

TOGETHER

Design concepts for improving youth
participation in decision-making processes in
Helsinki

Hazal Alkan
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Together - Design concepts for improving youth participation in decision-making processes in Helsinki

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Abstract

Current democratic practises remain insufficient to equally involve citizens from different socio-economic backgrounds in the decision-making processes. In direct and representative democracy models, the practises may not protect minorities or give citizens enough opportunities to build a political intellect. Therefore, along with these models, conceptual framework of this thesis embraces deliberative democracy and Habermasian public sphere to improve young citizen's participation and political intellect in decision-making processes in Helsinki. The research is based on human-centred and participatory design methods with systems thinking approach. Throughout the research, 6 stakeholders are interviewed to explore existing practices and systemic problems in the field. The interview findings show that stakeholders struggle to provide political education and incentives to participate especially to the ethnic youth. Consequently, 3 design concepts are developed, and then validated in a participatory workshop with 4 young people aged between 14-19. The results indicate that young people could be educated about politics by attracting their attention to the subjects they care such as, student discounts and age limits. Additionally, social media tools could be utilized to help them creatively express themselves. These expressions could be the source of input for decision-makers. Lastly, young people do not prefer participating in face-to-face discussions due to the fear of peer judgement. Therefore, these discussions could be moved to judgement-free cyberspaces. All in all, the research results could be developed further to provide political awareness and unconventional ways of youth participation. Moreover, interview findings could be utilized to enhance stakeholder relationships and overall efficacy of the field.

Keywords: youth participation, equality, human-centred design, politics

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INTRODUCTION

Even though current democratic structures provide equal rights to every citizen, they remain incapable of providing equal opportunities. According to United Nations Development Program (n.d.), in 2016, top 1 percent of the population hold 22 percent of the global income, whereas bottom 50 percent owns only 10 percent. Besides economic inequality, many people around the world are discriminated because of their age, gender and ethnic background. These inequalities marginalize people and push them to the boundaries. This leads a vicious cycle of inequality because these citizens do not have means and resources to change the system for their own favour. They do not participate and raise their voices in the society which makes them not represented in decision-making. For this reason, power relations need to be restructured to ensure that every citizen has enough opportunities.

This thesis aims to achieve this by investigating citizen participation in democratic decision-making processes. It particularly concentrates on youth participation in the city of Helsinki. The research of this thesis aims to point the following question: *how can young Finnish citizens who are politically inactive be encouraged and empowered to participate in political debate and decision-making processes?*. Three design concepts will be introduced to answer this question. These concepts are built on different democracy and participation models, as well as analysis of online participation practises. The design research is based on human-centred design and participatory design methods, and systems thinking approach to pinpoint the systemic problems, stakeholder relationships and young people' needs.

In the following chapters, conceptual framework on the democracy models, public sphere and participation theories will be discussed. The discussion will continue with online participation theories and practises. In the methodological framework chapter, human centred design, systems-thinking and participatory design will be introduced. The chapter will proceed with the research timeline and methods used in the research. In the design process chapter, research phases, results and the insights will be shared and discussed. Lastly, in conclusion, all research will be summarized, and further development ideas will be suggested.

C H A P T E R O N E

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 - Democracy and Participation

Democracy has branched into different models since its emergence and citizen participation has evolved accordingly. This chapter will discuss the advantages and drawbacks of three different democracy models and related participation theories. These three models include the earliest democracy model, the current model of Western democracy and an alternative model which serves as the basis of the design concepts. It should be noted that even though these democracy models differ from each other, they can co-exist and overlap in many decision-making processes.

1.1.1 - Direct democracy

The origins of the word democracy have come from the Greek word “demos” as “the people” and “kratos” as “power”. Therefore, democracy means “the power of the people” (Ober, 2008, p.3). The earliest example of a democratic society was Athenians who had direct democracy from 522 to 322 B.C. This type of democracy was called direct democracy because the citizens (free adult men) governed themselves directly by participating in the public assembly (Hansen, 1999). This way of participation demonstrated a very active public life. However, public life was not the only social sphere where people were active and free.

Athenians lived their lives in two separate, social spheres: the private sphere and the public sphere. In the private sphere, men lived freely as they desired as long as they obeyed the laws. In the public sphere, every man participated in discussions in the assembly (Hansen, 1999). Along with these political discussions, “...citizens of each polis[state] might vote to elect magistrates; approve legislations, treaties and decisions about war or peace; and, at least in some cases, render judicial decisions.” (Samons, 2014, p. 22). However, the most prominent difference between Athens and the other states was that Athens formed a new council, “Council of 500”. This brought “demokratia” to Athens because in this council, every free man could “eventually” serve and vote in the assembly, no matter of his property ownership and economic status (Samons, 2014). This practice provided

even more equality among citizens who were already eligible to participate in politics. Athenian democracy is a notable example of equal opportunities on politics and division between public and private life. Nevertheless, it has attracted a great deal of attention from its critics until today.

Despite the fact that every citizen had the same participation rights in a direct democracy, it could bring inequality to the society. As Madison claimed in The Federalist Papers No. 14, “pure democracy” is always in favour of the rights of the majority, and there is nothing to protect the weaker. He continued that to protect the minorities, a representative democracy model should be adopted. (Madison in Hamilton et. al., 1788). This emphasizes that equal rights do not necessarily denote equality since people have conflicting interests which the majority always wins. For instance, in 2009, Switzerland had a referendum to ban the construction of mosque minarets which resulted against the construction by more than 57% of the votes (The Federal Council, 2009). This case was one example of how the majority in a direct democracy causes inequality over the minority. Additionally, Schumpeter (1987) pointed out that there will always be a conflict or a “fair compromise” because no “rational argument” exists for agreeing on a common good. In order to reach a common will of all citizens, “[e]veryone would have to know definitely what he wants to stand for. This definite will would have to be implemented by the ability to observe and interpret correctly the facts that are directly accessible to everyone...” (Schumpeter, 1987, p. 253). According to these views, direct democracy may seem unrealistic. The size and the complexity of the current societies obstruct individuals to be well-informed on every single issue. Even if people are well-informed, minorities will probably have to compromise many decisions. Therefore, critics suggest a different democracy model such as representative democracy in which political leaders or parties represent different groups of people and compete each other in the elections.

1.1.2 - Representative democracy

Representative democracy could be an alternative to direct democracy in terms of more equality and freedom. Schumpeter

defined the representative democracy as “...for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote” (Schumpeter, 1987, p. 269). This definition, nonetheless, was insufficient to include various facets of democracy such as; participation and liberty. Terry Karl stated that Schumpeterian model focused too much on the elections that it can lead to exclusion and even power imbalance between society members. (as cited in Diamond, 1999, pp.1-19). Representative democracy doubtlessly involves a certain degree of liberty and participation to support independent elections. However, Karl’s and Diamond’s perspective clarified that countries do not have to provide a *significant deal* of citizen liberty to be counted as a representative democracy.

Diamond (1999) observed this phenomenon as a notable difference between “electoral” and “liberal” democracy. In contrast to electoral democracy, “[liberal democracy] ...encompasses extensive provisions for political and civic pluralism as well as for individual and group freedoms, so that contending interests and values may be expressed and compete through ongoing processes of articulation and representation, beyond periodic elections.” (Diamond, 1999, pp.1-19). In other words, liberal democracy guarantees minority protection and citizen liberty especially in political participation. The representative model, particularly liberal democracy may seem an optimal solution for equality and freedom. Nevertheless, this model also has drawbacks such as limited participation of the citizens and biased political engagement.

Representative democracy may be criticized due to the lack of opportunities for citizens to participate in political discussion and decision-making. Representative democracy is a competitive system and to achieve a seat in the government, parties and political leaders create their own agendas and promote them. Conversely, it is questionable whether the citizens have enough knowledge base to build a political intellect and understand these agendas. According to several research findings, the higher social income a citizen has, the more likely it is that he/she participates in politics (Parvin, 2018, p. 34). Parvin (2018) expressed the view that

[d]emocratic states no longer provide citizens at the bottom end of the wealth and income distribution with the ability to develop democratic capacity or political knowledge through participation in the civic and associational activities which play a central role in the development of these things. As a result, poorer citizens are losing both the desire to participate and the capacity for effective or informed political participation. (p. 36)

This suggests that even liberal democracy cannot bring equality in participation while the wealth distribution is not equal. Representative democracy apparently remains insufficient to provide equal political participation to citizens due to this social division.

Another aspect of social division in political engagement in a representative democracy appears in the concept of *filter bubble* as Pariser (2011) coined the term. Filter bubble is a pool of information which search engines and algorithms create. It essentially changes what kind of information and ideas people find online (Pariser, 2011, p.21). Personalized search results and suggested content create a circle for people to see similar ideas of theirs which reinforces those ideas. Additionally, homogenous online communities in this circle may reward and punish the members which eventually creates more polarized members (Wojcieszak, 2010). Polarization consolidates social division, so as the inequality in politics. According to Wojcieszak (2010), along with online ties, offline social ties should also be considered while measuring the impact of the polarization. As a result of this division, decision-making lacks citizen contribution and public reasoning. To have a meaningful contribution with well-established ideas, citizens firstly need to be exposed to diversity in the social platforms.

1.1.3 - Public sphere and participation theory

Jürgen Habermas (1962/1991) identified these platforms as public sphere. According to Habermas, public sphere is a place where every citizen can engage critical and rational political discussions without the influence of the state. These discussions are accessible to everyone no matter of their socio-economic status.

He pointed out that this concept emerged in the late 18th century in the coffee houses, public halls and salons where gentlemen from upper-middle-class gathered and discussed current state affairs (Habermas, 1962/1991). At that time, these political discussions influenced the media and decision-making, but most importantly people's ideas. Public sphere educated citizens about the current affairs and helped them to build a political intellect. Contrarily, in modern representative democracies, citizens have hardly found a chance to reach political education in a similar setting and obtain more political power. Therefore, citizen participation and power relations in politics should be redefined.

Citizens and powerholders engage in different ways. In many cases, citizens do not hold any power in decision-making even though they participate in the process. As Arnstein (1969) noted, going through the blank process of participation vitally differs from having the control to influence the final result. (p. 216). She created a typology "Ladder of Citizen Participation" to identify and distinguish different levels of participation (Figure 1). In this typology, 8 different levels are divided into 3 categories: nonparticipation, degrees of tokenism and degrees of citizen power. Arnstein explained that throughout this ladder, both powerholders and the minorities (politically weak citizens) hold several obstacles. For instance, while powerholders might have biases against the minorities or unwillingness to share the power, the minorities could suffer from lack of political infrastructure and political intellect (1969, p. 217). Consequently, powerholders should provide the opportunity to participate while the citizens have tools and platforms to build political infrastructure for themselves. This view brings one of the most popular democracy models suggested as an alternative to representative democracy: *deliberative democracy*.

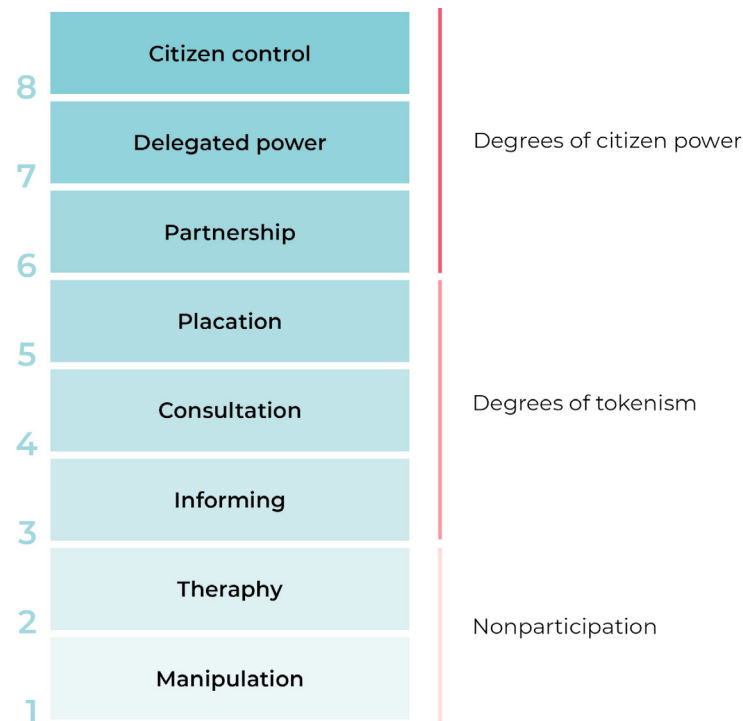


Figure 1. Eight Rungs on a Ladder of Citizen Participation (Arnstein, 1969).

