Kari Bjørka Hodneland

Room for Children's Participation?

Reflections on Communicative
Practice in an Educational Context

C O N T E N T S

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I enjoy cross country skiing. Writing this thesis can be compared to a rigorous ski trip. The conditions of the snow and the weather have been changeable. The snow has been wet and dry, fine and coarse. There have been snowstorms, sunshine and moonlight. I have skied in well prepared tracks, but I have also made my own way in heavy deep and wet snow. I have skied alone, but I have also had some very good company. I have met many people, the stops have been many, and sometimes they have lasted for quite some time. At times I have walked in the wrong direction and in circles too, which one can do if there is fog in the mountains. I have often chosen the wrong ski wax which has left me struggling uphill. On the other hand, I have also experienced the most fabulous downhill runs.

My father taught me how to ski. He also taught me much about the built environment in general and the importance of working across disciplinary borders in particular. In 1970, when I was still a young student and on the occasion of his 50th birthday, my father was interviewed for the local newspaper. "It is", he argued, "important that architects do not make decisions about planning matters and the design of our urban areas on their own. In the years to come it will be the duty of the architect to take account of the 'soft data', those which cannot be expressed by means of figures but are more concerned with human behaviour in general."

My design studies in the UK in the early 1970s were not compatible with skiing. However, the inspiration of learning to become better acquainted with another country, to be close to some of its early urban design ideas, as well as to be introduced to some local studies of the identity of place, made me forget the non-existent opportunities for skiing. A year at the Oslo School of Architecture to learn more about planning encouraged my interest in urban studies at a micro level.

Per, my husband, and I became parents in the late 1970s and for many years I was a full time mother for our two children, Nina and Knut. Living in a city in the 1980's, I followed details of the built environment and its development but it struck me then that children's text books were still focusing on rural life and farm animals. Thus these books no doubt contributed to my interest in

providing schoolchildren with knowledge of the built environment in urban areas. This was the beginning of what later became the development of my model for increasing awareness of the built environment.

When I first read a doctoral thesis the gratitude expressed in the acknowledgements to family, friends, supervisors and librarians puzzled me – today I understand the reasons why.

Jonny Aspen, head of the Doctoral programme at the AHO, for his professional assistance in converting my thesis text into this book format.

Oslo, September 2007

SUMMARY

The thesis title asks if there is room for children to participate in matters concerning the built environment. The concept "room" in the title, has three different meanings; the physical room referring to the public place in the local neighbourhood, the administrative room and the political room.

In Norway, the right of children to participate is, in principle, well looked after in many respects inclusive of the National Policy Guidelines to promote the interest of children and adolescents in planning. However, this does not mean that all children are experiencing the chance to participate. All permanent bodies of participation like the pupils' council are based on the principle of participation by representation.

In Norway, as in the rest of Europe, there are many examples of projects where children and the built environment are linked to participation. For many years a critical voice about the value of these projects has been heard because they seem to take place just once, they are rarely evaluated, and they are often bound to local conditions. The likelihood of transfer to parallel projects is therefore small or non-existent. By studying children and participation in an educational context, the transfer value might be increased.

The thesis builds on reflection on the author's communicative practice. The pilot-project about the "Small Ugly Places" constitutes most of the empirical part of the thesis. The project was about participation, children and the urban environment and was put into effect in five inner city primary schools in Oslo. The aim of the project was to use the public outdoor places in a practical-educational context. In co-operation with the municipal divisions, the children were encouraged to improve the design as well as the maintenance of the public place in the local environment. The Model for Increased Awareness of the Built Environment, the MIABE, designed by the author, is a context-bound teaching and learning model aiming at participation. The model comprises many different components, amongst others the acquiring of a limited vocabulary linked to the details of built environment as well as to public administration. The purpose of this component was to contribute to a dialogue between the different actors in the project. The responsibility for implementation of the children's informed ideas for change was that of the local authorities. The aim of the further

project activity was that all children and young people should get practical experience of participation. The school was, therefore, chosen as the arena for implementation of the model.

The research design for the author's strategy was built on method triangulation based on the narrative, the reflexive and the conversation as methods of acquiring knowledge. The first method has offered the possibility to present a story about the pilot-project of the "Small Ugly Places" in the shape of a narrative. The different incidents reported have resulted in a growing insight into the applicability of the MIABE components.

