data and outcomes, and planning and participation project reports easily accessible online. In cases when it was not possible to find information or in cases when it was not evident what might be available, finding the correct public

administrator, contacting them directly via phone or email, and receiving a reply - as well as being granted access to the requested information or reports - was notably easy. There was one instance, however, with the unit of analysis Barnetråkk (a method of participation to be presented later in the chapter) it was only possible to receive finalised reports that has resulted from participation, and not the raw data which children had written, tagged, and mapped during the participation sessions. Therefore, it is worth noting that the participation reports used in this study have been through the analysis of someone else and been presented in a particular way which might omit details that could have been of interest to this study.

4.3 Ethical considerations

Informed consent is consent which is freely granted, without persuasion, coercion, or threat, by individuals deemed competent to make an informed decision. Competence in this instance is understood as ‘having enough knowledge to understand what is proposed and enough discretion to be able to make a wise decision in light of one’s own interests’ (Fargas-Malet et al. 2010 p.177). As long as a study involves informed consent and has been reviewed by an ethical review committee, most adolescents (that is, ages 10 and above) should be given the right to consent for their own participation in low-risk research (Santelli et al. 2017). In line with this, this study recognized the young people who participated as capable “older children” who could provide informed consent for themselves (Skelton 2008).

In the early months of the field work, whilst scoping was taking place, the standard ethical approval procedure was following in accordance with the relevant college. It was also necessary to submit an application for ethics approval through the hosting university (University of Oslo). In the end, the same material that has been sent to the University of Glasgow and which had been approved was sent and approved in the equivalent Norwegian system. In advance of submitting it in Norway, it is worth noting however, that it was suggested that the consent forms and information sheet be simplified and shortened to make it

easier for research participants to read the documents and give their honest consent. In order to ensure compliance with the ethics standards at the University of Glasgow, however, it was impossible to remove anything from the consent form or information sheet and so the materials submitted and approved by both committees were the same. One other difference that was mentioned to the researcher at the time of submitting for ethical approval in Norway, was that the age range for granting consent without needing parental consent is younger. To ensure the standards of the University of Glasgow were met, the lowest age of research participant to give consent for oneself was 16 - had the study only needed to follow the ethical approval procedures in Norway it may have been possible to ask for slightly younger research participants to give their consent to be interviewed. These differences are not noted to critique or complain about either system, but to observe the differences. What is considered ethical varied between the fieldwork site and the university though with this thesis is based, illuminating different attitudes about how much information must be given to participants (less, in the case of Norway) and the age at which a person can consent for themselves to be a participant (younger, in the case of Norway).

All research participants were provided with a two to three sentence summary of the research via email before agreeing to schedule an interview. Before every interview, participants were given a one-to-two-minute verbal summary of the research aim and expected contributions, as well as a short explanation of the consent form and information sheet and a reminder that they could change their mind about participating at any time. Each participant was then given as much time as they needed to read the information sheet and consent form and to sign the consent form. For the observations, the supervisor of the site was able to give consent for the observations to take place. For interviews with adults, for interviews with young people ages 16 to 18, and for observations, there were similar but slightly tailored information sheets.

The standard ethical procedure for this type of study is to remove the names and place names to protect the anonymity of research participants. In this study,

potential identifies were removed from transcripts and replaced with pseudonyms. Because some participants come from a small sample pool in terms of their professional role or involvement with a project, however, the theoretical possibility of identification could not be completely eliminated.

The adults and young people (ages 16 to 17) who participated in this study were assured that confidentiality would be maintained. The one exception to this, stated in both the information leaflets given to adults and to young people, was if the researcher heard anything during semi-structured interviews that generated concern about potential danger of harm. Written information with identifiers (consent forms) were kept in a securely locked location separate from the audio recordings of transcripts and from computerized information containing pseudonyms. The rationale for retaining personal data after this PhD study was made clear in the consent forms, indicating that it may be used in future publications and conferences, maintaining the asserted level of anonymity.

The College Ethics Committee for Non-Clinical Research Involving Human Subjects form that was submitted and approved to the University of Glasgow. The approval letter is attached in Appendix 1.

4.4 Data management and interpretation

The analysis of data followed the general five step procedure recommended by Creswell & Creswell (2017). After gathering all the raw data, Creswell & Creswell suggest: 1) organising and preparing the data for analysis, 2) reading through and looking at all the data, 3) coding the data (using a mixture of predetermined codes and emerging codes), 4) generating themes, and 5) representing the description and themes (for which this study employed grounded theory).

Grounded theory suited this study well as an analytical tool because it enables exploration of constructed meaning (Bartels 2012). In this way, it was possible to unpack practices around and ideas about childhood that are taken for granted

(Alanen 2001). Grounded theory is also a suitable standpoint since there is not yet significant case study research exploring participatory planning methods with children and young people on a city-wide scale. As a methodology, grounded theory works in generating new hypotheses (Glaser & Strauss 1967), which was ideal as this study was exploratory. Further, grounded theory is particularly useful for working in different languages (Peters 2014) and in social justice research (Charmaz 2011).

With case study research it is important to not just ask accurate questions, but to be an active listener and able to interpret answers, as well as to be flexible and adaptive while holding in mind the main aims of the study. As such, the data collected in this research was stored in a case study database which includes both case study notes and case study documents. The information kept in this database is tabulated and emerging narratives and patterns were highlighted throughout the study and at the end of the study.

The qualitative data software analysis tool Quirkos was used to code and organise interview transcriptions. This was an ideal tool to use because it allows large amounts of text data to be added, organised, and coded in multiple ways. The raw qualitative data - transcripts, field notes, and observation notes - were added to the tool and categorised based on association to the units of analysis. After that first step, there were two rounds of coding.

First, the data was read through and coded based on pre identified themes that had emerged in the literature. This involved adding tags to the Quirkos tool and then moving sections of text into these tags, which appear in a bubble format, growing larger in size each time more text is added. These tags were generated through the process of creating a mind map with the research aim in the centre, the research questions branching out from the aim, and themes and sub-questions from the literature branching from each of the sub-questions. Figure 4-1 reveals an early version of the mind map that guided the research and is



Figure 4-1 Mind map used to organise ideas around the research questions shown here to illustrate the visualising of the aim, questions, and sub themes and questions, which emerged from the literature review phase of the PhD prior to the fieldwork. Overtime, this mind map evolved and grew in response to new knowledge gained in the fieldwork, engagement with peers in research groups and conferences, and learnings from articles and books published during the PhD period.

The first series of tags that emerged from the final version of the mind map (not shown here because the final version was not illustrated as in Figure 4-1, but hand drawn in the end of the research fieldwork notebook) included, for example, some of the following:

- Role of adults
- Box ticking
- Why do participation

- Impacts on plan
- What young people learn
- Types of inputs collected
- Aggregation and use of inputs
- Norway context
- Education of planners
- Links to curriculum
- Legal requirements

After this first round of coding, which involved reading all the raw text data twice to ensure all data relevant to the premade codes had been sorted, there was a second round of coding. The second round of coding first involved creating new tags in response to recurrent themes that had come to the surface during the first round of coding, but which did not fit into any of the pre identified tags.

Some of these new tags which were added for the second round of coding included:

- Thick verses thin inputs
- Preparations of young participants
- Translation process
- Learning objectives
- Interesting anecdotes
- On what can young participants give inputs
- What planners learn

After seeing all the tags organised in Quirkos it was then possible to group codes under larger themes and to ultimately determine that the findings chapters would be thematic, as opposed to case by case, one for each unit of analysis. This is because there was sufficient evidence across the cases, with common themes running throughout to generate thematic chapters each of which engage with data from the different units of analysis. A further reason for this decision,

is that some units of analysis yielded a heavy amount of data, particularly the youth councils and Barnetråkk, whereas the units of analysis Traffic Agent and Children's Representatives (all units of analysis will be presented and described later in this chapter) resulted in less data. This was due to the nature of these units of analysis, as participation methods, having a different range and number of people involved, the availability of opportunities to conduct observations, and the type of data that could be collected within the span of the fieldwork period. In the end, it naturally made sense to organise and present the findings thematically.

The organisation of the thematic findings chapters travels from a bottom-up view in order to offer a broad range of nuanced findings within a focused framework. The first findings chapter is about participation from the view of children and young people; the second is about participation from the view of adult facilitators; the third findings chapters dives into the process of information exchange and translation between young participants, adult facilitators, and the planning world; and the final findings chapter examines the planning system level in terms of participation. Each findings chapter therefore offers depth and breadth, to work toward the final presentation of the thesis conclusions.

4.5 Case selection

4.5.1 Norway

By now, this thesis has already explored the Norwegian planning system, the Oslo Model, and children and young people's participation in this context both in Chapter 3 and in the introduction. This section explains the thinking behind and selection of Oslo as the case for this study.

Norway has an international reputation for having one of the highest standards of living. According to OECD data, Norway performs highly by comparison to global averages in per capita disposable income, employment levels, safety, upper secondary education, life expectancy, civic participation, and life satisfaction, as well as considerably good air and water quality (OECD 2019).

What makes Norway such an interesting place to study children and young people's participation is partly because of its reputation and its identity as an idealized example for how different social and economic policies could be modelled. The reality is that, by global comparison, it has one of the most robust set of laws around children's rights and it has manifested several tools for carrying out children's participation. In other words, it provides a seemingly ideal setting in which to find quality examples of children and young people's participation in urban planning. The focus is placed on Oslo specifically because it is Norway's largest and most complex city - with discussions and tensions around densification, immigration, entrepreneurship, and tourism - and one of Europe's fastest growing capitols.

Oslo is an interesting city to study children and young people's participation in planning because there is somewhat of a paradox between the national reputation for upholding children's rights as well as its reputation generally as a Nordic welfare state and its market-driven urban planning system. This tension presents a story in which children and young people's participation is and must be taking place to adhere to legal requirements safeguarding children and young people's interests in urban areas and their right to participation, but all within a planning system that is organised with the idea of efficiency and allowing private firms to plan and build the city. Researchers note that, Norway generally is a place with increasing amounts of private development and planning practices which are notably more neoliberal than similar neighbours like Sweden, Denmark, and Germany (where public planning administrations maintain much more authority) (Falleth & Nordahl 2017; Fiskaa 2005; Hofstad 2013). Falleth et al. (2008) find that this has not just led to decreased participation in Norwegian planning, but also for planners and politicians to, because of municipal partnerships, align themselves with private developers. Hanssen & Falleth (2014) also point out that laws requiring participation in planning are not sufficiently specific to ensure that citizens' right to participate is enacted. These contradictions - the relatively strong participation regulations that are nonetheless not specific enough and have suffered under neoliberal shifts, and the positive reputation for upholding children's rights and several examples of

participation methods coupled with the real hierarchy of power and priorities of the planning system - make Oslo an important case in furthering knowledge about good practice around children and young people's participation and its realities in a market-driven planning setting.

Therefore, it is the contradictory story of Oslo that give richness and nuance to this study, lending itself to the creation of transferable, practical knowledge that can be used to better understand children and young people and children's participation in other urban settings, but also to contribute significant findings to the academic field of children and young people's participation.

4.5.2 Criteria for units of analysis

The units of analysis for this study were chosen based on three central criteria. First, all units of analysis categorically must be established methods for engaging children and/or young people in urban planning or transformation processes. They should be established in the sense that this thesis did not set out to create and test method or to study a completely new method. It is interested in the participation methods that already exist. One exception is made to this criterion in order to include one additional method - children's representative - which is not a method for engaging children and/or young people in urban planning or transformation processes but rather a method for ensuring children and/or young people's interests are safe guarded in planning processes. The reason for this inclusion is because children's representatives are the most commonly reported way that Norwegian municipalities report ensuring they are in compliance with planning and building law on children and young people's participation, even though it is not a form of direct participation.

The second criterion is that the methods selected should all be ongoing, in other words they should all be methods that are actively being used at least a few times a year. The third is that that the methods selected should be used city-

wide, in order words that should be used in multiple settings and areas around the city, not just in a particular neighbourhood or in a particular school.

In the end, six methods of analysis were selected, four central units of analysis and two minor units of analysis. The four central units of analysis are widely used, directly feed into the urban planning process, and, of course, meet all three of the criteria listed above. More data was collected for these four units. To compliment these, the two minor units of analysis, which also meet the criteria listed above, operate outside of the planning process. These two units were included to increase the breadth of the thesis and to consider a fuller picture of types of methods of participation with children and young people, though somewhat less data was collected on these two units.

The selected units of analysis work together as a whole to provide a representative picture of the range and scale of participation with children and young people in Oslo. By focusing on six specifically, it also enables depth and focus in the data collection which may not be possible if any method of children and young people's participation was considered in the study. In the following section, the selected units of analysis will be presented with a brief description.

4.6 Units of analysis

The participation methods researched for this thesis were selected in order to have a broad view of the participation activities taking place with children and young people in Oslo. In the Table 4-1, there is quick overview of the six units of analysis. Following this, there are short sections providing, unit by unit, a written overview.

Table 4-1 Simple Overview of Units of Analysis		
Barnetråkk	Nature of Participation	Direct
	Target Age Range	9 to 12
	Tools/Format	Digital and paper maps, walkabouts, focus groups
	# of Sessions	1 to 2
Ungdomstråkk	Nature of Participation	Direct

	Target Age Range	13 to 19
	Tools/Format	Digital and paper maps, walkabouts, geotagging, focus groups
	# of Sessions	1 to 2
Youth Councils	Nature of Participation	Direct participation, representation
	Target Age Range	14 to 18
	Tools/Format	Electronic documents, discussion, written inputs
	# of Sessions	1 session (when a planning case is received for treatment in monthly meeting)
Children's Representatives	Nature of Participation	Indirect participation, representation
	Target Age Range	0 to 18
	Tools/Format	Electronic documents, site visits (uncommon), written inputs
	# of Sessions	0 (representative receives planning case and sends written input)
Traffic Agent	Nature of Participation	Direct
	Target Age Range	9 to 12
	Tools/Format	Mobile phone digital mapping, geotagging, photographs
	# of Sessions	1 session in class and 1 time using application on walk to/from school
Custom-designed activities	Nature of Participation	Direct, representation
	Target Age Range	Typically 9 and up
	Tools/Format	Digital and paper mapping, painting and building, focus groups, creative mixed methods
	# of Sessions	1+ (possibility to be as many as 10 to 12, depending on the facilitators)

4.6.1 Kids' tracks (Barnetråkk)

Barnetråkk was conceived by sociologist Eva Almhjell, who worked with a team to develop the first version of a Norwegian mapping method to collect information about children's use of space. The method evolved throughout the

1980s and 1990s in response to increasing awareness that existing research on children's needs in the urban environment was not sufficient to impact policy and planning; at the time, it was noted that more was known about the movement and habits of wild animals in Norway than about children. Further, the spirit around the UN's International Year of the Child in 1979 pushed forward the interest in developing and making wider use of a programme for involving children more in urban planning. Barnetråkk was born as a way to actively involve children's knowledge and interests in the planning process (Aradi 2010). It has been used in Norwegian land use planning since 1993 (Barnetråkk n.d.).

In 2006, Barnetråkk became digitised so that the mapping elements of the method involves the children using maps on a computer screen where they can draw their walking routes, and drop icons, with an optional note, onto the map. In 2016, the method got another critical update thanks to the initiative of the Norwegian Centre for Design and Architect (DOGA), which moved the mapping component onto an online platform and made it free and open for all municipalities to use with more ease (Gill 2018; Hanssen 2019). Now, planners within a municipality have the possibility to access the online maps and see the icons, heatmaps, and comments left by classes that have participated since 2016.

Barnetråkk can be used to generate a continuously updated bank of information that is provided by local children and young people about their concerns and preferences in the areas around their home and their school. The idea is that municipalities and planners can consult this data as a means of ensuring children and young people's needs are safeguarded in urban planning. Alternatively, it can be used to as a participation method in direct connection to a specific planning process. The Barnetråkk programme recommends that teachers prepare their students in advance of the planned visit from the architect and/or planners by asking them reflective questions about their community, their neighbourhood, places they like and do not like, and how they feel about their walk to school and the public spaces available to them. The data output of

Barnetråkk is a series of digital maps with tagged points of information, which are used to generate heat maps and summaries.

When DOGA piloted Barnetråkk in 2016, they tested it in the municipalities Bodø (pop. 51,000), Ski (pop. 29,000), and Giske (pop. 8,000), showing that the method can be used in municipalities with different planning needs and processes. The pilot leaders of Barnetråkk in these three municipalities reported after that the experience was an educational, democratic exercise for the children, schools, and municipal persons involved (Hanssen 2019).

Today, it is available for all Norwegian municipalities to use. The usage of Barnetråkk has spread across more than half the municipalities in Norway and usage is widely varied. There are some well documented “best case” examples (Ski and Ålesund) in which the municipality has very clear and specific ongoing use of Barnetråkk mappings, with enthusiastic implementers making it happen (Hagen et. al. 2016).

The usefulness of Barnetråkk depends on its implementation process (Aradi 2010). Aradi (2010) cites a time in 2008 in which teachers involved in Barnetråkk through a research project took advantage of some additional steps - namely photo-taking and short essay writing and customised it into a task that fulfilled one of their curriculum objectives.

There is documentation that Barnetråkk changed already crafted plans before they were approved - for example, once an area meant to become a carpark instead became a green area with a playground (Martinsen 2018). That said, there has also been a time in which a private developer accessed the online maps and argued that the children’s low use of a green space justified the option to transform it into an area with buildings (Hanssen 2019).

The use of Barnetråkk today has some known limitations which Hagen et. al. (2016) set out: Barnetråkk’s mode of communication is mapping, an abstract representation of physical, living space; the icons from which children can select are pre-set and defined by adults; the frequency with which a child visits a place

is not represented; the time between the walkabout and the mapping phases of Barnetråkk means some information can be forgotten or lost between; and the classroom setting and participation surrounded by adults can lead children to map and say only what they think they are supposed to.

Hanssen (2019) argues that Barnetråkk's capacity to transfer the local knowledge of children, something which can be classified as tacit knowledge, into something useable, explicit knowledge, for planners. Having said that, Hanssen also reports that knowledge is lost in the process; planners involved in the Ski pilot flagged this as a problem. While they were able to access the digital maps, there were not conversations with the children or opportunities to follow up and understand more why they put particular icons in certain spots (Ski Municipality 2016). This can leave questions about contradicting icons, like for instance a park where children say they spend a great deal of time in the summer, but where they also report feeling unsafe. So, at once, a key positive of Barnetråkk is its capacity to channel tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge in such a way that planners are able to use it, while this can also be seen as a pitfall when thick knowledge is reduced to thin knowledge, and some nuance is lost (Hanssen 2019).

While Barnetråkk's creation was initially quite pioneering, a very similar Swedish and Finnish version have since passed it in terms of variety and usefulness of data collected - in particular, Barnetråkk fails to collect information about children's space use in the areas nearest to their homes (because of data protection) and does not collect any information about gender, and therefore misses the opportunity to spot how gender may impact use or lack of use of particular spaces (Aradi 2010).

4.6.2 Youth tracks (Ungdomstråkk)

Ungdomstråkk was born in 2015 when the Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation requested a pilot study around the young people's use of space in the Oslo neighbourhood Tøyen. The Work Research Institute (Arbeidsforskningsinstituttet), referred to as AFI, received this responsibility and

named the project Ungdomstråkk. Their intention was to examine the Barnetråkk method and other methods to find the best way of involving young people to learn about their use of space and preferences in urban places. AFI collaborated with two architects at Rodeo, a firm known for actively engaging in participation methods, and DOGA (Design and Architecture Norway), who are these days the managers of Barnetråkk (Hagen et. al. 2016). This initial step was largely rooted in practical, ethnographic research around the development of Ungdomstråkk as a concept.

The thinking behind Ungdomstråkk was that participation with young people needs to move beyond mapping use of space to involve young people as co-creators in a way that gives them influence (Hagen et. al 2016). It is a tool that, at the time of the fieldwork and at the time of the submission of this thesis, is under development. Generally speaking, Ungdomstråkk takes place with groups of young people from a school, during the school day, and is facilitated by members of the Ungdomstråkk team (including researchers, architects, and designers) as well as teachers. In a workshop format, which lasts a few hours, the young people work in small groups to engage with paper mapping activities, discussion and ideation conversations, and walkabouts involving the mobile application Experience Fellow. The workshops centre around certain pre-identified tracks, or themes, and each group of students is assigned to one track.

Ungdomstråkk is a form of direct participation in which the participating young people speak on their own behalf about their concerns, interests, and preferences regarding an adult-selected set of themes. The format in which they participate is through hands-on paper mapping, walk abouts, mobile geotagging, and focus group style conversations. Ungdomstråkk has been used in several neighbourhoods around Oslo in connection to the Oslo Planning and Building Administration's VPOR and Plan Programme processes and is expected to be formalised and made into a more widespread tool similar to Barnetråkk but focused on young people.

4.6.3 Youth councils (Ungdområd)

In June 2018, Norway adopted a new law setting out that starting in autumn of 2019, all municipalities and counties must each have their own dedicated youth council. Prior to this, it was not obligatory for municipalities and counties to have a youth council. With the new law, there are several specific requirements: members must be aged 18 or younger and they may serve a 2-year terms on the council. There must be a balance between male and female members, with neither gender making up more than 60% of the council. The county or municipality must compensate financially the youth council members for their monthly preparation and attendance at meetings (pay rate determined by respective county or municipality). Youth councils are to be considered advisory bodies with the right to comment on matters relating to young people (Lov om kommuner og fylkeskommuner 2018, § 5-12.; Kommunal- og moderniseringsdepartementet 2018).

Youth councils are one common way in which municipalities involve young people in planning processes. Youth councils are typically comprised of members who are actively involved or have been involved in other clubs at school or in their local area and have access to resources and experiences that enable them to quite effectively know the views of other young people, such that they are able to speak on their behalf (Hagen 2017). In country-wide evaluation, Knudtson & Tjerbo (2009) found that the areas in which youth councils had the most influence were cultural initiatives and the development of new youth and leisure clubs. The areas where youth councils had little to no impact were health, education, and city planning.

In Oslo, there is one youth council per district (bydel) and a central youth council (SUR) comprised of members from the borough youth councils. There is also an annual youth conference which consists of about 80 young people, coming from the youth councils or youth clubs, lasting three days and resulting in identification and articulation of five key areas of concern for young people. The borough youth councils meet usually 8 times per year, with members serving

a 2-year term (and 2 terms allowed) and ranging in age from 12 to 19. They have an annual amount of money which they allocate based on applications they receive, for local, youth-focused initiatives. They also discuss and give input on three to eight cases from various agencies about all sorts of topics related to issues and developments in their borough. SUR also meets regularly and corresponds directly with the municipality and cases sent to them by the municipality, in addition to prioritising the five areas identified in the most recent annual youth conference (Knudtson & Tjerbo 2009).

Youth councils have the possibility to influence their municipality in four key ways: They can bring forth their own issues and concerns for political treatment, they can be included early in the planning process for different policies and programmes, they can give input on the cases which are sent to them, and lastly they can distribute funds to local youth focused initiatives. This last one is where youth councils have the most power. While the third one is a regular practice at every youth council meeting, the frequency or depth of impact resulting from their input is unknown and varies. The first two are fairly uncommon across the municipalities, with the first one requiring increased adult involvement in sparking and supporting the process (Knudtson & Tjerbo 2009).

Youth councils are a form of direct participation and of a representation model in which a self-selected group of young people participate in urban planning as representatives of other young people and children in their area. The format in which they participate is through reading and discussing written report and sending written comments and concerns. These comments and concerns feed into VPORs, Plan Programmes, guidance and thematic plans, and plans for small scale changes to local roads and buildings.

4.6.4 Children's representatives

Despite being the most common method among Norwegian municipalities for safeguarding children and young people's interests in urban planning (Hanssen 2019), not much has been written of children's representatives. Children's representative will be described in more detail in the Chapter 6 which presents

the findings related to the views of adult facilitators of children and young people's participation in Oslo.

It is national law that each municipality must have a children's representative, that is an adult person who works in the municipality, typically as a social worker, to receive building and planning cases and to send written comments and recommendations on behalf of the local children and young people. In Oslo, there is one children's representative per each of the fifteen city districts and this person is sometimes but not always the district's youth council secretary. It is their job to represent those ages 0 to 18 in the district in all planning cases - typically VPOR, Plan Programmes, thematic plans, and some zoning plans.

Children's representatives are an indirect form of participation in which qualified adults speak on behalf of the needs and interests of local children and young people.

4.6.5 Traffic agent (Trafikkagenten)

Traffic Agent began in 2014 as a collaboration by Agency of Urban Environment, Norwegian Centre for Transport Research and Oslo City Teaching Agency. It was designed to involve children ages 9 to 12 in a traffic safety themed geotagging and mobile mapping activity in which the young participants track their route to and from school, along the way leaving thumbs up and thumbs down stickers, as well as photos and comments, indicating positive and negative points in their journey. Traffic Agent collects data from mobile app usage of school classrooms which have registered to be users via the teacher, usually either at the request of parents or the school principal, though technically the request could come from planners or the students themselves. At one time the Traffic Agent had 3 full time staff members based in the Oslo Municipality Agency of Urban Environment and their own dedicated budget for making small-scale repairs and upgrades to the built environment (Traffic Agent, n.d.).

Traffic Agent is a form of direct participation with children, though it does not link directly into the formalised urban planning system beyond some small-scale

physical modifications and upgrades such as trimmed hedges, repaired pavements, replaced lightbulbs, and, most significantly, creating new or modified pedestrian crossings on roads. Since, 2014, it involved schoolchildren from over 50 schools in Oslo. The Norwegian Centre for Transport Research is allowed to use the data for scientific research about the creation of new bus routes and pathways for school children's transportation needs. In 2020, however, Traffic Agent closed indefinitely due what appears to be challenges regarding new data protection laws.

4.6.6 Temporary, pop-up customised processes

This final unit of analysis was added to the study to give a fuller picture of the types of children's and young people's participation taking place in Oslo. It focused on custom-made methods that come from specialist planning, design, and architecture firms and which routinely use a mix of their own participation tools - from hands-on building and painting projects, to walkabouts, to mural making, to mood board and collage creations, to focus groups. The data collected for this unit of analysis comes from five firms, ranging from one of the largest in Oslo to medium sized to fairly small scale. The firm themselves are either specialist in citizen participation and/or children and young people's participation or they have one or two people dedicated to creating and facilitating participation sessions.

The participation carried out by these firms can be classified as direct participation, involving small groups or classes of children and/or young people, sometimes in one session and other times in multiple sessions to as many as 10 or 12 sessions. The outcomes of these sessions connected to the municipal master plan, site transformations, park and school design, area zoning plans, or detailed zoning plans.

4.7 Study strength and limitations

4.7.1 Limitations

One limitation of this study was the role of the researcher as a foreigner and non-native Norwegian speaker with a low proficiency level. Interviews were therefore carried out in English. While Norwegians statistically tend to have a high level of English, there were some adult interviewees who choose to express certain expressions and words in Norwegian (a practice that was encouraged by the researcher, who was confident that they would understand the meaning from their own knowledge of Norwegian or with later translation). In some youth councils, it is possible that some members self-selected out of the study when they otherwise may not have, because of concerns about their English proficiency. Those youth council members who chose to participate obviously had a high command of English however and were mostly extremely confident using English to express their views.

Because this thesis covers such a large range geographically, all of Oslo, and several different methods of participation, a tremendous amount of data could have been collected. Because of the timeframe of the PhD and the researchers spending ten months in Oslo, five of which were in the field, the number of interviews was limited to forty, with a strong representation of youth council members and youth council secretaries, but fewer private and public planner and just three teachers. A somewhat larger sampling of interviews could have brought more richness to the study as well as insight in the tensions associated with the high amount of private planning in Oslo.

On a similar note, the study involved only two site observations - one of Ungdomstråkk and one of a custom-made method involving a public square transformation. Initially it was hoped that the researcher would have access to a session of Barnetråkk and of Traffic Agent, but it proved to be challenging to discover the times/date/locations of such sessions and to gain access to them.

4.7.2 Strengths

There were several key strengths in the design and execution of this study. First, one strength of this study is that the researcher had lived in Norway previously and worked directly with young people. In introductions to interviewees, this was looked upon highly as it showed the researcher had a base level of first-hand experience in Norwegian life, society, and schooling. Another strength about the researcher's situation in relation to the fieldwork site is that the University of Oslo was open to hosting the researcher during the full duration of the fieldwork. The researcher was given a dedicated office space in the Oslo Science Park within the Educational Sciences Department, was mentored by a host supervisor, and was able to engage in a variety of department research activities, including one overnight and one full-day research retreat and two workshops around the co-creation of cities and about life and learning in the digital age.

Another strength of this study is that it was possible to gather a balance of data from all sides of Oslo, without overrepresentation from particular neighbourhoods or areas. With the youth councils, there was somewhat higher uptake from the east side, but it was possible to balance with conversations with youth council secretaries and case notes from the west side. Overall, in fact, the response and quality of the data collected from the youth councils was so high - both the interviews and online meeting records about their engagement with urban planning cases - that the study was able to gather a great deal of rich data from young people directly, some of which is not included in this thesis, but will likely be presented in a future article and has already been presented in two conferences and two workshops.

Next, it could be considered an advantage that the researcher herself was, by some standards such as those of the European Union, young person (under the age of 29) and was fairly familiar with certain cultural references, generational concerns, and technology habits, that provided helpful perspective when creating a productive and friendly interview space with the young people who

were interviewed in this study. Additionally, the climate crisis and climate strikes were topics that around half of the young people interviewed brought into the conversation, and the researcher herself has been engaged with climate strikes in Scotland, as well as online social media discussions and thinking around the climate crisis.

Finally, the fact that this study uniquely evaluates children and young people's participation on a citywide scale and focuses on participation methods that are mostly ongoing and used all over the city, give it strength. On one had there was an identified need in the literature suggesting that such research would be a valuable contribution to existing knowledge. At the same time, it is evident that those working in the planning and building field in Norway are becoming increasingly interested to know more about what good participation looks like and how well the existing participation methods available are functioning in terms of quality, outcomes, and areas of improvement. Therefore, this study has potential to contribute not just to the literature but also to give practical insights and new expertise those working in the participation field in Oslo and in Norway.

4.8 Chapter conclusions

This chapter described the methodological background that underpins this study. In this chapter, the case study model of research has been justified and the methods semi-structured interviews, observations, and text analysis have been identified as the methods employed in this study. The ethics considerations have been carefully contemplated and the processes used for data management and interpretation have been described. After this, an explanation for the selection of Norway, specifically Oslo, was stated and the criteria used for selecting the units of analysis in this study were defined. Lastly, the units of analysis were summarised and the study weaknesses and strengths were identified.

The following four chapters present the findings of this study, with Chapter 5 examining the views and experiences of young participants, Chapter 6 taking a

similar approach but moving to spotlight to adult facilitators of participation, Chapter 7 examining the process of translation that take place when communicating participation goals and outcomes between the planning world and young participants, and Chapter 8 focusing on the challenges participation with children young people faces because of the planning system itself.