1.1.4 - Deliberative democracy

Deliberative democracy refers to a discussion-based approach in which participants discuss and reach a consensus on certain political issues. It suggests “justifiable” solutions to the disagreements in the society (Gutman & Thompson, 2004). Deliberative democracy does not object the representative model, but it implies a more holistic view over citizen participation and communication between different parties in a democracy. Citizens and their representatives reach a solution in a way that representatives *justify* their decisions and citizens make sure to keep their representatives accountable by contributing to the discussions. Some theorists even argue that deliberative democracy should focus more on the interdependence of each parties and institutions rather than individual deliberations. Therefore, they suggest a systemic approach to deliberative democracy (Mansbridge et al, 2012). According to this view, “[a]

deliberative system is one that encompasses a talk-based approach to political conflict and problem-solving – through arguing, demonstrating, expressing, and persuading.” (Mansbridge et. al, 2012, pp. 4-5). This provides a platform for people with different political stances to discuss and find a common ground which is acceptable for everyone. Therefore, deliberative democracy maintains as a general forum for every citizen.

Deliberative democracy depends on the mutual trust and understanding of different parties which require certain features. According to Gutmann and Thompson, deliberative democracy has 4 main aspects. First of all, deliberative democracy should be reason-giving. Representatives and citizens base their decisions on rational arguments in a way that no one who is willing to reach a common decision would disagree. Secondly, all the information and deliberation platforms should be accessible to everyone. Every citizen has the same opportunity to understand the subject, form an opinion and join discussions. Thirdly, in deliberative democracies, decisions should be binding. This means that people deliberate to come to a conclusion which influences the final decision-making. Lastly, deliberative democracy is a dynamic process. It always supplies a possibility to discuss and challenge the previous decisions (2004, pp. 3-7). These aspects imply that deliberative democracy aims to bring equality, respect and reasoning to the public sphere. The public sphere of deliberative democracy can be in different settings and in different scales.

Deliberative democracy supports local and national level decision-making. In national level decision-making, randomly selected citizens who represent the whole society can participate political discussions and reach decisions. Robert Dahl (1989) envisioned this concept as following:

Suppose an advanced democratic country were to create a “minipopulus” consisting of perhaps a thousand citizens randomly selected out of the entire demos. Its task would be to deliberate, for a year perhaps, on an issue and then to announce its choices. The members of a minipopulus could “meet” by telecommunications. One minipopulus could decide on the agenda of issues, while another might concern itself with a major issue. Thus one minipopulus could exist

for each major issue on the agenda. A minipopulus could exist at any level of government – national, state, or local. It could be attended – again by telecommunications – by an advisory committee of scholars and specialists and by an administrative staff. It could hold hearings, commission research, and engage in debate and discussions. (p. 340)

This concept depends on the telecommunications to deliberate and reach a final decision like many phone polling examples. Fishkin (1995) argues that these methods do not estimate what people actually think, but they assume what people *would think* if they contemplate the political issues. This is because selected citizens receive certain amount of information before these phone calls which may distort the actual outcome. Therefore, he suggests a different concept with “deliberative polls”. In these polls, randomly selected citizens gather for several days and participate in moderated discussions (p.43). According to the research, some participants of these polls have higher interest and knowledge about the political issues than before (p.180). Although these practices seem promising to make citizens informed and to involve citizens in decision-making, they target a small number of citizens. To make this more inclusive and accessible, citizens should have similar practices in their local communities as well.

In community level participation, deliberative democracy could play a significant role. Resembling to Dahl’s “minipopulus”, Fung (2007) coined a new term “mini-publics” for public sphere in small scales. According to Fung, these mini-publics can serve for various purposes such as; an educative forum, participatory advisory panel, participatory problem-solving collaboration and participatory democratic governance (2007, pp.160-161). All these variations are driven by different motivations and aims. At the same time, all of them support deliberative democracy practices.

In these practices, slight differences exist between national level and local level deliberation. For instance, even though participant selection could be similar to mini-populus, which is random selection to represent the whole community, in mini-publics, voluntary participation could be another option. Voluntary participation nonetheless may not attract low income and less educated citizens. To involve these citizens, deliberation topics could be selected in a way that low income citizens could

also benefit from the end result (Fung, 2007, pp.162-163). Additionally, LaFont (2015) indicates that the criteria of random selection (in deliberative polls) could be biased and irrelevant which harms the values aforementioned. She also reveals concerns about the possibility of the arrival to a common consensus under the dominancy of the majority. These remarks emphasize that in mini-publics, multiple facets of deliberation process should be considered to provide inclusiveness and equality. Deliberative democracy could succeed to have more informed citizens who could shape their own community as it provides many benefits, but it surely has some pitfalls in its practices.

One of the most prominent drawbacks of deliberative democracy is the conflict between its values: deliberation and participation. Increased participation decreases the quality of deliberation. Deliberative democrats defend different views on this issue. As Fishkin (2009) notes “the three principles—deliberation, political equality and mass participation—pose a predictable pattern of conflict. Attempts to realize any two will undermine the achievement of the third...a democratic theory is all the more useful the less it requires to work on achieving several normative aims at once.” (p. 199). Therefore, he supports the idea that deliberative democracy is “agnostic about participation” which means that deliberative democracy does not necessarily need mass-participation to achieve its goal (2009, p. 191). In contrast, Cohen points out that “participation and deliberation are both important, but different, and they are important for different reasons. Moreover, it is hard to achieve both, but the project of advancing both is coherent, attractive, and worth our attention.” (2009, p. 328). These two contrasting views demonstrate that deliberative democrats support different approaches and hold different democratic values. Moreover, as LaFont (2015) points out, this conflict between “non-participatory deliberation” and “non-deliberative participation” is the very basis of the defence of the elite democracy, one of which is representative democracy (p. 48). Overall, these arguments show a lack of precise definition and immaturity of deliberative practices. Therefore, the design and the aim of the deliberation becomes quite significant to reduce these ambiguities.

Considering the quality of deliberation, it is important to mention Chantal Mouffe’s agonistic pluralism (1999). Mouffe is a well-known critic of Habermasian deliberative democracy. She

criticizes deliberative democracy because of its ideal discourse and rational consensus aspects. According to her, conflict is in the very nature of the politics and eliminating it deteriorates the values of pluralist democracy. Therefore, she claims that the multiplicity of the ideas is louder and the complex power structures are handled better in agonistic pluralism (1999). Chambers (2001) explained agonism as:

[a]gonism implies a deep respect and concern for the other; indeed, the Greek *agon* refers most directly to an athletic contest oriented not merely toward victory or defeat, but emphasizing the importance of the struggle itself—a struggle that cannot exist without the opponent. Victory through forfeit or default, or over an unworthy opponent, comes up short compared to a defeat at the hands of a worthy opponent—a defeat that still brings honor. An agonistic discourse will therefore be one marked not merely by conflict but just as importantly, by mutual admiration—something we see clearly in both dialogues from the show.

In addition to this definition, agonistic pluralism implies that citizens who support different ideas do not need to arrive at a consensus, but they need to acknowledge that the other views exist. This concept seems very important to preserve mutual respect and understanding between people with opposite views.

In this chapter, review has been done on different democracy models and the ways how citizens could be informed and participate in political decision-making. It should be noted that these different theories are not necessarily separate from each other, and they may become intertwined in various contexts. Therefore, these theories show that citizen participation and decision-making have multiple angles to be considered. In the next section, the concept of *e-democracy* will be reviewed and some of its examples will be examined in the light of the mentioned theories.

1.2. - E-democracy and online participation

The influence of the media on the voices heard in the public sphere has evolved over the time. In the late 18th century, citizens engaged in the public sphere and shaped the decision-making with media channels which were mostly local newspapers. These autonomous, local newspapers helped citizens to spread their opinions and pressure the politicians to act according to their needs (Habermas, 1962/1991). Within the advances of communication technologies, media has become *mass-media* over the years. It has started to serve for the dominant powers instead of raising citizens' voices. Even today, “[u]nder the influence of neo-liberalism, media systems throughout the world have been rapidly undergoing commercialization, privatization, and de/re-regulation, and subsequently merging into global mega-media corporations.” (Dahlberg & Siapera, 2007, p.2). As a result, media no longer assists citizens to raise their voices. Instead, media channels impose the ideas and values of the big corporations and governments. Surely, online media has been a part of this trend, but it still holds a potential to create democratic cyber-spaces for political participation.

The conceptualization of online political participation, however, has remained ambiguous since the emergence of online media. Even though studies show that in many countries, people use online media as an important political tool in various ways, scholars have not come to an agreement on which activities are in the scope of political participation in the cyberspace (Theocharis, 2015). Van Deth (2014) summarizes the different views on political participation as

Political participation is an abstract or general concept that covers voluntary activities by citizens usually related to government, politics or the state. In addition, these activities can be aimed at solving community problems or, in even more general terms, they can be ‘attempts to alter systematic patterns of social behaviour’ being ‘devoted to influencing the collective life of the polity’ or aiming to ‘induce significant social reform’. Other authors prefer even

broader concepts by simply referring to participation as ‘a categorical term for citizen power’ (Arnstein, 1969, p. 216) or to all activities aiming ‘... to influence or to change existing power structures’ (Brough and Shresthova, 2012). (p.353)

This suggests that the scope of political participation can be highly wide especially considering the current technological developments in the online media. Consequently, to better define its scope, Theocharis (2015) created a framework of “Digitally Networked Participation” based on -van Deth (2014)’s conceptual map of political participation (Figure 2). According to this framework, political participation has 4 definitions which are minimalist, targeted, motivational and contextual. This helps to characterize the actions and activities whether they are political participation or not. Nonetheless, these characterization does not imply participations’ impact in the overall political and social systems.

One of the main considerations of online political participation is the degree of its effect and impact in the political and social systems. According to Ekström (2015), political activities remain within certain boundaries which promote or limit the participation. Online media enables this boundary crossing to become a relatively low-cost activity (p.742). This low-cost may attract more people to act on politics (Earl, 2014, p. 174) while it may also lead “slacktivism” which is a form of feel good activism having no real impact (Morozov, 2009). In addition, Dahlberg (2001) points out that when citizens discuss controversial issues, they tend to search for groups of people with the similar opinions. As it is discussed in the previous sections, high participation level decreases the quality of deliberation, and feel good activities among people with similar opinions may not be fruitful enough to be informed about the political topics. As a result, these consequences help neither a better deliberation nor creation of a society with respectful, informed citizens. “Respectful and reflexive deliberation is demanded in order for self-seeking individuals to be transformed into publicly-oriented citizens and public opinion to develop that can feed into formal decision-making processes.” (Dahlberg, 2001, p. 620). In the light of these views, in this section, different online platforms will be analysed to pinpoint their strengths, weaknesses and their

potential impacts on the society.