The second method is discussion of the MIABE related to some central aspects of communicative planning theory. The reason for this was that both are concerned with the level of society as well as the individual level. Although planning theory deals with children to a limited extent, communicative planners and the practitioners of the MIABE share a wish to prepare a process for active participation. Other common aims are the encouragement of a capacity to communicate with authorities, stimulation of responsibility and interest in the public place and generally to gain positive experience from dialogue. Through inspiration from the theory of communicative planning on the above issues, an extended "room for participation" has emerged, called the MIABE Plus. The initial MIABE aims at making use of the details of the public places in a practical educational context to experience participation for the pupils of the primary school. The MIABE Plus aims at helping to form a foundation for young people's reflective argument and political dialogue, thus placing a heavier weight on communicative preparation for democratic practices in general and on the aspect of participation in particular. Hopefully, this might contribute to the enhancement of increased social engagement now and later in life.

Conversations with pupils who participated in MIABE-related projects ten years ago have, as the third method of studying one's own practice, given new points of view about the application of the MIABE. In addition, they have thrown new light on the MIABE Plus as a possible introduction to communicative practice in a democratic society.

One of the conclusions of the thesis is that the practical experience of participation of children and youngsters deserves to become part of their everyday life. Another conclusion is that there is a link between comprehension and facilitating of some of the MIABE components. This implies that the MIABE and the MIABE Plus might interact or be used separately depending on the age of the participating children and young people.

Application of the MIABE has taken place within the framework of representative democracy. In a possible application of the MIABE Plus, no structural or legal amendments would be required. However, a responsive

government and an accountable bureaucracy would be presupposed for application of both models.

Through reflective argument and political dialogue, the aim of the MIABE Plus would be to facilitate social engagement of all children and young people that will last long after the project ends.

SAMMENDRAG

Avhandlingens tittel stiller spørsmålet om det er rom for barns medvirkning i saker som gjelder de byggede omgivelsene. Begrepet rom i tittelen viser til tre ulike betydninger; det fysiske offentlige rom i nærmiljøet, det administrative rom og det politiske rom.

I Norge er barns rett til medvirkning i prinsippet godt ivaretatt på flere felt. Det er også bestemmelser i Plan- og bygningsloven i form av rikspolitiske retningslinjer for å styrke barn og unges interesser i planleggingen. Likevel er det ikke slik at alle barn får praktisk erfaring med medvirkning. Alle permanente organer for medvirkning, slik som elevråd, bygger på prinsippet om deltagelse gjennom representasjon.

I Norge og i Europa for øvrig finnes det mange eksempler på prosjekter om barn og de byggede omgivelsene knyttet til medvirkning. Allerede i flere år har det imidlertid vært reist kritiske røster om verdien av mange av disse prosjektene fordi de ser ut til å finne sted bare en gang, de blir sjelden evaluert og de er ofte relatert til helt lokale forhold. Overføringsverdien til tilsvarende prosjekter i eget eller andre land er derfor liten eller ikke eksisterende. Ved å studere barn og medvirkning i en utdanningssituasjon kan man øke en overføringsverdi.

Avhandlingen bygger på refleksjon over egen praksis. Pilot-prosjektet om de "Små stygge stedene" utgjør hoveddelen av avhandlingens empiri. Prosjektet handlet om medvirkning, barn og bymiljø og ble gjennomført ved fem sentrumsnære Oslo-skoler. Målsettingen med prosjektet var å benytte de offentlige uterommene i en praktisk lærings- og undervisningssammenheng. I kontakt med kommunale etater skulle elevene arbeide med tiltak for å bedre utforming og vedlikehold av det offentlige uterom i nærmiljøet. En egenutviklet modell for økt bevisstgjøring om de byggede omgivelsene og med målsetting om medvirkning for alle barn, MIABE, ble lagt til grunn for måloppnåelse av prosjektet. MIABE er en kontekstavhengig lærings- og undervisningsmodell som inneholder en rekke komponenter, blant annet tilegnelsen av et begrenset vokabular knyttet til detaljene i det offentlige uterom, så vel som til offentlig administrasjon. Hensikten med denne komponenten var å bidra til dialog mellom de ulike aktørene i prosjektet.

Ansvaret for gjennomføringen av elevenes begrunnede forslag til endringer lå hos de lokale myndigheter. Målsettingen med den videre virksomhet i utviklingen av prosjektet var at alle barn og unge skulle få praktisk erfaring med medvirkning, og skolen er derfor valgt som arena for gjennomføring av modellen.