Chapter 5. “Sometimes we feel like we’re just for show:” Children and young people’s experiences with participation

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to analyse how on-going city-wide participatory planning tools designed to gather information about children’s preferences and needs impact the decision making and design of a city. To build towards that aim it is first necessary to outline the realities of children and young people’s participation from the ground up. This chapter therefore describes how children and young people experience participation generally across the range of methods examined in this study.

This findings chapter connects to the literature discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 in three central ways. First, it illuminates logistical barriers and challenges associated with carrying out participation with children and young people. Second, it begins bringing to the surface the differing rationales present for enacting participation. Third, it reveals several characteristics of the planning system that create situations which are not conducive to children and young people’s participation. What this chapter uniquely offers is a spotlight on the voices of children and young people - not just their concerns and preferences for the built environment, but their views on the experience of participation in the planning process.

The first section of this chapter outlines the topics on which children and young people may give inputs into planning through participation. The second section describes the ways children and young people are prepared to participate in planning. The third section explores the child-friendliness of planning by looking at the objective and subjective experiences of young participants. The final section discusses the first three sections and considers the extent to which participation with children and young people could be classified as non-participation.

This chapter draws on data from 20 interviews, including six youth councils, five youth council secretaries /children's representatives, and several planners, teachers, and architects who had been involved in Barnetråkk, Ungdomstråkk, and/or custom-designed methods. Data from websites and documents about all six units of analysis were also used to compliment the interview data.

The aim of this chapter is to give an account of the conditions under which children and young people participate in planning in order to classify the extent to which Oslo is enacting meaningful participation and/or non-participation. This groundwork will enable the following chapters to broaden the perspective and examine, first, a slightly wider examination of the adults involved in enacting participation, and ultimately a big picture examination of the planning system and public administration in Oslo.

5.2 Children and young people's topics in urban planning

In this section of the chapter, the different units of analysis, or methods of participation that were researched in this study, are discussed in terms of what specific topics they invite children and young people to participate in. It begins by looking at Barnetråkk and Ungdomstråkk, as they share a similar format and themes and then moves on to consider the themes that youth councils and children's representatives engage with. Following this, there is a presentation of what children and young people think about these themes and what urban planning and environment topics they would like to give their inputs on.

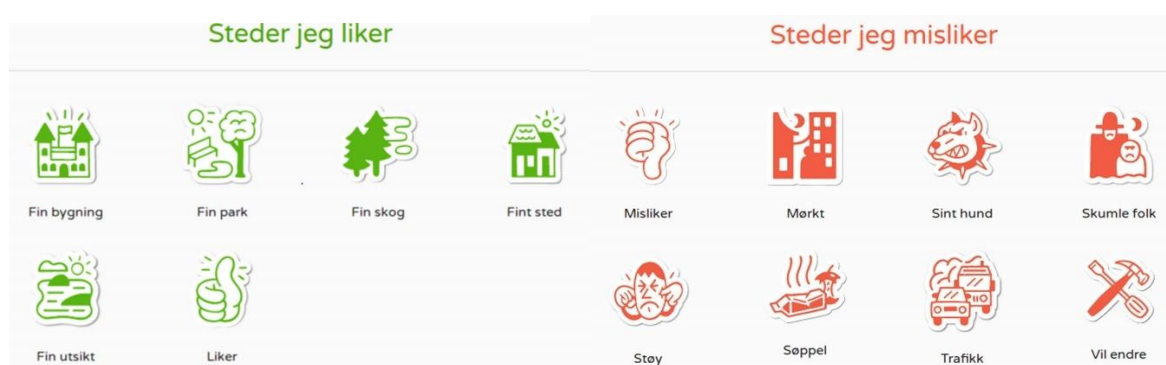
5.2.1 Barnetråkk stickers and Ungdomstråkk tracks

In 1989, the planner Eva Almhjell in the Vestfold region, to the southwest of Oslo, noted that the Norwegian public administration knows more about the walking paths of moose populations than of children. Thus, she, along with a researcher, created the first version of Barnetråkk, a mapping activity for gathering information about where children go and how they feel about those places. Barnetråkk has been the cornerstone of direct involvement with children and young people in planning in Norway ever since.

The importance of Barnetråkk to the evolution of children and young people's participation in Norway cannot be overstated. It not only sparked the normalisation of directly involving children and young people in planning, but it also identified a clear set of topics on which young participants should be allowed to comment and of which planners, in theory, would be able to make use. Thus, the first task of examining the topics on which children and young people may give input requires looking to Barnetråkk.

In Barnetråkk, participants are asked to draw on a map their walk from home to school, and to post stickers, which are defined by adults, on negative and positive places. Around 79% of children walk to school in Oslo (Aslak & Elvebakk 2011). The positive stickers are good building, good park, good forest, good view, good place, and like. The negative stickers are dislike, dark, scary dog, creepy people, noisy, rubbish, traffic, and construction. It is possible for participants to write details with each sticker if they choose. In the end, planners have a heatmap illustrating the routes to school, negative places, and positive places (with some varying level of indication, for the latter two, about what exactly is positive or negative). Barnetråkk has seen advancements in format such that participants can now place stickers onto a digital map, but no updates to its stickers.

**Figure 5-1 Image of stickers available on Barnetråkk
(from Barnetråkk website)**



In the mid-2010s, Oslo Municipality created Traffic Agent and a team of researchers at Oslo Metropolitan University (formerly, at that time, Oslo and Akershus University College) began developing Ungdomstråkk. While Traffic Agent was explicitly made to understand and improve traffic safety and travel habits of children and young people in Oslo, there are obvious similarities in its design and function with Barnetråkk. The idea behind Ungdomstråkk has been to create a Barnetråkk more suited to young people, since Barnetråkk is designed centrally for children.

All three methods employ maps and stickers, or some type of placeable icons or post-its, with a predefined label. See Table 5-1 with a summary of the topics on which children and young people may comment within each of these three methods of participation.

Table 5-1 Methods of participation and the topics involved, Part 1	
Method of Participation	Topics on Which Participants Give Input
Barnetråkk	Path to school, liked places, disliked places (with a focus on giving planners information about children's use of space within a planning area)
Ungdomstråkk	Path to school, young people's use of space within a planning area, topics determined by research team (or in some cases district administration) in advance of session and have thus far been topics like cycling, metro, high school, kindergarten, middle school, and places to hang out, food (with a focus on giving planners information about children's use of space within a planning area)
Traffic Agent	Path to school, liked places, disliked places (with a focus on traffic and having a clear safe path to school so that the municipality can make small changes to the build environment whenever possible)

All of these methods are heavily interested in children and young people's paths to school and their likes and dislikes along the way. The key difference that can be highlighted is that Barnetråkk and Traffic Agent, which were made mainly for ages 9 to 12, invite the young participants to give input on a narrower range of topics, in comparison to Ungdomstråkk, which is designed for ages 13-19. In a

sense, giving older participants more topics to engage with than younger participants is in line with thinking that participation methods need to be age appropriate and to be linked to the lived experiences and concerns of participants (Council of Europe 2020).

On the other hand, all three of these methods come with predefined topics and result in reports which present heatmaps of children and young people's paths to school, liked and disliked areas, and, as much as possible but depending on how much extra information participants have supplied along with each sticker, an adult written analysis and summary of what all the collected information means. Therefore, it is not immediately evident if the topics on which the young participants are invited to give input are indeed the most "relevant," as the Council of Europe's Handbook (2020) demands.

5.2.2 Cases given to youth councils and children's representatives

It is another story entirely when considering youth councils and children's representatives, the two most common arrangements across Norway for safeguarding children's interests in planning, in accordance with Norwegian law (Hanssen 2019). While children's representatives are adults, in an advocacy role for children and young people in planning cases, and therefore not a form of direct participation, it is a practice in full force in Oslo. All 15 of Oslo's districts have their own children's representative and the PBE has 2 employees dedicated to assisting them understand the cases and make the most of their role. Youth councils represent the children and youth in their respective districts (one council per each of the fifteen districts) and are composed of young people from the local schools and youth clubs. Both the youth councils and children's representatives receive plans drafted by the PBE and are asked to give their input. See the Table 5-2 for an elaboration on the topics youth councils and children's representatives may give input.

Table 5-2 Methods of participation and the topics involved, Part 2	
Method of Participation	Topics on Which Participants Give Input
Youth Councils	All public plan drafts (not building cases) and district and city-wide agendas for transport, traffic, cycling, parks, public space, and environment, it is possible to bring own cases forward
Children's Representatives	All public plan drafts (typically not building cases) and some private plan drafts in district and sometimes nearby districts, it is possible to bring own cases forward

There are two key differences between the methods Barnetråkk, Ungdomstråkk, and Traffic Agent and methods youth councils and children's representatives. The first is that the moment in the planning process in which participation occurs is different. The information collected through Barnetråkk and Ungdomstråkk (and potentially Traffic Agent) are used in the process of drafting a plan, while the information collected through engaging youth councils and children's representatives is received once a plan has already been drafted. The topics with which they engage are therefore logically different, because of what is needed from them for the planning process, but importantly the planning context into which their inputs arrive is different.

The second is that the parameters are much looser for the input allowed from youth councils and children's representatives. There are two reflections to be made on this latter point. First, youth councils and children's representatives, in theory, have the mandate to not just give their inputs on a plan draft, but also to speak at a district or municipal council meeting to express their concerns in more details, calling considerably more attention to their concerns. Second, in connection with that point, while it is possible to give any input on a planning case, if you are a youth council or children's representative, your comprehension of the plan, what is being asked of you, and how you can contribute is critical. In the following sections of this chapter explore the preparations children and

young people receive in advance of participation and the format and accessibility of participation activities, in order to make clear their understanding and ultimately to see if they are in fact involved a situation of nonparticipation.

5.2.3 Participant thoughts on the topics

On the whole, participants and others present during participation like teachers and adult youth council secretaries expressed mixed emotions towards the topics on which children and young people may give input. All like very much that they are invited to participate in planning, while some wish they could give input on other topics or feel important topics were omitted because of a method's parameters.

For instance, one teacher, Espen, found it "strange" that the planners who came were extremely keen to know where the students felt unsafe in the area, but did not talk at all about a high-profile planning case happening in their district very near the school (BT01).

Youth council members in three districts brought up their dissatisfaction with the fact that they are never invited to give input about the housing developments in their district. Take for example the words of Liv and Malin:

Liv So we have been asked about parks, for example, but when it comes to housing, not really.

Malin I think people think that it's not really important to us, or that we don't have a say in it because we're young and we don't -

Liv We don't know.

Malin We don't buy houses, because [laugh] we don't have any money, but the thing is that yeah, if we want to, when we grow older and want to live in this area, it will be an issue to us if there isn't, firstly isn't any houses or apartments for us, or if they're not well planned out.

Liv They have a bunch of those like grey and boring, and everything looks totally similar. Like no one actually wants to live in that kind

of area. So, if teenagers and children could, like participate in this, it would be like, very colourful houses and everything would look different. (YC03)

Liv and Malin express dissatisfaction about having been asked about parks, and not about housing. This illustrates a broader concern brought up by interviewees - that children and young people are often allowed to participate on *topics evidently related to youth*, but not about other topics which are also important to them.

Where youth houses, skate parks, basketball courts, libraries, and parks are concerned, it goes without saying that the children and young people of Oslo have participated in some way. It is also typically the case with matters relating to traffic safety spots to hang out. It is far more unlikely that children and young people will be involved in for example the development of housing. Why precisely this is the case will be explored more in Chapter 7, within a discussion about the planning system itself. This could be due to the notion that participation for children and young people is about educating them and about developing their sense of place, as described in Chapter 2, and so small scale local community areas like skate parks, libraries, and parks are easier to work

Table 5-3 Topics on which children and young people are most often invited to give inputs

- Traffic
- Having a safe walk to and from school
- Recreation spaces
 - Parks
 - Skate parks
 - Basketball courts
 - Libraries
 - Swimming pools
 - Youth houses
 - Culture centres
 - Music venues
- Places to hang out

with than something longer term and more complex like a housing area. Additionally, this could be about societal expectations about what children and young people care about, though as shown by Liv and Malin those expectations are not always correct.

A part of the data analysis for this thesis involved reviewing youth council agendas and reports from Barnetråkk, Ungdomstråkk, and Traffic Agent. Through this it became possible to see which topics children and young people are most frequently invited to give inputs.

It is noticeable that all of these topics are evidently in some way related to the daily lives of children and young people. This relevance is an important sign of effective and ethical participation according to The Council of Europe Handbook of Participation. At the same time, it is notable that these topics are small scale projects or niche areas within the broader landscape of planning.

The topic of gender was not brought up by any of the young people interviewed, although a couple of adult interviewees mentioned their concern that most of the topics on which children and young people can give input tend to be *boy spaces* more than *girl spaces*. One interviewee who had been involved in the promotion of Barnetråkk noted:

I think girls also will find themselves in these activities [and stickers], but I think it's a lot of outdoors and boys' activities a lot. (BT04)

One youth council secretary, reflecting on the development of their district's youth house felt it had been difficult to make spaces and activities for girls. Some rooms are dominated by table tennis and video games, and are typically occupied by the boys. They have started hosting one girl-only block of time and offering yoga classes in an effort to remedy this. That recreational space for children and young people may be more occupied by boys than girls, the topic of gendered spaces was not something with which interviewees seemed concerned.

5.2.4 What do the children and young people want?

What children and young people request when they are invited to give inputs varies depending on the area and existing infrastructure, but there are some commonalities across areas of Oslo. In terms of infrastructure swimming, sports facilities, libraries (with quite study space as well as places to hang out), and public trampolines are always in high demand. Concerns about traffic safety, traffic noise, and safe paths to school does appear to be of concern to children and young people, and not just a topic assigned to them by adults.

Clean, safe places to hang out and spend unstructured time (rather than in a sports club, for instance) away from adults is of particular interest to young people. Mari explained for instance:

There happens to be a problem. Because if you want to invite someone over, it's the family's home. It's much better to be a hangout outside of [home]. (YC05)

Sara brought up that existing places to hang out are not always accessible to young people:

Like there's not a lot of spaces, we just have some malls and we can't just hang around the malls unless you're buying something. And the restaurants are too expensive at times (YC04)

Tove and Sara expressed concerns about their peers:

Tove It's better to have places they can go to, places they can feel safe, instead of just being in the streets or yeah, doing bad stuff, stuff that isn't good for them.

Sara And they can sense of belonging by having a space, it can be with people that have the same interests. (YC04)

That said, young people do not necessarily like outsiders pointing out safety concerns or problems in their area. For example, youth council members in one district expressed great annoyance about the outside perception of their area - Yara explained that some adults in the media describe their area as “a terrible

place” and that “most of these kids are not gonna end up having a job and stuff like that.” Ilhan elaborated, saying “it’s like the media portrays this place kind of differently to what’s actually happening here.” Another member of this same youth council was quick to interject with their explanation that the “the media needs to red mark some places, because money making... capitalism.” While these youth council members were evidently highly interested in issues in their community and making active positive contributions, they felt that efforts are not seen because of outside portrayal of their area overall. This story aligns with Smith (2007) in which the media and organisations painted children and young people as victims rather than highlighting their contributions and political involvement.

Youth council members in some areas expressed frustration about the amount of new housing being built in their area, since they see there are already what they consider to be a high volume of people. In their view, there are an insufficient number and range of places for young people in their area to be and adding more families to the area will worsen this problem. Youth council members in districts with few youth clubs were desirous to have more youth clubs, and especially youth clubs with inexpensive food.

Examples of ideas that youth council members suggested for general improvements in their area include using the local road taxes to subsidise the cost of public transport for children and young people; improved education about financial wellbeing and money management as well as increased opportunities for summer jobs; and increasing and/or improving toilets in public areas. Among all youth councils interviewed, the topic of summer jobs for young people was of very high importance. This does not have a direct connection to planning, but it is important to note that, at times, what children and young people (and indeed adults) need and desire most from their local area is in fact not a new cycling lane or culture centre (no matter how nice those neighbourhood updates might be). This difficulty was brought up by some planners who reported that during participation sessions there are always inputs and requests that are well outside the scope of the plan they are drafting, and

managing expectations and directing the conversation productively can be a significant challenge.

Overall, it is notable that at least youth council member wished they and their peers could have more of a say in city planning overall. Take for instance the words of Yara:

Actually, I feel like we should be more [consulted and taken seriously on planning] because we don't get to say a lot about how our future is going to be because it's like, the older generation and stuff doing all the job. And we basically get nothing to say. So, we should be more included, not just us, but like, every teenager in [our district] could sent us ideas and then we can like, get it through. (YC02)

And Malin similarly remarked:

But it's weird, because, yeah, the city planning, you how everything is going to look in the future. The only people that [it] concerns, kind of, is us. So, it's a bit strange that we don't really have a lot to say on that matter. (YC03)

In these last two remarks, it is evident that the desire to participate more is about wanting the future to be better and fearing that the adults will not do an adequate job. In some instances, youth council members related planning to climate change - the adults making choices about the future of the environment and of the city cannot be trusted and they young people know it is themselves who will have to live the longest with the outcomes.

5.2.5 Discussion

The topics on which children and young people may weigh in on planning range impressively from traffic and making paths to school safer, to recreational spaces for children and young people, to plans drafted by PBE.

Yet already there are an evident sign of nonparticipation - children and young people are not given a say in the topics on which they may give input. The rest of this chapter will delve deeper into where signs of participation and

nonparticipation are apparent. To conclude this section, consider the reflections of one youth council secretary:

And the [district] might say, “yeah, but it's for youth participation, for them to be a part of things,” but it's really more like informational. Like “this is what we are going to do.” And then they have to read everything, and then maybe [the youth council will] say, “we agree” or “disagree.” It's not really like participation. (YCS03)

Indeed, in the youth council case, it was possible to catalogue members' inputs on planning cases, to identify the topics which they selected themselves on which to give input. Most commonly they pointed out concerns about traffic and safe paths to school, with particular enthusiasm for new cycling paths, and stressing the need for plans to more heavily emphasize sustainability and to ensure that new buildings are as green as possible. How these inputs were used, and if they created any changes in the plan is unknown - a theme that will be explored more in Chapter 7.

On what topics are children and young people allowed to comment? In the same breath, when discussing about the cases they receive and the stickers available to them, interviewees offered concerns that went deeper. The rest of this chapter will continue exploring the conditions of participation in order to provide a full report of the situation.

5.3 Preparation of young participants

According to Hart (1992) and the The Council of Europe Handbook on Children's Participation (2020) that children and young people need to be prepared and informed about their role before participation occurs or at the start of the participation session in some way, in order for participation to have been successful. This section describes the extent to which children and young people are informed and prepared to participate and begins to problematize the apparent lack of understanding and preparedness of young participants.

5.3.1 Why have we been invited?

One sign of participation, as opposed to nonparticipation, is that children and young people understand why they have been invited to participate. This has been taken into consideration by adult facilitators of participation in Oslo. Generally, there appears to sufficient explanation given to young participants at the start of participation sessions, to ensure they understand why they specifically have been invited to participate.

One planner, Lars, reflected about the comprehension of four classes involved in Barnetråkk:

I think they got an understanding of why we asked them to do this. Not necessarily what the whole planning process is or what's going to happen, but they understood that we wanted their opinion, and that it was important for us to hear what they say. (BT02)

Youth council members interviewed in this study clearly had a firm grasp on their mandate and why it is important for them to exist as a council, to represent the interests of children and young people in their area. Youth council secretaries described the process of ensuring the youth council members understand their mandate as one of their most important tasks and generally that it is not challenging for the youth council members to understand that. One youth council secretary, reflecting said:

I would talk about, it's actually in the mandate, that they are actually going to give advice to the district council in cases that are related to children and youth stuff. They say, "Oh, yes. Good." They understand that. (YCS02)

The understanding of children and young people involved in participation, as far as the question - why have we been invited - goes, appears to be no problem at all. Credit for this can be given to the adult facilitators of participation, but there is another factor to consider that likely deserves credit as well - the Norwegian education system.

In Norway, children learn throughout all school years about their rights and being a member of a democratic society, and indeed participation [not specifically in planning, but generally in public administration and community projects] is one component that has been long in the curriculum. It is therefore quite natural that participatory planning finds a space in schools and for students to understand why they have been invited.

5.3.2 Preparation in the classroom

Participation activities that take place during school hours with classes of students, necessarily involve both teachers and, most often, planners who are drafting the plan in question. Sometimes, instead of a planner, there may be an architect or other adult facilitator of some kind from the municipality or district. In any case, these adults must communicate to establish the times and details of the participation activities.

5.3.2.1 *View of teachers*

While acknowledging that time can be an issue, since the school schedule limits the amount of available time for participation sessions, teachers indicated that the way in which planners [or other adult facilitators] prepared their students did not, in their view, create a productive and open environment for participation. Teachers who opened their class for participation sessions with the PBE indicated planners presented the plan for which they were facilitating the participation session and some factual aspects about the area for which the plan was being made. There was some discussion about orienting oneself using maps. Information was typically presented on PowerPoint slides, which according to teachers is an infrequently used form of presenting information to students. Lars noted: “We don’t stand close to the board and kind of speak and teach to the students.” (BT01)

5.3.2.2 *View of planners*

From the view of planners [or other adult facilitator] entering a classroom to facilitate a participation session, classes which has been prepared by their teacher in some way, were more engaged, ready to participate, and able to provide inputs for the plan. To prepare their class, teachers discussed with the students about democratic processes, their rights as children, what is happening in the neighbourhood, how to navigate using a map, and what is going to happen when the participation session takes place.

Planners, such as Merete, expressed frustration about instance when they “had asked the teachers to prepare the kids about what was going to happen and also maybe look at the map to find where they lived” (UT08) but teachers for an unknown reason had not done so. They noted that the quality of the participation sessions depends on if “teachers prepared them really well” or not. (BT01)

There is an evident disconnect between teachers and those who come in from the outside to facilitate participation sessions, specifically about who is supposed to prepare their students and in what ways. This is an illustration of the necessity of having trained adults with adequate resources to facilitate participation. It also points to what may be a gap between participation and the planning system - in cases where there is not a key adult professional positioned between the world of children and young people and that of the planning system, logistical details can be lost.

5.3.2.3 *Uncertainties about preparation activities*

In some instances, it was evident that adults involved viewed preparation activities as recommended but optional, as an activity separate from the participation process. At the same time, they lamented the poor outcomes if preparation activities had not taken place or if they felt they had not been given the necessary materials and instructions in advance to prepare the children and/or young people involved.

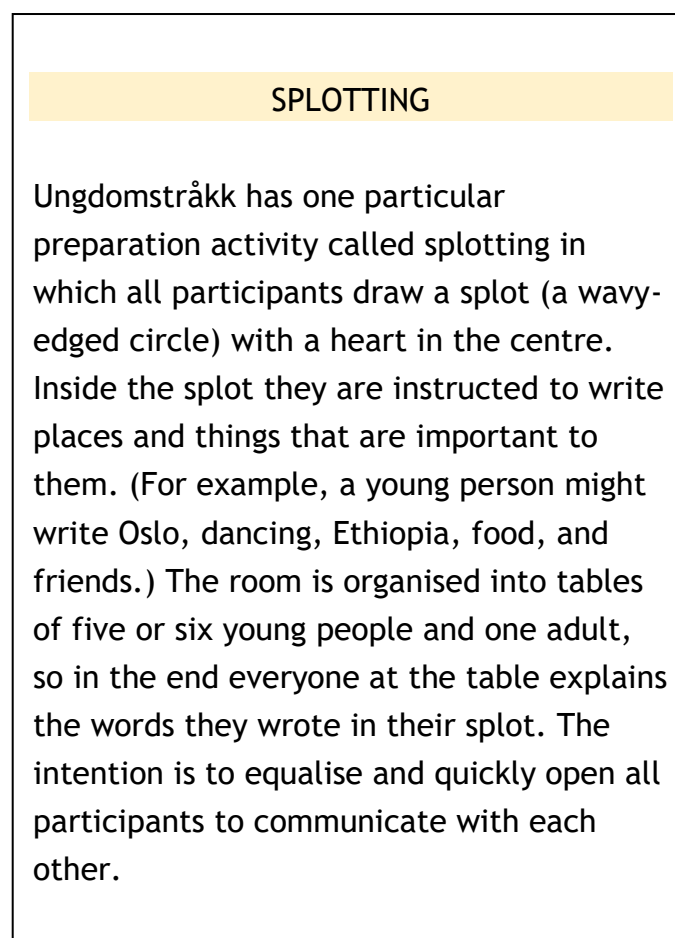
In other instances, adults viewed the preparation as an integral first step in the participation process. Sometimes this preparation takes place a week before, for one or two hours, and introduces planning, reading maps, and what is going to happen in the following session. Other times it is a series of ice breakers meant to acquaint all involved with each other and with the participation activities ahead.

The overall sentiment was however, as expressed by Inger, that adults who facilitate participation with children and young people “do not have a good way of preparing them to participate before they come to the event.” (UT09) Though a standard practice for adult meetings, there was consensus that PowerPoint slides are fairly ineffective in engaging young participants.

Underlying problems in terms of preparing children and young people for participation are evidently connected to a lack of knowledge about how to do - how and when to make time for it, what activities to use, who is responsible for facilitating the preparation phase, and how to present information and what information to present.

When participants do not understand what they are taking part in, what is being asked of them, where they fit into the process, what the outcomes of participation

Figure 5-2 Description of Spotting technique



might be, on what they are allowed to give inputs, how their inputs may be used, and/or when they might see outcomes of some sort, participation may fall into the category of nonparticipation. For this reason, problems such as those described above are of particular concern.

5.3.3 Thrown into the deep end

Young people reported that when it came to participation in building and planning processes, whether they are reporting on their own use of space and preference or representing the other young people's interests in the district through their participation, they are not given any training. When asked directly about if they receive training to be able to read, understand, and give input on planning cases, youth council members Malin and Liv laughed and said, "no!" Liv followed up by saying: "You're just straight out of the middle school and you just, you just dive in." (YC03) This was the common answer across all youth councils involved in the study, that young people are "really just thrown into it" (YC01).

Some interviewees referenced a youth house construction project in which a small team of researchers, architects, designers, and district youth workers were involved in hosting a multi-session participation process with 11 young people. The change in the young people after several sessions was highly noticeable - the planner involved noted:

It was 10 workshops before they started to say what they really wanted. And part of those workshops was going to different youth houses and seeing what others had and getting that information and then being able to say what they wanted. So it works well, if you can really take the time to make it work. (YCS04)

And those involved admitted that, while time consuming, it was one of the best participation processes with young people they had ever seen.

This same planner reflected on their experience with another form of participation for about 60 young people from two schools to give inputs on a

plan being drafted by the PBE. The session lasted during one whole school day, but some groups of young people were never able to identify their need and wants for the area. They asked for “more seating and more car parking” and when asked for more ideas they said “no” or suggested adding more benches. Some groups did manage to, in the final hour, “change their mindset to start being selfish for themselves” which was “fruitful.”

In another instance, a youth council secretary cited repeatedly one FutureBuilt project that had taken place in their district. (FutureBuilt was a programme involving 50 carbon-neutral projects in and around Oslo focused on building and planning from 2010 - 2020). This youth council secretary reported that several young people had been engaged in this project over the course of a school year at multiple events. Their experience had reportedly been far more meaningful, and their impact on the project more notable, than with any other participation process this youth council secretary had seen in all their time working with young people in the district. In the case of the FutureBuilt project and the youth house development, the success in terms of both being exemplar examples of participation was that the young people involved had time to understand the project, what was being asked of them, and their role. The starting sessions acted as training and brought the young participants to a point in which they felt able to say what they desired.

In the case of the youth council members too, those interviewed all noted the steep learning curve in the first year of being on the youth council. Ilhan explains:

The people that have been sitting here for quite a while, they explain things like thoroughly the first couple of meetings, and then you kind of get the hang of it. So, like, there's isn't a specific or official place to go and train, but yeah you get help. (YC02)

Children and young people who are participants in planning processes appear to have little to no training or preparation in advance of participation sessions and activities. The young people interviewed all described that in their first engagements with participation, they felt they lacked even a basic

understanding of planning and how to best communicate their views to planners and architects. Based on the reflections of adult interviews who had been involved in or heard about longer term participation activities, it is evident that when young participants are more prepared, because of past experiences and having longer amounts of time and more participation sessions, their contributions more accurately reflect what they truly want more than a hasty response to a prompt.

5.3.4 Conclusion

In the above sections, it had become evident that children and young people often do not receive adequate preparation in advance of participating. The reasons for this appear to be that adults are sometimes unsure whose job it is to prepare young people and/or they do not have suitable activities and methods to use for preparing young participants.

While children and young people appear to understand why they are invited to participate there, they also feel they have been thrown into the deep end and struggle to formulate ideas and inputs that represent their own needs. The subsequent section will continue to interrogate the extent to which young participants understand their role as participants.

5.4 Child-friendly, accessible participation?

This section examines the subjective and objective experiences of children and young people who participate in planning. The first section describes difficulties associated with comprehending planning cases and the extent to which planning has been made accessible to young participants. The second section critically examines the lack of feedback and follow-up children and young people receive after having participated. The final suggestion broadly discusses the limited understanding of children and young people who have been involved in participation activities.

5.4.1 Density, length (pages and time) and language of planning

The length, language, and density of planning is central problem for children and young people's participation. The challenge adults face when trying to make planning accessible to young participants will be described in Chapter 6. This section continues to explore the conditions of planning, with focus on participants' experience of it.

Youth council members typically receive three to eight cases three to seven days before their meeting, one or two of which, depending on the district, will be a plan draft or other planning related document. That gives youth council members three to seven days to read in total somewhere between 60 and 250 pages and to prepare questions and comments. Youth council members and secretaries described planning cases as on average the most dense and lengthy cases they receive.

Youth council members lament that this is entirely an insufficient amount of time. While being a youth council member is a paid job, their primary responsibility is their schoolwork.

Fatima I have so much schoolwork. I don't have time to read [cases] thoroughly. (YC06)

How exactly do the youth council member cope with this this amount of case work? All adult secretaries interviewed reported that at least some percentage, ranging from 25% to 100% of the members (excluding the youth council leader who must prepare the meeting agenda and assist the others, to the best of their ability, make sense of the cases - they are paid extra for being the leader) do not read the cases in advance.