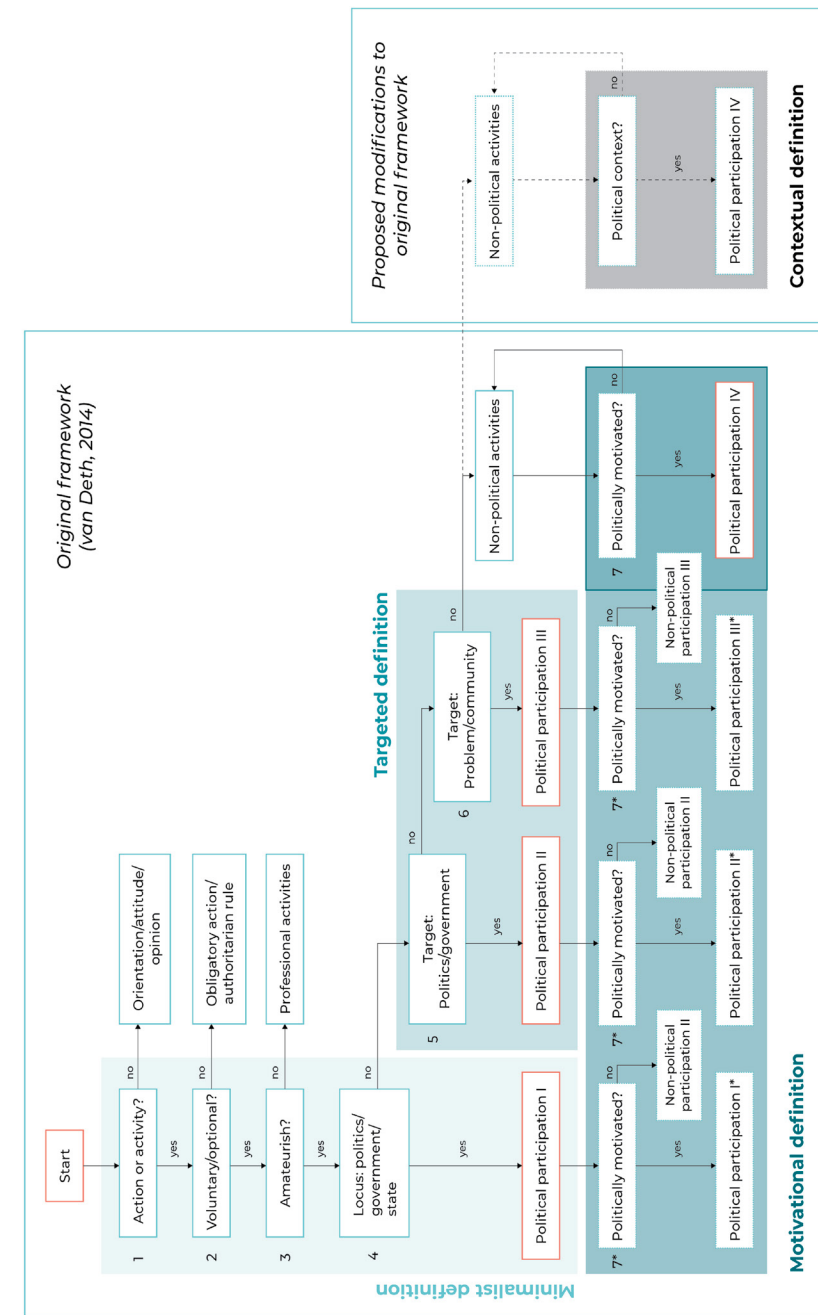


Figure 2. Reproduction of Van Deth’s (2014, p.335) conceptual map and proposed modifications (Theocharis, 2015).

1.2.1 - E-democracy.org

E-democracy.org started as an election information website in 1994 in Minnesota. Since then, it has grown to host over 50 online local forums and other civic-engagement tools. In local forums, participants discuss local issues that they care about within the boundaries of the platform rules. All these forums are funded by volunteer donations except a local government fund in the UK (E-democracy, n.d.). These local forums differ from other online forums because participants use their real names and focus only on local issues. Additionally, platform principles and rules enable respectful discussions in the forums.

E-democracy aims to provide a safe space for civic-engagement, knowledge exchange and effective way of using online tools (E-democracy, n.d.). Nevertheless, it only attracts people who are already interested in politics and local issues. Therefore, it remains insufficient to bring diversity to the discussion platforms. Additionally, there is not enough evidence about the impact of these online communities in actual decision-making processes.

1.2.2 - Loomio

Loomio is an open-source deliberation and decision-making tool, developed by a New Zealand-based cooperative social enterprise. It helps people to discuss and propose issues, and vote on the proposals. Loomio is meant to be used by organizations, groups and/or individuals. Therefore, it only supports diversity within these organizations and groups. According to their blog post, 75% of the Loomio users have an undergraduate degree (rdbartlett, 2017). Even though it succeeds to provide discussion and decision-making inside a specific group, the platform does not create a public sphere where wider audience would want to participate. In other words, the platform provides the opportunity to participate in any scale, but it may not necessarily motivate citizens to take action.

1.2.3 - MyCountryTalks

MyCountryTalks aims to bring people with different views together to discuss on issues at hand. Local and national newspapers join this platform to enable their readers to reach other citizens with opposite views in their neighbourhood. Newspapers create a set of questions to examine their readers' political views and MyCountryTalks matches people with completely different political viewpoints (MyCountryTalks, n.d.). This might widen the citizens' political perspective and understanding of the issues as well as other fellow citizens. However, the audience of this application remains limited to the newspapers' readers only.

1.2.4 - Decidim

Decidim is an open-source software for citizen participation for organizations in any scale. Decidim helps people to connect with each other, discuss, vote, start initiatives and participate in assemblies (Decidim, n.d.). This free software could be used by organizations who wants to adopt participatory practises. Therefore, Decidim does a great job to give all the necessary tools which can be adapted to these organizations' needs. The organizations, nonetheless, becomes responsible for inclusion of their members.

1.3. - Insights of literature review and benchmarking

In this chapter, different democracy models were analysed, and selected online tools were discussed to demonstrate the overall landscape of today's western democracy. Additionally, diverse design approaches were introduced to improve citizen participation in decision-making. According to these discussions, main problems and opportunities will be summarized in this section.

To begin with, even though aforementioned democracy models differ from each other regarding the ways of citizen participation, these models could co-exist in different context.

For example, delegates elected in representative democracy may practise deliberation in their assembly. Another clear example is semi-direct democracy in Switzerland where direct democracy is complemented by representative democracy. Consequently, while referring to these models, one should acknowledge their ability of co-existence in different organizational structures.

Representative democracy does not support equal political participation for everyone. Citizens with high income and high education outclass the ones with low income and low education. This is, of course, not a coincidence. According to a recent study, political participation may be beyond the personal choice. Parents' education and socio-economic status can affect the children's political participation in their adulthood (Lahtinen, Erola & Wass, 2019). Even though current democratic systems provide equal rights to every citizen, not everyone has the equal opportunity to use these rights. Therefore, new actions and activities should be considered to involve those who are unwittingly inactive in politics.

Secondly, citizens do not have enough resources to learn about the political issues and form their own ideas. Citizens should form their own understanding about the issues to have a voice and power in decision-making. This might need a lot of time and effort because of the dispersed information in different media channels. Therefore, people may not be interested in investing resources to something which may not even change anything in the political agenda. To prevent this situation, relevant information about the issues including opposite views and their foundations should be easily accessible to everyone.

Thirdly, representative democracy and current online tools do not support respectful deliberation between opposite views which may affect the decision-making. Due to the aforementioned reasons, people tend to group with the ones who share the similar political views. As a result, they are not exposed to different opinions and ideologies. Although some of the platforms provide relatively more diversity, only interested people join the discussions. Once again, disadvantaged people are not encouraged to participate in deliberations, and the existing solutions remain too facile to solve

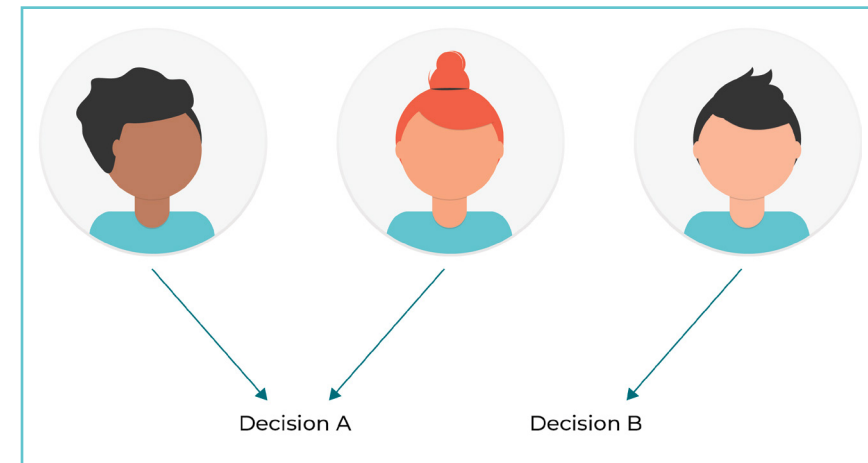


Figure 3. Direct democracy.

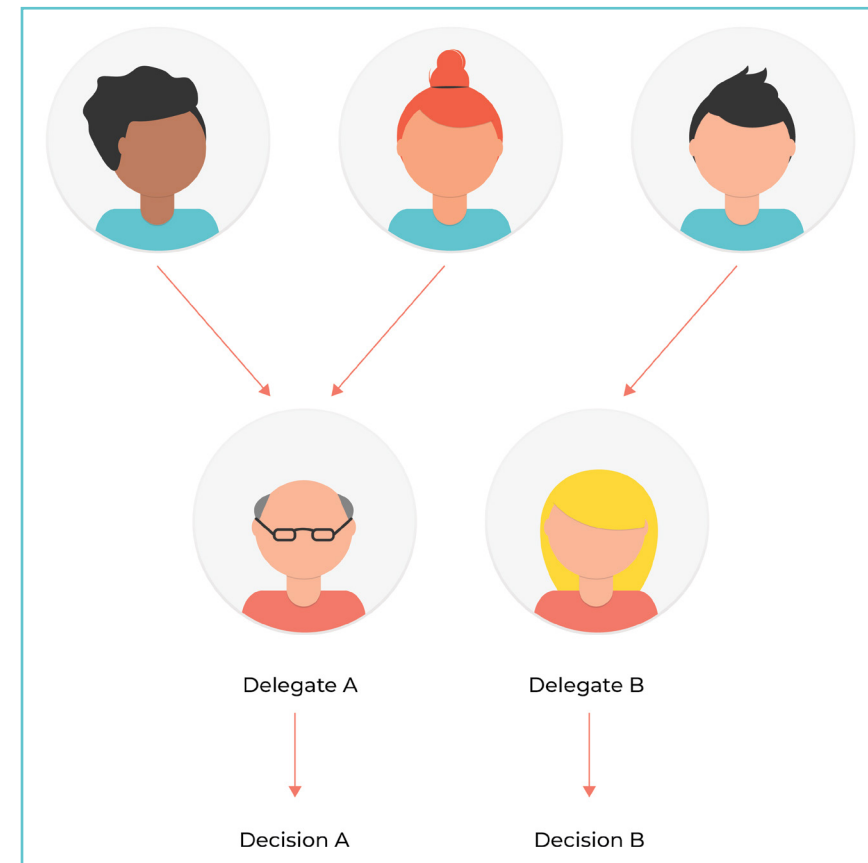


Figure 4. Representative democracy

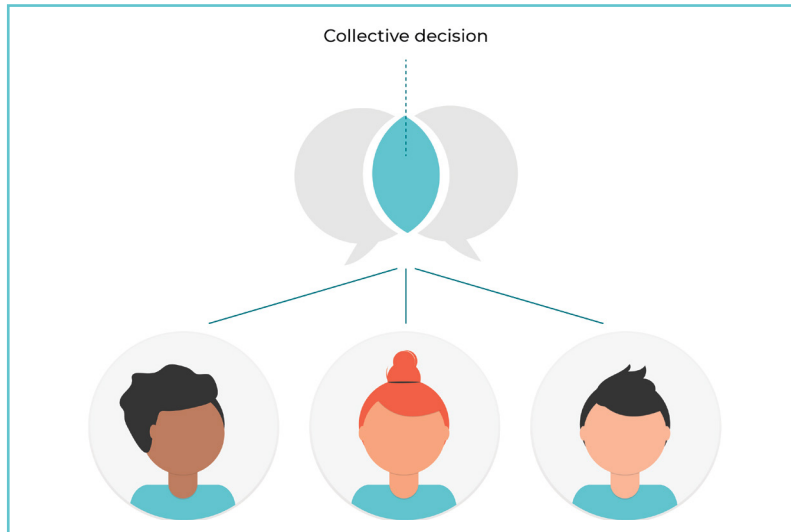


Figure 5. Deliberative democracy

its root problems.