Forskningsdesignet for denne studien av egen praksis bygger på metodetriangulering som strategi. Den baserer seg på tre metoder: den narrative, den refleksive og samtalen som metode for utvikling av kunnskap. Den førstnevnte metoden har gitt mulighet til å presentere historien om de "Små, stygge stedene" som har gitt en økende forståelse for de ulike MIABE-komponentene.

Den andre metoden er drøfting av MIABE i forhold til noen sentrale aspekter ved kommunikativ planleggingsteori. Begrunnelsen for valget av kommunikativ planleggingsteori som studiens teoretiske referanse har vært at den tar opp både det samfunnsmessige nivå og individnivået. Selv om planleggingsteori i liten grad omhandler barn, deler kommunikative planleggere og de som praktiserer MIABE et ønske om å legge til rette for en medvirkningsprosess. Andre felles mål er utvikling av evnen til å kommunisere med myndigheter, stimulering til ansvar og interesse for det offentlige rom, og generelt å oppnå positive erfaringer gjennom dialog. Gjennom refleksjon over egen kommunikativ praksis med de byggede omgivelsene, barn og medvirkning, er det fremkommet en mulig utvidet betydning av "rom for medvirkning" som er kalt MIABE Pluss. "Pluss'et" er en utvidet forståelse av MIABEs potensial. Den opprinnelige MIABE har som målsetting at elever i grunnskolen gjennom økt bevisstgjøring om detaljene i det offentlige rom også skal få erfaring i medvirkning. MIABE åpner for bruk av det utvidete potensialet i MIABE Pluss. MIABE Pluss har som målsetting å bidra til å skape en mer reflektert argumentasjon og politisk dialog hos ungdom, og legger derfor større vekt på kommunikativ forberedelse til demokratisk praksis generelt og på medvirkningsaspektet spesielt. Forhåpentligvis kan dette bidra til å fremme økt samfunnsengasjement både nå og senere i livet.

Samtaler med elever som ti år tidligere medvirket i de prosjektene som utgjør avhandlingens empiri, har som den tredje fremgangsmåte for å studere egen praksis, gitt nyttige synspunkter om bruk av MIABE. De tidligere elevene hadde også synspunkter på MIABE-modellens utvidede potensiale.

En av konklusjonene fra avhandlingen er en påstand om at barns og unges praktiske erfaring med medvirkning fortjener å bli en mer selvfølgelig del av deres hverdag. Bruk av MIABE har funnet sted innenfor rammen av representativt demokrati. En mulig bruk av MIABE Pluss, vil ikke medføre behov for hverken strukturelle eller lovmessige endringer. Imidlertid forutsetter bruk av MIABE, så vel som av MIABE Pluss, et byråkrati som

svarer på og følger opp henvendelser og en regjering som viser interesse for barn, medvirkning og de byggede omgivelsene.

Målet med MIABE Pluss er, gjennom refleksiv argumentasjon og politisk dialog å legge til rette for et samfunnsengasjement hos all ungdom som vil vare også etter at et medvirkningsprosjekt er avsluttet.

1. THE INTRODUCTION

> What is now needed is reflection on own practices, theoretical
> underpinning of the existing projects and new methods based
> on interdisciplinarity as well as a new 'language'.[1]

My concern about how the children and the young could possibly increase
their awareness of architecture in its widest sense; "from the spoon to the
city" goes back many years.

In 1993 I was offered the possibility to test a self-developed method of
learning to acquire an identity for a place. Through most of the school year
1993-1994, 15 youngsters at Oslo Montessori School tested my method. In
1994 the project terminated with an exhibition of the so called "Slemdal"
project. In many ways my project mirrored contemporary national initiatives
on an increased interest in the built environment like the "World declaration
of Architecture in Schools" signed by the Minister of Culture Aase Kleveland
in 1993[2] and the preparations for a new National Curriculum for the primary
school – both aiming at enhancement of knowledge in architecture and design
for children and the young.

In 1995 my method for learning more about the local neighbourhood was
used as a base for parts of the "Råholt" project. The municipality of Eidsvoll
in its plan of activities for 1995-1998 had made "participation and
democratisation" a local area of commitment. The "Råholt" project was
therefore linked to the National Policy Guidelines to promote the interests of
children and adolescents in planning, as part of the work on the municipal
sector plan.[3] For the first time, my method was used to achieve participation.