Some youth council members had developed strategies like skim reading and searching for information that appears relevant to youth. Magnus and Jenny say about this:

Magnus Yes and some cases or even like 80 pages. It seems really impossible at first, but we learn how to kind of just kind of-

Jenny Just to scroll through

Magnus Yeah just scroll through

Jenny -and find the most important. (YC01)

Length and amount of time to read are not the only challenges to working with planning documents. Children and young people, and indeed almost all adult facilitators interviewed find the language of planning to be dense, technical, complex, and bureaucratic. One architect Håkon noted:

One difficulty about the participation of children is that there are these language barriers and knowledge barriers. (UT04)

Youth council members reported frequently that planning cases are heavy, formal, tiring, and full of “hard words” and “weird numbers.” Magnus explains:

And even though some of us have been [in the youth council] for a long time, the language especially in some of the cases are just almost impossible to understand. (YC01)

When it comes to other forms of participation like Barnetråkk and Ungdomstråkk, adult interviewees who had been involved in facilitating questioned how much the children and young people involved had really understood. Indeed, the various tracks of Ungdomstråkk and stickers and mapping of Barnetråkk were comprehensible tasks and even fun activities to do during school time, but did they understand the introductory presentations about the planning area or the planning process? Those interviewed were highly doubtful. One planner, Siri, commented:

They should be able to take something home to know what they participated in afterwards. Because there's no way they're going to be able to Google their way into what just happened. What was I part of? No idea! So, I think they should have gotten a little brief to bring home, if they wanted to participate more or something, because probably nobody really understood the information. But they probably understood that they are giving input. (UT05)

Teachers too found the complexity of planning and the way planners presented it to be a barrier for their students. When directly asked how many of their students had understood why the planners had come to facilitate *Barnetråkk* and what the point of it was, Espen stated:

A very small amount. You talk about the very reflective students the ones that normally perform very well, they understood it and appreciated it... but [I'd] say it [is] 10% of the class maybe? And then for the rest of the class, I'm not quite sure if they got it. (BT01)

This problem intensifies for non-native speakers of Norwegian. Notably, over 30% of Oslo's population is comprised of immigrants - not including children and young people born to immigrant families who may also not have Norwegian as first language at home - with the majority coming from, respectively, Poland, Lithuania, Sweden, Syria, Somalia, Germany, Eritrea, Iraq, Philippines, and Thailand (Statistics Norway 2021).

Overall, the length, density, and language of planning is a challenge for young participants in Oslo. Najma's comment wraps up this section and leads into the next:

Honestly, if I could be honest, then every single documentation we have gotten from politicians have been difficult to read. And I wish that they would write like we're 16 years old. (YC06)

From the data presented here, it is evident that the 'adult-oriented institutions' (Heinrich and Million 2016) that rule urban planning generate participation involving language and processes that are not child- or youth- friendly (Cockburn 2013).

While children and young people do not have the language to discuss or conceptualise macro-level discussions about climate, economic, and cultural politics, they do have complex interactions daily with these issues on a micro-level in their neighbourhoods, homes, and schools (Hayward 2012) - which is what planning stands to gain from participation. Effective communication with children and young people in participation is active and it is explanatory

(Alparone & Rissotto 2001) throughout the entire process of participation, including the preparations and follow-ups. Even when it is active and explanatory throughout the process, the power difference between architects and planners and children and young people can add a ‘stumbling block’ in the participation process (Clark 2010). Effective communication is, however, absolutely critical to the success of participation with children and young people (Alparone & Rissotto 2001; Derr & Tarantini 2016; Horelli 1997).

It also appears that having a figure to translate ‘adult language’ and create links for the children and young people involved to be able to engage with the planning processes is important (Alparone & Rissotto 2001; Ataol et al. 2020), a concept which will be more explored in Chapter 7.

5.4.2 Following up with participants

Following up, or giving feedback, with participants is one key distinction between participation and nonparticipation. For Barnetråkk, it appears to be a common practice to send a formal report about the participation session including heat maps, an analysis, and photographs as a way of following up with the young participants. They can therefore view the visualisations of what they contributed. The planner Lars described this process:

We made this report and send it back to the school and asked them if they had any comments... we also encouraged them to send like a formal [input form online to be attached to the plan in addition to the report] (BT02)

In the view of teachers, this was not actually a form of follow-up. Teachers reported that after participation took place in their classroom, they “haven’t heard anything since” (BT01) and after they got the report finished, there was “no contact” (BT03). District administrator Kristin expressed deep frustration about this:

It is actually unethical to do it. It's better not to do it. Because if you get people's hopes up, and you're not, you haven't thought of how to make things happen. Then you should just leave it. (BT03)

One study found that children were in fact not often informed about if and how their inputs has been used (Kränzl-Nag Zartler 2010).

For youth councils, there is a similar story to present. All youth council members interviewed were asked if they ever hear back from the district, the municipality, the PBE, or anyone after they have sent feedback on a planning case and the resounding answer was “no.” Malin and Liv elaborate on this:

Malin But we're not really sure how much of that actually ends up changing anything.

Liv We don't really get follow-ups, do we?

Malin No we don't really know what happens. (YC03)

In a couple districts it was evident that the youth council secretary has time to search in the municipality's online case database and inform the youth council the outcomes of the cases in which they have been involved and where they see traces of the youth council member's inputs. As one youth council secretary Leif noted, without such information, “it can be hard for the youth council to actually see that they have been a part of a process. (YCS02) In no circumstances, however, would the youth council get a direct message back about their involvement and how their inputs were [or were not] used and what the outcome of a case has been - “they don't send us an email and see and say, look, we used your input,” expressed Youth Council Secretary, Lene (YCS06).

Adult facilitators across participation methods expressed uncertainty about the best way to give follow-up and updates to young participants. In one instance of Ungdomstråkk, the youth people's email addresses and phone numbers were collected, but then several months passed for the adult facilitators had organised the results from their participation sessions and felt rather awkward about what to say and how. They reflected that Facebook communications may have been better, but also that not many young people are on Facebook (UT03).

It was not just this one time that Ungdomstråkk facilitators found following-up with participants to be a problem. Inger, one of the coordinators of the programme reflected that overall:

We don't have a system for how we deal with and analyse it, and how we spread it in in the whole municipality, or how you communicate back to the people that participated. What happened to their input? So that's, so that's a systemic change that needs to happen. (UT09)

In the case of Traffic Agent, there are no procedures in place to give feedback to students who have participated. The programme is designed so that teachers can facilitate the programme with their class, without any outside assistance, and students' reports are sent to the municipal department for Traffic and Transportation. Reports are read within the same day they are submitted, or the day after they are sent, and in some cases small problems like overgrown bushes can be trimmed that very day. Other times, when the pavement needs replacing or physical infrastructure needs modifications, the timeline can take some days or weeks, but in the end the reports sent in that sparked those changes are anonymous. In theory those working behind the scenes for Traffic Agent could send word to a class about how their reports lead to improvements or small temporary signage could be placed in the area. The Traffic Agent team opts for posting Facebook updates where parents can see the results. Children who take part in Traffic Agent may hear from their parent but neither they nor their teacher are directly given feedback from the Traffic Agent team.

What this section illustrates clearly is that in most participation facilitated with children and young people in Oslo feedback either is not happening or is not working. This is particularly concerning because when children and young people are not given feedback after they participate, it is a clear sign of nonparticipation (Hart 1992).

5.4.3 Different Methods for Different Age Groups

As presented in the last chapter, each of the methods of participation that was studied in this thesis was created with a specific age range in mind. Table 5.4 presents this information.

Table 5-4 Target Age Range for Each Unit of Analysis	
Unit of Analysis	Target Age
Barnetråkk	Ages 9 to 12
Ungdomstråkk	Ages 13 to 19
Youth Councils	Ages 14 to 18
Children's Representatives	Ages 0 to 18 (represented, not active participants)
Traffic Agent	Ages 9 to 12
Custom-designed activities	No target age, each method will be made with age in mind

At face value, it is evident that the methods which directly engage children and young people in some way (in other words, all except for Children's Representatives) are designed with a particular age range in mind. As such, the tools, topics, and approach of each is both meant to relate to children and/or young people of particular ages and be accessible in terms of format, setting, and tools. This generally aligns well with the principles set out for participation with children and young people (Hart 1922; Council of Europe 2020).

This research found that upon closer examination of the different participation methods, each individual instance of each method can, in its own way, consider age and make additional adaptations. For example, the interviews and observations of Ungdomstråkk showed that, while it is designed for ages 13-19, sessions of Ungdomstråkk take place with one or two classes of students and thus the participants in an individual session will be the same age or just a year older or younger. In other words, it would not be the case that participants aged 13 or 14 would be in a session with participants aged 18 or 19. In this way, the

planners, teachers, and architects involved in carrying out the activities associated with Ungdomstråkk, such as youth-led walks, focus groups, paper mapping, and digital mapping, were able to tailor the particular topics, style of communication, length of sessions, and other details in order to ensure the sessions are as relevant as possible.

At the same time, this thesis found Barnetråkk and Traffic Agent, which target a narrower age range - students who are not yet in high school - operate more as a one-size-fits-all. Similar to Ungdomstråkk, students of the same or almost the same age would participate together since they are all in the same class at school, however the methods themselves are more clearly defined. On one hand, it makes the methods easier to repeat in more schools, since there is little to no customising for different ages. On the other hand, this cookie-cutter approach can mean that methods are not made as relevant or accessible as possible for young participants. In interviews with two teachers whose classes had engaged in Barnetråkk, both felt the sessions were not dynamic enough to engage all their students sufficiently. An administrator who worked on Traffic Agent similarly expressed uncertainty about the capacities of some of the younger participants when it came to making full use of the digital mapping tool - it was the case that older students had more capacities to take photos and write short comments in their geotags within the Traffic Agent mobile application. Younger participants were more likely to have some of their inputs written by and submitted by a parent rather than by themselves.

Earlier, section 5.4.1, brought to light the challenges that youth council members face in coping with documents and processes that have not been tailored to their age. The youth councils showed themselves to be the least relevant and accessible to young people, when it came to participation in urban planning, of all the methods examined in this thesis. By contrast, custom-made methods are, by definition, highly adaptable. The planners and architects interviewed provided examples of different activities and ways of engaging children and young people based on their age. During one of the observations carried out for this thesis, in fact, there were multiple participation activities

happening all on one site, and each activity had been created for a particular age range. This included small scale construction activities with 17-19 year-olds, painting activities with 8-12 year-olds, and focus groups with 14-15 year-olds.

5.4.4 Summary

The general consensus of the adults and young people interviewed in this study is that young participants display a real lack of understanding about participation, what exactly they are being invited to give inputs on, and what the outcomes may be or are. It underscores the *adult orientation* of planning (Heinrich & Million 2016) that produces language and processes that are not child- or youth- friendly. From the start, children and young people are generally not given any sort of formal training in advance of participating and the form and amount of preparation and explanations they are given varies widely but generally is lacking in substance. In the moment of participation, the language, complexity, and amount of time allotted prevent young participant's comprehension and the topics at hand and what exactly they might be able to offer. Afterwards, children and young people are not generally given feedback about what has happened since their participation or how their inputs were used.

The reasons for this range from lack of communication and cooperation among adult facilitators, or lack of time, to uncertainty about how to prepare, engage, and give feedback to young people. More simply, there is a lack of knowledge about to make participation child and youth friendly. This chapter did not set out to make villains of the adults who facilitate participation, however, which is why Chapter 6 is dedicated to exploring their experiences and the challenges they face. Indeed, their efforts, sometimes unpaid efforts, are what make participation happen and the fruitful outcomes that are generated are thanks to their initiative and dedication. Before moving on to Chapter 6, however, there is a final section of discussion about the realities of children and young people's participation which more directly outlines the signs of nonparticipation present in Oslo's participation practices with children and young people.

5.5 Signs of nonparticipation

This final section unpacks what was described in this chapter and tries to make sense of why there are so many markers of nonparticipation in a municipality with a fairly advanced system and set of methods in place for enacting children and young people's participation. In the end, this chapter concludes by classifying participation efforts in Oslo overall as problematically ridden with evidence of nonparticipation.

5.5.1 Designed for adults

What the last part points to is the idea that participation explicitly designed for children and young people is somehow inaccessible to children and young people. Young participants understand *why* they have been invited to participate but struggle to grasp in what they are participating.

Adult facilitators of participation for children and young people were exasperated about this problem. They explained that participation, while meant to involve people, operates using language which is "not available for normal people." (YCS06). One youth council secretary Solveig said:

They're never tailored to the youth. They're always tailored as if a grown, highly educated person is reading them. And they're so long. (YCS03)

Planners and architects admitted that the complexity of planning is a huge challenge to participation. They described it as "a system for bureaucrats" (UT04) and one architect, Siri, commented that "it doesn't it doesn't make any sense to anyone that doesn't work with it on a daily basis." (UT05)

The sections above have described a system in which participants understand why they have been invited to participate, but are not adequately prepared to take part in and in the moment of participation cannot comprehend exactly what it is they are participating in.

What appears to be an overarching issue is that participation methods that appear to have been designed for children and young people are, in fact, not. In frustration, youth council secretary Solveig [with a great deal of experience working with young people in various capacities across their district] explained the problem as a “sort of façade that all the public sector is using” (YCS03). This speaks to a larger issue within the system that will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 8.

5.5.2 Box ticking: Sometimes we feel we’re just for show

Participation being a box-tick in the planning process is not news. While participation is often touted as an essential part of a democratic society, formalised participation activities and processes frequently become a box-tick that legitimises already drafted plans and the outcomes of planning (Ruming 2019). Interviewees were not asked directly about this issue, and yet it was brought up in some way by nearly everyone involved with the youth councils. Consider for example this selection of quotations from youth council members:

Magnus Sometimes we just feel like we're for show.
Jenny Just to look good on paper (YC01)

Malin It feel feels like it's just to check it off the list. Like. Yeah. *So now we have asked the youth council, so that's good, that looks really good.* (YC03)

Fatima Yeah, I do feel like the politicians are always sending us all these documents because they have to and not because they want to. (YC06)

An even harsher stance on the situation was offered by Solveig, youth council secretary:

There's a word in Norwegian called *skinndemokrati* that we say for democracy that isn't real. And I feel like sometimes that's what we're playing out here. Because [the youth council members] sit there and they are very engaged. They discuss these cases, they try to do [their best to] figure out how to like respond properly... but I feel like it's mainly just the [municipality] or the [district] just do it to have it done, cause they're supposed to, and then it really doesn't matter that much. (YCS03)

Once, youth council members recalled having been invited to a participation event in their area, to represent young people at an event that “was for everyone” but when asked more about the event, it became evident that not everyone on the youth council had been informed or invited. Fatima exclaimed: “I had no idea, like, this meeting even existed [and] had not gotten any information” and Najma concluded that “we don’t really know that much” about these external events to which they are invited (YC06). This illustrates that young people have been added to the list of people to invite but not an abundance of thought or action has gone into involving them.

When it comes to the plans drafted by the PBE, children and young people’s participation is certainly not viewed as a box to tick off a list, based on interviews with adults involved with the PBE, and yet the youth council members clearly report experiencing it that way. Where Barnetråkk and Ungdomstråkk are concerned, the lack of follow-up with teachers and participants hints that after participation has taken place, it gets lost somehow in the larger process.

5.5.3 Classifying participation

This chapter has outlined the realities of children and young people’s participation. It began by explaining the topics on which young participants may give input and then moved on to talk about the preparations they are given in advance of participating. It then described the extent to which children and young people understand participation and their role within it. Ultimately it concludes that overall, in Oslo’s participation with children and young people, there are signs of nonparticipation. The reality on the ground is that participation is not working for children and young people. In all cases, there are signs of what Hart calls tokenism, which are:

instances in which children are apparently given a voice, but in fact have little or no choice about the subject or the style of communicating it, and little or no opportunity to formulate their own opinions (1992).

Using the framework given by the European Council’s handbook (2020), other nonparticipation markers identified in this chapter include: children and young

people are not given feedback, are unsure about what the outcomes have been or could be, and do not fully understand what is being asked of them. In accordance with the law, participation with children and young people is taking place, but the quality of it in terms of effectiveness and ethicality appears to be rather low.

Some adults interviewed expressed deep annoyance about the state of participation, suggesting that bad participation with children and young people is stealing their time, making them into hostages, or form of child labour. Heidi, a planner, described the situation as one in which “everyone is running around with their fancy methods” (POP05) but they have no clue what they are doing or why, but they are doing it in response to pressures from various branches of the Norwegian public administration. Despite Norway’s tradition of promoting children’s rights and having mechanisms in place for participation, these the quality of participation its outcomes are dependent on the capacities and attitudes of adults involved in the process (Kränzl-Nag Zartler 2010) - the following chapter therefore takes a closer look at the adults involved.

Solving the problems identified in this chapter is not as simple as giving recommendations to the various adults involved in participation. The following chapters will explore on a deeper level additional sides of the story and being to amass more information as to why nonparticipation may be taking place. The next chapter moves up a level to carefully consider the critical role of adult facilitators, the challenges they face, and their concerns about participation.

Chapter 6. Time-consuming and to what ends? A look at adult facilitators' experiences with children and young people's participation

6.1 Introduction

Children and young people's participation in planning in Oslo is not facilitated by the children and young people themselves. When, why, and how they are involved is all decided and orchestrated by certain groups of adults. These adults have varying levels of contact with children and/or young people on a daily basis, have different educational backgrounds, and sit in different spots within the larger planning and/or government system. The aim of this chapter is to identify the main groups of adults who facilitate participation with children and young people in Oslo and to highlight their main challenges and reflections on their role and participation.

The first section sets out who are the main groups of adult facilitators who enact participation with children and young people in Oslo. The second section explores the two largest logistical challenges relayed by adult facilitators of participation with children and young people in Oslo - lack of time and lack of preparedness. The third section moves beyond presents their main collective dissatisfactions and reflections on children and young people's participation in planning in Oslo.

The findings presented here connect to the literature discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 in three central ways. First, it illustrates the roles that adult facilitators play in participation processes with children and young people. Second, it builds upon the evidence noted into the last chapter about the different logistical barriers and challenges associated with carrying out participation with children and young people. Third, it reveals the different characters present in participation with children and young people, some of whom - like architects and planners - are immersed in planning processes, and some of whom - like teachers and local administrators - exist outwith the planning world, and their respective reasons acting as facilitators and varied backgrounds. What this

chapter uniquely highlights are the voices of the range of adults involved in participation with children and young people, all linked by their role as facilitators of participation in different ways and at different moments in the planning and participation processes.

This chapter draws on data from 21 interviews with adult facilitators, planners and architects, designers, teachers, children's representatives, and youth council secretaries who were involved directly in or who had been in close contact with one or more of the six instruments studied in this thesis. Three interviews in particular feature multiple times throughout the chapter: 1) Vibeke, a senior architect who has been extensively involved in Barnetråkk and wider conversations about children and young people's participation in Norway for well over a decade, 2) Siri, an architect from a private firm who has been involved in multiple sessions of Ungdomstråkk and worked on her own custom-made participation activities, and 3) Jorunn, a planner from the PBE who has worked to ensure planning in Oslo is complaint in involving children and young people and who has established several of the trainings and mechanisms for children's representatives. In addition to the interview data, this chapter drew from information on government websites and online documents about all six units of analysis.

Note that Chapter 7 is dedicated to defining and examining the process of translation between young participants and the planning world, an essential part of facilitating participation with children and young people. This section therefore leave translation untouched.

This chapter as a whole reveals that the adults tasked with facilitating participation with children and young people in Oslo are woefully prepared and equip to carry out their respective roles, and are themselves fairly critical of participation with children and young people as it exists presently.

6.2 “Not my daytime job:” Identifying adult facilitators of participation with children and young people

This first section summarises who the different groups of adult facilitators are, the types of education and/or training they will have received in relation to their role as a facilitators of participation, and each group’s respective motivations for facilitating participation. The data used in this chapter is based on interviews and field notes, confirmed, whenever possible, by information on municipal or national webpage.

6.2.1 Introducing the adult facilitators of children and young people’s participation

The following sub-sections identify the main groups of adults who are involved in children and young people’s participation in Oslo - including the youth council secretaries, children’s representatives, private planners and architects, municipal planners and architects, teachers, and miscellaneous others - and lightly summarises who they are and what they do most often as facilitators of children and young people’s participation.

The ‘main groups of adults’ were classified according to the frequency of their involvement on the scene of participation with children and young people. Distinctions were drawn among groups that could have been grouped together (for instance children’s representatives and youth council secretaries could perhaps be groups as ‘district administrators’ and the planners and architects could have been grouped together rather than separated into public (PBE) and private) if there was an evident difference in their responsibilities and/or motivations.

6.2.1.1 *Youth council secretaries*

In autumn 2019, Norway adopted a law setting out that all municipalities and counties must each have their own dedicated youth council, along with some updated requirements about gender balance, term lengths, and that the county

or municipality must compensate financially the youth council members for their monthly preparation and attendance at meetings (pay rate determined by respective county or municipality (Kommuneloven 2018)). In Oslo, there is one youth council per city district, rather than just one for the whole municipality, and for each of the 15 city districts, there is one youth council secretary.

This study found that youth council secretaries are typically educated in social work or a related field. They work fulltime for a municipal district, typically as a youth crime prevention officer (*SaLTo*-koordinator), a public health advisor, or a social worker of some sort, and are very frequently in contact with local young people. The post of youth council secretary generally involves, based on the interview data collected for this thesis:

- Ensuring the yearly continuity of the youth council
 - inviting local schools and youth clubs to elect a representative for the council
 - checking that those elected do indeed live within the district
 - giving the district the names and bank details of members so they can be paid
- Booking a meeting room and ordering pizzas for the monthly meeting
- Receiving, reading, and distributing cases (from both the municipality and the district on topics ranging from urban planning to health to traffic) to youth council members
- Assisting youth council members with understanding complex vocabulary and cases
- Writing meeting notes and recording decisions and inputs
- Liaising between the youth council and the district or municipality

Youth council secretaries as facilitators are not specifically tasked with participation in planning, as illustrated by the list of their responsibilities above.

In terms of their specific role in participation, as adult facilitators, they are typically the *only* adult involved directly with the youth council members when

they receive planning cases (which, as the last chapter mentioned, include maps and text and can be over 100 pages). Even experienced youth council secretaries appear to have extremely limited knowledge of planning, though their knowledge about how the district in which they work and municipality - and how processes work and where power lies - is very developed. Youth council secretaries are comfortable engaging with children and young people in their professional life, and are evidently successful at fostering discussion and creativity among youth council members.

6.2.1.2 Children's representatives

Children's representatives are similar to youth council secretaries in a number of ways. In most of Norway, there is one children's representative per municipality while in Oslo there is one per each of the fifteen districts. They are often educated in social work, government, sociology, or some other related field and work for a municipal district typically as a youth crime prevention officer (*SaLTo*-koordinator), a public health advisor, or a social worker of some sort. The role of children's representative is assigned to them by Oslo Municipality based on their experiences working with children and proximity to local young people and children. It is not uncommon for a district's children's representative to be or have once been also the youth council secretary.

The post of children's representative generally involves:

- Receiving and reading planning cases sent from the PBE and sometimes from private firms (sent to them usually via PBE)
- Sending comments, objections, and approvals on elements of plans
- Consulting with local youth council and/or visit sites, sometimes

In terms of participation, children's representatives are designated to ensure children and young people's interests and needs are safeguarded in planning. They are the most commonly used method of doing this, in compliance with Norwegian law (Hanssen 2019). They are a form of indirection participation, as they are adults who speak for the children and young people.

Like the youth council secretaries, they are highly knowledgeable about how the processes and distribution of power in the district in which they work and in the municipality. Unlike youth council secretaries, they tend to know a little about planning because of trainings available to them through the PBE (to be explained later in the chapter - essentially the trainings are customised to support children's representatives to have the biggest possible impact considering their limited time and the high amount of planning cases they are sent to deal with alongside their main job.

6.2.1.3 *Private planners and architects*

Planners and architects who work in private firms - which come in a great variety of sizes and with different types of specialities and clients - have been educated in planning, architecture, landscape architect, design, sociology, human geography, and/or engineering. Private planners and architects in Oslo work mostly with building plans, area zoning plans, and details zoning plans. None work with children or young people on a daily basis. Some involve them routinely in projects every few weeks, while others never come into contact with them. The way planners and architects involve themselves in participation with children and young people can vary hugely, judging by the interview data gathered for this thesis:

- Some will search online for existing Barnetråkk reports to know what data already exists on the area and cite it in the plan drafts
- Some rely on the district or PBE to either invite the relevant youth council(s) and children's representatives to their consultation hearings or send them drafts of the plans, on which they may submit inputs
- Some will host custom-made participation activities that range from one day to an entire series of days and themes

As facilitators of participation, private planners and architects can be either the most attentive and successful facilitators or the least, depending largely on the firm's clients and the financing available. Some are intensely dedicated to

participation, giving their clients researched justifications for allowing ample time and money for participation, and creating customised, multiday participation sessions with children and young people. They appear to almost never facilitate Barnetråkk or Ungdomstråkk. Terje, a planner at one of Oslo's largest architect and planning firms flatly stated that the reality is that most facilitate the absolute minimum (MISO1); this amounts to hosting hearings for adults and, if the district or PBE asks, inviting the relevant youth council(s) and children's representative(s) to the hearing, and/or sending them a plan draft on which they may comment.

6.2.1.4 PBE planners and architects

Like the planners who work for private firms, municipal planners and architects are educated in planning, architecture, landscape architect, design, sociology, human geography, and/or engineering. In the case of this thesis, 'municipal planners' are those working for Oslo's Planning and Building Administration (PBE). Unlike the planners and architects who work for private firms, the PBE planners and architects mostly draft area guidance plans, called VPOR or Plan Programmes (and every few years the new municipal master plan), and work on strategy documents for themes like cycle paths, car free city centre. Some PBE planners and architects are responsible for reviewing and declining or approving plans sent to them by private firms (based on an entire series of criteria, including if children and young people's needs and preferences have evidently been accounted for).

The municipal planners and architects almost never work professionally with children and young people, with just a few exceptions. When it comes to participation it is typically the case that one or two members from a team who are drafting a VPOR or Plan Programme will facilitate Barnetråkk. In some instances, when they require or want young people's input as well, they team up with the team who facilitates Ungdomstråkk to host one or two sessions. Other times, especially when drafting a new municipal plan, they may facilitate their own custom-made participation activities - normally hosting a meeting or

workshops, where the plan is presented and young people may give verbal and written inputs.

6.2.1.5 Teachers

Entirely disconnected from both the planning world and the municipal and district administration world, teachers are another group of key adults who play a role in children and young people's participation. Teachers in Norway are educated to a master's level in pedagogy, teaching, and their subject area. They work for public primary or public secondary schools (there are essentially no private schools in Norway). By nature of their profession, they work daily with children and/or young people, and know much more about their concerns and preferences than perhaps any of the other types of adult facilitators.

Teachers may play quite different roles in different methods of participation. For Trafikkagenten, teachers must register their class and introduce the programme to students, who map their routes to and from school either alone, in groups, or with parents. They may or may not make it a part of their lessons or a traffic safety week. Sometimes teachers independently facilitate Barnetråkk, entirely at their own initiative or at the direction of the district or PBE. Most often, however, teachers are not the main facilitators of participation. Typically, their role in participation is that they allow those facilitating participation to use class time, inform and prepare students to some extent to before participation takes place, supervise the class and help maintain good behaviour and focus, and assist facilitators with participation process.

6.2.1.6 Others

There are times when researchers, artists, district project managers, youth clubhouse staff, librarians, and/or school principals are involved in participation. They assist in planning and facilitating participation activities in a huge variety of ways. It is worth remembering that these people do come into the picture from time to time and have a role in some moments of some participation

sessions. None of them are involved frequently or heavily enough to be worth adding as an additional group to the list of adult facilitators.

Merete, an architect and planner who has worked with Ungdomstråkk participation sessions commented that young people are often quite aware of local building and planning happenings though their parents - Merete cited specifically a recent time when several young people expressed concern about plans including a 14-story building, which private developers had circulated in the community. Merete found that young people voiced serious arguments against certain details of the plan before they were able to explain to them, during a participation session of Ungdomstråkk that in fact these plans were still forming and the PBE had yet to approve any of the details. This example highlights one key source of input - parents - where children and young people inevitably get, or do not get, information and can be influenced about certain building and planning cases happening in the area.

6.2.1.7 Summary

The main groups of adult facilitators involved in participation with children and young people are youth council secretaries, children's representatives, private planners and architects, municipal planners and architects, and teachers. None of the groups of adult facilitators enact participation as a central component of their job - indeed for youth council secretaries, children's representatives, and teachers, it is entirely separate and consume time that they would otherwise being using for their respective jobs. They each play quite different roles in their regular professional life - as district social workers and administrators, as planners or architects, or as teachers - and are connected to different participation methods in different ways. Sometimes they work together to facilitate participation, and other times not. Through participation, youth council secretaries, children's representatives, and teachers are asked to interact with planning, a highly technical field. Meanwhile, planners are immersed in planning jargon and processes, but typically do not have the know-how to communicate their field in a child-friendly manner.

6.2.2 Trainings and education

Based on the fact that none of the groups of adult facilitators are employed entirely to facilitate participation with children and young people, and they are so disconnected in terms of who is involved in which methods and in what ways, it is worth examining the types and amounts of education and/or trainings these groups of adults receive in advance of taking the facilitator role. This can be due to issues like lack of training opportunities for youth workers, lack of a children and young people's participation consultant, and lack of architecture and design teams with experience and willingness to work with children and young people (Dimoulas 2017). There is a need for more adults to be trained in how to "allow children to represent themselves" in participation (Ataol et al. 2020). The extent to which each of these groups of adults is educated and/or trained in their role as a facilitator of children and young people's participation is varied though overall rather underwhelming.

6.2.2.1 *Preparing youth council secretaries and children's representatives*

When a youth council secretary begins their post, they will have a meeting with the outgoing secretary, and they will be given any necessary documents or information about open cases and current members. The political secretary in the district may also meet the new secretary and give them some guidelines. Generally speaking, however, there is no formal process for onboarding a new secretary. The Central Youth Council in Oslo hosts small seminars each year, and a new secretary may attend one of those to become better oriented and to meet other secretaries. Generally, the youth council secretaries interviewed for this study felt that it would have been helpful to have received more training in advance of taking up their post. For instance, one youth council secretary elaborated that they wished for:

“more training on how to do stuff, because it's low key politics, but that's not my day to day job. And also pedagogy, there is a lot of pedagogic [work] in running Youth Council. (YCS05)

Understanding how to support the youth council in developing their own knowledge and being effective in representing themselves can be a challenge for youth council secretaries.

Another concern is planning terminology; all of the youth council secretaries who participated in this study expressed uncertainty about how planning works and where the youth council members can have an impact in planning. As one youth council secretary said exasperatedly:

It is technical language. It is political language. We had two cases this week, which were... I have a master's degree, like I can read academic texts, but this was... I didn't understand. What do you want to know? I didn't understand at all. (YCS06)

To make matters more complicated, several districts have youth council members who are non-native speakers of Norwegian. As one secretary commented:

“My kids do not have Norwegian as a first language and the cases are written in very complicated Norwegian. There are words there that [even] I struggle to understand. (YCS03)

Not being able to confidently explain planning cases to youth council members - a critical task for youth council secretaries as adult facilitators of participation - is a considerable frustration. It both illustrates the necessity for more training - and planning related training - as well as points to a grave problem in the method of engaging youth council planning.

When it comes to the children's representatives, the picture is somewhat brighter. Children's representatives, impressively, receive “all the area zoning plans and detailed zoning plans and VPOR and plan programmes and municipal plans, but not all the building plans” (CR01) and are allowed to give any inputs they want, in as much detail as they like, and even have the right to attend and interrupt city council meetings, in order to ensure children and young people's interests are represented and safeguarded in all plans. Of all groups of adults,

they have not only had highly relevant backgrounds and education but are also routinely given the most preparation and support for their role.