Lastly, powerholders and citizens need to have a balanced relationship to collaborate in decision-making. This requires efforts from both parties. While powerholders need to relinquish some of their power, the citizens should be willing to share this power to achieve a common goal which is beneficial for everyone. To reach a balanced collaboration, both top-down and bottom-up movements should be initiated.

All in all, these concepts will be the foundation of the design research in this thesis. Different solutions can enable people to participate, deliberate and affect the decision-making within this conceptual framework complemented by research methodologies. Therefore, in the next chapter, methodological framework of the design research will be introduced.

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C H A P T E R T W O

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, design approaches taken during the design process will be introduced and relevant methodologies used throughout the project will be discussed.

In recent years, the role of design discipline in the society has undergone a shift. After the industrial revolution, industrial design as the only design practise had been used solely for mass-produced products which then caused mass-consumption and landfills full of unused products (Papanek, 1985). Papanek severely criticized this phenomenon. He claimed that design brings responsibility towards the society and the environment, and design should be used for “the need”, not for “the desire”. This criticism was almost half a century ago. Still, only in the last decade, design has started to become a tool for wide range of organizations to foresee the future and tackle various complex problems and needs (Brown, 2009). An innovative design company IDEO created a framework called *design thinking* for this creative problem-solving process (Brown, 2009). According to Brown, in this framework, innovation can happen only when the products or services are feasible, desirable and viable enough (Figure 6). Brown explains that many organizations including businesses, government agencies and NGOs has started to adopt design thinking and design methodologies to improve their services and products, as well as their way of working. To accelerate the creeping pace of this shift, in this thesis, design thinking will be used to solve problems which interests various organizations and stakeholders.

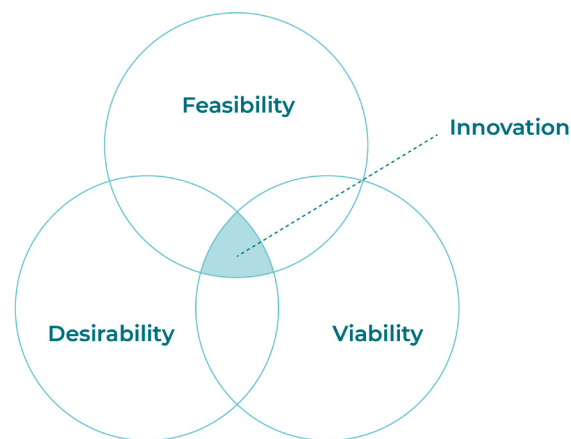


Figure 6. Innovation in design thinking. Three criteria are needed to achieve innovation (Brown, 2009).

Design could play a significant role to solve wicked problems in today’s democracies. As it is discussed in the E-democracy section, various online and offline platforms bring different parties together with the aim of solving their problems related to democratic decision-making. Nonetheless, these problems are much more complicated in our social systems than it is thought in these services. As a result, design discipline should take a holistic approach to discover the underlying problems behind the symptoms. The aim of the design project in this thesis is to benefit from design approaches such as *human-centred design* and *participatory design* along with *systems thinking* to uncover the core issues in current democratic systems and develop solutions by involving different stakeholders. In this section, these approaches will be investigated, and relevant methodologies will be introduced.

2.1. - Human-centred design

Human-centred design (HCD) approaches the design process by prioritizing the user needs and problems over the design process and artefacts. These needs and problems, which users may not be even aware of, are ascertained by conducting research in an iterative process. HCD, as an approach and a process, involves various aspects, methods and phases which are rooted and evolved from different fields.

Human-centred design approach originates from the fields such as ergonomics, artificial intelligence and computer science (Giacomin, 2014). Put it differently, it has emerged from relatively technical fields which extol the aspects such as functionality, task accomplishment and interactivity. From this perspective, HCD may seem similar to other design practises, yet they differ in many ways. For example, as Krippendorff (2004) claims, object-oriented design emphasises tangible products and objects, and considers humans only as a factor. Contrarily, human-centred design does not separate design from how humans perceive the designs and integrate them in their life (p. 8). This view highlights that the meaning and the perceived value of the artefacts are as valuable as other necessities such as function, interaction and ergonomics in design. As seen in the Figure 7, human-centred design pyramid shows the imperative steps of HCD (Giacomin, 2015). At the top

of the pyramid, the meaning and the reason of the artefacts are located. This may imply that emotional engagement plays an important role from the users' perspective to understand and use the products and services. Surely, this emotional engagement would need a strong base providing intuitive (sometimes even invisible) interfaces, as shown in the previous steps in the pyramid. In summary, HCD enables designers to solve real problems by focusing on the users' behaviours, needs and desires. HCD also brings an empathetic layer to design process which amplifies emotions, meanings and values in people's lives. Therefore, in this thesis, HCD approach will be taken to furnish intuitive, user-friendly and valuable services. Considering the complexity of citizen participation in social systems, HCD alone may not be sufficient to analyse the systemic problems. Therefore, in the next section, systems thinking approach will be discussed to complement HCD.

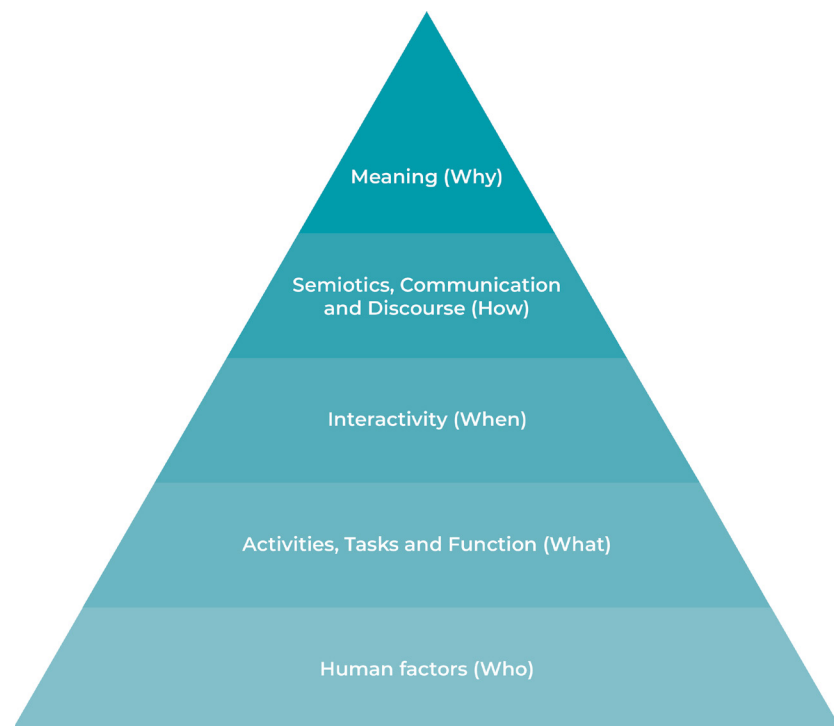


Figure 7. The human centred pyramid (Giacomin, 2015).

2.2. - Systems thinking and systemic design

Systems thinking helps people to understand the real causes of the problems by identifying the relationship between subsystems or different elements in a system. According to a definition provided by Meadows, a system is “an interconnected set of elements that is coherently organized in a way that achieves something” (2008, p.11). This definition highlights the interconnectedness between different parts and the purpose which a system is built to achieve. This point of view shows that systems thinking may differ from the conventional thinking. For instance, in systems thinking, it is aimed to improve the relationships between different parts for the long-term success, whereas in conventional thinking, the parts are fixed independently, and the success is usually for a short period of time (Stroh, 2015). Consequently, when dealing with social problems which have many layers and stakeholders, systems thinking approach should be taken to achieve long-lasting, sustainable solutions. Design process could also benefit from systems thinking approach and its varying methods to enrich the problem-solving process of systemic problems.

Systemic design is a design process which is guided by systems thinking to understand and navigate between different stakeholders and root problems in the systems. Systems thinking and design thinking have multiple schools and approaches which makes it challenging to define them and identify their methods. Therefore, Ryan points out that “[i]f the value of connecting systems thinking and design thinking is related to the diversity of each tradition, then a [systemic design] framework should be open to many different syntheses of systemics and design.” (2014, p.2). In fact, this view is already widely applied in design practises when designers evaluate the situations and choose the methods accordingly. Instead of strictly defining its terms, methods and boundaries, systemic design can be explained as Jones (2014) states:

[s]ystemic design is distinguished from service or experience design in terms of scale, social complexity and integration. Systemic design is concerned with higher order systems that

encompass multiple subsystems. By integrating systems thinking and its methods, systemic design brings human-centred design to complex, multi-stakeholder service systems... It adapts from known design competencies—form and process reasoning, social and generative research methods, and sketching and visualization practices—to describe, map, propose and reconfigure complex services and systems. (p.93)

In other words, systemic design provides a strong path to solve wicked problems in social structures by combining all the necessary components from both fields. Human-centred design reinforced by systems thinking could enable changemakers to grasp the big picture as well as the details in a system, which eventually help them to solve the systemic problems. To involve different parties, participatory design principles could be integrated into the course of this problem-solving process.

2.3. - Participatory design

Participatory design (PD) enables users and/or community members to have a say in the design process which eventually affects their lives. Participatory design has emerged from systems thinking when technical systems engineering did not succeed in the workplaces due to the ignored social aspects (Bannon & Ehm, 2013). Since then, participatory design has been used in various areas such as urban planning, community decision-making and organization management. PD and systemic design come side by side since both approaches enables various stakeholders to influence the design process and the outcome.

Participatory design, similar to systemic design, does not have a set of rules which can be applied in different stages in the design process. Rather, it has values and principles which the process carries all the time. Luck (2018) states the guiding principles of PD as “equalizing power relations, situation-based actions, mutual learning, tool and techniques, alternative visions about technology and democratic practices” (pp. 2-3). These principles are relevant to create equal, democratic spaces providing enriching experiences and co-creation possibilities for all the stakeholders.

2.4. - Research timeline

In this thesis, a creative process called “The Double Diamond” mapped by British Design Council is used. This process is divided into 4 parts; discover, define, develop and deliver. In discover phase, designers investigate the problems, needs and opportunity areas by conducting research. In define phase, these research results are analysed, and opportunity areas are narrowed down to have a clear design brief. In develop phase, designers implement and test new concepts according to the design brief. Finally, in deliver phase, product or services are launched and customer feedback is gathered (Design Council, n.d.). In this thesis, only the first 3 phases are covered. Various methods have been used in these 3 phases (Figure 8). Participatory design, similar to systemic design, does not have a set of rules which can be applied in different stages in the design process. Rather, it has values and principles which the process carries all the time. Luck (2018) states the guiding principles of PD as “equalizing power relations, situation-based actions, mutual learning, tool and techniques, alternative visions about technology and democratic practices” (pp. 2-3). These principles are relevant to create equal, democratic spaces providing enriching experiences and co-creation possibilities for all the stakeholders.

In the discover and define phase, firstly, literature review is done to form a conceptual basis towards solving the problem. Then, the area of focus is decided. During the define phase, selected methods of IDEO’s Human-centred Design Kit (Design Kit, n.d.) is used. These methods include *secondary research*, *interviews* and *stakeholders map*. In the secondary research, both quantitative and qualitative data is gathered to understand the problems and the opportunities in the focus area. According to this, stakeholders in the field are identified and interviews are held with them. After the interviews, stakeholders map is created to comprehend the relationship between different parts of the social system at hand. This process leads to define the *design brief* and the core *design principles* which guide the rest of the design process.

In the develop phase, various ideas are generated by *brainstorming*. Then, 3 ideas best suited to the design principles

and the scope of the thesis are chosen to develop further. These ideas are introduced to the target group in a *participatory workshop* for idea validation. After the feedback is gathered from the target group, the insights are shared, and further development ideas are suggested. In the next chapter, research findings, ideas and the insights will be discussed in detail.