The National Policy Guidelines of 1989 to promote the interests of children
and adolescents in planning pursuant to the Planning and Building Act, is
probably unique in that the interest of children should be made explicit and

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[1] Bert Mulder, in *Common Threads:Participation for a Better World". Centre for Creative Communities and the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum.* (Panel discussion. Glasgow, Scotland, September 23-24, 1999).

[2] Notice Arkitektnytt, "Kulturministeren Er Med," *Arkitektnytt*, no. 11, June 21 (1993).

[3] Kari Bjørka Hodneland, "Tettstedprosjekt Råholt," *FORM - et fagpedagogisk tidsskrift (FORM - a pedagogical journal)*, no. 4-5 (1996).

considered in all community planning.[4] Having had the first Ombudsman for children in the world since 1981, the interests of Norwegian children had been high priority on the national agenda for a long time.

The pilot-project on the "Embellishment of the Small Ugly Places" (1996-97) is the main empirical reference of my thesis. The project was a co-operation between the Municipality of Oslo, Chief Commissioner's Department (Byrådslederens avdeling) and me.[5] More than 250 children from five inner city schools and their teachers joined the initiative. Most children were aged 10-12. The children immediately named the project "Small Ugly Places", which has been used with enthusiasm by everybody who has met the initiative ever since. However, it is important not to forget the term "embellishment" as it has in it a promise of a change of some kind, hence the experiencing of the participatory part of democracy.

The aim of the project was to make use of the public places in a practical-pedagogical connection. The children should, in cooperation with the municipal departments, take measures to improve the design as well as report on the lack of maintenance. My practice thus relates to a micro-level in all respects. The responsibility for implementing the children's ideas was placed locally, that is at the municipal level. The children and the young were the main actors and the field of investigation was the public places. In the following my practices are, therefore, referred to as micro-practices, a term borrowed from Bent Flyvbjerg.[6]

The tool for accomplishing aims in my three above mentioned projects has been the MIABE, the Model for Increasing Awareness of the Built Environment. The MIABE is a context-bound teaching and learning model (designed by the author) closely linked to parts of the National Curriculum of 1997 and comprises a number of components for facilitating action. More than 400 children and the young have been working in accordance with my model. Making use of the public places in the built environment as a base for teaching and learning is encouraging the children's engagement also in matters that concern the community. The model has proven useful in achievement of participation like in the "Råholt" project and in the pilot-project on the "Small Ugly Places". The MIABE aims at participation from all children and the young.

Although the model did not get its present name until after concluding the pilot-project on the "Embellishment of the Small Ugly Places" I have chosen to use the term the "MIABE" from the "Slemdal" project onwards to try and prevent an unnecessary confusion. To better suit the goals of the above pilot-project, my model was refined; some initial components were left out, some

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[4] A more extensive explanation is offered in my chapter "Positioning of the MIABE in a Broader Context".
[5] My firm is an individual enterprise.
[6] Bent Flyvbjerg, *Making Social Science Matter: Why Social Inquiry Fails and How It Can Succeed Again* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

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new components were added. The changes of components are accounted for as they occur.

Parallel to my work as an external project leader of the "Small Ugly Places" project, my Doctoral training course commenced at Oslo School of Architecture. I learned that my self developed method was not a method but a model. I also learned from an early reflection on my own communicative practice, that a slight change in focus from my initial interest in the children's interpretation of the built environment, to the participatory part of democracy was emerging. The question then arose; could the MIABE possibly also hold a broader potential than originally assumed? To distinguish between the present MIABE and a possible future version of my model, the latter will be referred to as the MIABE Plus.

How is my shift in focal interest recognised? The shift is recognised from the idea of participation based on ideas for change in the built environment like in the "Small Ugly Places" project, to that of providing a foundation for young people's reflective argument and political dialogue. Thus, the MIABE Plus might possibly serve as a platform for the youngster's participation in democratic practices in a wider sense, now and later.

Applications of the MIABE have taken place within the framework of representative democracy. In a possible application of the MIABE Plus, no structural ort legal amendments would be required. However, a responsive government and an accountable bureaucracy would be presupposed for both models.

1.1 THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS THESIS

The objectives of my thesis are;

1. To describe the MIABE, its many components and how they were facilitated to promote children's participation in the pilot-project of the "Small Ugly Places".