Children's representatives, of which there are 15 in Oslo, one per municipal district, receive quite a unique form of support from the PBE. This consists of:

- 1) a webpage on the municipality's intranet where children's representatives can see guidelines and tips for understanding planning cases and for having an impact and templates for writing input on planning cases;
- 2) twice yearly seminars for all children's representatives to learn about ongoing and upcoming planning cases, ask questions, meet each other, share advice, and understand where and how to give inputs on planning cases;
- 3) two dedicated planners in the PBE who update the aforementioned webpage, host the yearly workshop, make themselves available to answer questions via phone or email, and are tasked with thinking of new ways to support the children's representatives; and
- 4) coversheets on each plan they receive with simplified maps, a summary of the plan, and/or key issues on which they are invited to comment.

What interviews with children's secretaries and the PBE administrators who inform the children's representatives revealed is that, despite all this preparation and support, the children's representatives face the same problem as the youth council secretaries - planning cases are too large and too technical to effectively engage with.

As one children's representative put it: "it's a massive task to point out and to remember everything" and estimated that there are about 26 to 28 plans of different levels currently being drafted for their district presently (CR02). A planner in the PBE noted that, "I think it's too much information or too much to

do for some of them. They don't have time to read large documents" and that some cases can be around 100 pages long (CR01).

Some feel the role can be quite solitary and undefined. One children's representative commented that, "you have to find your own way." (CR02) Children's representatives are not required to give their input on every case they receive and indeed when asked how frequently they hear from the children's representatives, a planner in the PBE commented that "it is not so often" (CR01).

Those interviewed cited time as a key issue as well and admitted that they are not always able to make time to send inputs, leastwise to read, research, and think about a planning case enough to have inputs worth sending. One youth council secretary remarked that their strategy is to "only speak out when there is an issue" that is quite evident (YCS02).

The focus here is training, though *lack of time* is a recurring and connected issue which will be discussed in the section 6.2, alongside the time-related woes of all the groups of adult facilitators of participation. Interestingly, despite being the most prepared, trained, and supported for their role as facilitators of participation (though arguably they are more representatives than facilitators, since the basis of their role does not involve hosting any kind of regular participation sessions with children or young people) the children's representatives are struggling to effectively fulfil their responsibilities, due the density and complexity of planning.

6.2.2.2 University education of planners and architects

Unlike youth council secretaries and children's representatives, planners and architects are not assigned a particular role, but they become facilitators of participation with children and young people either because they are tasked to do so for a plan they are drafting - either working for the PBE or a private firm - or because they work in a private firm that specialises in participation and it's a professional interest of theirs. In any case, there is no particular, regular

training on facilitating participation with children and young people that a planner or architect in Oslo necessary receives at a moment in their career.

There are, however, limited opportunities for planners and architects to take a course on participation during their university degree. Planning and architecture students in Norwegian universities may have taken a participation course as an elective, but it is generally not a requirement, according to Vibeke, an architect with wide knowledge about architecture and planning education due to their affiliation with an important architecture and design centre. Planners and architects interviewed explained that their education had primarily consisted of theory courses and process-oriented technical training. Though some found it rather unusual that a participation course had not been required. Ingunn, and architect, remarked:

“It's in the law in Norway too, if it's a public project or state funded then you have to do it, so it's weird to me that so many people haven't really experienced that, or, you don't have to do it in your studies.” (POP06)

Among the planners and architects involved in this study, those who had taken an elective participation class had been tremendously impacted by it. Vibeke said about a couple of architecture students they know, that after taking a participation class at their university it had evidently “changed their lives” and their entire outlook towards their profession (BT04).

In some instances, those who'd taken participation classes went on to start their own planning, design, and or/architecture firm with participation woven into their practice, or to join a young firm of this sort. Heidi, for example, described working in their own firm as taking the theory they had learned and asking “how do you use it and how do you translate it into practice,” explaining that:

For us, it's quite natural to involve people. We don't see it as something like, ‘oh, now we are doing good... [or of participation as a] bonus. No, no, it's just like, when we start, we start to analyse the area, and the social cultural aspect. (POP05)

May, architect and designer at another firm that started out working on small scale place transformations and is growing to work on different levels of projects, explained that:

Our goal is to make an inclusive city... We want everyone to be able to participate. And it's also part of the democratization of this city's development, because traditionally, there's a very limited group of people who feel at least that they have any influence. And sometimes maybe that's the reality as well. So then what we've been doing a lot is to have workshops and engaging people. (POP02)

Another firm explained that they had put together their own special model they use when taking on planning and architect cases that includes looking at the social imaginary, involving people, social capital, safety, feelings, traditions, lifestyles, and existing connections to the neighbourhood.

While some who took participation classes went on to such firms as those described above, others went on to the PBE or private firms with less focus on participation.

Some who went on to existing firms, have seen themselves become the 'participation person' in the firm who gets called on to facilitate participation for others' projects. Planners Katrine and Lise relayed that because they had taken a participation class in university, their colleagues often looked to them to organise participation events involving children and young people or other difficult to reach groups, rather than doing it themselves (POP08)

It appears that in some firms, rather than having the lead planner or architect on a project take charge of and be involved in participation activities, they delegate it someone else in the firm and then get reports back. This may be more efficient, though it arguably creates distance between the participation activities and those working on the plan itself, in contrast to what takes place in the Oslo Municipality PBE where planners are expected to facilitate and be involved themselves in participation processes, rather than ask someone else to do it and wait for a report. In such cases however, the planner tasked with facilitating participation may have little idea about where to begin.

Those who had not taken an elective participation course, for instance because such a course was not offered every year, lack of time, or lack of interest, did learn about participation in their core coursework, but never in much detail or depth. They described their core coursework as generally very theoretical and technical. Planner Katrine noted that they'd learned about participation, but it was a very small component of their overall planning degree (POP08). Another planner Merete recalls from their recent years in university that they "learned about the importance of involving the local people" but not much about how to do it. They learned about firms that did "include local people but didn't really learn how to [facilitate participation]" (UT08). One architect, Ingunn, who had opted to take the participation course was quick to note that:

"it was a really good class that I think is like really essential to the whole degree. And I think that the people who didn't take that class I kind of missed out. (POP06)

Great concern was expressed by one senior architect Vibeke, who has worked heavily through their career with participation, about the ongoing lack of training for planners and architects in university to learn about good participation and how to facilitate it. They cited a recent report in which they had been involved demonstrating that by 2025 participation will be one of the most important issues in Norwegian planning, but that at the moment those involved in the everyday work of planning are woefully prepared. (BT04)

Researchers working on participation are desirous to see all university degree programmes in planning, architecture, and landscape architecture in Norway to add a training component that would give students the knowledge and skills to facilitate participation. A barrier standing in the way of this is the lack of knowledge and consensus about what makes good participation and it is thought that more research on the subject will help, according to Inger, is "influence the education system for future planners." (UT09)

The central takeaway about the education of planners and architects is that most have been learned about participation in their university degree, and at most they have taken one course on the topic. The consensus about this, among

planners and architects, is that their education about how to practically facilitate participation with children and young people, was insufficient to the point that they now in their professional life feel unsure about or unable to carry out the roll as well as they feel they should be able to do.

6.2.2.3 Teachers

Teachers do not receive training or education to be facilitators of participation with children and young people. In advance of being involved in a particular session, they may receive some materials and instructions, but these types of pre-session preparations will be explored later in the chapter. The main point here is that teachers do not, like the other types of adult facilitators, receive any formal appointment with documents and training, or special course in their university degree.

6.2.3 Motivations

The groups of adults on the stage of participation with children and young have been identified, and the types of training and education relevant to being facilitators have been explored. To finish painting the big picture of who adult facilitators of participation with children and young people are, this section shines a light on the motivations each group has for facilitating participation.

The reality is that not all groups of adults who facilitate participation, and therefore allegedly ensure that children and young people's needs and interests are safeguarded in planning, and that children and young people are able to participate in planning, in accordance with Norwegian law, are acting with the same motivation. The reasons for carrying out participation and the desired outcomes presented in Table 6-1, are based on prevalent replies given across interviews with all the different types of adult facilitators. It considers both what they said about themselves and also what they commented about each other (which was consistent with the descriptions they gave of themselves). It excludes the reason that they must do so to comply with their job, a reason which no one highlighted particularly anyhow.

The differences among the motivations of adult facilitators is highly evident. Youth council secretaries and children’s representatives have similar interests - they aim to see children and young people’s needs and preferences present in drafts of plans and ultimately to see the local area change and grow in a way that positively impacts children and young people.

Planners and architects from the PBE and private planners and architects hired for public projects did not *not* share the motivations of youth council secretaries and children’s representatives, but they were highly specific that their motivation for facilitating participation with children and young people was to produce maps with details about where children and/or young people go, do not go, like, dislike, feel safe, and do not feel safe. One PBE planner Lars simply stated what they would like to know from children is, “where do you go and which places do you like?” (BT02).

Table 6-1 Motivations of Adult Facilitators of Participation
Youth Council Secretaries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the youth council carries out their role as representatives of the district’s children and young people by, in this case, understanding and sending their inputs on planning cases they receive • See that the needs and preferences of local children and young people are accurately represented in district and city planning and development in such a way that the district becomes a better place for children and young people to grow up
Children’s Representatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See that the needs and preferences of local children and young people are represented in district and city planning and development • Ensure that drafts of plans do not contain any details that may result in negative changes for children and young people in the urban built environment • Ensure that, when possible, changes are added to drafts of plans that will produce positive changes to the built environment for children and young people
Private Planning and Architecture Firms
<i>When the client is a private land owner or developer</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid wasting time (and money) by ensuring the planning process does not get slowed down or derailed by unhappy inhabitants who believe children

<p>and/or young people's interests have not been considered sufficiently or that the proposed plans will result in negative changes to the urban built environment for children and/or young people (if participation is carried out, it is a sort of protection)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get political approval for their plans more easily because they can prove they met the legal requirements for participation and maybe even did more than that (they will not get their plans approved if the PBE and local politicians see that participation has not taken place or has been in some way insufficient) • (Sometimes) Use participation to brand the area as a trendy place, raising the level of interests and attractiveness of the area to ultimately earn more money
<i>When the client is the municipality or other public body</i>
See the following section
PBE (Planning and Building Administration of Oslo Municipality)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be in compliance with Norwegian planning legislation • Know how children and young people use an area (where they go and do not go), which areas they like or do not like (and sometimes, why) - with a special focus on safety and where children and young people feel unsafe - and if there are overwhelming requests for libraries or sports facilities
Teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give pupils the opportunity to learn about democracy, being a member of society, reading maps, and/or government and municipal processes • Ensure the needs of their pupils are included in the local area's physical development and see the local areas improve for the school's students

It is another story when it comes to the planners and architects in private firms working for a private landowner or developer. Their motivations centred around not wasting time or money, and ultimately earning from whatever was to be developed based on the plans. Terje, a planner in one of Oslo's largest private planning and building firms put it bluntly:

We are asked by the municipality to do consultation work and the main reason we do it is to show the municipality that we've done consultation work. (MIS01)

Teachers, like youth council secretaries, children's representatives, and planners and architects working on public plans or projects, are desirous that children and young people's needs are reflected in drafts of plans and that the local sees changes that improve the life quality of their students. Teacher Espen said, for example, "we [teachers] know the surrounding areas, and there are

quite a few shortcomings, as we as we see them, which affects the students” (BT01). They also are hopeful that their students are provided with a meaningful learning opportunity.

It matters that each group of adult facilitator involved in participation with children and young people has different motivations because it means they will have different levels of dedication, interpretations of what children and young people say, ways of staging and organising methods of participation, and defining what it means for participation to have been successful.

These findings link up to the literature in Chapter 2 in which the rationale for carrying out children and young people’s participation was outlined. It is evident that the different adult facilitators in Oslo’s participation scene bring vastly different expertise and skills to the table, along with their respective reasons for engaging with participation in first place. The most common identified motivations were to uphold children and young people’s right to participation, to positively impact children and young people, to positively impact the built environment, and to fulfil legal requirements.

The desire to ensure that the youth council fulfils their task of representing the districts children and young people, for example, and the aim of seeing that the needs and preferences of local children and young people are represented in district and city planning and development, may be attributed to a desire to uphold children’s rights. The aim of fulfilling legal requirements was an interest of the PBE but can be seen in the private developers wish to avoid wasting time and get political approval. Of all the adult facilitators teachers and to an extent the children’s representatives and youth council secretaries wanted to see participation positively benefit children and young people and the built environment.

One unexpected finding was the PBE’s interest to have a knowledge bank on how children and young people use areas and their likes and dislikes mapped out into a useable format. While this appeared to be a motivation, it can be connected to both their aim to be in compliance with participation legislation

but also the believe that having such knowledge is the key to bettering the urban environment based on children and young people's inputs.

6.2.4 Summary

This first part of the chapter has identified and summarised the role and key characteristics of adult facilitator types in Oslo. From children's representatives and youth council secretaries, to public and private planners and architects, to teachers, there is great variety in the types of adults involved, where they fit into the planning process, their level of engagement with children and/or young people, their knowledge of planning, and the methods in which they are involved.

None of these facilitator adult groups have any significant part of their fulltime job allotted to their role - and it certainly goes without saying that none are solely employed to facilitate participation with children and young people. Notably there is no group of adult facilitators who have been explicitly trained and educated in the facilitation of participation with children and young people. Lastly, each group of facilitator adult is driven by different motivations.

The following section draws more from the experiences of these figures, shedding light on their key challenges in the facilitation of participation.

6.3 Logistics-related woes - lack of time and preparedness

This part of the chapter leaves behind the question who are the main groups of adults involved in the facilitation of participation with children and young people and turns towards their experiences. Based on the interviews collected for this study, it appears that adult facilitators are suffering from a severe lack of time and lack of preparedness. As May, an architect, summarised, "it can be practical things that make it fail" (POP02). The following subsections examine the most frequently identified practical challenges - lack of time and lack of preparedness.

6.3.1 Understanding the problem of time

The problem of time was explained in three different ways by interviewees. For some, the issue was that participation itself is too time consuming and that it should be less so, others felt the problem was that they personally had insufficient time to give, while others proclaimed that participation should in fact take more time.

6.6.1.1 *Participation is time-consuming*

For some, participation with children and young people is entirely too time consuming. This issue was reported in a few different ways. At times, the method as a whole was seen to be too time consuming. For example, one PBE administrator, Jorunn, comparing the use of children's representatives to the Barnetråkk, commented that "Barnetråkk is a method too... but it takes time" (CR01). The PBE planner, Lars, who had recently facilitated Barnetråkk in two schools similarly noted that "it is very time consuming" (BT02).

In other instances, certain parts of the facilitation process are too time consuming. For example, in reference to making use of Ungdomstråkk, district administrator Kristin explained that they "ended up spending a lot of time trying to figure out the legal part" of protecting the young people's personal data and in order to use a mapping application from Switzerland they were required to draft an agreement in Norwegian. All this led to what they considered a great deal of lost time, which they wished they could have used on "making a good plan" and working "on the actual content of the days" of the sessions (UT03). Siri, a private architect who had assisted in facilitating a one-day participation session remembered trying to make use of a mobile mapping application -

It was really time consuming to try to write something on your phone... I don't think meshes well with the energy of the kids. (UT05)

There are some who find participation itself entirely too time consuming. For example, one private planner explained that their firm sees participation as a

time-consuming endeavour and they prefer to host open hearings, as a minimum compliance with legislation (MIS01).

6.6.1.2 Lack of time to fulfil facilitator role

Others expressed the issue of time lying not in the method, but in their own lack of time. This was highly reported among the children's representatives and youth council secretaries interviewed for this study. For instance, Monica said "so I don't have as much time as I wish I had on this work. I wish I could be more prepared or like work more behind the scenes," but that they mostly just have time to skim-read the case documents, order pizza for the meetings, and attend the meetings. (YCS06)

For youth council secretaries, there are elections every year, so not only do they need to use some of their time contacting schools and facilitating the elections process, they must use a lot time helping the new members become "comfortable in their role" and cope with the "drama... and the crying and everything" when members do not get re-elected, according to Solveig (YCS03)

One children's representative, Leif, explained that some weeks, they spend 40% to 50% of their working hours reading planning cases and sending inputs. (CR02). Another elaborated that they normally only send inputs on planning cases when there is obviously an issue and that it would be essentially impossible for them to research each planning case and to send detailed inputs. As they put it:

Being a children's representative is just a role. It's not my daytime job... which is crime prevention coordinator. I have to sort of prioritise between many of the issues [including also be a youth council secretary]. YCS02

Administrator Jorunn in the PBE offered that they are fully aware that children's representatives lack time: "it's too much information or too much to do for some of them... they don't have time to read large documents" (CR01). They noted that they had "we tried to get them a 50% post" but for unexplained reasons, it was not approved (CR01).

6.6.1.3 *Good participation takes time*

Several adult facilitators interviewed felt that participation sessions in which they had been involved felt rushed. One facilitator recalled being at a youth council meeting once when two planners from the PBE had physically gone to gather inputs from the youth council. They spent about 30 minutes presenting maps and explaining the plans for new sports facilities within the plan and then asked for inputs. The facilitator remembered that the planners asked something like “Can you tell us? Do you want this option or this option or this option?” and the facilitator, Inger’s, reflection on this was:

It was just not a good process because it was so obvious that it was too much information too quickly and too limited, what they were supposed to choose from. They were really working hard, these youth, to understand what they were being asked and to figure out on the map what they were supposed to react on. It was technical and there was little context. They were like, ‘well, maybe you shouldn't have done the kindergarten there, maybe it should be there.’ It was very random what they were able to express, but they really tried hard. I felt so sorry. (UT09)

For some facilitators this means they must be extremely organised and clear about plans and objectives with children during the session, to try and get through all the necessary activities. Jørgen described a session they had facilitated recently as “quite fast” and “super short.” (POP04) From the view of one private architect, the “very brief, short session” which they had been a part of the week before our interview, it was “very difficult to know exactly what they [the young people] meant” because they “only meet them once” (UT05). Siri also noted that, despite the workshop lasting all day, it was the “last 20 minutes were fruitful,” explaining that:

it took a lot of work to change their mindset to start being selfish for themselves. It really just took a lot of time. (UT05)

Siri (UT05) and, independently, one youth council secretary Synnøve (YCS04) remembered a time when the municipality organised a series of 10 workshops with a small group of young people in one district. (*The specifics of the project*

omitted due to confidentiality.) Both remembered that it had been quite special for the young people involved and that the inputs they were able to offer, particularly in the final sessions, had been very valuable to the project.

Two planners from a private firm with several years of experience with children and young people's participation said that when they have the budget and the time, it is best to have multiple sessions. For instance, Merete felt that young participants "work better together" after multiple sessions and in the early sessions they "can plant some seeds" of creativity (POP08).

6.6.1.4 Summary

At once, it is possible to see quite mixed opinions about the relationship of time to participation, while perhaps the overall conclusion is that, indeed, participation with children and young people is seen to be a time-consuming endeavour. What precisely this means for the facilitation of participation is that processes and preparations can be rushed.

What will be illustrated in the subsequent section is that pre-session steps are sometimes skipped or missed, and essential information arrives last minute.

6.3.2 Understanding the problem of preparedness

To an extent, lack of preparedness could be seen as a side effect of lack of time. It may also be due to a lack of understanding about the importance of pre-participation planning and communication. Lack of preparedness manifested itself across the different participation methods examined in this study and was reported by several facilitator adults.

6.3.2.1 Miscommunication and unprepared co-facilitators

The overall consensus among the adults interviewed was that they had seen and/or experienced inadequate levels of preparation such that they were not

always sure of the plan, their role, and/or how to interact with young participants.

There is normally not just one adult involved in facilitating participation with a group of children and/or young people and in some cases one of the adults involved send out pre-session information or hosts a preparation meeting or even a training.

Referring to a different participation session, one architect who had been agreed to assist with a participation session with young people recalled that they “only got the email about what was going to go on, or what was going to happen... the night before” - the person responsible for this email later confirmed that they had been excessively busy and unable to send it sooner - and that several of the adults facilitating the session were evidently very uncomfortable and unsure of what was taking place, what would happen next, and their precise responsibilities throughout the day (UT05).

One rather exasperated planner, Merete, who had been involved in a participation event with two classes of young people, along with an architect, three researchers, and two teachers reflected:

I wish... we adults had more information about the tasks from [the start] because - those exact tasks from the folder? I hadn't read before, and I didn't know about them. So like, it was hard for me to tell the children what to do, while at the same time trying to understand what to do. Yeah, so that was kind of difficult. And... what were the purple lightbulbs for and what were the other lightbulbs or what were the big lightbulbs for? I didn't know the difference! (UT08)

Merete recalls once facilitating Barnetråkk and when asked if they knew much about it before hand or were given some type of training or workshop on it replied, “no, we have one girl who has done it a few times before who explained it to me” (UT08).

A more experienced facilitator of participation with young people, Inger, noted that:

“when you work on youth participation, if you want planners to actually do participation or youth participation as part of their everyday work and feel confident in it and know how to do it.” (UT09)

Indeed, it appears that, commonly, some facilitators arrive on the scene without full knowledge of the sessions’ agenda or their role in it. In instances when facilitator adults had been prepared in some way, it was generally the case that not a large amount of work had been put into it.

6.3.2.2 *Preparing teachers and their role in preparing students*

As explained in an earlier section of this chapter, teachers do not receive any formal training or education in planning or facilitating participation in planning. (Though they do, of course have rich knowledge of pedagogy and a wide variety of skills for constructively working with children and young people.)

In the interviews, the lack of preparedness of teachers posed a significant problem to the success of participation activities set to take place in the classroom (or during class time, outside the school) - from both the teachers view and the view of planners and architects.

The methods Barnetråkk, Ungdomstråkk, and Trafikkagenten, and frequently activities invented by private planning and architect firms, take place in schools or during school hours. In this case, teachers are to some extent present during and involved in the participation session(s) with their students. Their precise role in the process is undefined, but it is evident that their investment in the sessions(s) and how prepared they are affects their students.

One point brought up was what happens when teachers do not know what is to take place during a participation session. District administrator, Kristin, reflected that “if the teacher is sort of uncertain about what’s going to happen and is hesitating a little bit, like, ‘oh I was supposed to do this and I forgot’ then it is hard” to facilitate the participation session and students ‘just get noisy.’” (UT03). Two planners brought up the same issue, reporting that while they had sent teachers instructions, some had not read the instructions. This resulted in

teachers arriving to the sessions without any idea about their expected role in the participation activities. Additionally, in these instances, the teachers who had not read the instructions, had not prepared their students.

For example, in advance of Barnetråkk, teachers are typically asked to have their students register on the Barnetråkk platform and see what it looks like. Merete, a planner, remembers sending teachers such preparatory tasks and then finding that “the teachers hadn’t done any of it.” (U08) It created quite a problem because at that time Barnetråkk did not work on iPad and the students came prepared to the session with iPads. Much of the time was consumed sorting this out and eventually registering students on the platform, rather than on the participation activities.

Similarly, the planner Lars found that teachers who had not prepared their students to navigate a map in advance of their visit to facilitate Barnetråkk (though they had been asked to do so), resulted in the majority of the session being consumed by the planner trying to explain the maps rather than doing the planned activities (BT02). Another planner was disappointed to find that teachers had not, in advance of their visit to the school, worked with students, as instructed, to identify their homes on a map of the local area (UT08).

Teachers also play an important role during the participation sessions, from the view of planners and other adult facilitators. Kristin reflected that students “definitely work better when the teacher was there and that teachers “can spot who’s going to be a problem” (UT03). Along the same lines, Merete compared participation sessions when the teacher was patrolling and sessions when the teacher left them alone, and that with their teacher present “it was easier for the kids to do the tasks because it was quiet and controlled” (UT08).

When teachers involve themselves in participation through prepping their students in advance, it makes the participation sessions themselves more successful in terms of completing all the planned activities and working with on-task students.

There are times when the teachers themselves have been the only facilitators of Barnetråkk, with no planners or architects there to explain or assist, and this is indeed always the case with Trafikkagenten. The teacher Espen recalled not having enough adults to assist all the students with their mapping activities, since the students were sent out all over the neighbourhood, and having “to separate us as best as we could.” (BT01) Though in these instances, the disconnect between the school and the district administration and PBE created uncertainty about what the result of their efforts had been. This may be in part because, as senior architect Vibeke commented, “some schools have done it by themselves, but it's such a challenge that they don't know a sufficient amount about the planning process.” (BT04)

Teachers themselves have mixed opinions about participation sessions taking place during their class time. While the teachers interviewed for this study expressed enthusiasm about the opportunity for their students to participate in planning, they also felt disappointed after having been involved. While they and their colleagues were enthusiastic about facilitating Barnetråkk, it was disappointing to not see any changes come in the year after. A couple of teachers explained that after Barnetråkk was facilitated at their school, they did not hear much from the planners who had come, other than receiving a report which was too complex for their students to read.

The above examples have largely been in reference to Barnetråkk and Ungdomstråkk, but there are also times when private planning firms work with classes in schools on participation activities, they designed themselves. In these instances, there appears to have been most sustained engagement with teachers and more possibilities for teachers to link participation to their lessons. Heidi recalled the final day-long activity they conducted with a group of school children -

The teachers called us afterwards and they were like ‘okay, this was the best day ever for the children, or of the year, the most fun day they have ever had.’ (POPO5)

May, planner in another private firm remembers working for a few months with one school, which had coincidentally and unrelatedly also participated in Barnetråkk; afterwards the students:

rated it to be the best project that they've done the whole year. And this and the teachers were really inspired because they saw that they could do things differently. (POP02)

There is an evident difference from the way programmes like Barnetråkk, Ungdomstråkk, and Traffikagent (methods most often employed by the PBE) involved teachers - as people expected to read instructions, prepare students, and help facilitate a one or two day participation sessions - compared to times when private firms (as well as when the PBE drafts their municipal master plan, with extra assistance for extra participation) partner with a school and develop participation activities for a specific plan and with focus on the specific teachers and students who will be involved.

Teachers are, at once, professionally the closest to children and young people and the farthest from the world of planning (indeed children's representatives and youth council secretaries are outwith planning, but at least know about district and municipal processes and have some trainings and/or resources at their disposal). Yet the preparedness or lack of preparedness of teachers - whether the *fault* of those informing them inadequately or because they did not read what was sent to them and prepare their class - appears to significantly support or hurt the success of a participation session.

6.3.3 Discussion

Untrained, inexperienced adults can struggle as facilitators of participation when processes are not clear and methods are challenging to enact (Mårtensson & Nordström 2017). Adult facilitators - in this case, the youth council secretaries, children's representatives, public and private planners and architects, and teachers - arrive on the scene with varied backgrounds and motivation. Their role involves facilitating participation with, generally, very little time and very little preparation. Working under such conditions, it is not

surprising that these people have strong feelings about participation and reflections on what is not working. The final section of this chapter will set out, from the viewpoint of adult facilitators, where participation with children and young people falls short.

6.4 “There are lots of angry dogs and it's very simple”: understanding the key problems with participation from the view of adult facilitators

During the field work, adult facilitators expressed a range of dissatisfaction about and frustration towards different challenges associated with children and young people's participation, some of which have already been hinted at in the previous sections. This final section in the chapter outlines the three key grievances expressed by the adult facilitators - disappointment with those involved in the facilitation of children and young people's participation, dissatisfaction with existing methods, and a perceived lack of tangible or meaningful outcomes.

6.4.1 Disappointment with others

Most all adult facilitators expressed at least mild frustration towards another group of adult facilitators and their skills or performance in the planning and/or execution of participation sessions. It was not uncommon for disappointment to be directed at the district governments, municipal government, and/or PBE in various forms. Take for example the words of one facilitator, Inger, about the PBE:

They have to do participation, and they really don't know how to do it, and they're really wanting to do it. And their motivation for doing right, it's really high, but their skill set and the resources to have for is not really there. But there's a lot of goodwill and there's actually also a lot of like, there are resources in organisations to do it, but there's no direction. (UT09)

Similarly, a youth council secretary Solveig reflected on the district and the PBE:

Yeah and I think they I think they *mean* very well, but they're, they're not able to see how youth function. Like they don't understand the differences between us because we're - there a huge difference between a 14 year-old and a 44 year-old. (YCS03)

It is generally agreed that the PBE and local government have positive intentions and a genuine desire to facilitate participation with children and young people, but that they had not been doing a satisfactory job. The “politicians and decision makers... are very, very concerned about what the young people think... and they don't really know how to how to find out,” according to Leif (YCS02)

Siri from a private architecture firm recalled being at an Ungdomstråkk participation session in which a representative from the PBE was tasked with moderating the discussion of one table of seven young people. “[They were] very nervous about the whole thing,” the architect described, and ultimately the PBE person “started shooting down their ideas” and told young people “you can't wish for that, I'm not gonna write that down” (UT05).

By contrast, some of the interviewees from the PBE expressed disappointment with teachers, youth council secretaries, and/or children's representatives. Section 6.2.2.3 already explained how planners may be frustrated when teachers do not prepare their students in the way they had hoped, in advance of a session. Another example is that, according to some at the PBE, children's representatives and youth councils do not always or often send their inputs on planning cases. In reference to sending cases to the youth councils, Jorunn, a PBE planner noted “we very rarely get comments back... I do not know why they are not sending comments to us.” When asked if it is common for the children's representatives to send input on plans, they replied “it is not so often” (CR01).

Others aimed their frustration at the organiser of the participation sessions generally. For instance, one facilitator, Jørgen, commented that prior to a session hosted by a private architect and design firm, they were not informed of “how much [and what has] been communicated,” to the young participants. They that they will “often try to give some glimpses of what's the idea or at least just say something about what we are doing, or what will happen” but it

can be complicated when they have no idea what the young participants have already been told or gone through in advance of the session (POP04). In the interviews overall, there was finger-pointing in every direction and an attitude of *I am trying my best, but so-and-so makes my job not matter or nearly impossible*.

6.4.2 Existing methods not working

Another common point of dissatisfaction is with the available methods of facilitation for children and young people's participation. Generally, planners and architects felt that the methods Barnetråkk and Ungdomstråkk were too narrow. One planner, Håkon, from a private firm that works often with participation with all ages commented that "the categories that the children are allowed to use" are too narrow though they "wish it was a better tool" (UT04). An architect who runs their own firm, Heidi, echoed that concern and elaborated to say that "you need different methods for different stages in the process, and you have different goals and different ages" so they are "a bit critical Barnetråkk and Ungdomstråkk" and have not found them useful (POP05). Senior architect Vibeke who had worked extensively with Barnetråkk reflected on the comments of planners over the years: "the planners say that there are lots of angry dogs and it's very simple" (BT04) and that the flatness of it - and the question of how to amend a plan based on a child's concern over a local angry dog - can result in somewhat useless participation result.

One facilitator, Inger, took issue with the heavy focus on mapping habits and preferences - Barnetråkk, Ungdomstråkk, and many custom-made methods do - because in their experience most children are "very inaccurate about when they'd done something or how many times they'd done something" (UT09). They illustrated their point through describing times when they had watched children placing stickers onto a park on a map, indicating that they liked the park. Yet when asked about the park, it was evident they had been there once in the last six months and vaguely remembered enjoying it. Inger's evaluation of this was that "the data is not really very reliable" (UT09).