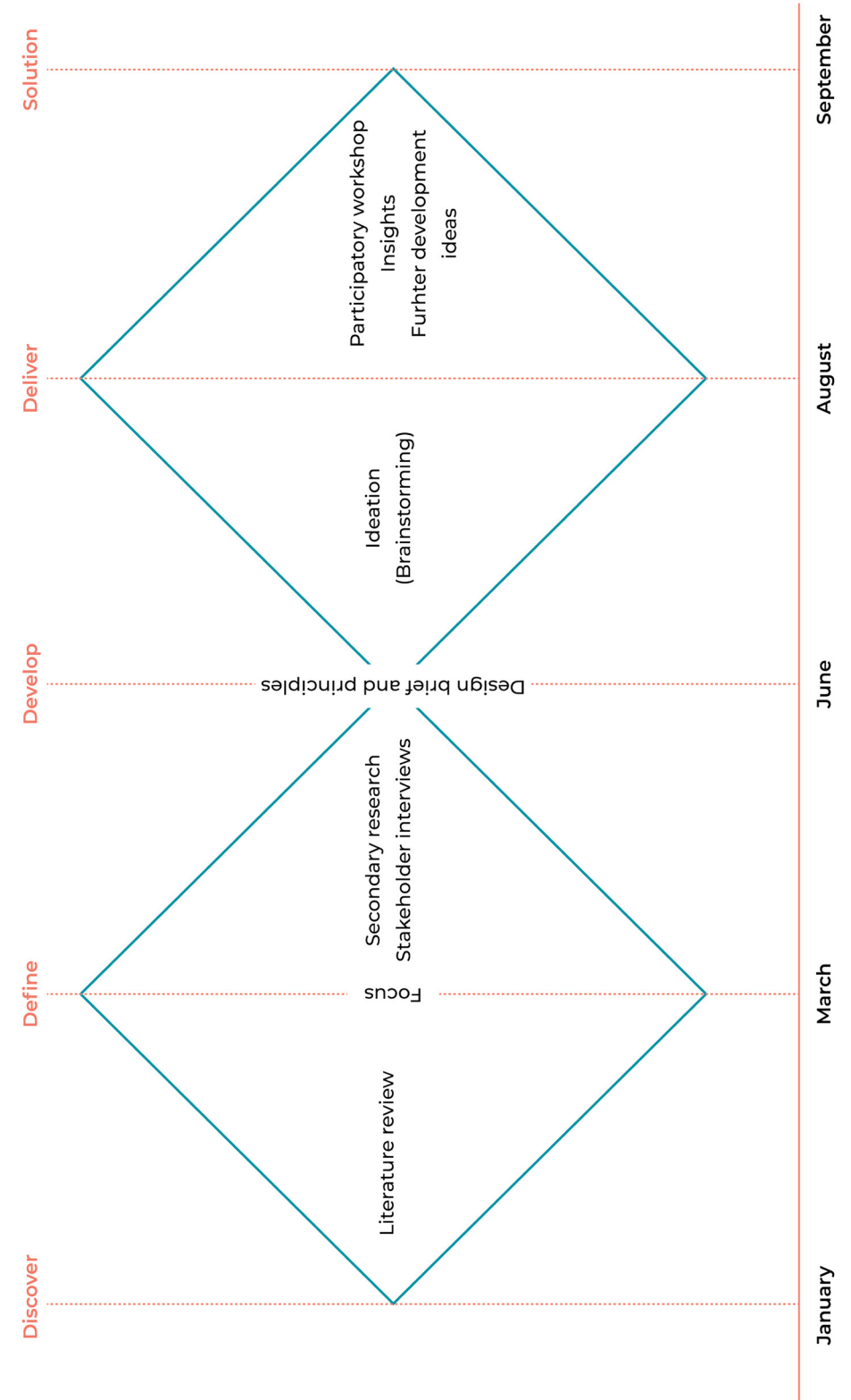


Figure 8. Research timeline in the Double Diamond process.

C H A P T E R T H R E E

DESIGN PROCESS

3.1. - Secondary Research

3.1.1 - The goal and the context

The goal of the design research is to provide an equal opportunity to every citizen, especially the ones in a disadvantaged position, to participate and influence the political agenda. Rather than forcing people to participate, the research aims giving the tools and incentives to citizens to be equal and active in their communities. The research will focus on youth participation in the city of Helsinki. This is because young people can be educated about politics in early ages to raise more open-minded, politically active individuals who can strive for equality. As a result, the research will investigate the young citizens' barriers to local participation and provide a platform where they can learn and discuss about various topics, be active in their communities, and influence the decision-making in multiple levels of the local governance.

After the conceptual framework is done and the scope of the project is set, a secondary research is conducted to gain more insights about the topics such as, youth participation, external factors affecting political participation and state of youth participation in Finland. The research findings are utilized to understand the dynamics of the social system of youth participation.

3.1.2 - Youth participation

Enabling young people to involve in the decision-making process can benefit the youth as well as the society. Young people are usually disregarded in contributing the society as active members. Although they are expected to participate the society just after their adolescence, they may not have a chance to take responsibility apart from the family life and school curriculum. Even in these spheres, their participation might be limited by an authority such as parents and teachers. In these circumstances, young people do not have enough, if not any, opportunity to learn how to take responsibility in a social and organizational context. Hart (1992) notes that to achieve a grasp of democratic

participation and the ability and self-esteem to participate could be possible only with incremental practise. This cannot be passed through as abstraction (p. 5). Therefore, young people should be encouraged to participate in their communities to truly understand what a democracy means. This participation helps them to learn and acknowledge different views, as well as to be capable and self-assured citizens. Eventually, raising capable and self-assured citizens reinforces the democratic values in communities and the sense of belonging of the community members.

Youth participation depends on different levels of relationship between adults and the young people. These different levels can be seen in Hart's (1992) Ladder of Participation which is an adaptation of Arnstein's (1969) work (Figure 9). In this ladder, the highest three rungs show the interactive relationship between the children and the adults. For example, the decision-making process could be initiated by children as well as adults, and in most cases, the decisions are made collaboratively. According to Hart, youth participation has a great significance also for the adults to guide the youth and learn from them. He explains that the reason of non-participation among the youth is not because young people are unwilling to participate, but they lack adults who can understand their enthusiasm and guide them to take the right actions (1992, p.14). Similarly, Checkoway (2017) emphasizes that adults who believe that they are better than the young people because of their age forms unauthentic partnerships with the youth which eventually does not give any power to the young people (p.94). Adults and young people need to collaborate and work in different ways according to the circumstances at hand to mobilize young people and integrate them into society in their early ages.

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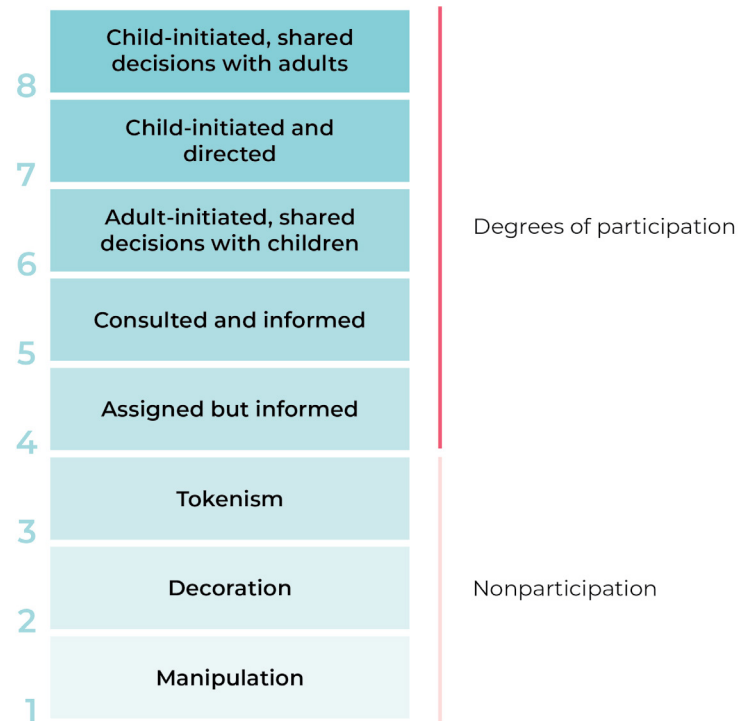


Figure 9. Hart's adaptation of Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation (Hart, 1992).

3.1.3 - Factors affecting political participation

Political participation is a complex phenomenon. It is affected by many factors such as, socio-economic status, education and ethnic background (Barret & Brunton-Smith, 2014; Parvin, 2018). To begin with, socio-economic status is usually the most influential determinant of the degree of political engagement. High income citizens have higher knowledge and interest on politics compared to low income citizens (Barett & Brunton-Smith, 2014; Parvin, 2018). According to the research conducted by Solt (2008), income inequality could jeopardize the interest of the low-income citizens on elections and decrease the frequency of their political engagement. As a result, high-income citizens are represented more which, in return, affects the decision making in favour of them. This widens the gap between different socio-economic status and creates a vicious cycle of unequal political

engagement. This also has consequences on young people's political behaviour. A recent study demonstrates that voting patterns can be transmitted through generations (Lahtinen, Erola & Wass, 2019). In other words, if the parents do not vote in the elections, their children will most likely repeat the same behaviour in their adulthood. Inequality between socio-economic status creates unequal political engagement which duplicates the same pattern through time. Therefore, social learning opportunities and systemic supports should be given to the disadvantaged citizens to embody them in the public sphere.

Educating youngsters increases the political knowledge and engagement. In this case, schools become significant agents to facilitate the learning process. Barrett & Brunton-Smith (2014) states that:

political knowledge can be increased through civics education if an appropriate pedagogical approach is adopted (Niemi & Junn, 1998), the emphasis which is placed upon elections and voting in school classes is a significant predictor of young people's intentions to vote in the future (Torney-Purta et al., 2001), and the taking of school classes that generate an interest in politics and national issues predicts the likelihood of discussing the news and watching or listening to national news with parents (Chapman et al., 1997). (p. 11)

Put it differently, political interest in adulthood correlates the education taken in young ages. Another research also suggests that civic engagement environment in schools can support young people's civic development (Malin, Han, & Liauw, 2017). In public schools, young people from different backgrounds can benefit from this environment to change their trajectories determined by their background. Briefly, education and civic engagement in schools hold a great potential to inform and mobilize young people regardless of their background.

Citizens' political engagement also depends on their ethnic background and the quality of social integration. Minority groups, immigrant individuals and foreign-born citizens could demonstrate different behavioural patterns than the native majority. Firstly, perceived discrimination could increase the political engagement and participation of citizens with foreign background (Barett &

Brunton-Smith, 2014, p.11). For instance, in Finland, Somalis form the biggest refugee minority who faces ethnic discrimination more than any other group. This leads Somali men to establish civic associations and actively participate in local politics (Wass, Blais, Morin-Chassé, & Weide, 2015). Another factor affecting ethnic minorities' political participation is the time spent in the home country and in the new one. This model suggests that the longer the citizens live in their home country, the more difficult their adaptation is in the new home because political and social learning mostly happens in citizens' "formative years" (White, Nevitte, Blais, Gidengil, & Fournier, 2008). However, Wass et al. (2015) found out that in 2012, Finnish local elections showed the opposite pattern with the citizens born in democratic countries, but the research results are not linear to arrive a certain conclusion. Even though there are ambiguous findings about this model, political structure of the home country and citizens' political predispositions before immigration could remain as strong factors. In contrast, another model implies that cultural exposure and language familiarity could also stimulate more active political participation as the citizens can learn political structure from scratch in the new country. However, similar to the previous one, it is hard to find consistent data to support these assumptions (White et al., 2008). Consequently, research findings demonstrate that ethnic background could determine the level of political participation, yet its effects mostly are discordant in different occasions.

Many factors affect the political participation of the citizens. While higher socio-economic background and higher education increase the political engagement, ethnic background could have variable effects. Along with these elements, factors affecting the political participation include but not limited to gender, mass-media, workplaces, institutions and overall democratic structure in the countries (Barett & Brunton-Smith, 2014). Although these factors prove that political participation is more than a personal choice and a very complex phenomenon, they hold opportunities to improve the quality and the quantity of the political engagement.

In the next two sections, stakeholders in this domain will be identified and the relationships between them will be drawn in a system map to demonstrate the elements which inhibit the overall system.