2. To reflect on the process of achieving participation from the perspective of the theory of communicative planning.

3. To examine the potential for a revised and expanded version of the MIABE (the MIABE Plus) based on the understanding emerged from the above reflections.

From these three objectives, the research question emerged: How to study and research my own educational micropractices in an educational context with children working with details of the built environment in their local neighbourhood, and have a dialogue with real situations of participation?

I shall attempt to answer the question using three different perspectives: (i) "Tell the Story", in which I report application of the MIABE in the pilot-project on the "Embellishment of the Small ugly Places" (ii) the theoretical discussion and (iii) my conversations with some of the former users of the MIABE. Additionally, the chapters "The Research Strategy", "The MIABE" and the "Positioning of the MIABE in a Broader Context" all contribute in answering the question.

A theoretical elucidation of educational practices with children, the built environment and participation could take many directions, like for example a pedagogical approach or possibly also an approach rooted in political science. However, I wished to discuss the MIABE and its application with regard to certain issues within the theory of communicative planning. Why was this? The reason for the choice of communicative planning, as well as for the application of the MIABE, could be divided into benefits for society as well as for the individual. Although the theory of planning applies only to a limited extent to children, communicative planners and the practitioners of the MIABE share a wish to prepare a process for active participation. Other common aims are 1) personal growth, 2) exercise in becoming citizens within a democracy, 3) ability to communicate with authorities, 4) stimulation of responsibility and interest in the public place, and 5) generally to gain positive experience from dialogue.

The concept of planning as such is explained in the text to come, so is the more specified concept of communicative planning. Although the concept of planning might be wide, it refers to physical planning whenever mentioned. It has been argued that research on child participation is based too often in a personalised local context and thus failing to connect the research to the broader social processes of society. Trying to comply with this challenging criticism, I have aimed at capturing a more holistic view in reflection on my own communicative practice with children and participation. To assist in achieving the aims, parts of the communicative planning theory have proven a useful tool.

1.2 EXPLAINING SOME CONCEPTS AND TERMS

As my practice derives from the life-world, this concept frequently appears. Tore Sager in his book "Communicative Planning" explains the life-world perspective to be "reserved for the acting individual taking part in the events rather than observing them. The lifeworld signifies both a context of reference and a repository of intuitive knowledge and know-how for social actors."[7] This is the interpretation to which I subscribe in this thesis.

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[7] Tore Sager, *Communicative Planning Theory* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1994), 247.

My thesis title asks if there is room for children to participate. The concept of room carries three different meanings. The first of my three meanings of the concept of "room" is the physical room in the shape of the public place in the local neighbourhood. The second meaning of room, the administrative room, facilitates participation projects for children and the young, not at the political decision-making level of the City Council and its Standing Committees, but at the level of the agencies responsible for practical implementation of projects, as reported in my story about the "Small Ugly Places". The political room, the third meaning of the concept of room, is formed by a government that is responsive in issues concerning children and participation. This room is also shaped by policy documents concerning children, participation and the built environment. With regard to this third meaning of room I have taken the concept "political" to relate to decisions made by political authorities, at all levels.

In Norway children and the young are given status as independent individuals having the right to active influence and participation within the society. The concept of children and the young usually refers to the age groups between 0 and 18. My practice is about schoolchildren in primary schools. The concept thus refers to the age groups 6-16.

Generally, the concept of participation seems to cover "everything" from political participation in paying the ballot box a visit every two years to what is the framework of this thesis; experience of participation based in an increased awareness of the built environment. In reflection on my own communicative practices, I have seen children's participation described in many different ways, ranging from the wish of adults to expose the children as the icing of their own cake to that of "true" participation in which the role of the children is given priority. The concept is highlighted under the heading "The Discussion".

I would argue that the concept of ethics needs to be approached with the utmost of discretion in all matters concerning children. In Norway, research on or with children has to be sanctioned by the Data Inspectorate (Datatilsynet). The empirical part of my thesis never formed part of a research project and permission from the inspectorate was not sought. However, the ethics of my role as a facilitator was covered under the ordinary precautions applying interim visits from people outside the school, trust and professional secrecy. The children were given anonymity in that I knew them by their first name only. Written permission for use of photos of the participating children in media was given by their parents in accordance with the Code of Ethics of the Norwegian Press.[8]

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[8] "Code of Ethics of the Norwegian Press. Ethical Code of Practice for the Press (Printed Press, Radio and Television)." Section 4, Publication Rules, 4.8.