Some adult facilitators felt that existing participation places too much responsibility onto young participants. For example, Siri, a private architect who worked on an Ungdomstråkk workshop reflected: “I feel like I'm putting a lot of responsibility onto these kids to say what they want” (UT05). Similarly, youth council secretary Lene (YCS05) commented that it is the job of the youth council members to “make fruitful” their opportunity to give inputs on planning cases with insufficient resources and support. Existing methods can be too simple and inflexible, yield irrelevant and inaccurate information, and/or place an unfair amount of responsibility onto young participants.

6.4.3 Perceived lack of outcomes

For several adult facilitators, a point of frustration was that the outcomes and impacts of children and young people’s participation was often not evident to them. All of the teachers interviewed in the study expressed mild confusion and general disappointment that after having involved with students in Barnetråkk and/or Trafikkagent, there has been no or almost no evident improvement to the local area and/or they had received no or limited information about what the results had been and how they were being used. For instance, one teacher reflected that “since [Barnetråkk] not much has happened” and, “I think the intentions are good, but something must have stopped it (BT01).

Another teacher, Kjersti, remembered several classes at their school being involved in Barnetråkk more than two years before the date of the interview. They explained that after the participation sessions took place, nothing happened and that “that is de-motivating and it shouldn't actually happen, because then you recall, ‘Okay, we did this. Nothing changed.’” (BT03)

Vibeke attributed the lack of outcomes to things in the planning world being “a bit chaotic at the moment” with “a lot of other things like bicycling and all these things which are important” and that children’s participation appears to drown amidst it all (BT04).

While another facilitator, Håkon found the methods produced inputs from children and young people with rarely came into disagreement with plans:

I have never come across where there's been a conflict with the... data and the development of the site or something like that. (UT04)

This was a sentiment echoed by some youth council secretaries as well, with one quite senior youth council secretary, Leif, flatly commenting “I don't think the youth councils have that much impact” (YCS02).

It is unclear how much of an impact the children's representatives have on planning. It was revealed in an interview with two PBE planners that the children's representatives “don't give so many comments” and that the PBE does not have statistics about how often they with inputs or the ways in which it is used (CR01)

The question - to what extent and in what ways does participation influence planning - is a larger question of this thesis and will be explored more in Chapter 9 when the larger planning and participation system is explored. For now, the main take away is that adult facilitators have witnessed few or no changes because of participation with children and young people, and felt that the impacts of participation on planning had been minimal or non-existent.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has identified the main groups of adults who facilitate participation with children and young people in Oslo and described the types of relevant education and/or training they may have received, along with their diverse motivations as facilitators. It then examined the conditions under which these groups of adult facilitators operate - that is with very little time and preparation. The final section set out the three central grievances expressed about participation with children and young people, illustrating the overall level of dissatisfaction of adult facilitators.

The following chapter will examine in depth how these adult facilitators operate as translators between children and young people and the planning world.

Chapter 7. Translating McDonalds: The tricky task of communicating between young participants and the planning world

This chapter explores how adult facilitators communicate between children and young people and the planning world - an act which they described as translating - to understand *how* they gather, aggregate, and use information about children and young people's needs and preferences.

The first section explains the two-directional process of translation that takes place - towards children and young people and towards planners and architects. The second section explains how the inputs and ideas expressed during participation sessions are saved, presented, and made available, along with discussion about the pros and cons of gathering thick knowledge versus thin knowledge. Section three explores the educational opportunity that participation can be, while problematising the necessity to frame and guide children and young people whilst not directing them what to think and say. The final section concludes the chapter by explaining what planners and architects ultimately felt they learned from participation sessions and suggests that despite all the positive efforts of adult facilitators, too much information - both on the children and young people's side and the planning side - is lost in translation.

This chapter draws on data from 25 interviews, including 4 youth councils, and a wide range of public and private planners and architects, designers, teachers and youth council secretaries and children's representatives who had been closely engaged with one or more of the instruments researched for this thesis. The voices of Leif and Solveig, both children's representatives and youth council secretaries in two respective city districts in Oslo, are seen frequently throughout the chapter. They each talked in depth about the role of a translator figure for youth councils, as children's representatives, and in other custom-made methods in which they had been involved. Additionally, the voices of two PBE planners - Lars and Merete - are prevalent in this chapter. They have facilitated and received the resulting inputs and data from, respectively, Barnetråkk and Ungdomstråkk, and they shared rich insights about their

experiences as municipal planners attempting to engage with and get the most out of these methods of participation. Data from websites and documents about all six units of analysis were also used to compliment the interview data.

This all builds up to the final chapter which will explore the larger planning system, and question about when and where participation takes place in the planning process.

7.1 The task of two directional translation

The concept of translation - either the specific label translate/translation/translating or a description of the process - was cited across numerous interviewees, adults and young people alike, to mean the task of making information comprehensible.

In the context of this thesis, the *translation* described was a two-way process - both as making planning and building comprehensible to participating children and young people and as making the children and young people's inputs and ideas comprehensible to planners and architects. The following image illustrates what will be described in the subsequent two sections.

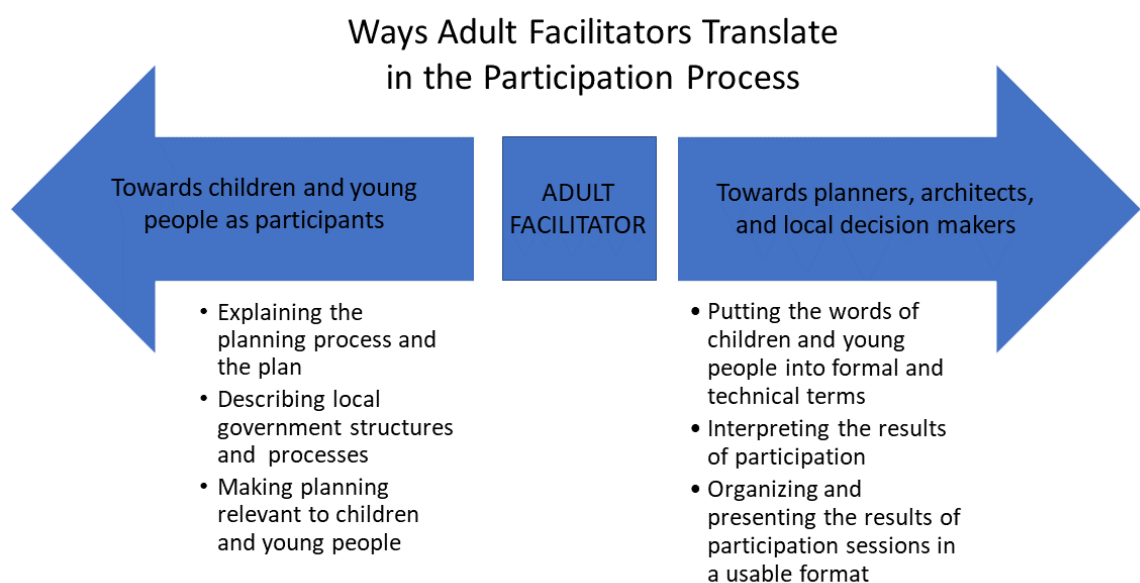


Figure 7-1 Image created to illustrate the translation process

7.1.1 Translating towards children and young people

Children and young people “can participate in the same level as the grownups. It's just a matter of the communication” (POP05). It is the role of the adult facilitators to translate planning and building so that children and young people can engage as participants. For some, like youth council secretary Lene, this generally amounted to taking the “quite difficult” and “really bureaucratic” language of planning and translating it “into a more human language” (YCS05). Others described this as:

“making planner language, maps and the way that they communicate more approachable and available.” (UT09)

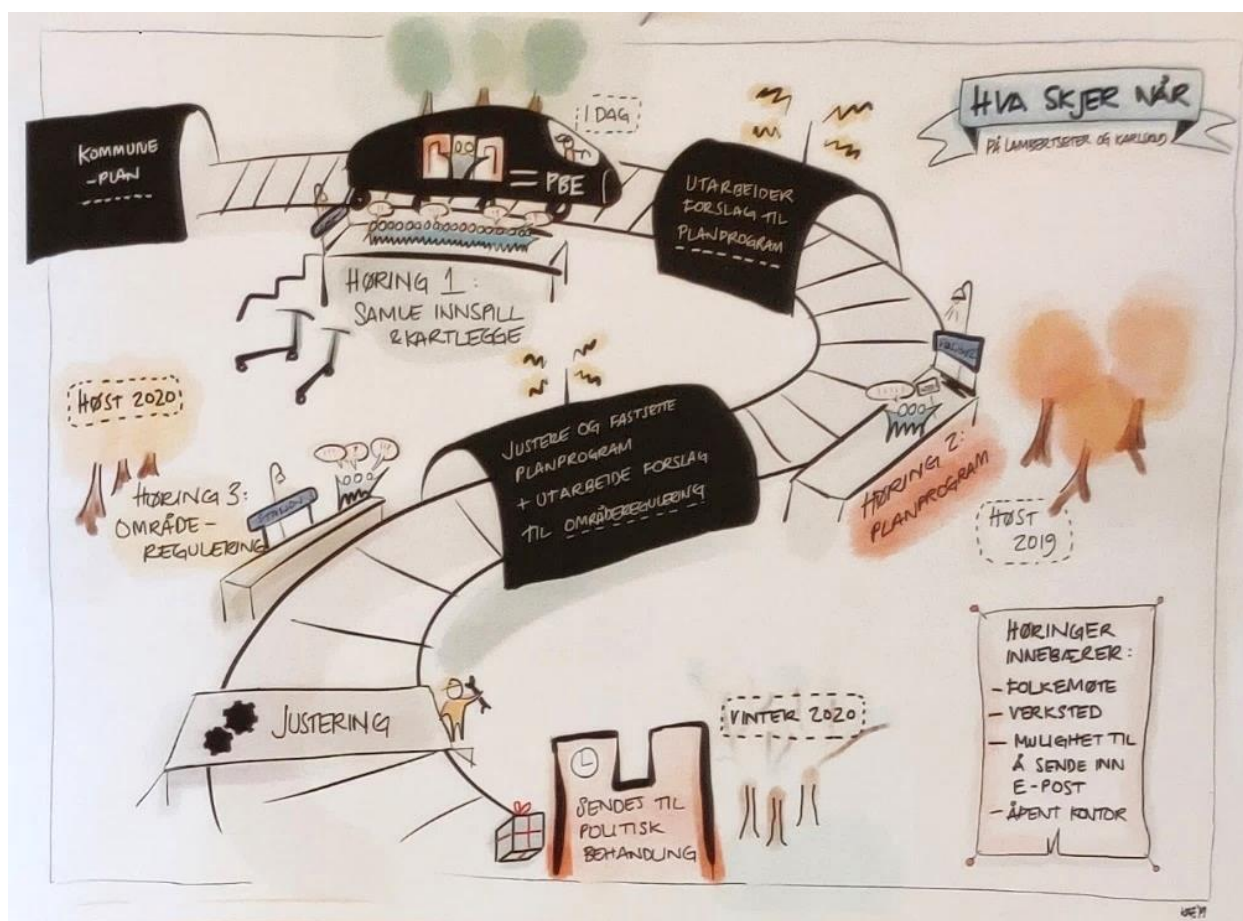
“explain things in easier language, because there's some quite technical issues in those plans.” (CR02)

A youth council member, Liv, echoed this, explaining that their adult secretary “tries to explain how it works and tries to make it easier” (YC03). One youth council secretary, Solveig noted that the process of translation is even more important, and indeed challenging, when the participating children and young people “do not have Norwegian as a first language” (YCS03).

Making the difficult, technical, and bureaucratic language of planning understandable - or explaining the plan and planning process overall - is not the only translation taking place. Some adult facilitators describe to young participants their position in planning and provide an overview of local government structures and processes. This was especially the case with youth council secretaries. Leif described the overview they provide and that they cite it monthly in reference to each case they receive:

“I start at the city council, of course... then you have the various departments in City Hall... then I explained to them these 15 districts of Oslo and the fact that the director in the district is actually employed by City Hall and has a lot of power... the budgets... and there are direct elections to the district councils... then, of course, the committees... and I tell them about who are the people running these things and names of the directors. Then I repeat, when we have actually cases, ‘this is going to end up there... this is going to end up there’ and stuff like that. (YCS02)

Figure 7-2 Train illustration used to show planning process in past Ungdsomtråkk event



Two facilitators, Kristin and Inger, who had been, separately, involved in Ungdsomtråkk also noted the importance of acquainting young people with the “language of power” (UT09) and ensuring that young participants know about the “district and what’s going on” (UT03). The Figure 7-2 is an example of an illustration that was used to explain the planning process to a group of young people in a one-day Ungdsomtråkk session. The first tunnel in the top left side of the page is the municipal master plan out which has emerged a train being driven by the PBE, embarking on the process of drafting a ‘plan programme’ for the local area. There are various points when it stops for participation and is viable, and other points when it is in a tunnel, being drafted and adjusted, and cannot be seen by participants. The final destination at the bottom is the city hall, which receives the plan programme and vote to approve (or disapprove) it. All young people present received a print-out of this drawing, and it was presented and explained at the start of a day-long participation session.

Explaining planning sometimes involves presenting customised drawings, such as the one shown in Figure 7-2 - if you have an illustrator on the team - and other times may involve simply viewing information on government websites, drawings on a white board, and/or diagrams on a PowerPoint presentation. Finally, for other, translating planning is not always so much about making the world of planning comprehensible or explaining local government processes, it is more about making planning relevant to the lives of children and young people.

One teacher, Espen, for example, recalled that even though their students had received an overview of planning and the plan that was being drafted, “it was too complex and not sort of related to anything regarding the school” (BT01). Solveig, a youth council secretary, elaborated that if children and young people “don't understand why it's relevant to them, they really don't have a lot of views” (YCS03). Another secretary, Lene, remembered that when “they saw that the consequences of how a planning case would affect their environment and their social life and community” they understood their role and were able to generate opinions and ideas related to the plan (YCS05). As Lise, an architect, explained, planning must be made relevant to the “world” of children and young people and participation sessions need to be customised to particular age groups and areas as much as possible, with that in mind (POP08).

Architects at one large planning firm in Oslo, Lise and Katrine (POP08), felt that in order to give proper feedback to participants, a digital tool would be necessary but that at the moment they do not have the technical capacity.

Adult facilitators may translate planning and building terms and concepts, local government organisation and processes, and/or describe the plan and planning specifically as it relates to the children and young people participating, depending on what they think best suits the situation. What is most important, as one architect Håkon stated, is that children and young people “need to see that they are being taken serious[ly]” (UT04).

In summary, the main ways in which adult facilitators translate to make planning understandable for children and young people is by explaining the planning process and the plan, describing local government structures and procedures, and by making planning relevant to their lives as young participants.

7.1.2 Translating towards the planning world

The translation of the planning world for children and young people is only one half of the translation process that takes place. Adult facilitators must also take what children and young people say and translate it so that the planning world can understand and make use of it. One part of this is making what children and young people say more formalised. As youth council secretary Solveig put it:

I can't write exactly what [the young people] say... I've never been encouraged to do it. I've always been encouraged... to write it so that it's more proper. (YCS03)

Another youth council secretary and children's representative, Leif, recalled the times when they had sent back the direct words of children and young people, the "politicians and directors" replied "What was that? That was strange!" (YCS02).

A part of translating from the language of children and young people to the language of planners is a complex process which involves "sorting out what [children and young people] actually think" (YCS02) and then making it "sound very smart" (YCS05) and "more proper" (YCS03). Synnøve explained their process of doing this:

I translate into grown-up talk, but I do it in front of them. I keep... a big projector [where] I write the minutes of the meeting... while they're watching, and then I read through it, and I ask "is this representative of how you feel?" and, like, they know me so well now, that they will say... if they don't agree. (YCS04)

Here there is an evident confidence this secretary has with the council members - a quality that most key adults do not have due to their non-proximity to young people on a regular basis. A similar account came from Leif:

I listen very carefully. And when I think I've picked up where they're heading, I may ask them, is this what you mean? And then they say, "Yes, yes yes! Oh, we didn't think of, of putting it that way. But that's exactly it." So. And that way, the meanings of what the youth council means, actually, says, is sort of translated into an understandable language for the politicians. (YCS02)

The above examples apply primarily to youth councils or other instances when participation takes place in a consultation meeting type of setting.

When it comes to other forms of participation which involve mapping various needs, likes, dislikes, and ideas, it is not necessarily informal language that needs to be translated. Sometimes the raw outputs of such forms of participation are not comprehensible or usable in planning. In these instances, translating the needs and preferences of children and young people means that adult facilitators need "to interpret the results" of participation, for example:

They all say they want McDonalds, but what does that mean? Perhaps that McDonalds is cheap. They can sit there for a long time. It doesn't necessarily mean that they really specifically want the brand McDonalds. You know? It means something to them (UT05).

Other times the translation taking place is not so much about interpretation of what children and young people say, but about putting the outcomes into a format that is comprehensible to planners and architects. The PBE planner Lars planner explained that after Barnetråkk, "we take those results and we try to make them... easier to read and understand" (BT02) by generating heatmaps and summarising key points. How raw inputs collected are put into a useable format will be described more in section 7.2.

7.2 Gathering, organising, and presenting inputs and ideas

When adult facilitators translate the words, ideas, and inputs of children and young people in participation sessions into the language of planners, there are several factors that come into play beyond using formal language and interpreting the results. There is essentially a curation process that takes place and what is ultimately written up and shared determines the usability and usefulness of the participation outputs. This next section of the chapter describes the ways in which the information and ideas shared by children and young people in participation sessions is gathered, organised, stored, and shared, and then moves on to explore the different uses for different types of data that results from participation.

7.2.1 Aggregation, storage, and access to participation inputs and ideas

There are no general standards or processes in place directing how inputs from children and young people should be gathered, recorded, and shared. As one researcher and facilitator, Inger, put it:

We [in Oslo] don't have a system for how we deal with and analyse it, and how we spread it in in the whole municipality, or how you communicate back to the people that participated. (UT09)

One architect, Ingunn, described that during sessions they will assign one adult facilitator to walk around and take notes based on what they overhear, and during the session the participants will produce written materials that can be read afterwards. In the end they “made kind of report of the process... what we did... what happened” and wrote up “bullet points” of the main points (POP06).

This model, of writing a final report, is the norm, though “there's no requirement to record or register what's been said” (MIS01). Further, there is no requirement for what must be in the report, rules about the omission or prioritisation of information, or how it must be presented. What is included in the report depends on the method and who is involved. One firm explained that they create reports with evidence to indicate how they reached certain

conclusions, “so it's not like we took it out from the air, but we don't have like a specific... system or... protocol” (POP02).

The typical reports are eight to fifteen pages and include maps, text, drawings, and pictures. Different maps illustrate information like the paths children and young people use to go to and from school, the spots they reported liking or not liking, the spots they reported a safe or unsafe, and points where they have placed ideas for swimming pools, libraries, parks, and bike racks. Some will also include links to digital maps so, as Kristin put it, “when you zoom in the different comments pop up” (UT03). Some reports will include more quotations and summaries of what young participants said, rather than focusing on map-based data point. (UT09) Although in reference to such reports, the planner Merete commented that those can be “really thick [with] lots of sources and complicated language” and that it is easier to use reports with “more pictures” which are “easier to read” and “more to the point” (UT08).

In terms of usability, heatmaps and maps in general are preferred by planners. The planner Lars explained that after a participation session they gave all the digital and non-digital data to a colleague who was not at the participation session in any ways but is “really good at computer stuff” and they “combined all the results in one map and then use the grading of the colours so that it will be easier to see” everything.” (BT02) Merete explained it is “easier... to use further the information that we actually put on the map” (UT08).

The final report model works in the planning process - a summary of participation event can be tidily uploaded and attached to a plan draft, for all to read, and so politicians can see that children and young people have been consulted and involved to some degree, in accordance with the law. Once online, these reports can usually be accessed by anyone who may want to reference them for other planning projects.

One problem with this model is that, as mentioned above, there are no rules or requirements about what information is include and how it is presented. One planner explained that they will inform participants “if you want it registered on

the case, you need to send us some written information afterwards” (MIS01). Information collected during participation sessions, and what is presented in the final report depends entirely on the adult facilitators, their viewpoints and priorities, which as illustrated in the last chapter can be widely varied. Another trouble when the following type of participation takes place - keen to have the voices of their local children and young people included in planning, “often the local administration [districts] do [participation sessions, especially Barnetråkk] as a preparation for the planning process and then we just get the reports and we [the PBE planners] read them” (BT02). In this case, there are levels of separation that can mean those drafting the plans lose valuable information. This is illustrated by one planner’s reflections:

I got some new information from being at the [sessions], from the children that I talked to, I think it will be valuable for the planning, but I guess the report in itself didn't give me anything (UT08).

Planners are not always present at participation session, however, and are therefore not always able to gain such insights.

In summary, the most common way of presenting and making available the results of a participation session with children and young people is to write a report with the main points and a few heat maps. This can be an accessible format, but it often lacks information or contains unreliable information, an issue which is taken up in the next section.

7.2.2 Thick and thin data and their respective usability and what is lost

In terms of children and young people’s participation, “every translation process... being done by adults, represents a risk of reducing the rich knowledge to a very “thin” type of knowledge” (Hanssen 2019). While heatmaps and simpler reports are favoured by planners, this form of information is considered thin knowledge. The key advantage being that “so much data” can give an “overall sense of what are the positive sides about this area and what are the negative sides” (BT02) and it is “very visual” (UT09). The use of paper and digital maps with children and young people is favoured by planners because it

easily translated into planning language or data and ideas that can easily be incorporated into a planning process. Research reveals that qualitative mapping with children can yield rich information about the physical activity spaces which children use: namely about the prejudices and preferences children develop with regard to issues like safety and usability (Christensen et al. 2015).

At the same time, even planners and architects interviewed in this study admitted that they “miss something when it is just blue and green and red dots on a map” (UT04), as put by Håkon, and that “the data is not really very reliable” (UT09), said Inger. Reflecting on the digitalisation of Barnetråkk (it was originally all done on paper) and the trend of other methods to use digital mapping activities, Vibeke noted that

The digital part it could be sometimes a bit too tempting, to only do the digital, within the classroom, and not sort of go out and talk about the situation... the digital is positive, but it could also be negative if you do it sort of too shallow. (BT04)

The over digitalisation of participation results in the loss of “a deeper understanding,” for instance there are, according to Lars:

Many areas they register that they are both scary, but also places they like to be. So... what does that mean? Are there certain activities that they like, but they still find it area scary or is it different parts of the day when I find it scary? (BT02)

It is necessary to recognise that “the social world is more complex” (UT04), says Håkon, and asking young participants “why do you think that” (UT08) rather than just plotting points on a map. Otherwise, the result can be, as Merete describes:

One thing that we lacked from this workshop was that we did not actually get the information about why. Why do you want this? Why is that dangerous? Why do you not like to walk here? (UT08)

Another benefit of gathering thick data through “deep consultations” and not relying primarily on maps, is that planners and architects can gain a richer understanding of an area. The planner Terje reported frankly, “we don't really we don't have local knowledge about most of the places we operate” (MIS01).

The downside to reporting thick knowledge resulting from participation is that it can require more interpretation and, as one architect commented, most planners and architects are “not accustomed to being creative in that way” and find it hard to “use what [the young people] are saying” (UT05). Another frustration is that sometimes in reports presenting thick knowledge about a place, the facilitators “we didn't get in touch with enough people” (UT04) so planners question the representativeness and thus usability of the report.

In summary, when the results of a participation session are made thin, it can be easier for planners to read and use, but it may be missing crucial information and misrepresent what the children and young people expressed. When results are thick and presented in that way, it can give planners a richer understanding of children and young people's relationship to and feelings towards the planning area. It can however, at the same time, lack in representativeness and be difficult to make use of in planning.

7.3 Educational elements and directing children and young people's thinking

As explained in Chapter 2, existing literature identifies concerns about striking the balance between guiding and supporting children and young people during participation versus telling them what they should say and how they should feel. Participation is viewed as a learning opportunity for children and young people, while at the same time adult facilitators must be wary of their influence whilst still providing some framing and guidance. Thinking of participation as educational for children and young people allows thinking big and dreaming about the future, but it can also be disconnected from the realities of planning (Knowles-Yáñez 2005). The following sections describes how participants in this study saw the educational opportunity of participation and explores the concerns that adult facilitators have about guiding young participants without directing them in what to say.

7.3.1 Youth council members learn through doing

The best example of learning through participation is the youth councils. The youth council secretaries who are with the youth council members every meeting and know them from their first year to their final year in the council, note that “they learn a lot” (YCS02). Through handling cases every month, their understanding of planning and other local issues increases greatly and “learn quite a bit about politics” (YCS03). In the words of the youth council members themselves, this is also the case. Najma, a youth council member in one district commented that

By looking at the documents, we are realizing things, other teenagers like me doesn't know, like what is happening the inside, if the budget is like very tight, or if it's not. (YC06)

Others secretaries explained that youth council members do not just learn information and processes, they also gain skills. For instance, they “become better readers” (YCS02). Solveig recalled a transformation in one of the members: “One of the girls last year said, *when I came here, I rarely dared asked for water, but by the end of the year,*” she had learned to speak and “fight for her opinion.”

She was really, really proud of herself. I think that's good... start out shy, and then you learn something along your way that makes you more like able to talk and make your decisions heard. (YCS03)

This is echoed by the youth council members; take for example Jenny's reflections on the hard-earned essential skills she and her peers had to develop to be effective youth council members:

You should know how to voice an opinion. You should know how to formulate that opinion so it will be taken seriously because they dismiss things very fast. If you do not specify certain things, then they will not take it seriously even though you have some good points in there... you have to be able to organise yourself and... you have to be able to speak well for yourself and... to come up with good arguments very fast against people that are older and have more power than us. It's a lot that you had to learn and fortunately most people here learn fast. (YC01)

While the youth council members have sustained engagement with planning cases during their term on the youth council (as well as other local issues in the areas of health, education, culture, etc.) and are able to learn through doing, over time, most all other participation sessions are a one or two event experience. The following section will consider the most common instances of this, which take place at school or during school time.

7.3.2 Learning through participation at school

When participation takes place within a school, the teachers may find themselves with an opportunity to connect the participation experience to their lessons. For example, a teacher, Kjersti, recalled the time when Barnetråkk took place in two schools where they were the director, and what the programme brought to their social sciences teachers:

In social sciences, it's basically about reading and listening to and doing written work and this [Barnetråkk]... is linked to their own environment...this made it more real. *This is my route to school, and I can tell about my route to school, and the other children can do the same thing.* It's a way of telling them that the close things matter. It's so much more vivid than reading a book that they can read no matter where they live in Oslo or in Norway, or kind of general terms. Here it's about the actual place. (BT03)

For their school, Barnetråkk helped bring the social sciences to life by enabling them to apply concepts to local, lived experiences.

The architect May remembered partnering with a school that had a class of neuro-diverse students, and how they engaged them in a pop-up building project to learn about space, materials, scale, and design.

They had one teacher who has responsibility for students who have special difficulties in my concentration and behaviour and so on. He was like, *this is like a dream thing for them, you know, instead of them, sitting still and being unfocused, they could go out and do practical work, which is also a huge benefit to the rest of the school.* (POP02)

Through the involvement of that class, other teachers have become interested “because then they saw, within how they work at the school, they saw that they could connect different subjects and teachers, they could work more like across fields” (POP06). The firm of Ingunn - which does small scale place interventions, building project, and some small zoning plans - is going to host more sessions with the school, as a result.

The examples listed above appear to be somewhat rare, however, despite the feeling that participation in planning and building is an activity that could apply in various subject areas. Vibeke, who has extensive knowledge of and experience with Barnetråkk, explained that ideally, participation could be relevant in learning about “geography and maps... technology... democracy... society... and humanities” (BT04). Similarly, a PBE planner Merete reflected that participation can be “linked to citizenship and being a member of society” since “participation skills for a citizen” is a “part of the school system from when they're in kindergarten from primary school and all the way up” (UT08).

Despite this, there can be logistical reasons that prevent participation from becoming an educational opportunity. For instance, one teacher, Espen, who had facilitated Barnetråkk noted that “we would have tried to include it in the curriculum, especially with social science and maybe planning development, urban civilizations, stuff like that” but they had not done so because the school was quite newly established, and they had not “got all the curriculum plans ready yet” (BT01).

Other times, the problem is that the planners and/or architects who bring participation sessions to the school do not reach out with sufficient time. The PBE planner Lars commented that “In an ideal situation would be that we contact the school at least six months ahead, so that they can plan it as a part of their school programme,” but the often are not able to get into contact with schools so far ahead of time, for whatever reason (BT02).

In other instances, if no teacher or school administrator has championed the idea of integrating participation into lessons in some way, the possibility slips

through the cracks. Generally, according to the teacher Kjersti there will be at least a “board in the school” with information about what is happening and “the website address, so they could go and read for themselves, making it “kind of visible... that something is going on” (BT03).

In summary, there is interest to use planning as an educational opportunity connected to various different curriculum topics, though the actual enactment of connecting participation to school lessons and utilising participation as an educational opportunity is evidently falling short in most instances.

7.3.3 Directing children and young people’s thinking

In existing research, using participation as a learning opportunity has been problematised because while it can be educational, adult facilitators run the risk of directing young people’s thinking or telling them how to be citizens rather than teaching them how to think critically and speak for themselves. Whether examining the youth council members in their sustained engagement with different planning cases over time or participation sessions that take place in connection to schools, this is a concern for adult facilitators.

In this study, despite the widely varied experiences and educational backgrounds of adult facilitators of participation, this was a known concern that was taken seriously. All the adults interviewed demonstrated a keen awareness of their position in participation and felt it was important for outcomes of participation with children and young people to reflect as much as possible what children and young people need and want. As Leif said: “it’s important that the [young people] reflects what they’re thinking and not what I think” (YCS02).

Echoing this, the architect May explained their firm’s first step when facilitating participation with children and/or young people is to ensure they “understand that they had to define themselves what the needs were for the school,” their area, and themselves (POP02).

Another youth council secretary Hege also stated that before a participation session they tell the young people: “my opinion does not matter, I just want you guys to discuss and I am going to write what you are discussing.” (YCS06) One district administrator and youth council secretary Lene said what they tell young people is:

You're independent, you don't work for the district, you're not politicians, you don't have to be loyal to anyone else, but yourself and your counsel and what is best for the kids! And it's up to you to define what is best for this district's young children. (YCS05)

Similarly, a teacher, when asked if they and their colleagues had mentioned to their students' ideas for the neighbourhood development in advance of a participation session, replied “no” and confirmed that the students generated their own problems and ideas to report. (BT01) In the same breath, however, managing to stay neutral and not direct young participants *too much* can be a significant challenge. For example, it can be difficult listening to the suggestions of children and young people during participation sessions, when one already knows generally what is going to be planned and/or what is impossible or possible.