3.1.4 - Youth participation in Finland

Every year since 1996, Finnish Youth Research Network and State Youth Council conduct a research about the political participation of the Finnish youth between the age 15 and 29. According to the 2018 Youth Barometer results, 61% of the youth is somewhat interested in politics which is the record high value since 1996 (Myllyniemi & Kiilakoski, 2019). Myllyniemi and Kiilakoski (2019) state that the questionnaire was given to the young people without defining what politics is. In other words, young people interpreted what would be in the scope of political participation. The research results imply that the concept of politics among young people might be broad. Figure 10 shows the percentages of different political participation forms which young people have been used (Myllyniemi & Kiilakoski, 2019). According to this figure, traditional voting is still the most common political participation method among the youth. What is interesting in this figure is that almost one third of the young people consider purchase decisions as a political participation form whereas the percentage of people who discuss politics in online platforms remain much lower. This might imply that online political discussions are considered not influential among young people. All in all, these results show that political participation of Finnish young people has been increasing over the years although the means of participation remains still limited.

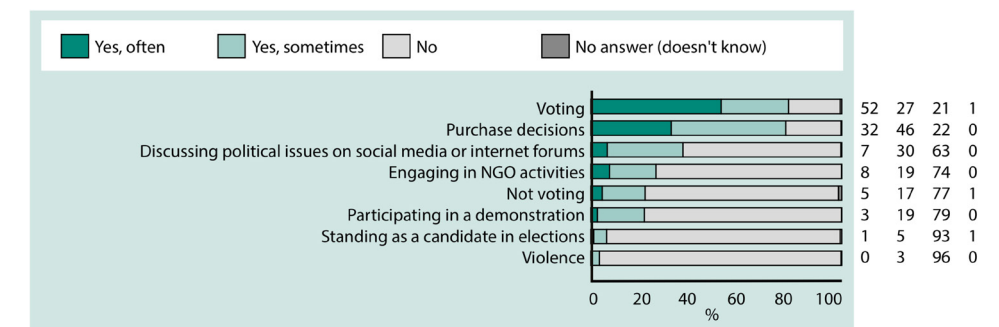


Figure 10. Young people's answer to "Have you personally exerted influence by means of..." in percentage. (Myllyniemi & Kiilakoski, 2019).

3.2. - Stakeholder Interviews

In youth participation in Helsinki, national, local and core actors can play a significant role. National actors affect the nation-wide and EU level policies and legislations, whereas local actors affect the direct ways of participation of young people in the city. Table 1 shows all the actors involving in youth participation in Helsinki. Core actors, as it will be called in this thesis, are young people, their families and their schools. The reason why they are the core of this system is that young people always interact with them regardless of their choice. Consequently, these actors could be a gateway to political participation with relatively low effort.

Table 1

Stakeholders list

National actors	Local actors	Core actors
Ministry of Culture & Education	City of Helsinki*	Young
Allianssi*	City Council	people
Lutheran Church	Local church	Famillies
Scouts	Local scouts	Schools*
Political parties	Local political party	
State Youth Council	branches	
Youth researchers*	Youth City Council	
	Ruuti*	
	Neighborhood youth centres*	
	NGOs	

*Interviewed stakeholders

As highlighted in Table 1, some of the actors were chosen to conduct interviews. These actors are selected to have diverse perspectives on the topic. Among national actors, Allianssi, an umbrella organization of youth NGOs and one of the most influential representatives of young people in the national politics is chosen to represent third sector parties. Along with Allianssi, a researcher from Finnish Youth Research Network is interviewed to achieve academical insights about youth participation in Helsinki and in Finland. Among local actors, an executive in City of Helsinki is contacted to clarify how the city supports citizen participation and how they work to reach their participation goals. In addition, Ruuti, a youth participation system in Helsinki is reached out to understand varied participation possibilities they provide in Helsinki. Also, a youth worker from a neighbourhood youth centre is interviewed to comprehend how they integrate young people into society with daily life activities in the youth centre. Among core actors, a school counsellor is interviewed to understand how schools can promote participation, what are the obstacles young people have in their personal and school life, and how the schools can be leveraged to teach political participation better. Semi-structured and in-depth interviews are held with these stakeholders. (see Appendix A for more details). In the next sub-sections, these actors and the interviews will be introduced thoroughly.

3.2.1 - The City of Helsinki, municipality

City of Helsinki provides wide range of opportunities for young people to avoid social exclusion and to enable active participation. According to Helsinki City Strategy 2017-2021, the goal of the city is to make the young people feel at home, have free time activities and influence their city (City of Helsinki, 2018a). Therefore, the city serves with various facilities and services such as; social services, libraries, neighbourhood youth centres, online youth initiatives, participatory budgeting and yearly representative youth council (City of Helsinki, 2018a; Ruuti, n.d.a). Besides youth participation, Helsinki has also developed a participation model and a participation game for municipality employees to encourage them to involve citizens in different ways (City of Helsinki, 2018b). As a result, Helsinki could be considered as

a progressive city in terms of citizen participation. An interview has been done with Head of Participation and Information Unit to comprehend the city's perspective on citizen participation.

According to the interview, the main aim of the city of Helsinki is to provide various participation channels to get input from different groups of people. For example, citizens can suggest ideas for their own housing area via city's online platform. Additionally, citizens can participate in participatory budgeting to have a say about how the city's budget is used. The city measures their participation success by the number of the citizens involved in participatory services, direct feedback from citizens, diversity of the people and inclusivity of the services. City of Helsinki stays as a neutral actor in participation domain and works with various organizations. However, due to the recent organizational change, organizations such as NGOs have difficulties to understand how the city works and which sections is responsible for certain tasks.

3.2.2 - Ruuti, youth participation program

Ruuti is a participation system for young people as a part of Helsinki Participation Model (Ruuti, n.d.b). With Ruuti services, young people can become a candidate for Youth City Council or elect representatives. They can create online initiatives to be heard by Helsinki City Council. Additionally, they can apply for youth project grants which is up to 3000 euros (Ruuti, n.d.b). The main focus of Ruuti, however, is participatory budgeting. Ruuti (n.d.b) explains its participatory budgeting as a deliberative democracy practise in which the youth have power to discuss and negotiate about the resources the city has (p.15). This suggests that Ruuti provides a new paradigm for youth participation practices in the city. Within the help of other organizations, Ruuti enables young people to influence decision-making while practicing their social and political skills.

3.2.3 - Helsingin Yhteislyseo, secondary school

Schools as one of the stakeholders hold a crucial role in young

people's participation. In Finland, by law, every young people from 7 to 16 is obliged to go to the school (Finnish National Agency of Education, n.d.). Therefore, schools can reach and affect every young person in their area. In addition, schools as educational platforms could be a place to learn and practice participation due to their organizational structure.

For the design project, an interview is held with the school counsellor of Helsingin Yhteislyseo in Kontula, Helsinki. This school is chosen because Kontula is a part of a region called Mellunkylä where the unemployment rate is relatively higher and median income is relatively lower than the mean values of the city. Additionally, 29% of the population has a foreign background in the area (City of Helsinki, 2017). Consequently, Kontula neighbourhood could provide great insights on how aforementioned factors affect the young people's participation and the youth work. Interview results may clarify some of these effects.

According to the interview, the school has representative democracy and deliberative democracy. Students elect their representatives and the representatives deliberate with other stakeholders in the school to decide on matters at hand. Additionally, even though most of the students are not eligible to vote due to their age, before the national and local elections, political parties often visit the school and tell about themselves. Students also elect Youth City Council members in the schools. The school provides the election space whereas youth centre organizes the elections. Lastly, students participate in surveys about the quality of the services in the school.

The school closely collaborates with different organizations. The school and other stakeholders in the area such as, church, scouts, library, social workers and the police have a meeting about the youth every 3 months. However, there is not any coordination between these organisations which makes it hard to keep track of the current state of the youth work in the area. The school also works with organisations such as the youth centre, NGOs and youth clinic. They sometimes provide space for certain activities or they collaborate on campaigns. These collaborations between different stakeholders highly depend on the people working in the organisations. People in charge may not want to collaborate on projects, or when the people change, the organisations may

also alter their strategies.

It is quite easy to reach young people who are unwilling to use any of the youth services. School counsellor and school psychologist can easily have one-to-one conversations with them. Nevertheless, behaviour change of these youngsters are more challenging. When the parents do not know the school system very well, it affects the children because parents can neither help them with their homework nor encourage them in their studies. Students with ethnic backgrounds struggle more since they have to learn everything with their second language. In these cases, the school may not find the right kind of support for them. The school has a close relationship with the families. The school informs families about the status of their children. The teachers meet every family at least once a year. Additionally, if the students want the school to talk to their parents due to a problem at home, they try to help them solve the problem. Due to the socio-economic background of the area, the young people may suffer mental problems, unhealthy habits and issues at home. Therefore, it is crucial to support young people to integrate them in the society as healthy citizens.

To sum up, Helsingin Yteislyseo provides different levels of participation with two different democracy models. If students want to involve in decision-making and make a change in the current structure, they have means to do this. However, young people with foreign background may struggle more due to their language barrier. Low level of education and socio-economic background of the parents may also decrease their children's participation not only in the studies, but also in other domains. Moreover, the youth work in the area is not coordinated well that stakeholders do not follow any collective, long-term plans and projects which may lower the overall success of the youth work in the area.

3.2.4 - Kontula Youth Activity Centre Luuppi, neighbourhood youth centre

In many neighbourhoods in Helsinki, young people could benefit from youth centre facilities and activities. Youth centres not only provide social, cultural and educational opportunities, but also support and guide young people who face problems in

life (City of Helsinki, 2015). An interview is held with the youth worker in Kontula Youth Activity Centre Luuppi to comprehend the youth centres' role in youth participation.

The interviewee mentions that youth centre provides open space for young people for socializing, dancing, playing and recording music, as well as several other spare time activities. Youth workers organize events and excursions. Youth centre does not necessarily reach every young person in the area. Rather, they provide the means and services for young people to do what they want. In the youth centre, youth workers and young people can decide certain actions to improve the area. For example, youngsters have decided to have a skatepark in the neighbourhood which is currently in progress. If young people need certain guidance to start a project or initiative, youth centres could help to achieve their goal.

The majority of the young people coming to the youth centre has an immigrant background. Their major problem is language. Language affects their school performance and their overall life quality. Especially in winter, youth centre is considered a great option to spend time at due to the darkness and cold weather outside.

Youth centre mostly collaborates with the school, the police and the Lutheran Church in the area. With the school, they have "get to know each other" events with 7th graders. Moreover, they sometimes have lunch breaks together with the students in the school. They also use each other's facilities. For example, for Youth City Council elections, youth centre uses school premises. In addition to these collaborations, youth workers from these two organizations have weekly or bi-weekly support groups for boys who need help in various topics. Youth centre also communicates with the police for criminal cases and with Lutheran Church for youth projects.

All in all, youth centres play a significant role to provide wide range of activities and guidance to young people. Considering the fact that every area has different characteristics, youth centres could initiate solutions to local young people in their area. Consequently, every youth centre focuses on different subjects and activities. Most youth centres favour deliberative democracy and participatory decision-making with young people to make sure that young people are heard and integrated in the

society. However, even though youth centres seem appealing, they may not reach every young people in their area. In these circumstances, young people should be provided variety of different ways to participate and to be heard.

3.2.5 - Allianssi, umbrella organization for youth NGOs

Allianssi is an umbrella organization for all the youth NGOs in Finland. A semi-structured interview is done with Organization manager in Allianssi. According to the interviewee, Allianssi provides materials, trainings, networks and support for professionals and the volunteers in the youth work. Additionally, Allianssi lobbies youth work, youth rights, youth participation and all the other themes affecting young people in the society. Allianssi represents the young people in the political scene while communicating with the government and the ministries. Even though some people criticize that this representation is done by adults, the interviewee insists that in many cases, it is better to rely on experts rather than having a young person for the sake of youth participation. The best and ideal way of decision-making would combine different experts, researchers and young people. However, this would make the process very complicated and costly. Therefore, how the decisions are made should be evaluated case by case.

Allianssi collaborates with many different organizations including 3 main actors in the youth sector; municipalities, Lutheran Church and NGOs. However, the coordination in the youth field is not sufficient. The projects could be forgotten in a few years and new organizations come up with the same projects. Allianssi and NGOs also struggles to initiate long term projects due to their yearly funding. This funding also leads competition between different NGOs even if they have the same goal and incentives. According to the interviewee, there should be long-term projects in which researchers work on a specific subject about the youth to measure the real impact.

Allianssi also works with schools to organize “mock elections”. Even though underaged students are not eligible to vote, the elections are still held in the schools to initiate political thinking and discussions among peers. The interviewee states that young

people are not interested in politics because they do not know enough. Politics should be thought with the subjects close to the students’ daily life. Moreover, even though some people will remain uninterested to politics, elected students and youth workers should be provided tools to talk to these youngsters to receive input from them. This input, then, might be used in decision making to consider the needs and the opinions of wider audience.

3.2.6 - Conclusion

Young people in Helsinki have various means to participate in decision-making. City of Helsinki and Ruuti provide participatory budgeting and other practises to involve people in the decisions. City aims to deliver different kinds of participation methods to attract more attention and receive variety of opinions. Moreover, young people could practise political participation in schools via their school board, Ruuti’s participatory budgeting or Allianssi’s mock elections. They could also have casual deliberation in NGOs and youth centres.

According to the interview findings, a stakeholders map is created to illustrate the relationship between different actors (Figure 11). The connections between all the actors illustrates that actors interact and work with each other regarding youth participation. Since these interactions vary across the field, stakeholders face diverse problems in their work.

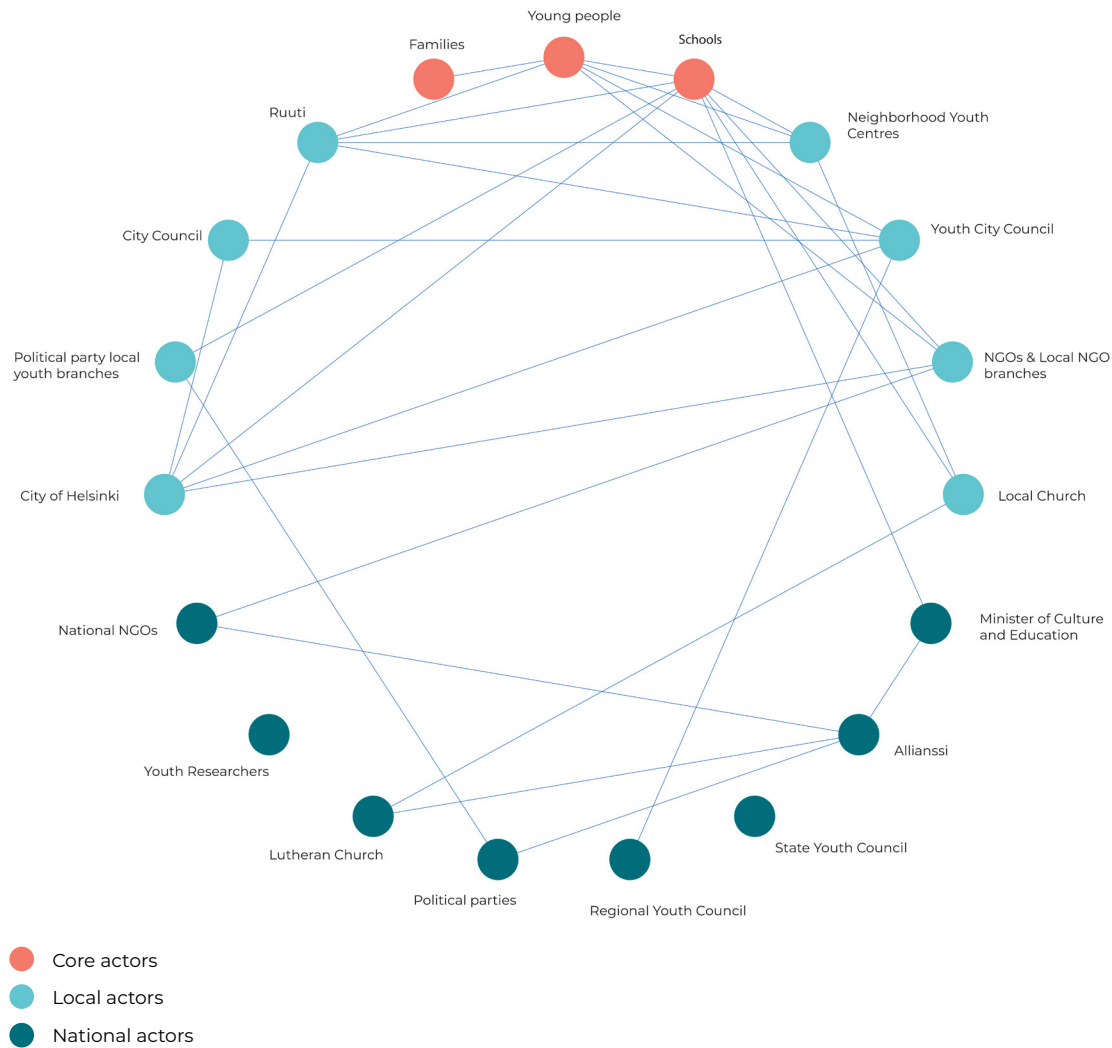


Figure 11. Stakeholders map. The connections indicate that stakeholders work with each other.

The stakeholders seem to struggle with 3 main issues. First of all, coordination in the youth participation field is weak. The projects are scattered, and the impact of these projects remains ambiguous. Different stakeholders compete each other for the same goal and the same fund. The stakeholders hope to have more organized projects, learning opportunities for peers and long-term impact. Secondly, the education of politics towards the youth in different organizations may not be effective enough. The politics education emphasizes national level decision-making, whereas many topics regarding local issues are uncovered. This leads young people to form an incomplete understanding of what politics is and how they can participate. Thirdly, young people with a mother tongue different than Finnish and Swedish struggles in many aspects of life including political participation. Communication channels may not support a proper language for them, or they might not be familiar with the local customs and culture. Therefore, stakeholders sometimes are unable to receive input from these groups and to provide better services for them. To summarize, coordination between stakeholders, politics education and integration of ethnic youth become 3 main opportunities to improve in youth participation in Helsinki.

3.3 - Design brief and design principles

As it is discussed in the previous sections, political participation is determined by three main factors; socio-economic status, education and ethnicity. Additionally, whether related to these factors or not, stakeholders struggle with unorganized project management in the youth field, insufficient political education for the young and integration of ethnic youth. According to these two different sources of input, one could say that improving the relationship between different stakeholders would increase the productivity and the overall impact of the entire field. Ideally, this would be the main purpose of any project which aims to improve youth participation in Helsinki. However, this aim exceeds the scope of this master's thesis. Therefore, in this thesis, the two overlapping aspects of political participation will be emphasized;

political education and participation of ethnic youth. According to the conceptual framework and the research findings so far, a design brief could be formulated as; *A service that educates and encourages young people for political participation and deliberation so that young people no matter of their ethnic background can raise their voice and be represented in decision making processes in Helsinki.* In addition to the design brief, design principles are decided to underpin the ideation phase. These principles are voluntary participation, equality, inclusion and education. In the next section, three different concepts will be introduced to fulfil the design brief.

3.4 - Ideation

According to the design brief, different ideas are generated and 3 of them are selected for further development. These ideas are chosen because their focus covers different aspects of the design brief with the usage of different media tools. In the next sub-sections, these concepts will be introduced.

3.4.1 - Idea 1: Marketing Campaign

Design research shows that young people do not necessarily know how, and for which subjects they can influence the decision-making. Therefore, a marketing campaign with posters and social media advertisements is suggested to raise awareness about youth participation in the city politics. The aim of this campaign is to make young people understand that daily life situations can be the consequences of political decision-making. Moreover, further information about the topics and the ways of participation could be provided in the website written in the advertisements to encourage young people to learn and act more. Lastly, these advertisements could also target different ethnic backgrounds by using different languages.

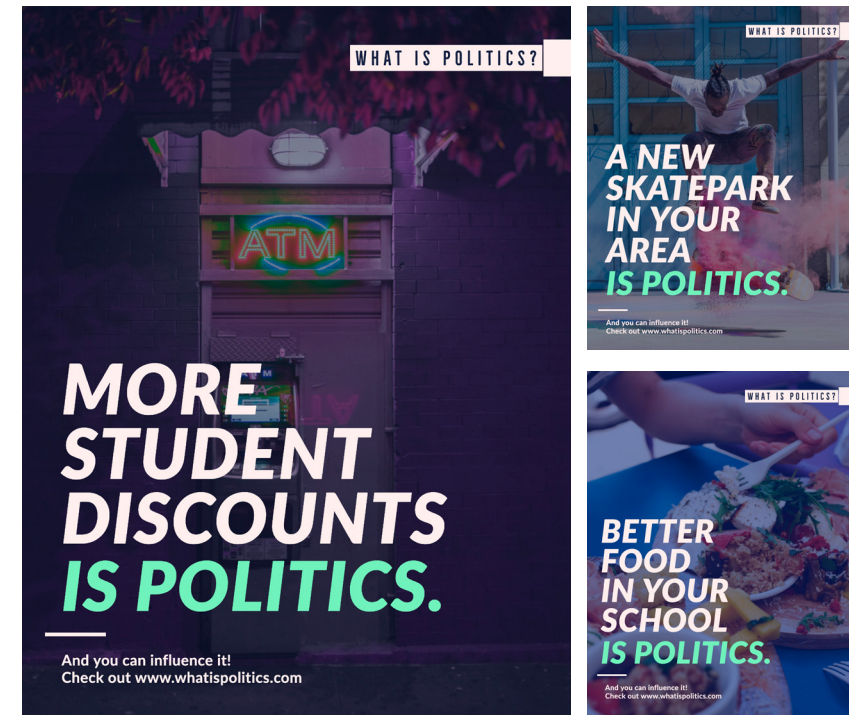


Figure 12. Poster design concepts with different topics.

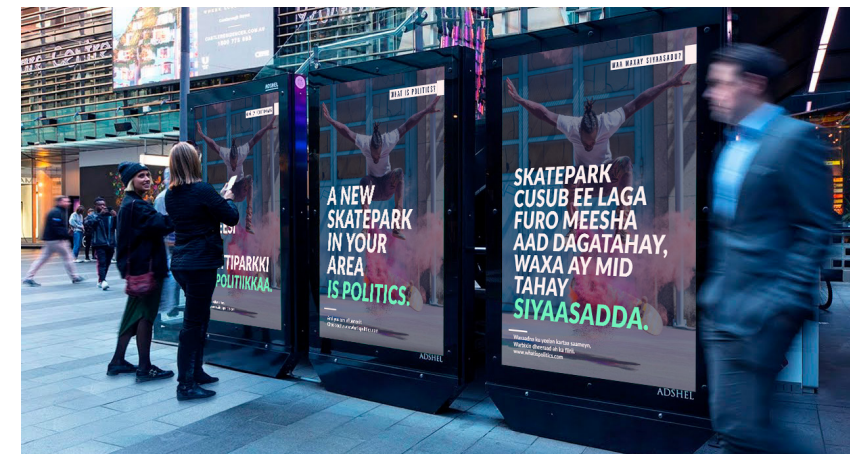


Figure 13. Poster designs in Finnish, English and Somali respectively. Adapted from figure in INGMEDIA(2019).

3.4.2 - Idea 2: Augmented Reality (AR) mobile application

Gamifying participation with the tools that young people use could increase the rate and effect of the participation. Therefore, a social mobile application could be a fun participatory experience for youngsters while helping the city to receive input from them. In this idea, Augmented Reality (AR) is used to have a location-based experience. With the mobile application, young people can draw or write their proposals to certain locations while the other peers can rate and comment on these proposals. Users of this application get a notification on their phone when they are close to a proposal location. Additionally, the city itself could use this application to ask opinions about certain projects. This application may also allow young people to collectively create new proposals and different kinds of posts around the city.