Should I say that they can't wish for nicer stores, if that's the biggest wish? Should I say *no, what about a park?* I tried that, but they were like, *we have enough green areas in the neighbourhood...* I tried to like describe a cool park with a fountain and then they were like, *yeah, that sounds cool*, but then I kind of like guided them to what we want in the area, right? So that's hard. (UT08)

In a rather extreme example, the youth council secretary, Solveig, new to their role, described what the youth council members reported to her about their former secretary:

She was saying, *this is what you should want*. If they [the youth council members] were disagreeing, she would just say *no, no, no* and she would not write [what they wanted]. (YCS03)

Generally, if an adult facilitator has directed the thinking of the children and/or young people in a participation session, it is more by circumstance and

accidental. For instance, linking this to the theme of translation, one youth council secretary explained that if the planning cases they received were “more tailored” to the youth council members, it would be easier to not accidentally insert their own opinions.

I'm afraid that when I make meaning of the case, I might put myself in it... my view of it. So it's kind of hard to like try to stay separate. I know the district's view of things, because I usually get a brief in advance. So I know what they think they want the result to be. (YCS03)

Sometimes well-intentioned teachers, in preparing their students for a participation session may suggest ideas for changes that might improve the area and then students latch on to those ideas and they appear frequently in the results of the participation session. The planner Lars reflected:

I don't think the teachers do that, like they wouldn't tell the children, "tell them that we need a swimming pool," you know? But they might talk about it and say, "oh, wouldn't it be nice if we had a library and a swimming pool" and so on and the children would be like "yeah that will be nice." And then many of them suggest a swimming pool or a library, for example. (BT02)

Other times the participation methods themselves create a sort of tunnel vision in young participants. This is an oft cited problem with the Barnetråkk, and sometimes the Ungdomstråkk, method:

They get these stickers and that's what they look for, an angry dog, for example, and they find angry dogs everywhere... the stickers kind of lead them in directions that they might not would have chosen if they didn't have them. (BT02)

An artist, Jørgen who is often hired to assist one private firm facilitate participation felt the process was “rigged in some way” and that too often children are directed “like paint this here... and maybe you can say that” (POP04). Leif, a youth council secretary, reflected that the youth council members:

have to sort of be aware that I don't tell them what to think... because well it could be very easy for me to talk them into sort of a anything, especially when they are new in the in the role. (YCS02)

In summary, adult facilitators of participation in Oslo recognise their position as one meant to guide and support young participants while at the same time not directing their thoughts too much. They also acknowledged the challenge of this, noting that there are ways in which children and young people can be accidentally told what to say or think. The next section explores this difficulty more, by setting out the reasons adult facilitators felt the need to, carefully, provide some framing and direction to young participants.

7.3.4 Necessity of framing the themes and directing the session

Despite the difficulties and concerns around directing children and young people's thinking, it is possible "to guide them in a productive way and in a diplomatic way" (YC05). One youth council secretary, quite senior in the role and with experience also as children's representative, noted that sometimes young participants need their creativity to be stimulated and that the knowledge of adult facilitators can help them discuss and realise what they want.

I know a lot about how Oslo works. I also know a lot about what kind of options there are. So if they're stuck, I can say to them, "well, the options can be this, this, or this, or anything you could think of..." And then they start talking to each other (YCS02).

Sometimes, especially when methods use pre-determined stickers or tracks to guide the sessions, it is essential "to guide them a little bit to tell you more about the area" (BT02). Other adults similarly described the act of providing options and guidance to young participants as a way to stimulate creativity and ideas. For example, three interviewees, each from private planning and architect firms, described the usefulness of one particular tool: a large board with images of different functions that could be present in a space (see *Figure 7-3*). In their respective experiences, such a tool greatly supported young people to start thinking about and prioritising their interests and needs in the areas being developed.

The logistics of participation can be another reason for the importance of structuring sessions and guiding young participants. As the architect May commented, “they need a lot of guidance” because “there is limited time” (POP02). Participation sessions must be carefully planned, with clear themes set in advance, or they run the risk of receiving unusable inputs and wasting people’s time.

While adult facilitators do not wish to tell children and young people what they should say or think during a participation session, they also know the realities and possibilities of planning and want to carefully offer structure and themes so that the outcomes of participation are relevant and usable in the planning process.

7.4 Outcomes of translation process

As explained in the above sections, adults translate between the planning world and participating children and young people and the results are most typically put into a report. They must communicate carefully in order to make the most of participation sessions while also not telling children and young people what to

Figure 7-3. Example of tool being used to help participants visual the potential functionalities of a public square (Title Translation: What do you want to see in the square?)



think and say. Considering the difficult and often flawed process of translation involved in the enactment of participation with children and young people, it is worth questioning the ultimate usefulness of what comes from this process.

7.4.1 Usefulness of inputs collected

This study found that the overall usability of information and reports generated by participation sessions varied. Some planners and architects explained that participation with children and young people gives them “pretty good sort of picture of the whole situation” (BT02) and a “general sense of what [children and/or young people] care about” (UT05). Others slightly more specific examples, for instance that they learned “what parts of the area the children use” (UT08).

That said, the planner Lars, after facilitating Barnetråkk in two schools reflected that they “could have got a lot of the same information just by talking to the teachers perhaps or talking to the school administration... [or] parents” (BT02). Similarly, the district administrator Kristin who had facilitated both Barnetråkk and Ungdomstråkk noted that they “know the district quite well” and “probably didn't need another report telling” them about the needs and preferences of local children and young people (UT03)

Others explained that participation had not resulted in any surprising or previously unknown findings. One facilitator Siri reflected that the young people who participated in a session with them recently “answered what I would probably expect” (UT05). Of that same session, Merete who had also been involved stated “it was nice to read” the report, but “it wasn't really surprising” (UT08). As the architect Heidi put it, what children and young people want is not difficult to guess - “more fun cities, more colourful cities, more lighting, more water, places to hang out” (POP05). Sometimes unsurprising findings results in planners and architects feeling unsure what to do with the reports. For example, Merete remarked,

I think it's so valuable, we just need to figure out how we can use it. I think we will manage to do it, but I don't know exactly how. (UT08)

Possible reasons for this will be explored in the next chapter, linking to the planning and participation processes and timelines themselves, pointing to incompatibilities.

There are times when the main point planners and architects learn from a participation session is how to facilitate improved participation sessions in the future. This is especially the case when those facilitating are doing it for the first time. One architect, Ingunn, remembered being tasked with facilitating participation with a group of children:

I think most of us thought it was quite nerve wracking, or we thought it was a bit scary because we [had] never done it, but it was really good. It was a good experience and we also learned what worked and what didn't work. (POP06)

There are some examples of times when planners and architects were impacted by what they learned from a participation session and/or report. The architect Siri remembered seeing the heatmaps that resulted from a session, where a street had been heavily marked as dangerous, and the corresponding comments that the children had written:

When I look at the map, I don't see that there's any reason why this street should be dangerous, but then it turns out, because a lot of people drive the kids to school so there's always a lot of cars, and then there's no sidewalk. (UT05)

Another example which two interviewees (one teacher and one planner) cited was a time when the children from two schools in a planning area heavily requested that a public library be built. It had not been in the plan, and inserting it into the plan involved discussions with the public library and several others who had not previously been involved in the planning process. In the end, however, the library was added to the plan. "It made some impression that of all the things, that was number one" for the children, said the teacher Kjersti (BT03).

May, an architect, remarked that “when there are unexpected outcomes” it is a sign of “a great process of participation,” stressing the importance to be “open for whatever comes.” (POP02) Generally, planners and architects have not learned a great deal from children and young people because of participation sessions. In following chapter, the thesis will explore this issue further by looking specifically at when and how participation happens in the planning process and different forms of participations relationship to different types of plans.

7.4.2 Lost in translation

Facilitators, if they are an independent figure in the process, may serve as a bridge between children and young people and the planning world to ensure that the needs and preferences of young participants are not lost in translation or misused (Alparone & Rissotto 2001). Some studies found that without someone operating as ‘translator,’ children and young people’s preferences, needs, and ideas would have been inaccessible to planners and decision makers (Clark 2010; Alparone & Rissotto 2001). It was also evidently important that the translator figure translates ‘adult language’ and create links for the children and young people involved to be able to engage with the planning processes (Alparone & Rissotto 2001; Ataol et al. 2020). Careful collaboration between several parties - like planners, architects, researcher, youth workers, and/or other civil actors - to create space for children’s voices and to translate the ideas and values of children into useful policy ideas and projects, is essential (Wilks and Rudner 2013; Dimoulas 2017).

The central conclusion of this chapter is that while the adult facilitators see themselves as translators and can identify for themselves some of the main challenges of the task, the overall successfulness of their labours is concerning. Despite efforts to making planning comprehensible to young participants, planners ultimately noted “I don’t think they really understood it” (UT08) and similarly teachers commented that their students had understood “a very small amount” (BT01). A few planners and architects questioned if participation at most planning levels is worth carrying out because planning “doesn’t make any

sense to anyone that doesn't work with it on a daily basis" (UT05) and they felt disenchanted with the lack of evident outcomes of participation. Sometimes it is the case that information learned from participation sometimes does not become translated into technical planning ideas or it does not get directed to the right people, because there are not established channels for which such information can reach the right people in planning (Morrow 2011).

Holding in mind the previous chapter which described the numerous difficulties associated with being an adult facilitator of participation - such as lack of training and lack of time - and considering the findings presented in this chapter, it should come as no surprise that the reports resulting from participation sessions are lacking in substance, difficult to understand, and/or lack new or usable information. The intent of this chapter is certainly not to shame adult facilitators, but rather to elaborate on the impossible job with which they are tasked. Figure 7-1 at the beginning of this chapter illustrates the way that adult facilitators work to translate between children and young people and the planning world, while the sections of this chapter have illustrated variables that sabotage the process.

The final findings chapter of this thesis will place one final piece into the puzzle - though at this point it is evident that the mechanisms of participation with children and young people in Oslo are highly flawed. Before moving on to the discussion and conclusions however, the next chapter examines the larger planning system to identify where and when participation takes place in the planner process and to examine times when participation appears to have made an impact on a plan and ultimately the built environment.

Chapter 8. Too little, too late: the systematic barriers and realities of the Oslo Model for children and young people's participation

The aim of this final findings chapter is to examine Oslo Municipality's planning system overall to understand how, why, and where it makes space for children and young people's participation. The first section explores the complex relationship between the Planning and Building Administration (PBE), private firms and their clients - namely landowners and developers, and municipal politicians. The second section describes where participation should in theory take place in the planning process and where it is in fact taking place. The third section highlights when and how children and young people's participation impacts planning. This chapter naturally links strongly to Chapter 3 in which the context of the Norwegian planning system and participation regulations, and importantly the Oslo Model, were presented.

This chapter draws on data from 20 interviews. Naturally, some voices feature more often than others - particularly Terje, a sociologist and planner at one of Oslo's largest and most acclaimed private planning and architecture firms, and Jorunn, a senior PBE planner who works heavily with children's representatives and reviewing plans submitted by private firms. Other PBE and private planners and architects - particularly Lars and Heidi - as well as some children's representatives, youth council secretaries, and youth council members also give valuable insights to consider alongside the main voices of this chapter. Data from websites and documents about all six units of analysis were also used to compliment the interview data.

8.1 Unpacking the relationship between private firms, the municipal planning and building administration (PBE), and politicians

To properly make sense of when and how children and young people's participation in Oslo enters and impacts planning, a strong understanding of the broader planning system is necessary. Building off Chapter 3 which described the planning system according to existing literature, this chapter reports on the

planning system as it is experienced by those interviewed for this study. The following section emerged based on what participants in this study reported most often as critical details of the planning system which in some way support or deter participation with children and young people.

8.1.1 The power of planning programmes and VPORs

As set out in Chapter 3, the Building and Planning Administration of Oslo Municipality (PBE) invented within the Norwegian planning system two, what they call, tools for controlling the content and quality of area zoning plans and detailed zoning plans drafted by private firms. These are the VPOR and the planning programme. While in smaller municipalities, the municipal master plan may have extreme levels of details about the planning to be carried out, Oslo municipality's master plan, since it covers such a large and complex amount of land, is more general. Particular areas are identified as areas requiring planning and, depending on the scale and complexity, this may require a planning programme and/or VPOR.

Lars, a planner in the PBE, and to other planners described planning programmes as 'plans for the plans.' Within a planning programme, the PBE can describe when and what participation work should be carried out, among other expectations. Lars explained:

We make planning programme for the entire area and we say something about the land use and the topics that are important in this area and public space. It's a lot of focus on public space, and then that planning programme is an overall programme for smaller zoning plans. Because usually, in Norway, zoning plans are made by private [firms]. So that means that we have already sort of set the framework for the area... but we haven't decided on the details, but it means that we are giving some guidelines for the product. (BT02)

The VPOR is a similar document, in the sense that it gives guidelines for the private firms submitting zoning plans and it focuses heavily on holistic public space development and quality. As Tejre described, "the idea [behind the VPOR] is that the private developers should cover everything, all public infrastructure,

which is needed because of their development, whether it be like water and sewage and all that stuff, roads, schools” (MIS01).

There are key reasons for the development of these two tools. Lars, explained why Oslo developed the VPOR and Plan Programmes, rather than making all the zoning plans themselves:

Making a zoning plan takes a lot of time and we have so many areas [that are] developing really fast and the population growth is really fast. So we don't have the time and resources to make zoning plans all over the city and that's why we created this combination of guidelines combined with the planning programme with special focus on public space, so that we ensure that we have the quality and the necessary public space when an area is being developed by private companies. Also for the for the public social infrastructure... planning new schools, sports facilities, and so on. (BT02)

Terje elaborated on the impetus for developing the VPOR and Plan Programme -

Some 10 years back [the PBE and Oslo Municipality] saw that they were losing control, because not only were the private sector driving this, they also had huge areas of waterfront development and brownfield development sites which they wanted to develop the new districts on a massive scale with a lot of landowners... they have started out being better at doing their own municipal master plans.

Terje went on to explain that when the VPOR was introduced it was illegal and “didn't have the proper legal foundation” according to the Building and Planning Act but that it was nonetheless allowed because Norway was not “really prepared for this kind of municipal planning.” Because of Oslo's size, complexity, and growth, the use of VPORs has enabled the PBE to design a municipal master plan and then VPOR and Plan Programmes to detail and place requirements on particular areas -

It's good because they, in doing that... define a grid of public spaces and where roads should go, where should you add squares, and public transport hubs and all that, they can be pre-defined. (MIS01)

The participants in this study provided examples of how these two tools work in practice. Merete, a planner in the PBE explained that while plan programme is

not a legally binding document, “we decide the overall, how it should be” and then a private firm submitting a plan, “they have to actually listen to what we [have decided]. (UT08) Terje gives an example of what this could mean in practice -

It will say that you can't build a thing here before a school is in place... You can't force private developers to build schools and kindergartens, but you can say that we won't let you develop this site at all before the school is in place. So then... they end up financing it. (MIS01)

Terje also noted that a VPOR or Plan Programme gives the PBE “something stronger to lean against when we come in with our crazy schemes” (MIS01). By this they mean that the PBE uses Plan Programmes and VPOR to guide and pressure the private firms and their clients. It came to surface that the VPORs and Plan Programmes are considered the PBE’s most powerful tools for allowing private firms to plan and develop large areas whilst ensuring the construction of ample, quality public infrastructure. Jorunn provided an example of this in action:

We can tell the private planners that this is a good area for children... so if you're going to [build] there, you have to keep another area or maybe you can change your plans. Let the buildings be on the other side and maybe have this area open for playing space. Or maybe we won't recommend the plan if [the children lose their playing space]. (CR01)

Another aspect of the VPOR and planning programme tools is that when the PBE going through the drafting process, they themselves facilitate participation with children and young people. Kristin, a district administrator who facilitated both Barnetråkk and Ungdomstråkk in their district along with the district’s children’s representative, explained that the PBE was making a VPOR for an area within their district and needed the reports of the two participation activities to utilise in their drafting process and to be able to cite it (UT03). Jarle, a children’s representative in a neighbouring district was familiar with both the planning programmes and VPORs in their area, and explained that as often as possible they attend meetings to give inputs about the needs of local children and young people (CR02). Siri, an architect, and Lene, a youth council secretary, each recalled that youth councils also receive drafts of planning programmes and

VPORs, and are invited to give feedback. (Indeed, by looking back at the meeting notes of youth councils across Oslo in the last three years, it is evident that they nearly always receive a VPOR or planning programme draft at least once before it is finalised.) What this reveals is that participation is used by the PBE in VPORs and planning programmes to not just to pressure private firms and their clients to facilitate participation, but also to legitimise the guidelines and parameters set out in the VPORs and planning programmes that they create.

Siri in particular expressed concern about how participation is being utilised by the PBE in this way:

Sometimes I worry about the fact that this participation thing is essentially... used as a tool in Norway, I mean, which is developer driven city planning, in the end. So I think the state wants to really develop the participation thing, because then they have a tool to steer these developers to be able to say, we have data that says what people want is this, so you can't build a 12 storey building. (UT05)

Terje spoke openly about the way the PBE in a sense bribes private firms to facilitate participation, displaying how Siri's concerns are not unfounded -

they strongly urge, since we have a lot of big projects, they strongly urge us to do that because to [facilitate participation] and the kind of the silver lining they provide for us, is that if you do that, it will be smoother in our in our process with you. (MIS01)

In summary, the PBE holds participation sessions with children and young people in the process of drafting VPORs and planning programmes, to add legitimacy to what they have set out and to establish certain expectations and guidelines for the private firms submitting zoning plans. The PBE is not the final destination of zoning plans in Oslo, however; after zoning plans are processed by the PBE, they reach Oslo City Hall, where the politicians must review and vote to approve (or disapprove) a submitted plan. This is where actually the politicians can have an influence on the planning process and the amount and quality of participation with children and young people that is carried out.

8.1.2 The role of politicians

“In the end the politicians have to decide,” PBE planner Jorunn stated simply, as message echoed by Merete, also of the PBE, who said “it ends with the politicians... it is actual up to the politicians” (CR01; UT08). Once zoning plans have been drafted and submitted by private firms and processed by the PBE, they reach the municipal politicians. Along with the final draft of the plan, politicians receive either the inputs and reports that resulted from participation sessions and/or a summary of all the participation that took place and the results of it. For instance, Lars, explained that people “can fill in a form that we have online or they can send a letter... and then we would perhaps change the plan and it will be part of the process that is being sent to the politicians” (BT02). In the end, to approve the zoning plan and make it a legally binding document, the politicians must vote to approve it, and then building and development can within the plan can go ahead.

Heidi, an architect and small-scale planner who works in a private firm, explains that more and more their clients are seeing that facilitating participation beyond the bare minimum especially with groups like children and young people “lowers their risk actually... with politicians” (POP05). By this, they mean that plans are more likely to be approved and will encounter fewer setbacks in the planning process. In smaller municipalities, in fact, Heidi finds that inviting local politicians directly to participation activities gives them an even clearer reassurance about the participation that has taken place, making it easier to gain their approval for plans. Heidi gave the example of a plan they had made recently for a town outside of Oslo; the politicians had been invited “to visit the place and talk to the children and see what they had done” (POP05).

While not the norm, there are times in Oslo when politicians engage directly with children and young people - namely with the youth council members. Mari who is a member of their district youth council and the representative for the central municipal youth council remembers that:

Figure. 8-1 Anecdote. Outside of Oslo, landowners and developers have much more influence over politicians in the absence of a strong planning administration

In municipalities without a strong planning administration, landowners and developers interact directly with local politicians and the outcomes of planning can be highly unpredictable. Terje gives an example of how different politicians in a city near Oslo resulted in a fundamentally different planning landscape:

“Politicians are often a [a big force] especially outside of Oslo... in smaller municipalities, you have more of a unpredictable landscape where things are sent from the [planning] administration, straight to the politicians and... they prepare for a meeting just by reading these documents. And a lot of crazy stuff happens in those political meetings because they start talking across the table in the meeting, and then it is like, they go totally against it, just like on a whim... We have Lillestrom which is just... outside Oslo, which is growing really fast. And the municipal administration they tried to restrain the development not letting buildings be too tall, not too dense because they want to have that small-town character. I had projects there 10 - 15 years back and then they said that no building in Lillestrom should be higher than the church spire. Now the church looks like one of the smaller buildings in the city, but uh, and then the administration says that we're, we use that church spire limit, but then politicians go in and say, yeah, we're [going to instead] listen to the product developer. They've approved 20 stories high buildings, which is higher than most buildings in Oslo actually.” (MIS01)

we had to meet the politicians and they... asked us why we did it and how, and asked if we had some plans. They actually listened. And we had to talk to them. It's like a direct meeting.” (YC05)

Mari explained that this is “actually very good” because otherwise the youth council members feel unsure if they are heard, when they send written inputs on planning cases.

As Liv, from another youth council elaborated:

They (the district and/or PBE) make reports of what we say and then that gets sent to the politicians and then if the politicians actually listen to it, that's something else. So yeah, it's kind of you don't really know if you're being listened to. (YC03)

Children's representative Jarle explained similarly to Mari that talking directly to politicians can be the most effective way to ensure that the concerns and interests of children impact a plan, since otherwise the inputs sent in writing or summaries post-participation can be lost in the planning process. Jarle carried on the say:

It's me, [the other children's representatives], and municipal head doctor, we are the only ones that can go to meetings with the politicians and speak up and no one can stop me, not even the director. So that's good. (CR02)

Whether or not participation is highly valued and the opinions and ideas of children and young people are valued can depend on the politicians themselves. For example, Fatima and their fellow youth council members reflected on how some politicians have expressed more interest than others -

I feel like the politicians on the left side of the politics takes us much more serious than the one on the right side. (YC06)

When municipal elections change which party has a majority and thus which party controls the City Hall, planning processes can be entirely derailed. Terje explains what happens:

You have a new set of politicians and they think of things differently, and then they could just do something else... which could be founded in pure politics or also good planning strategies, but sometimes it's neither. (MIS01)

Because of this, clients of Terje's firm will sometimes pressure for planning processes to be finished and for their plans to be approved in advance of an

election. They might also delay a planning process until after an election, rather than find themselves with a half-drafted plan that becomes politically unfeasible because of the election. Finally, Terje explained that from time to time, politicians will use a plan as a political tool to gain votes or to sabotage their opponent. This all serves to emphasize the influence that politicians and politicians can at times have on the planning process.

Ultimately, based on the explanations given by Terje and three other planners, that politicians highly value seeing that participation has taken place, especially with children and young people, although they themselves are not always sure what good participation means or how it should be done. The PBE planner Lars specifically pointed to Barnetråkk as a form of participation which holds capital:

The politicians are very concerned about participation and they know Barnetråkk, like a lot of politicians talk about [it]. So it's something that they can recognise and say, "oh, good, they did this in this area." (BT02)

Barnetråkk, being a widely known and liked tool, gives legitimacy to the planning process in the eyes of the politicians. While other methods of involving children and young people are welcome (and at times are in fact more suitable for certain types of plans, settings, age groups, etc.) they are not always understood or met with the same enthusiasm.

Children's representative and youth council secretary Leif stated:

I think we have politicians and decision makers who are very, very concerned about what the young people think and they don't really know how to how to find out. (YCS02)

Youth council secretary Hege echoed this, stating that "the politicians say that they are very eager to hear from the youth council, they want to hear them," but that political willingness is not enough to see good participation with children and young people carried out and to have it impact a plan (YCS06). Indeed other chapters have clearly shown that political willingness and a keen interest in children and young people's participation in planning are not the only building blocks that need to be in place for it to materialise, and indeed, as

explored in earlier chapters, there are several very real barriers that limit the effectiveness of children and young people's participation.

8.1.3 The role of landowners and developers

The PBE with their planning programmes and VPORs and the politicians in the City Hall are the major public sector actors who engage heavily in all planning processes.

At the other side of this broad system there are the private planning and architecture firms, which come in a range of different sizes and with different specialisations, who draft the majority of Oslo's detailed zoning plans and area zoning plans. Their clients, who are either landowners, developers, and/or the municipality, heavily influence the amount of participation with children and young people that takes place.

Terje explained that clients either host competitions (both open and by-invitation-only) or else directly approach a firm. Terje continues on to say that if a client wants to see a lot of participation, there are a few particular firms they consider because "[participation], that's kind of their business strategy." At the firm where Terje works, however,

It isn't ours... but it is what it is and we are hired for specific reasons. People don't come here to get that. They go elsewhere. (MIS01)

On the other hand, Heidi, the owner of a private architect firms that sometimes drafts zoning plans has found that sometimes landowners and developers will carry out more participation than the municipality:

Because the planning department here in Oslo, they do this standard site analysis, and they have, of course, a participatory processes, like asking people... but it's not a lot... but it's also a matter of resources... they don't have the resources.

Whereas Heide has seen private developers and landowners "do more in first phase mapping now than they did before" and "they come... already with like a

social analysis of the whole area” (POP05). Heidi’s explanation for this change was that landowners and developers are essentially developing a sort of nerdy-interest and social justice attitude towards their role in planning - “they know they have to give something back.”

To an extent, Terje agreed that landowners and developers are beginning to take an interest in participation generally, but attributes it to their growing awareness of others’ interest in concepts like social sustainability and corporate social responsibility. Now, Terje says “you cannot really just think of profit.” Beyond this, however, Terje explained the changing interest towards participation in relationship to the changes in what generates a profit:

People are now looking more for experiences and more tactile... uh like they want to... feel the sun on their faces and wind in their hair and that happens outdoors, or maybe they get that extra, like unique experience of getting like the personal customer service. Yeah, rather than going into like a homogenous, like retail landscape. So that's also changing the game a lot for us right now because our clients are very, very doubtful whether these large-scale shopping things are something for the future, whereas people are more increasingly interested in spending time in the city, for food and drink, especially cultural events and just being social, which is a big shift. You don't go to the city to for retail purposes alone. You do buy stuff, but you go there to see stuff and to meet people and to drink and eat. (MIS01)

Terje explained that with this change, their clients have subcontracted other firms to carry out participation activities during the planning process, as a way of branding the place, generating a buzz, and creating expectations for future potential customers, as well as to gauge the public’s interest in spending their time and money in what they hope to develop in the area.

8.2 Children and young people’s participation in the planning process

This next section describes first the opinions participants in this study had towards when participation should take place in the planning process and then describes when in fact it is taking place. It then gives examples of times when children and young people’s participation has impacted a plan.

8.2.1 Where does participation work best in the planning process?

When about the ideal time to facilitate participation in the planning process, the most common reply was “the earlier the better.” Lars explained from their view as a planner:

Early. Early in the planning process... so that you get information you need early on, so that you don't do a lot of planning and then you end up figuring out, okay, this wasn't such a good idea because... the information we have now tells us that we should do things differently. (BT02)

For some, ‘early’ meant early in the life of a particular plan. For example, when it comes to VPOR and planning programmes, PBE planner Jorunn’s advice to children’s representatives, with whom they works closely, is “if you want to change something, be as quick as possible!” Jorunn explained that there is “super little possibility that that comment will change something” if it comes too late in the planning process. In acknowledgement of this, children’s representative Jarle explained that when they receives plans early in the drafting process and is able to reply swiftly, it is more likely “they can change some details” (CR02).

Lise and Katrine at a large private planning firm in Oslo noted that they have to, by law, accept inputs on planning from the public and give a response to each one, and “it takes a lot of resources and a lot of time.” (POP08) Reflecting further, they said of this process, that there is “no point of doing that at all, it's really sad” because the moment when participation happens is too late in the planning process and the inputs they receive are often commenting on details or parts of the plan that are beyond their control or simply cannot be changed.

Rather than highlighting the importance of participation early on in the drafting process, others felt that participation needs to take place in the municipal master plan since it effectively governs all the smaller plans which result from it. For example, Vibeke, a senior architect who has been involved with developing and spreading Barnetråkk for well over a decade, explained that planners and architects should focus heavily on participation in drafting the

municipal master plan. Vibeke explained that it is easier to make use of children and young people's ideas and inputs, "when it's... not so detailed." They went on to explain:

I think it's easier for them to be in dialogue with the kids, when they haven't really planned much yet. Then it's much easier to change the use of space and also to incorporate and implement [what kids say] into the plan. (BT04)

For Vibeke, the most critical moment for involving children and young people in planning was at the municipal master plan level. Vibeke did additionally, however, echo the sentiments of those above, stating that new, updated participation must be carried out for subsequent plans because "there will be other things to consider, of course, in the more detailed plans. [In any case], you should start in as early as you can" (BT04). Similarly, Jorunn noted that participation in higher levels of plans is superior to in the lower levels plans, explaining that for example, there is:

very little you can do in the building cases because it's already decided in the regulation plans, so it's much more important to get into contact with the regulation plans and say something about that." (CR02)

Terje had similarly concluded that participation with children and young people is of particular important in the municipal master plan, since unlike the other PBE planning guides, VPORs, and planning programmes, it is legally-binding and drafted by the PBE itself, rather than private firms which is largely the case for area zoning and detailed zoning plans. Terje explained that the municipality have,

tried to make as much consultation work as possible to make the like the population of Oslo feel that they actually have a say, because after the municipal plan has been made a lot of sites are targeted for certain services and purposes (MIS01).

He elaborates that "it's not right that we [private planners] stand there on the behalf private clients, trying to make our project look good for whoever's

listening, whereas the municipality could do a more balanced” process of participation with children and young people [as well as adults]. (MIS01)

There were, however, some outliers to the notion that participation with children and young people should happen early in the planning process. Jorunn was one voice among these, expressing uncertainty about what children and young people themselves can offer to planning at an early phase. “I think it’s difficult for children to comment on [the plan] beforehand,” Jorunn explained, because plans are so large, technical, and complex (CR01).

Siri, an architect who started their own planning and architecture firm with participation at the heart, reflected that more and more they question where in the process participation with children and young people belongs. Early in the process, the plan is “very abstract, on this big, big scale and big spaces [and] that is a lot more difficult and complex.” On the other hand, Siri noted “perhaps [participation] works better on a smaller scale, like on a design scale, when they can physically see something... I think on that level participation works really well.” Siri’s reasoning for this is because when children and young people report problems on a small scale, “the kommune [municipality] will fix it immediately” whereas the results of participation in the municipal master plan, VPORs, planning programmes, and zoning plans results either take a great deal of time to materialise or do not materialise at all (UT05).

In Chapter 3, the moments in which participation legally must occur in the planning process, which could be called stages of obligation using Sheir’s framework (2001), are after the plan draft has already been sketched and a second time right before it is finalised and approved. Yet, the message of participants in this study are stating that it would be better to have participation as early as possible and that participation too late in the planning process can make little to no impact.

It is one topic, to consider when in the planning process participation should occur, according to participants in this study, while it is entirely another to

report the quite mixed impressions about when participation is taking place in the planning process.

8.2.2 Where is participation taking place in the planning process?

While most participants in this study noted that participation with children and young people is best at the beginning of the planning process - either meaning at the level of the municipal master plan or early in the life of a particular plan - most also reflected that when participation takes place in reality is too late. For instance, May, an architect and designer in a private firm who has spent the last several years of their career thinking about and trying to improve participation methods in Oslo, simply stated that “quite often it comes much too late” (POP02). Håkon, an architect also well versed in the world of children and young people’s participation in planning in Oslo and working in a private firm, explained that “usually the kids they come in at the stage where everything has already been decided” (UT04).

Looking specifically at the youth councils, Leif said that by the time youth councils receive planning cases and are asked to give their input, “the planning process is more or less finished.” This is an issue which Leif found particularly concerning because in their view, “in order to have an impact, you have to be a part of it quite early” (YCS02).

Youth council members Jenny and Magnus echo this, noting that:

often we get cases that are already closed, it's just... so we know [what is happening]. So then it feels like we can't really say anything on the matter because we just know that, [for example], this place is taken down, although that's something that we *would* like to protect... Things that are in development, it is easier for us to feel like we are heard, because then we can actually be in communication with the people that are doing it (YC01).

From their view, receiving a planning case that appears already finished means the ‘case is closed’ and they are under no impression that their inputs will matter. This is similar Morrow’s (2001) writing about moments when quality

inputs were received from young participants but there were not channels for these ideas to reach the right people.

A wider observation came from Hege, a youth council secretary in another district, who reported that sometimes the municipality and district will invite groups of young people to participation sessions, but it is observably always “really late in the process, so everything [is] planned” (YCS06). These are the general impressions that participants in this study offered to the topic of when participation with children and young people occurs in the planning process.

In terms of the first concern stated earlier, that participation with children and young people needs to take place early in the drafting of a plan, the reality of when it happens varies. As stated in Chapter 3, legally the plan drafts must be released for participation after some preliminary meetings have been held and a plan has already been sketched, as well as a second time shortly before the plan is to be finalised and submitted for final approval.

While *Barnetråkk* can be used at all levels “from a really overall level to the detailed zoning plans,” according to planner Lars, when exactly in the life of a plan it is used can vary from plan to plan because of who all is involved, delays of any sort, and school schedules (BT02). When Lars facilitated *Barnetråkk*, however, they note that “we did it quite early on in the planning process,” knowing that the earlier they got the children’s inputs, the more they would be able to consider it in the drafting process.

Terje explained that when their private firm first makes an area or detailed zoning plan, they make a “very rough map sketch, which shows the outline or the zoning plan, the proposed outline, and then there’s a three-week period where people can send their input.” Most people “don’t really have much to say... because they haven’t been given sufficient information to understand what it’s all about.” The planners and architects at Terje’s firm are then allowed to resume working on the draft, and in the second instance when participation is required, the “plan is kind of finished” (MIS01). In the first moment when input

is invited, Terje admits that almost no one has enough information to be able to provide input, and the window to submit input is only three weeks. The second moment when participation is invited, the moment when youth councils and children's representative might receive the plan draft, the plan is, as Terje says, more or less finished. It is difficult to imagine a space for children and young people's participation in this process at all, leastwise their participation early-on and meaningfully in the process.

Heidi, an architect at a much smaller private firm, reported the same story, describing how "people feel that [the planners] already have decided how it should be" by the time participation takes place. What happens, in Heidi's view, is that the private planners will sort out "how they want to do it and everything" and then "they get the message from the politicians and administration, [saying] you have to do this participatory process," it takes place as more of an afterthought and most likely does not influence or change the plan (POP05).

In terms of the second concern listed in the last sub-section, that participation with children and young people needs to take place especially in high level plans, namely the municipal master plan, as well as the VPOR and planning programme that result from it, the story is somewhat brighter. There is political will and keen interests inside the PBE to facilitate increased and enhanced participation with children and young people, a fact that openly stated by several participants in this study and evident from the high number of presentations and workshops hosted within the planner and architect community in Oslo.

For this reason, the municipal master plan, VPORs, and planning programmes - which are all entirely drafted by the PBE and which dictate what can and cannot happen in the resulting area zoning and detailed zoning plans - involve both children and young people in either through a combination of Barnetråkk and Ungdomstråkk, or similar custom-designed methods, inviting the youth council and children's representatives, and/or hosting pop-up or a series of participation methods. Naturally the Municipal Master Plan, which involves the entire

municipality and therefore a great deal more time and people, necessitates more participation sessions, whereas for VPOR and Plan Programmes, which concentrate on one area, are drafted during a shorter period of time and involve less amounts of participation, but still at least Barnetråkk and Ungdomstråkk or another combination of methods to involve both children and young people at least once in the drafting process.

For VPOR and planning programmes, what is most typical is that children's representatives will receive information and early drafts about the plan and be invited to give inputs. As the planners and architects draft the plan, they will host Barnetråkk and/or Ungdomstråkk or a similar method, and before the plan is completely finalised the youth council will receive the plan draft and be invited to give inputs (youth council members are also typically invited to Ungdomstråkk or the equivalent type of session).

8.2.3 When and how participation impacts planning

The participants in this study gave quite varied replies when questioned about the impact of children and young people's participation on planning in Oslo.

Generally speaking, there was consensus among planners and architects that participation - either direct involvement or reading the resulting report - is a good way for them to learn more about the area for which they are planning. For example, PBE planner Jorunn explained that "if we do not know things about the area that we maybe should know [participation has an important role there]" (CR01). This was echoed by Terje,

We have projects all over the place. We don't really have local knowledge about most of the places we operate. So you get some valuable insight... for instance... we map out like the roads, which are in public roadmaps, but you can have kind of a path, which is a shortcut for everyone, which you see it if you're out on the site, you often see like a track through the woods or something, but you don't really know if it's a popular one or not. (MIS01)

Such inputs can result in planner and architects stepping back and taking another examination of their plans to consider new alternatives and options. Leif, a youth council secretary, and children's representative, explained that planner and architects:

may get ideas from the youth council, and they may not actually have seen those options before, and then they may decide that this case needs further research, and they send it back to the administration. That has happened (YCS02).

Håkon, an architect at a private firm known for their frequent facilitation of participation noted that Håkon and their colleagues normally will check online to see if there are any existing Barnetråkk reports which they may be able to reference in impact assessment and feasibility studies (UT04).

Almost no examples were given of times when significant changes were made to a plan because of participation with children and/or young people. Most often, participants in this study gave examples of times when small changes were made to infrastructure - typically related to safe paths to school.

Naturally in the case of Trafikkagenten, which focuses on safe paths to school, there are example of this - an administrator in the municipal Department of Traffic, Camilla pointed out a prime example of this in which a junction was made narrower for cars and crosswalks were widened. In this instance, children send reports via the Traffikagenten mobile application during winter - "imagine that you're here behind the snow and it's cold, you cannot really see what's going on and... others cannot see them" (TA01). On a map and in the summer, the crossing appears safe, but during winter it becomes a challenging crossing for children, a fact that became known and resulted in a change, thanks to reports from the children via Trafikkagenten.

Similarly, Jarle, a children's representative in a district very busy with planning and building projects, recalled a time when the planners had drafted a scenario in which a large number of children would have to "cross three parking lots" on their way to school. Jarle and the local youth club reported this concern and

were heard - “they actually changed some plans for the building of the new school, for the sports centre, for the for whole neighbourhood” to ensure the path to school would be safe in the eyes of Jarle and the local youth club (CR02).

The most seemingly significant example of a change made because of children’s participation was the addition of a library to a plan programme draft. Kjersti who is now a teacher at another school, was the school principal at one of two schools involved in Barnetråkk when this happened.

[The children] wanted the facilities and the books that that the public library could grant them... It was decided a year afterwards, or a year and a half that [the area] as part of the programme would get a public library. It wasn't originally the plan, but I had a telephone [call and I was told] that they had decided, that the area would get a public library (BT03).

Kjersti explained that “it made some impression that of all the things, that was number one” (BT03). This clear memory which Kjersti describes curiously does not match what Lars, the main PBE planner who facilitated that particular Barnetråkk session, recalled. Lars noted that “I saw there was great interest in having a swimming hall in the neighbourhood” but does not mention the library.

Going back to the plan programme draft which the PBE had at the time of the Barnetråkk sessions, there appears to have already been a library planned, and within the same time period there are two news articles - one in Oslo’s Dagsavisen and one in the district newspaper - written by adults in the area, explaining the need for a library. Looking at the finalised plan, for which construction is set to begin in 2022 and finish in 2024/2025, there is a library amidst the planned parks, school buildings, care home, and pathways.

Unfortunately, it may be the case that Kjersti misremembered or was not aware of the existing plan to include a library in the planning area. This seemingly great example of a time when children’s participation impacted a plan, is left in question, though it may be worth noting that Kjersti told their students that

because of their participation a library would be constructed, and they were quite pleased with the news.

8.2.4 Methods of participation mapped onto the planning process

The research questions of this thesis were applied across all instruments and held in mind across all interviews. As such, it was possible to discover cross-cutting themes that speak to participation with children and young people broadly in Oslo. At the same time, there are distinctions to be made about the different methods of participation that were examined in terms of what their intended outcomes are for both planning and for young participants. The data gathered and analysed for this thesis is able to offer a picture of what the central aims of each instrument are seen to be for both planning and for young participants - according to participants interviewed for this thesis. The following Table 8-1 illuminates these differences.

Table 8-1 Intended Outcomes of Each Unit of Analysis			
Unit of Analysis	Situation in Planning System	Intended Outcomes for Planning	Intended Outcomes for Participants
Barnetråkk	-If initiated per the request of the PBE, the results may be considered in VPOR and Planning Programmes -No connection*	-For planners to find out how children use and experience their local environment -To be in compliance with participation requirements set by the government	-To teach children about democracy and citizenship -To enable children to contribute to changes in their local built environment
Ungdomstråkk	-If initiated per the request of the PBE, the results may be considered in VPOR and Planning Programmes -No connection*	-For planners to find out what young people think about their local environment and what is important to them -To be in compliance with participation requirements set by the government	-To teach young people about democracy and citizenship -To enable young people to contribute to changes in their local built environment
Youth Councils	-Formally invited to give input on VPOR	-To be in compliance with participation requirements set by	-To teach young people about democracy and

	and Planning Programmes	the government	citizenship -To enable young people to contribute to changes in their local built environment
Children's Representatives	-Formally invited to give input on VPOR, Planning Programmes, and sometimes zoning and area plan drafts	-To be in compliance with participation requirements set by the government	N/A
Traffic Agent	-No official role in planning process -Results can lead to micro-level repairs and adjustments to the built environment	-No direct expected outcomes for planning -For the municipality to know about the items and areas during paths to school that could be repaired or updated to ensure better traffic safety of children commuting to school	-To teach children about democracy and citizenship -To enable children to contribute to changes in their local built environment
Custom-designed activities	-Results may feed into municipal master plan drafting or zoning and area plan drafts depending on the initiators of the participation activities and their overlap with planning firms and/or the PBE -No connection*	-No particular expected outcomes for planning -To be in compliance with participation requirements set by the government	-To teach children and/or young people about democracy and citizenship -To enable children and/or young people to contribute to changes in their local built environment
*In case of "no connection" to the planning system, it is the case that there are instances of this method of participation taking place independently from a planning process and the results were not used in any moment in any planning process.			

What is important to highlight about Table 8-1 is that the different methods being examined come from different institutional settings, involve different actors, and fit into the planning process at different moments in different ways, or not at all.

Barnetråkk, for instance, is notably more established as a tool for direct participation with children in Norway and has become an instrument of which municipal planners and architects are aware and sometimes use. Ungdomstråkk was generated much more recently and while it has a similar spirit, it is neither standardised for regular use in the same way nor is it widely known as an option for participation. Youth Councils and Children's Representatives are well established in Oslo and are formally engaged in different types of plans. These two instruments differ from Barnetråkk and Ungdomstråkk because they invite youth council members and children's representatives to give inputs on an existing plan draft, whereas the idea with Barnetråkk and Ungdomstråkk is that the data gathered from mapping activities, conversations, and geotagging can be used to inform the content of a plan. Traffic Agenda unlike the others was not designed to feed into the planning process at all, despite it directly engaging children and young people in mapping activities and conversations about improving the built environment; that said it sometimes results in more immediate, while small scale, transformations which the children and young people can see and enjoy. Finally, the place of custom-made methods in planning is highly dependent on the parties involved and reason for it happening. For example, if a large-scale planning firm runs a participation workshop that they designed for a group of local young people, the inputs gathered may feed into a plan which they are drafting. On the other hand, there are times when local architecture and planning firms engage children and young people in participation activities without having any connection to a plan and the resulting inputs are used for a small-scale public space transformation or building refurbishment.

In this light, the methods of participation examined may look rather disconnected, however what this thesis found was that all had the same intended outcomes for the young participants themselves (with the exception of children's representatives, which does not directly engage any children or young people):

- To teach children about democracy and citizenship
- To enable children to contribute to changes in their local environment

This connects to one of the research questions that address the educational nature of children and young people's participation. On a surface level, these methods all exist in order to either engage children and young people directly in planning or to ensure their interests and preferences are safeguarded in planning. Where they sit within the planning system, their intended impacts on planning, and their actual impacts on planning vary. The mentality around using participation as an educational tool appears to serve as justification for going ahead with participation with children and young people, even if it is known that the impacts cannot and will not impact a plan or ultimately the built environment.

8.3 System-level failures for children and young people's participation

Several explanations emerged from participants in this study for why children and young people's participation is made difficult or ineffective by the broader planning system. For example, Jorunn - who, it is worth remembering, is a senior planner at the PBE and key contact person for the district children's representative - expressed hesitation about the legal requirements associated with children and young people's participation:

I think you do not fulfil the law just having the children representative say something, because you have also to directly allow children and young people to comment on plans... and that is difficult because we do not have some way, like what exactly is that? (CR01)

In Jorunn's view, the children's representatives play an important role in ensuring children and young people's interests are safeguarded, in accordance with the law, but when it comes to direct participation with children and young people, Jorunn does not know what is required.

Where the divide between public and private planning is concerned, there is a marked difference in the amount and type of participation with children and young people that takes place - as documented in existing literature and in this study. This can be illustrated by the description Terje gives about the firm's regular system for adhering to the participation laws—

We kind of try to gather as much information as possible about the site and the area. We use all kinds of sources, also Barnetråkk, maybe not Trafikkagenten as much, but we try to just get as much information as possible, to show respect for the site we have been given to work on but... we do very little consultation work with kids. [There are] at least some hearings with stakeholders and public stakeholders which are often the Children's Representatives, who are sent these letters, which say nothing, and then they get invited to the public hearing. It varies how active they are, but we don't get much from them; it very rare that they that we see them replying to these hearings. (MIS01)

At Terje's firm, there is a stated desire to exhibit respect for the areas where they work and to have and much information about the area as possible. In terms of children and young people, it does not amount to deep consultation work, hands-on participation, or any form of participation with children and young people beyond reading old Barnetråkk reports - when they are available - and inviting the relevant children's representative(s) to hearings (which, according to Terje, they rarely attend). While not all firms are this way, existing literature indicates that most private firms - responsible for 80% or more of the zoning plans in Oslo - operate similarly when it comes to children and young people's participation. Using past Barnetråkk reports and other thin data results in the loss of richness (Hanssen 2019) and context that can help planners comprehend and make use of young participants' inputs.

It is not just private firms whose interests compromise their capacity to carry out quality participation with children, there are also difficulties in the public planning world. Youth council secretary Solveig points to the municipal and

district governments, explaining that from what they have witnessed, their primary concern is the photo opportunity and the box-ticking more than carrying out meaningful participation. Referring again to the 'Dream Street' [Drømmegate] workshop in which local children and young people, including youth council members, had been invited to write and draw their "visions and dreams about how this area was going to be and where things were going to be," Solveig described how afterwards nothing changed. In response to complaints, Solveig remembers that the district said, "but we had workshops, they participated!" and then blamed the municipal government for not realising the potential outcomes of the participation sessions (YCS03).

This connects to the concerns of the architect Håkon, who identifies the hierarchies and priorities involved in planning as the factors which derail participation with children and young people. Håkon describes the thinking process of planners: "we need to make sure that this and this and this and this and then we can think of the kids" and concludes that by the time children and young people "come in, it doesn't have a real effect" UT04).

Youth council secretary Leif provided an example of this problem, remembering a time when the youth council had concrete concerns and suggestions about the planning of a new IKEA in their district -

The youth council, they wanted to ensure that from the E6, which is the highway, that there were entrance and exits directly from that to IKEA, to reduce traffic on the little roads. They... said where it should be... and actually, it was quite a good suggestion and it was rejected at once because the road authorities... don't want too many exits from highways. (YCS02)

Despite the youth council having legitimate concerns about traffic increasing on small roads in the neighbourhoods near the new IKEA, the road authority's priorities were valued more highly than those of the youth council members.

Leif elaborated that often times the timeline, in addition to the hierarchy of priorities, is a reason the youth council members' inputs do not impact a plan.

Leif said that by the time a plan reaches the youth council, “there isn’t very much to do, they are more or less set.”

Figure 8-2 Anecdote. Yes! We want a culture house!

Two youth council members Magnus and Jenny told of a case which had been repeatedly given to the youth council every year, several years in a row - the proposal to construct a culture house in the district. Despite expressing firm support and stressing the local young people’s desire to see the culture house developed, the case never seemed to move beyond the idea phase:

There have been a lot of cases when we see that they dismiss us. For example, there was [a proposal to build a culture house]... that gathers... the cultural things like art, drama, music, everything. It was asked for in, I think, 2011, at least nine or eight years ago. It was made clear that everyone in the youth council wanted it and everyone in the District Council wanted this house. And there are many houses here that aren’t used for anything, so it wasn’t necessarily asking for too much... and then *again*, it was asked for in 2014. *And again*, everybody agreed [and]... there were no arguments against, it wasn’t a problem. The money was easily accessible. It was needed in this kind of district... *And then again*, not long ago, we get a case where they again asked for us to voice an opinion about *this house*. And *we again* say that is very much needed and we 100% support it.

So it’s really saddening, I guess, to see that we have to do this again and again and again for something that is so clear that we all want and there’s nothing that’s against it. There’s a lot of money that’s used on smaller things than this. And this is something that’s obviously been talked about several times. (YC01)

Jenny exasperatedly described their experience as ‘saddening’ and was unable to make sense of why they had been asked so many times for something which they had clearly said they wanted and why, with so few evident objections and barriers to the culture house, it had yet to be realised.

Another problem can be the amount of knowledge and time needed to effectively give inputs. Jorunn explained that inputs and suggestions on plans

which do not come with examples, evidence, and facts are much easier to dismiss and rarely impact. Jorunn set out that, “if they have time, it's very good with evidence. They should use the law, but also the evidence, the facts” (CR01). As described in earlier findings sections, adult facilitators almost never have sufficient time to carryout participation, and children and young people generally lack even a basic understanding of their role in planning. It is therefore difficult to imagine young participants and/or adult facilitators having the capacity and time needed to include examples, evidence, and facts alongside their inputs.

The participants interviewed in this study are largely not content, to different degrees and in different ways, with the current state of participation with children and young people in Oslo. The architect Håkon for example, expressed frustration about the lack of constructive and radical outcomes:

I feel that architects are super talented people to inform, so they can be great at making fun workshops with various fun tasks and make these drawings or build these things out of foam and stuff. But usually, uh one doesn't end up with something very constructive or particularly radical... And I think that's part of the problem. (UT04)

Participation falls short not in one way or in one moment, as revealed by the examples above - sometimes the challenge is a lack of time to produce the necessary examples and facts, other times it is the interests of private planning firms, other times seemingly good quality participation takes place and the results never materialise, and other times the hierarchy of interests de-prioritises the inputs of children and young people.

Chapter 9. Is children and young people's participation just the optional, flavourless, and pretty sprinkles on top of urban planning?

9.1 Chapter overview

The central aim of this thesis was to analyse how on-going city-wide participatory planning methods and tools designed to gather information about children's preferences and needs impact the decision making and design of a city. The site of this study was Oslo, Norway, where research around six different participation methods with children and young people, including 40 interviews with both adults and young people, site observation, and the analysis of text materials was carried out. Rather than examining a one instance participation event or method in-depth, as past studies have done (Heinrich and Million 2016; Bishop and Corkery 2017), this thesis sought to examine the larger picture of children and young people's participation in changing and planning the built environment overtime in one city. The experiences and views of different people involved in different ways with different forms of participation were brought together, to be able to identify to what extent participation is being carried out and exactly when and how it is taking place.

This final chapter is divided into three main sections. The first presents the research questions and a brief summary of how the thesis answered each question. The second section presents four cross-cutting themes that presented themselves in the processes of carrying out the study and answering the research questions. The third section critiques the study in terms of its strengths and limitations. The final section presents the study's contributions to practice - with some targeted recommendations for Oslo - and details the original contribution to knowledge.

9.2 Summary of main findings

The findings chapters of this thesis were organised to present participation with children and young people from the bottom up, starting with the experiences of the children and young people involved, moving on to the adult facilitators, and

lastly looking at the larger system of planning and urban change in Oslo. While Chapters 5 and 6 looked closely at personal experiences with participation, Chapters 7 and 8 focused more on systems and processes. The findings chapters cast light onto a number of themes and points of interests that will be brought together in these next two sections, answering the research questions and presenting the cross-cutting themes.

The research aim, as identified in the introduction is:

Analyse how on-going city-wide participatory planning tools designed to gather information about children's preferences and needs impact the decision making and design of a city

To respond to these aims, the thesis has revolved around the following research questions:

1. To what extent and in what ways are the opinions and ideas of children in participatory projects used in planning and design?
2. In what ways are data about the needs and preferences of children being framed, organised, and shared?
3. To what extent are participatory tools and methods in place to educate verses to what extent are they principally to collect data and opinions about children and young people's needs and interests?
4. To what extent does the educational nature of participatory planning steer children's thinking and minimise children's agency ("citizens in the making" to be shaped)?

9.2.1 Addressing the research questions

In the following subsections the research questions, drawing on the data presented and discussed in the findings chapters and with consideration of the existing literature set out in the beginning chapters of the thesis.

9.2.1.1 Question one

To what extent and in what ways are the opinions and ideas of children in participatory projects used in planning and design?

The extent to which children and young people's inputs are used to shape the urban environment varies from case to case - that is to say among the methods examined in this study, but also individual instances of each method in action. This study identifies three main ways in which children and young people's inputs are used within the urban planning and design systems:

- 1) To make small-scale, surface-level, often temporary changes to the urban environment

In the case of Traffic Agent and custom-designed projects enacted by local architecture and planning firms, participation with children and young people typically results in the temporary beautification of an area such that it becomes a nicer and safer feeling areas for children and young people. For example, Traffic Agent has resulted in hedge trimmings that cleared and made safer paths to school. One local architecture and design firm, transformed a public square from a grey, forbidding place into a colourful, leafy place with custom made benches and plant boxes painted by children in the neighbourhood. These are examples of direct participation that result in swift actions, from which children and young people now may benefit. At the same time, these are temporary, small improvements within the larger cityscape and have no impact on larger scale planning and building projects around the city.

- 2) To affirm and sometimes slightly amend existing plan drafts

In the case of Barnetråkk, Ungdomståkk, Youth Councils, and Children's Representatives, there are instances of plan drafts being changed slightly after young participants (or the children's representative) gave their input on a planning case. More often, it appears that these forms of participation assure

planners that their notions about what the area needs are in agreeance with what the local children and young people report in participation.

- 3) To comply with planning legislation and thereby avoiding delays (caused by the PBE or local politicians or caused by public disapproval)

Children and young people's inputs from Barnetråkk and/or Ungdomstråkk, or comments from the youth council or children's representatives are sometimes summarised in a short paragraph within a planning case or are presented in a report that is attached to the planning case, to demonstrate that participatory processes were enacted. Their role in changing the built environment, in this case, is to get existing plans approved - both by the PBE who review plans and to win the approval of the local politicians who ultimately have the final say and who expect to see that children and young people's needs and interests have been considered. When it is evident that participatory processes were enacted, delays or complications related to noncompliance with rules and norms around carrying out participation can be avoided.

It is evident that public planning projects involve and make use of children and young people's inputs more regularly in comparison to private planning project. Overall, however, children and young people's inputs are not often used to shape the urban environment of Oslo.

Aside from these three clear ways in which the inputs resulting from participation with children and young people are used in planning, the participants interviewed for this study struggled to give concrete examples of times when any of the methods of participation had an evident impact on a planning case or on the urban environment. Through the analysis of interviews and the analysis of texts and documents, however, this study was able to pinpoint the most typical or likely impact that each of each individual methods of participation had on urban planning.

Table 9-1 Impact on Planning of Each Unit of Analysis	
Unit of Analysis	Impact
Barnetråkk	Give planners new knowledge about children and young people's needs and preferences in the area
Ungdomståkk	Give planners new knowledge about children and young people's needs and preferences in the area
Youth Councils	Give planners new knowledge about children and young people's needs and preferences in the area
Children's Representatives	Give planners new knowledge about children and young people's needs and preferences in the area
Traffic Agent	Give Urban Environment Agency data which can result in small upgrades in the built environment like replaced lights and cleared walking paths
Custom-made projects	Small scale site transformations

It is obvious that the most common, likely outcome of these participation methods is that planners are given new knowledge about children's needs and preferences in an area. That said, it must be recalled that in the findings chapters it was revealed that generally planners and architects are more assured of their already existing notions about what children and young people want than surprised by new or useful ideas. Traffic Agent and custom-made projects stand out as the methods which are almost never connected to formal planning cases, but at the same time are the most likely to result in rapid, evident changes to the urban environment based on children and young people's inputs. This leads directly into the following questions about how data gathered in these cases is organised and shared by adult facilitators.

9.2.1.2 Question two

In what ways are data about the needs and preferences of children and young people being framed, organised, and shared?

Each of the methods of participation examined in this thesis, while having similarities offering cross-cutting themes when examined together, each have different ambitions and possible outcomes. It is thus to be expected that each may have different types of resulting data which can be used, or not used, by different groups of people in different ways.

When it comes to youth councils, they may submit their comments and feedback on any planning case that has been sent to them. There is no standard format for this, and in fact the youth councils are not directly told on what themes they should give input, or what is expected from them. Typically, the youth council secretary will translate what the youth council thinks and wants into formal language to send in reply to a planning case - this could be a few bullet points or sentences at most. What results from their participation are meeting minutes that are digitally available publicly on the municipality's website and which are sent to the relevant municipal agencies that have requested inputs.

Children's representatives can send inputs however they want, or they can use templates given to them by the PBE to make their inputs more easily connect with the planners' work at PBE - they also receive yearly trainings about what to focus on and how to do it. In this sense there may be more standardisation in terms of how the data about children and young people's needs and preferences is formatted.

In most cases, participation activities like Barnetråkk, Ungdomståkk, and custom-designed methods result in some kind of report drafted by a project assistant or administrator who was involved in the participation session(s). There is no standardised format or set of themes that must be used in the generation of these reports. There is a high level of detail to these reports, in comparison to the comments that youth councils and youth council secretaries give on planning cases. That said, the comments of youth councils and youth council secretaries are a rawer form of data - making it both truer to what they want to express and also sometimes less usable to planners. Typically, with Barnetråkk, Ungdomståkk, and custom-designed methods the digital and paper maps and other materials with raw data generated during a participation session are normally available only to those tasked with writing the report. In other words, what is presented in the report are summaries and heat maps made based on the analysis, skills, and judgment of the person drafting the report. There is therefore a risk that some details may be overlooked or misinterpreted, but it also means that the data has been translated into a format that is seen to be

more useful to planners and thus can result in better uptake and use of the ideas and inputs given during participation. The main recipient of these reports is usually planners working on a particular planning case or planners working generally in a particular area to which the report pertains.

If a report was generated in response to, or within the timeframe of, a specific planning application, it will be attached to a plan draft and/or referenced in a planning application. This is particularly true for Barnetråkk and Ungdomståkk, as well as the inputs submitted by the youth councils and youth council secretaries. Planners, architects, politicians, and other stakeholders, as well as the general public at certain points, have access to this information.

Methods like Traffic Agent and custom-made participation activities were found to disseminate their findings and impacts more often to the general public. For example, Traffic Agent, before it went defunct in early 2020, did outreach to parents on Facebook, posting images of changes made in response to reports sent in by children involved in their mapping programme. Custom-made projects in particular tend to do all their own publicity online and on social media to share project happenings and results and sometimes to gather participants. Barnetråkk, being respectively high profile in Norway, sometimes appears in local online blogs and newspapers to make parents and community members aware that some of the classes in the local school(s) were involved in the programme. When participation activities are shared online, they are naturally framed in a way to garner support and awareness among the public, rather than to feed into any sort of participation process, it nonetheless is one way in which data about the needs and preferences of children and young people is utilised and shared.

What this study uncovered is that there are no best practices around gathering data from children and young people through participation and no set formula for formatting or organising reports. Reports are what typically reach planners and architects, as well as the PBE committees and politicians who review planning cases. The public can access reports if they have been attached to

planning cases online and sometimes can learn about children and young people participation through local news, blogs, or Facebook.

9.2.1.3 Question three

To what extent are participatory tools and methods in place to educate verses to what extent are they principally to collect data and opinions about children and young people's needs and interests?

What was revealed in Chapter 8 is that adult facilitators typically go into a participation setting with the idea that, participation has the potential to teach children about democracy and citizenship and to enable children to contribute to changes in their local environment. This aligns with a prevalent idea in literature on children and young people's participation that one of the benefits and reasons to carryout participation with children and young people is for the educational opportunity it provides (Hart 1992; Driskell 2002; Heinrich & Million 2016; Mårtensson & Nordström 2017). It was evident that the majority, if not all, of the adults interviewed for this thesis held this belief. In fact, most described participation more readily as a way for children and young people to learn about planning and their role as citizens in an urban setting more than they talked about the connection to improved built spaces. At the same time, there was little evidence of serious thought being put into measurable educational outcomes or to adapting elements of any of the participation methods to make them align with existing school curriculum.

It is evident that the participation methods examined in this study were entirely or mainly designed in order to collect data and opinions about children and young people's interests and that the educational possibilities have not been seriously integrated into any of the methods of participation that were researched. At the same time, there is a clear belief among adult facilitators, planners, teachers, and other adults involved in participation that an important benefit of children and young people's participation is, in theory, that young participants learn about citizenship and democratic practices. At the time in which this research was carried out, this educational potential had yet been

realised.

9.2.1.4 Question four

To what extent do participatory planning methods steer children's thinking and minimise children's agency ("citizens in the making" to be shaped)?

It was highly evident that the adult facilitators of participation, despite their varied education and professional backgrounds took very seriously the risk that they may impose their ideas and opinions on children and young people in participation sessions. They demonstrated a keen awareness of their position in participation and explained that it was important for outcomes of participation with children and young people to reflect as much as possible what children and young people need and want. As such, great care appears to have been taken in most all instances of participation across the instruments researched to ensure that young participants have an open opportunity to voice their own ideas and needs.

At the same time, it is also the case that each method of participation necessarily places certain limits on what can be contributed. Barnetråkk and Traffic Agent participants are given clear parameters about what they can comment on, and principally are invited to indicate likes and dislikes about those set topics. Similarly, Ungdomstråkk provides set themes on which young people can give inputs. By contrast, youth councils and children's representatives are not given clear enough guidelines to know exactly what inputs are being requested and thus the lack of steering can result in unusable inputs. Chapter 5 explored what topics children and young people are invited to give inputs on, and discussed how focus is necessary to yield results that planners can actually use, while at the same time, children and young people feel limited and patronised. Hart (1992) and the Council of Europe Handbook on Children's Participation (2020) clearly identify that young participants should be allowed to choose the relevant topics of important and comment in ways that suit them - in practice the processes in Oslo are meant to maximise the potential impact by making inputs easier for planners to digest and use, but it disappoints the young participants.