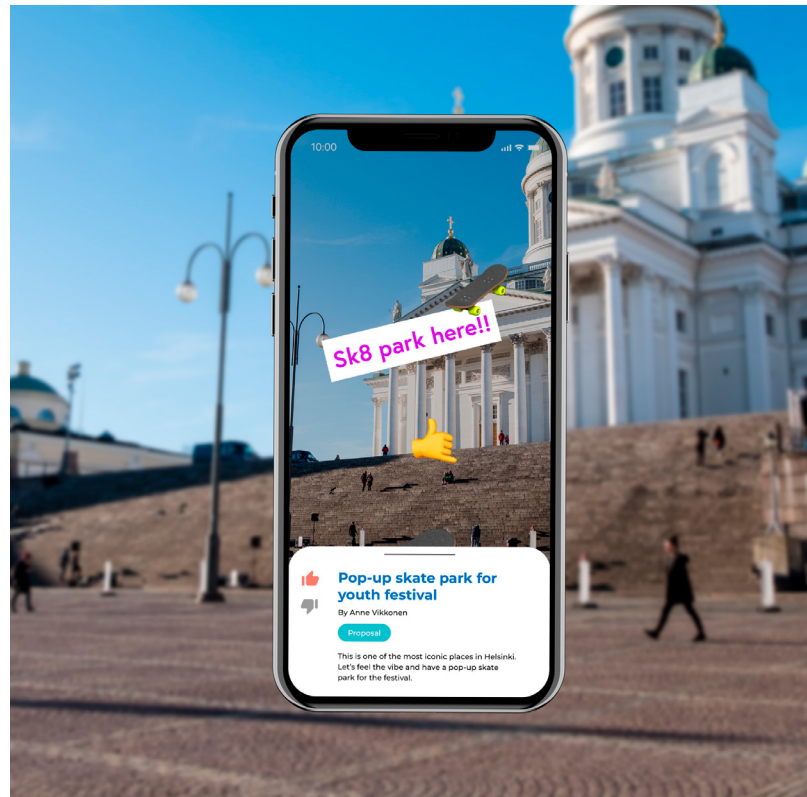


Figure 14. AR Mobile application concept. A young person proposes to have a pop-up skate park.

3.4.3 - Idea 3: Workshop framework

When the city or the school have to make a major decision, a workshop framework could be used to receive input from every young person affected by the decision. In this idea, the workshops are held in the schools with randomly formed student groups. Random selection prevents uniform groups which involves people with similar ideas. In each group, every student follows the guidelines to express and discuss their ideas about the topic. This reinforces the notion of deliberative democracy and equality among the youth. At the end of the workshop, the students have to come to an agreement in their groups. The final decision of the groups is registered to the online database. By this way, every young person is heard and considered in the decision-making. Also, these inputs are transparent and open to everyone who wants to access.



Figure 15. Concept representation of young people following the workshop rules on their mobile phone.

3.5 - Participatory workshop for idea validation

A participatory workshop was held to validate these three ideas. The workshop was held in Kontula Youth Activity Centre Luuppi with four young people. The workshop was designed to have a semi-structured conversation with the participants to receive their feedback about the ideas, as well as youth participation in Helsinki (see Appendix B for workshop agenda and conversation starters).

The participants were selected randomly to prevent any bias in the outcome. Table 2 shows the participants' age, gender and ethnic background. Participants' age varies between 14 and 19. Even though all the participants are fluent in Finnish, two of the participants' native languages are different than Finnish or Swedish.

Table 2

Workshop participants information

Participants	Age	Gender	Ethnic Background
Participant 1	19	Female	Finland
Participant 2	17	Female	Estonia
Participant 3	14	Male	Bulgaria
Participant 4	14	Male	Finland

The workshop setting had several limitations. Firstly, participants were not informed before the workshop, so they were not prepared. Participants were also introduced to a topic which they do not talk about in their daily lives. Therefore, it was challenging to break the ice and have a fluent conversation.

Additionally, not all participants knew each other which also made them hesitate to talk because of the fear of peer judgement. As a facilitator, I struggled to equally include everyone in the discussions for these reasons. Another facilitator was needed to share the task of facilitation and information gathering. Lastly, the ideas were communicated verbally except the poster designs. If prototype of each idea would have been prepared, the overall workshop would be more insightful for everyone.

3.5.1 - Results

Idea 1: Marketing Campaign

Before gathering feedback for the first idea, participants were asked to tell what kind of political topics would be related to young people. In the conversation, participants hesitated to state any opinions which may imply that they do not have enough knowledge about the topic. During the feedback session, they agreed on the fact that this campaign would change their perception of politics. However, they stated that the topics covered in these advertisements and the overall design of the posters should be more interesting.

At the end of the workshop, participants were asked to write any ideas related to the workshop topic. Two of the participants were especially interested in the student discount poster. They suggested finding more information about where to find the discounts and requesting more discounts from certain places. This may imply that the website in the posters would be participatory, rather than being only informative.

All in all, participants acknowledged the potential of the marketing campaign to change the views about politics. However, the topic selection and graphic design of the posters should be improved to well target the audience. Additionally, the campaign website should have a participatory aspect which immediately enable young people to act.

Idea 2: Augmented Reality (AR) mobile application

Social media applications are widely used among the participants. Participants also have previous experience in using AR application such as Pokémon GO game. Therefore, this idea

excited them the most. They explained why they use social media applications. According to their view, while sharing posts with friends and other people makes it an interesting activity, features such as, filters and stickers help them to personalize these posts. Additionally, posts including jokes and memes entertain and encourage them to use these apps more. Nevertheless, although they accept that this app may help youth participation in the decision-making, they would prefer using this app to connect with their peers rather than the decision makers. Therefore, the interaction in the app should be re-structured to balance between these two purposes.

Idea 3: Workshop framework

For this idea, participants are asked about their discussion practices at school. They state that they struggle in discussions and they avoid them when possible. This is mostly because young people do not want to be judged by their peers. Also, they feel that they do not have enough means to express themselves. Therefore, they do not even want to talk more about this idea. This implies that face-to-face political discussions may not be suitable for this age group. However, different means of self-expression and anonymity could be provided in a different platform to enable young people to discuss related topics.

3.5.2 - Reflections

Participatory workshop results provide many insights regarding the design concepts. First of all, although marketing campaign in physical spaces seem quite traditional, it has a great potential to attract young people's attention to subjects that they might be interested in. As mentioned before, however, the design and the content of the campaign materials should be revisited to pinpoint the teenagers' taste and interests. This campaign could also spread in online platforms as social media advertisements to provide easier access to the website written in the materials. The website in the campaign could provide information about the topics and direct ways of participation as two participants suggested. To sum up, this idea could change young people's perspective on politics and decision-making. It could mobilize them to participate more on the issues they care.

Secondly, interactive media tools such as AR mobile application concept draws great attention from young people. They already use a wide variety of social media tools which enable them to express themselves in different ways. This idea could spread their self-expression, as well as interaction with other people to physical locations while still being online. This is a relatively unexplored concept in social media. As a result, many young people could be willing to try this concept. Nevertheless, this concept has one drawback. Young people may not be interacting with decision-makers as anticipated. Consequently, the application should be designed in a way that decision-makers and young people communicate in a fun and efficient way. Also, this application should be iteratively tested multiple times during the design process to ensure the desired outcome.

Thirdly, participants stated that mandatory discussions in the school makes them uncomfortable and nervous. These effects were also visible in the participatory workshop. As a result, instead of having face-to-face conversations, discussions could be moved to cyberspace. Teenagers could be anonymous to other peers, whereas teachers or administrative roles could see everyone's name to prevent any misbehavior. Nonetheless, this altered concept needs more user research with young people to assure whether it would work or not.

Discussions in the participatory workshop also show that young people need safe and judgement-free space to share their opinions. Therefore, discussion-based participatory workshop may not be the optimal way to gather their feedback. Whether participants know each other or not, they might feel the pressure of others. This is why participation games or other participatory methods could be more enjoyable and insightful options while targeting teenagers.

C H A P T E R F O U R

**DISCUSSION &
CONCLUSION**

4.1 - Discussion

The main problem this thesis tackles is the insufficient citizen participation due to the lack of equal opportunities provided to the citizens. This lack of opportunities prevents people from building a political intellect and being equally represented in the decision-making processes. Therefore, the thesis investigates young people's participation to empower them in relatively early ages.

The design concepts suggested in this thesis aim to provide political education, equal participation and open discussions in public sphere within the help of online tools. The concepts are built on the representative democracy model with a deliberative democracy influence. In other words, the concepts address the current decision-makers (representatives) to receive more input from young people, while raising awareness about politics among the youth by exchanging knowledge. Idea validation workshop results suggest that young people are comfortable at expressing themselves in online public sphere, whereas they are unwilling to participate in face-to-face discussions, because of peer judgement. This means that different forms of online participation and notion of e-democracy can be utilized to enhance their participation experience, but deliberative democracy remains an undesired option among the youth. However, deliberative democracy could still be a possible option in a different setting such as; in an anonymous, online communication platform.

After the literature review and secondary research, two different approaches could have been taken: (1) interviewing young people to understand their needs and barriers to political participation, (2) interviewing key stakeholders to comprehend systemic problems in the youth participation field. The second approach is chosen to put the research in a bigger context and find out the real problems instead of the symptoms that young people experience. Consequently, young people involve in a late research phase to validate the concepts which address these problems.

4.2 - Conclusion

This thesis investigated youth participation in decision-making processes in Helsinki. It examined the current status of youth participation in the city and identified problems and opportunities in this field. According to the findings, the thesis suggested three design concepts which aim to engage young people with city politics while using different online tools. Even though these concepts were not interactive prototypes, they gave great insights about what would make young people more active in political decision-making.

The design research methodology is based on human-centred design, participatory design and systems thinking. Selective methods are used from each domain to undermine the systemic problems, suggest well-targeted concepts and validate these concepts with real users. Throughout the process, in-depth interviews are held with 6 key stakeholders. The interview results help to diagnose the systemic problems and needs. To fulfil these needs, design concepts are developed and validated with 4 young people in a participatory workshop. Young people are involved in a late stage of this process because most of the young people have not formed a comprehensive understanding of politics. Therefore, the concepts are designed to educate them about politics and to provide interesting and unconventional ways of political participation.

The overall research findings can be used to develop services to improve youth participation field in Helsinki. They might be the basis of projects which improve stakeholder relationships, project management and impact analysis. Additionally, two prominent concepts can be developed further and iteratively tested with young people to deliver necessary tools for youth participation to decision-makers. All in all, the research results suggest that youth participation in decision-making processes could be improved by exploiting different online media tools. These tools, if utilized well, can promote equality, inclusion and politics education among the youth.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Table 1

Stakeholder interviews list

Interviews	Role	Organization
1	Docent in Economics and Social History	Finnish Youth Research Network
2	Planner	Ruuti Youth participation Program
3	Youth worker	Kontula Youth Activity Centre
4	School counsellor	Helsingin Yhteislyseo
5	Organization manager	Alianssi
6	Manager of inclusion and interaction	City of Helsinki

Appendix B

Participatory Workshop Agenda

1. Breaking the ice

- Introducing myself and the thesis
- Participants introduce themselves (age, gender, background, language)

2. Discussing the ideas

Idea 1: Marketing campaign

- What kind of topics related to youth is politics?
- Explaining the idea.
- Did the idea generate any opinions?
- Is this a possible story?
- What would you change in this idea?
- Could you imagine yourself interested in these topics?
- What would you expect to see in the website written here?
- Do you think that this campaign would change your perspective on politics?

Idea 2: Augmented Reality (AR) mobile application.

- What kind of social media applications do you use?
- Why do you use them?
- What are the features that you like the most?
- Explaining the idea.
- Did the idea generate any opinions?
- Is this a possible story?
- What would you change in this idea?
- Could you imagine yourself interested in this app?
- What would be more interesting to young people?
- What would you expect by using this app?
- Do you think that this app would change your perspective on politics?

Idea 3: Workshop framework

- Do you have discussions at schools? How do you feel about them?
- Explaining the idea.

- Did the idea generate any opinions?
- Is this a possible story?
- What would you change in this idea?
- Could you imagine yourself being active in these discussions?
- What other ways of discussions would be more interesting to young people?

3. Gathering new ideas

- Asking participants to improve the ideas or suggest completely new ideas on sticky notes.

4. Wrap up