9.2.2 Cross-cutting themes

Through investigating and answering the research questions, this thesis identified four themes that cut across each of the cases examined. In the following sections, each of these themes will be set out and discussed in relation to existing literature. Ultimately what these crosscutting themes, considered all together point to, is a system that fails to enact meaningful participation with children and young people.

9.2.2.1 Differing rationale for enacting participation, mindset on benefit to children not city

This research clearly identified that the adults involved in children and young people's participation in changing the urban environment in Oslo come from a range of professional backgrounds, bringing quite different knowledge and skills. Some find themselves involved in participation with children and young people on a regular basis - such as youth council secretaries and planners, designers, and architects in private firms with a strong participation focus - while others are suddenly tasked with carrying out or being involved in a participation project with children and young people - this includes, for example, some planners in the public system, planners in private firms, and teachers. Each of these adults bring their own assumptions and expectations, as well as their own rationale and objectives for being involved in participation with children and young people.

Chapter 7 explored these different rationale and objectives (summarised in appendix 4). Whether carrying out participation with children and young people in order to adhere to planning legislation, to understand where children and young people feel safe and unsafe, to learn about children and young people's transportation habits to and from school, or to ensure that children and young people's interests are represented in the planning process, to gain political approval for a plan, or education children and young people about planning and the urban environment, a rationale/objective that was notably not prevalent among the range of adults interviewed for this study was the positive impact that children and young people can have on the urban environment through

participation. A dominant view among adults involved in this study was that participation should be carried out, whatever the rationale and objectives, with children and young people because of the benefit to children and young people. There was an obvious lack of comprehension that participation with children and young people could also be valuable for urban places.

While perhaps ironic, this should not come as a huge surprise. Participation with children and young people is often presented as a sign of a city's recognition of children's rights and capacities, an indicator that a city is interested in empowering and educating their youngest citizens, a mark of positive child-adult relations in a city (Bishop and Corkery 2017). Participation with children and young people is not often discussed in terms of physical outcomes and long-term benefits to the urban environment resulting from children and young people's inputs.

Chapter 5 examined the experience of children and young people as participants, revealing that children and young people want to be taken more seriously on more topics related to the urban environment because they believe that their inputs will result in positive outcomes for all. Some specifically referenced younger siblings, their future selves, and the other children and young people in the area as people who would benefit from their inputs in participation processes now. In contrast to the common rationale and objectives adults had for carrying out participation with children and young people, children and young people themselves believed that their inputs, if taken seriously, would result in improved outcomes for the urban environment.

In summary, there is a mindset among adults that participation is for the benefit of children and young people while children and young people believe their participation is for the benefit of the urban environment and the future people who will be living there.

9.2.2.2 Weakness in legislation, lack of clear-cut expectations and processes

There is an evident unclarity around how, when, and to what extent participation with children and young people should take place in order to firstly comply with the national legislation and city norms and secondly to ‘do a good job.’

It appears that in larger scale planning and building firms, a certain level of participation that seemingly complies with the legislation has been normalised through the PBE and local politicians’ approval of their plans. When it comes to children and young people this generally involves no direct forms of participation, with reliance on old Barnetråkk reports, when available, from the relevant area. If the PBE mandates that the local youth council(s) be invited to planning hearing meetings and the reality is that such meetings are often not attended by a youth council member and in either case the formatting these hearings are technical and inaccessible in terms of youth-friendly formatting and language.

In addition to this, it was a dominant view that potentially good participation processes are ruined by overly bureaucratic processes, gaps in communication channels, and lack of a person ‘in charge’ of following up or interacting with children and young people before and after a participation activity. Several adult facilitators, particularly youth council secretaries, expressed great frustration about the current state of participation, stating that children and young people give their time, but then their inputs are ‘lost in transit’ or not taken seriously because no one knows who exact is meant to make use of children and young people’s inputs or how or when.

This aligns with past research on the vagueness present in existing Norwegian legislation about participation in planning. Hanssen and Falleth (2014) argued that the actual requirements and details of participation in planning within Norwegian law ‘are too diffuse’ and not sufficiently explicit (2014). For Hofstad (2013), the lack of requirement to use specific methods or tool, essentially

invites negligence towards adhering with the law in cases where children and other marginalised groups need to be involved. Fiskaa (2005) stated that to make participation something that is taken more seriously by developers, and something that demands increased attention on developing higher quality methods and habits, the existing laws and guidelines would require redrafting (2005). These concerns ring true with the finding in this study.

9.2.2.3 Lack of resources - training, expertise, preparedness, and education

There was consensus that those carrying out participation lacked training and education that could have resulted in better participation processes and outcomes. This ranges from planners and architects to public administrators and social workers who find themselves involved in participation projects. It was also a concern for youth council members who are tossed into the deep end without training and groups of children and young people who are involved in one- or two-day sessions of Traffic Agent, Barnetråkk, and Ungdomstråkk, typically without much preparation.

It was also a central view that most participation projects are rushed and the children and young people do not have adequate time as participants for the session(s) to yield quality results. Time is also a key issue for children's representatives and youth councils, who are paid for a set number of hours and have reportedly too much on their plates to manage giving the necessary amount of time and attention to planning cases. Participation being too time consuming is a reason that planners and developers tend to avoid it and in this study a few planners even praised Barnetråkk for being a one-stop-shop that can be used in a variety of planning cases - and yet the brevity of it appears to be a key issue for why it fails short in terms of meaningful participation and impacts.

The problem of lack of expertise in carrying out good participation with children and young people is further illustrated by experiences of some interviewees in this study - they had been involved with children and young people's participation once in university or one time in their profession and because of

that they had become known as the ‘children and young people participation person.’ They now are called on to support others’ planning cases in this way, because no one else on the planning case, or even sometimes in the entire firm, knows exactly how to carry out participation with children and young people.

According to The Council of Europe Handbook on Children’s Participation (2020), effective and ethical participation requires that adult facilitators are supported with resources, trainings, and expertise. To classify as participation according to Hart’s ladder (1992), such a level of support would need to be in place, or else the participation can easily fall into the realm of tokenism or decoration. Lack of time, training, preparedness, and expertise are serious problems for the implementation of children and young people’s participation in planning, while also being issues with rather obvious solutions - some of which will be set out in the recommendations section of this chapter.

9.2.2.4 *Non-participation*

This study identified several signs of non-participation throughout all of the city-wide, ongoing methods of children and young people’s participation; from municipal master planning to detailed zoning planning to the drafting of new guidelines and agendas for urban issues, existing methods fall short. The only possible exception to this could be the carefully crafted one-off participation methods used in small scale site transformations carried out by some small architecture and design firms, however the attention of this study was heavily on methods that had been developed and utilised over and over and could be taken up by different planners, architects, and facilitators in different contexts, to some extent, around the city.

In all cases, there are signs of what Hart calls tokenism, which are:

instances in which children are apparently given a voice, but in fact have little or no choice about the subject or the style of communicating it, and little or no opportunity to formulate their own opinions (1992).

Other nonparticipation markers include when children and young people are not given feedback and are unsure about what the outcomes have been or could be and times when they do not fully understand what is being asked of them. In accordance with the law, participation with children and young people is taking places, but the quality of it appears to be, in many cases, quite low.

Some adults interviewed expressed deep annoyance about the state of participation, suggesting that bad participation with children and young people is stealing their time, making them into hostages, or a form of child labour. One planner described the situation as one in which “everyone is running around with their fancy methods” but they have no clue what they are doing or why, but they are doing it in response to pressures from various branches of the Norwegian public administration.

The evident prevalence of non-participation in the methods analysis in this study rather came as a surprise. At the beginning of the thesis, Oslo and the participation taking place with children and young people there was a point of interest in terms of lesson to be learned or ‘what’s working.’ Finding several points of dysfunction in the methods examined and strong dissatisfaction from both adults and young people resulted in a more critical thesis than previously expected - with the aim of giving recommendations and supporting the growth and enhancement of Oslo’s existing efforts in participation with children and young people.

9.2.2.5 *Units of Analysis in Focus*

This thesis primarily involved the identification and analysis of themes that cut through all units of analysis in order to discuss and present findings that address the central aim of the thesis. That said, it cannot be ignored that the individual units of analysis are based in different institutional contexts and moments in the planning process. One of the outputs of this thesis is Table 9-2 which indicates, based on all the data collected, where each of the instruments analysed sits in the planning system.

Barnetråkk, Ungdomstråkk, Youth Councils, and Children’s Representatives, the primary units of analysis all can connect to the planning system in some way and moment. Traffic Agent was not made to fit directly into the planning process; while two participants interviewed suggested that it could technically be viewed by planners during the plan drafting phase there was no evidence of this happening. Custom-designed methods may fit into the planning process at times but it is not always the case that they are envisaged this way so it has been excluded from Table 9-2.

Table 9-2 Methods of Participation in the Planning Process		
Moment in Planning Timeline	Method of Participation	Type of Plan
While plan is being drafted	Barnetråkk, Ungdomstråkk	VPOR, Planning Programmes
After a plan draft has already been generated	Youth Councils, Children’s Representatives	VPOR, Planning Programmes, zoning plans
Before the plan finalised and approved	Youth Councils, Children’s Representatives	VPOR, Planning Programmes, zoning plans

What Table 9-2 illustrates is that Barnetråkk and Ungdomstråkk, which respectively engage with participants ages 9-12 and ages 13-19, are an opportunity for children and young people to participate in planning of VPORs and Planning Programmes, which then guide and frame what zoning plans within the area they cover must include and consider. Meanwhile youth councils and children’s representatives aim to ensure that children and young people’s inputs, needs, and preferences can be expressed about VPOR and Plan Programmes once they have been drafted, and about zoning plans.

9.2.2.6 Addressing the study’s central research aim

Central research aim: *Analyse how on-going city-wide participatory planning tools designed to gather information about children’s preferences and needs impact the decision making and design of a city*

In consideration of the study research questions and cross-cutting themes, answered and set out above, this thesis has made four main conclusions about

how on-going city-wide participatory planning tools designed to gather information about children's preferences and needs impact the decision making and design of a city.

First, it concludes that most participation activities associated with the six methods analysed, while representing good intentions and a strong foundation towards having the right infrastructure in place, are largely tokenistic due to signs of nonparticipation such as the young participants having not been sufficiently informed, adult facilitators not having sufficient resources, and an overall lack of child-friendliness (Council of Europe 2020). Data, in terms of inputs, ideas, and suggestions from children and young people about their needs and preferences, tends to be shallow or 'thin' (Hanssen 2019) with rich, thick data getting lost in translation. Children and young people participate are not given sufficient preparation in advance of their participation and are typically not informed of the results of their participation, both of which are problematic in terms of carrying out meaningful participation.

Second, children and young people's participation appears to generally have quite a limited impact on the decision-making and the planning and design of the city. Aside from a few specific examples in planning cases and small-scale and temporary changes made in Traffic Agent and custom-made projects, it was difficult to identify any tangible outcomes of children and young people's participation. When it comes to positive impacts on the children and young people who participated, youth council members evidently gain the most because of their sustained engagement with planning overtime because of their term times, while most participation activities that are one or two sessions are forgotten by young participants.

Third, there are several flaws in the implementation process of children and young people's participation. These include a lack of training and education for adult facilitators, lack of preparation for children and young people who are participants, lack of instructions and clear purpose for the youth council in planning cases, lack of clear guidelines and rules regarding children and young

people's participation, and lack of time to carry out participation sessions as well as lack of time for figures like the children's representatives and youth council secretaries to fulfil their role.

Fourth, children and young people participation is being used more often than not to tick a box and to advance the planning process rather than to meaningfully involve children and young people in planning and to integrate their ideas, needs, and preferences. Despite evident political will, respectively strong legislation, and the presence of several established methods and tools for carrying out children and young people participation, this study finds discouraging results.

9.3 Study implications

This thesis makes meaningful contributions to research and to practice, centrally in the Norwegian context but it also offers transferable knowledge to those working in children and young people's participation in other places. The following subsections describe these contributions.

9.3.1 Contribution to research

First, the findings contribute to strengthen existing knowledge about children and young people's participation in three main regards. First, it brings together the too often disconnected research on children and young people's participation and research on planning. This important connection has enabled the exploration of participation methods through the lens of planning, to bring about findings that describe participation's shortcomings beyond the logistical design of participation methods. It has been possible to also discuss the ways in which the planning system limits children and young people's participation because of its processes and priorities. This has resulted in a nuanced portrayal of the barriers to effective and ethical children and young people's participation; even if recommendations, such as those listed later in this chapter, can be undertaken, the systematic barriers that exist because of planning system - such as set timelines and competing priorities - would continue

to place boundaries on what children and young people's participation could achieve.

Second, this thesis offers a city-wide investigation of a variety of participation methods for gathering children and young people's inputs in urban planning and shaping the built environment. This was a gap identified in the research; those working on children and young people's participation had expressed the need to research more around best practices and particularly to know more about the innerworkings of methods designed to gather children and young people's views and specifically methods that operate on an ongoing basis as opposed to one-time case studies (Bishop and Corkery 2017; Heinrich and Million 2016; Wilks and Rudner 2013; Wilhjelm 2002). The research aim was designed around this need, and in answering the corresponding research questions it created new knowledge to help fill the gap.

Third, this thesis created new knowledge about the translation process that was set out in Chapter 7. This process is one in which a key adult facilitator is positioned between the world of children and young people and the planning and building world, and they must engage in a process of translating instructions, information, inputs, and ideas between the two worlds. It has already been described in past research (Hart 1992; Wilks and Rudner 2013; Dimoulas 2017) the necessity to have careful collaborations between adults and children and young people in participation and that a strong adult facilitator can help ensure the inputs and needs of children and young people reach the right place such that they can be put into use. What this thesis offers is the diagram presented in Figure 7-1 showing the main information that must flow through the translator to ensure that participation is transparent, that children and young people know what is being asked of them and what the outcomes will be, and that the participation activities are child-friendly or age appropriate (all these are essential for effective and ethical participation according to the Council of Europe Handbook on Children's Participation (2020)). The translators must also work to convert the ideas and inputs of children and young people into accessible, accurate information that planners and architects can meaningfully

make use of it their plans. This thesis was able to present and discuss this model as a new way of looking at the role of adult facilitators in participation with children and young people.

9.3.2 Contributions to practice of participation with children and young people in Norway

The unique circumstances of the Norwegian planning system and the Oslo Model are irremovable when understanding the findings of this research. This thesis resulted in both critical reflection on the planning process and the use of tools such as the VPORs, as well as practical recommendations for those seeking to strengthen children and young people's participation in Oslo. The reflections on the Norwegian planning process and the Oslo model link to the last subsection - in essence, the planning process structure in terms of when participation can take place and the competing priorities such as economic interests limit the imagined potential of children's participation. Considering that Norway has one of the world's strongest children's rights records in recent history and the admirable legal requirements to ensure children and young people's participation, there is an upsetting irony in the fact that despite these advancements, there are systematic barriers that prevent the full realisation of the measures taken to further children's rights.

Despite these observations, there are a series of general recommendations for logistical changes that could be made, which would appear resolve some of the central challenges and frustrations experienced by the participants involved in this study. The practical recommendations for Oslo are as follows:

1. Make the Children's Representative role a full-time paid position in districts with a high level of development, and at least 30%, or the necessary amount, in district with a low level of development, so that the person in this role has the necessary time to fulfil the responsibilities associated with the job

2. Make the Youth Council Secretary role at least a 20%, or the necessary amount, paid position so that the person in this role has the necessary time to fulfil the responsibilities associated with the job
3. Require a 1-year hands-on participation class for all university students studying planning, urban design, or architecture in Norway so that future planners have experience, knowledge, and skills to effectively carry out participation activities
4. Strengthen and clarify the legal guidelines and city norms for children and young people's participation - create a simple check list of what must be done and the quality at which it must be and - mandate that private plans involve evidence of direct participation and clear documentation of how children and young people's input was used in the planning process
5. Host a yearly skill and knowledge sharing event among public and private planners, architects, politicians, youth council secretaries, youth council members, and researchers to evaluate state of participation and discuss actions for improvement
6. Mandate that if youth councils are to be consulted on an issue, they are given clear direction about what is being asked, they are given updates about how their inputs have been used (even if the choice was to not use their inputs for some reasons), and, whenever possible, the format of the documents they are sent is made accessible

These recommendations are small-scale changes which, based on the research, appear to have the potential to improve the experiences of those involved in participation and most importantly improve the quality and impact of participation with children and young people. That said, the overarching difficulty of the planning system having varied levels of groups and professionals with their own priorities, and the planning system's interconnectedness with economic efficiency and paybacks, will remain as a pressure on the manifestation of quality participation with children and young people.

9.3.3 Contribution Beyond Norway

Lastly, the study findings are likely to be of interest to cities which currently have participation programmes with children and young people, as well as those planning for the creation and implementation of participation initiatives with children and young people. It is crucial to note that every city brings its own unique context which will grant different catalysts and barriers to participation processes with children and young people. It is not expected that all the findings in this thesis will be relevant to other cities. This thesis has, however, identified the points of disfunction that are common across different methods of participation, which may be present in other cities and settings. It has also provided the model of the translation process, which may be useful for adult facilitators in other contexts to conceptualise of their role and of the tasks associated with translating. Additionally, Oslo is not the only quickly growing compact city with a high rate of private planning taking place, so the observations made about the systematic barriers to children and young people's participation in the planning process may ring true in other settings. Finally, Chapter 5 highlighted in particular the experiences and thoughts of young participants themselves, and some of their dissatisfactions such as not being invited to participate on particular issues like housing and of not receive news about the outcomes of their participation are not unique to Oslo; this study serves to underscore to those working in children and young people's participation to avoid such practices associated with nonparticipation.

9.4 Concluding remarks

Coming full circle, back to the story about Bjørnstärn Bjørnson and Peter Qvam's first children's parade, Norwegian children and young people are still deeply linked to notions of Norwegian-ness and have thus been granted a relatively high level of rights and protections in the modern legal system. At the same time, this thesis reveals children and young people sometimes being used by adults to advance their own objectives in planning, behind the façade of participation. This thesis argues that there is a mismatch between the Norwegian state's

evident commitment to children and young people's participation in planning and the delivery of meaningful participation with children and young people.

This empirical investigation sought to investigate the ways and extent to which children and young people in Oslo are involved in urban planning and changes to the urban environment. Oslo was the focus, on the premise of their range of existing methods of participation with children and young people, and because of Norway's strong track record on children's rights and historical attention to childhood. Questions about the inner and outer workings of children and young people's participation were posed. In the final analysis, the basic answer is that despite the glossy façade, children and young people's participation is limited and rather lacking in outcomes.

This study found participation processes lacking adequate resources like time, expertise, and training. The expectation that legislation and guidelines mandating that children and young people be involved in urban planning and transformations, does not entirely lead to meaningful participation and outcomes. The study findings illustrate the various ways in which existing participation methods are institutionalised or actively used in planning processes, while highlighting a number of shortcomings that ultimately shed light on the harsh realities of non-participation and box ticking.

In terms of the Norwegian planning system - and specifically that in Oslo - this study bolsters existing investigations that frame private firms behind much of the planning and transformation of Oslo as a threat to participation activities. That said, small architecture firms specialising in participation provided some of the most impressive examples of meaningful participation with children and young people in site-based transformations. Replicable methods like Barnetråkk, while sitting well with planners in terms of usability, tend to result in thin data and to tokenise young participants, while the very institutionalised children's representatives and youth councils lack time, resources, training, and respect needed for their inputs to have an impact on plans for changes in the urban environment. There may have been more to say about the potential of Traffic

Agent, however due to data privacy changes in European law [and perhaps other reasons unknown to the researcher] the programme was indefinitely shut down in spring 2020, one year after the conclusion of this study's field work.

Moving forward, enhanced guidelines and firmer rules, accompanied by trainings and education about the proper enactment of participation with children and young people would benefit Oslo, along with the allocation of more resources and adjustments made to existing methods that are presently lacking in various capacities. The infrastructure and good will are already in place; strategic adjustments along with improved education, resources, and regulations could make a difference in transforming Oslo's presently flawed participation initiatives with children and young people into a much richer and more meaningful experience, resulting in better urban places for all.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1 Ethical Approval Letter from College



College of Social
Sciences

13/02/2019

Dear TAYLOR SAWYER

College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Project Title: Evaluating and Critiquing the Uses of and Educational Dimension of On-going, City-wide Children's Participation in Planning

Application No: 400180120

The College Research Ethics Committee has reviewed your application and has agreed that there is no objection on ethical grounds to the proposed study. It is happy therefore to approve the project, subject to the following conditions:

- Start date of ethical approval: 30/11/2018
- Project end date: 01/12/2021
- Any outstanding permissions needed from third parties in order to recruit research participants or to access facilities or venues for research purposes must be obtained in writing and submitted to the CoSS Research Ethics Administrator before research commences. Permissions you must provide are shown in the *College Ethics Review Feedback* document that has been sent to you.
- The data should be held securely for a period of ten years after the completion of the research project, or for longer if specified by the research funder or sponsor, in accordance with the University's Code of Good Practice in Research: (https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_490311_en.pdf) (Unless there is an agreed exemption to this, noted here).
- The research should be carried out only on the sites, and/or with the groups and using the methods defined in the application.
- Any proposed changes in the protocol should be submitted for reassessment as an amendment to the original application. The *Request for Amendments to an Approved Application* form should be used: <https://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/socialsciences/students/ethics/forms/staffandpostgraduateresearchstudents/>

Yours sincerely,

Dr Muir Houston
College Ethics Officer

Muir Houston, Senior Lecturer
College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer
Social Justice, Place and Lifelong Education Research
University of Glasgow
School of Education, St Andrew's Building, 11 Eldon Street
Glasgow G3 6NH

Appendix 2 Consent Form for Research Participants

CONSENT FORM



UiO : Department of Education
University of Oslo

Evaluating and Critiquing the Uses of and Educational Dimension of
On-going, City-wide Children's Participation in Planning

Name of Researcher: Taylor Sawyer

Name of Research Supervisors: Rebecca Madgin, Keith Kintrea, Ole Smørðahl

I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

I consent to interviews being audio-recorded.

I understand that confidentiality will be maintained as far as possible, as described in the participant information sheet.

I acknowledge that copies of transcripts will be returned to participants for verification.

I acknowledge that participants will be referred to by pseudonym.

I acknowledge that there will be no effect on my grades/employment arising from my participation or non-participation in this research.

I agree to take part in this research study

I do not agree to take part in this research study

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Name of Researcher

Signature

Date

Appendix 3 Table Showing Types of Plans in Oslo Municipality

Data gathered, organised, and written here by the researcher, during this study

Types of Plans in Oslo Municipality	
Statutory land-use plans	
<i>Municipal master plan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highest level of plan, prepared by PBE • All municipalities must have one • Framework for development of municipality and for management of land use • Sets out what shall or shall not be built, when, and where • Sets out where area zoning plans, detailed zoning plans, and VPOR will be necessary • Includes a land use section (legally-binding) and a societal section⁵ (not legally-binding) • Must be publicly available online for public to view • Voted on and approved by the municipal council
<i>Area zoning plan</i> <i>[områdeplan]</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sets out in more detail than municipal master plan - what shall be built, where, and when • Prepared by PBE or by private firm • Either this or VPOR is typically above detailed zoning plan
<i>Detailed zoning plan</i> <i>[detaljregulering]</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most detailed level of plan describing what shall be built, when, and where • Usually 4 to 6 detailed zoning plans per area zoning plan

⁵ The societal section is called *samfunnsdel og byutviklingsstrategi* and a land use section is generally referred to as *arealdelen av kommuneplan* in the 2008 Planning and Building Act, but in Oslo referred to as the *juridisk arealdel*.

J	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Typically prepared by private developers (and processed by PBE and approved by city council)
Non-statutory guidance plan	
<p>VPOR [veiledende planer for offentlige rom]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Created by the Oslo municipality to make planning process faster and more flexible Prepared by PBE Act as area zoning plans (either this or area zoning plan must be above detailed zoning plan)
Other strategies and assessments	
<i>Thematic strategy documents</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drafted by different government ministries to visualize, prioritize around topics like cycling, green spaces, quality public spaces, building material quality, etc.
<i>Impact assessments</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drafted by PBE to understand potential impacts of building or not building particular infrastructure in particular areas
<i>Planning Programme</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans for plans, prepared by PBE Used in areas with complex planning needs to set out guidelines, standards, and priorities to consider when drafting zoning plans

Appendix 4 Table Showing Main Actors in Urban Planning in Oslo

Data gathered, organised, and written here by the researcher, during this study

Main actors in Oslo's urban planning and their role	
Actor	Role
Private development and architecture firms	More than 80% of zoning plans in Oslo are drafted by private firms (Andersen and Skrede 2017; Falleth et al. 2008). Sometimes plans will be submitted with a few collaborating firms each covering different parts or aspects of a zoning plan. Architecture firms also submit building plan applications once zoning plans have been approved and development may begin.
Landowners	In the 1980s the municipality sold most of the land in Oslo to private buyers, and now it is buying back bits and pieces; at present, the ownership of Oslo's land is extremely fragmented. Numerous different types of landowners in Oslo are therefore present in the process of drafting plans and have a say about what gets build. (Write more elsewhere about the landowners)
Building and Planning Agency (PBE) [Plan- og bygningsetaten]	The PBE is the main planning arm of the municipality, with a team of over 450 planners and architects working on various planning cases and strategies. They are in charge of drafting the municipal master plan, some area zoning plans, all planning programmes, all VPORs, and for processing area zoning plans before they reach the city council. The PBE also conducts impact assessments and draft thematic strategy documents in partnership with

	other municipal actors. Public participation facilitation is another of its responsibilities.
Real Estate and Urban Renewal Agency [Eiendoms- og byfornyelsesetaten]	The Real Estate and Urban Renewal Agency is the municipality's landowner. It is in charge of some development projects, and buying, renting, and selling the municipality's land. It is highly interested in the development of public spaces in the centre of Oslo.
Cultural Heritage Management Office [Byantikvaren]	The Cultural Heritage Management Office advises the city on the preservation of historical and cultural buildings and environments and archaeological sites. When plans are made, they inform about protected areas and related rules.
City Environment Agency [Bymiljøetaten]	The City Environment Agency's job is to maintain and oversee streets, traffic safety, plazas and parks, recreational areas - including water areas along Oslofjord - and sports facilities. As a part of this, they are concerned with air, noise, water, and soil pollution. They are involved early consultation meetings for new planning cases and with impact assessments.
Water and Wastewater Agency [Vann og avløp]	The Water and Wastewater Agency is often involved early in new planning cases since all areas of Oslo in some way need to provide clean drinking water and wastewater and sewage management.
District Councils [Bydel]	Oslo has 15 district councils which must be involved throughout the planning process when plans are made for areas within their district, as well as when plans taking place in neighbour districts will clearly impact their resident, transportation, schools, etc. in some way.

<p>Limited companies owned [entirely or more than 50%] by Oslo Municipality⁶:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ruter AS • Sporveien AS • E-Co Energi Holding AS • Oslo Energi Holding AS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ruter is the public transport authority in Oslo and neighbouring Akershus County (co-owner). • Oslo Energi Holding AS supplies power to the city. • E-Co Energi Holding is Norway's second largest producer of hydroelectricity. • Sporveien is the provider of trams, buses, metro trains, and related infrastructure. <p>These businesses are involved in the planning process from very early on, since their equipment and services are often affected by plans and/or will provide some equipment or services in an area because of new developments.</p>
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⁶ Information about these companies, their yearly earnings, etc. can be viewed at Proff.no.

Appendix 5 Rational for engaging with children and young people's participation from view of adult facilitators

Data gathered, organised, and written here by the researcher, during this study

Rational and Objectives of Adult Facilitators of Participation with Children and Young People
Youth Council Secretaries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the youth council carries out their role as representatives of the district's children and young people by, in this case, understanding and sending their inputs on planning cases they receive • See that the needs and preferences of local children and young people are accurately represented in district and city planning and development in such a way that the district becomes a better place for children and young people to grow up
Children's Representatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See that the needs and preferences of local children and young people are represented in district and city planning and development • Ensure that drafts of plans do not contain any details that may results in negative changes for children and young people in the urban built environment • Ensure that, when possible, changes are added to drafts of plans that will produce positive changes to the built environment for children and young people
Private Planning and Architecture Firms
<i>When the client is a private land owner or developer</i>

- Avoid wasting time (and money) by ensuring the planning process does not get slowed down or derailed by unhappy inhabitants who believe children and/or young people's interests have not been considered sufficiently or that the proposed plans will result in negative changes to the urban built environment for children and/or young people (if participation is carried out, it is a sort of protection)
- Get political approval for their plans more easily because they can prove they met the legal requirements for participation and maybe even did more than that (they will not get their plans approved if the PBE and local politicians see that participation has not taken place or has been in some way insufficient)
- (Sometimes) Use participation to brand the area as a trendy place, raising the level of interests and attractiveness of the area to ultimately earn more money

When the client is the municipality or other public body

See the following section

PBE (Planning and Building Administration of Oslo Municipality)

- Be in compliance with Norwegian planning legislation
- Know how children and young people use an area (where do they go and not go), which areas they like or do not like (and sometimes, why) - with a special focus on safety and where children and young people feel unsafe - and if there are overwhelming requests for libraries or sports facilities

Teachers

- Give pupils the opportunity to learn about democracy, being a member of society, reading maps, and/or government and municipal processes

- Ensure the needs of their pupils are included in the local area's physical development and see the local areas improve for the school's students

Appendix 6 Letter of invitation to be hosted by University of Oslo

UiO : **University of Oslo**
Department of Education

To whom it may concern

Date: 11 May 2018

Invitation for international research stay – Taylor Sawyer

The Department of Education at The University of Oslo hereby confirms the arrangements for the visit of **Taylor Sawyer**, PhD researcher at the University of Glasgow, for the Study Abroad period of 1st September 2018 until 20th August 2019.

Ole Smørdal will serve as her supervisor during her stay, and she take part in the activities of the research group **MEDIATE**.

Sawyer will be studying with Smørdal in areas at the intersect of design-based research, participatory design, and urban planning methods. We will explore implications for planning practices, methods for children participation, and roles of ICT for co-production. Her expertise is in the intersection of participatory planning with children and pedagogy. She will take part in ongoing research in the project 3C - Co-constructing city futures. 3C address participation in the construction of ideas and visions for city futures.

Taylor Sawyer's PhD project will give the 3C project and the **MEDIATE** research group insights into and opportunities for discussing issues related to method development for and with children, development of school activities and curricula, and the role of teachers as facilitators of co-production.

The Department of Education provides a desk at a shared office space and access to library services and high speed internet connection. The department may not cover any costs related to travel and stay. Through meetings (typically monthly) Smørdal will help assess progress and ensure thesis research is progressing adequately.

We look forward to a mutually rewarding experience and to welcoming Taylor Sawyer to the University of Oslo, Department of Education. Please feel free to contact us with any questions.

Sincerely yours,

Ola Erstad
Head of Department

Ole Smørdal
Head of EngageLab



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