My thesis title refers to my own communicative practice. By communicative I subscribe to the interpretation offered by Lisbeth Birgersson who argues communication in its broadest sense to comprise "everything from legislative agreements to what the individual is able to experience with all senses and as part of a cultural community."[9]

Jorunn Christoffersen was the key person of the pilot-project on the "Embellishment of the Small Ugly Places". In this thesis she is usually referred to as the internal project leader of the municipality. Her formal title was project advisor to the Chief Commissioners' Department.

My role is described in the chapter "The MIABE" and also in the chapter "Tell the Story". I developed the MIABE and acted as facilitator, co-ordinator, and an enthusiast. In my chapter "The MIABE Revisited" my role was also that of a researcher.

Throughout the thesis I have chosen to use the personal pronoun "he" without thought to discrimination.

All translations of letters, faxes, children's notes and more, are mine. The main challenge has been translation of the latter, particularly in the chapter "Tell the Story". However, to the best of my ability, I have aimed at paying justice to their work as well as to their ways of expression. All documentation referred to is accessible for study in the form of a non-printed attachment, as in most governmental reports. In my case, this enclosure is a CD available on request to the Oslo School of Architecture and Design.

My reference system is the "EndNote 8". My manual of style is the "Chicago 15 A". Unfortunately, the programme does not always correspond with my wishes; Norwegian nouns do not begin with a capital letter, neither do the prepositions. In my footnotes and thus also my bibliography they do. I apologise for this inconvenience to the reader.

When I go cross country skiing, I usually plan for a variation in tracks. I need some minutes to warm up, preferably in a moderately rolling terrain. The challenge of attacking some steep upward hills then follows. Running downhill at the end of my trip is a reward for my efforts.

Organising the text of my thesis has many similarities to skiing. Preparations of my skies are important to enjoy the trip: the soles should be carefully prepared from brushing and gliding. The waxing process of skies – to allow for skiing uphill as well as downhill is important. The basic preparations have to take place before the season starts.

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[9] Lisbeth Birgersson, "In Touch with Place," *Nordisk Arkitekturforskning. Nordic Journal of Architectural Research*, no. 4 (2001): 79.

In preparing for a thesis, the same rules seem to apply: the foundation of the research is the research strategy which will guide the writing of the thesis. However, as when you go skiing, the conditions might change as you go. The snow might get warmer or colder thus demanding another layer of wax or even a new one; the research strategy might need to be supplemented during the writing of the thesis. My introductory chapter could be compared to inform the rest of my family about the choice of my track.

Still using the skiing as a metaphor my chapter "The MIABE" would be the minutes to warm up, while the three chapters "Tell the Story", "Positioning of the MIABE in a Broader Context" and the "MIABE Revisited" all would be the sloping part of the trip. How to possibly discuss my practice in terms of scholarship? This challenge no doubt could be related to meet some steep upward hills, like in my chapter "The Discussion". What remains is the pleasant running downhill – reflecting upon the long day out.

After skiing the skies need to be cleaned to be ready for the next trip. Although not knowing what my next trip would entail, I have briefly looked into a possible future context of a wider potential application to the MIABE, the MIABE Plus, in my chapter "Leaving the Door Ajar".

1.3 INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTERS

In my next chapter, Chapter 2, "The Research Design", the reader is introduced to the positioning of my research subject. Linn Mo argues that "Studying professional practice can be research, but professional practice itself is not research."[10] How, then could I possibly try and comply with the requirements for making my practice "researchable"? I have investigated various qualitative research methods considering their adequacy and usefulness for solving my problem. The qualitative research strategy of Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman is discussed, followed by an introduction to the narrative method, the reflexive method and the method of conversation as ways of production of task-relevant knowledge. My chapter "Tell the Story" and the chapter "The MIABE Revisited" are both presented as narratives. To the latter, the use of conversations as a method for acquiring knowledge is applied.

The purpose of my third chapter is to introduce to the reader the case of my thesis, the Model for Increasing Awareness of the Built Environment, the MIABE. Application of the MIABE is illustrated from my initial project on children and the built environment, the "Slemdal" project and also from the "Råholt" project in which, for the first time, participation formed part of the aim of my model. I argue that the MIABE is a practical, teaching-and

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[10] Linn Mo, "How to Write a Good Thesis," (Oslo School of Architecture and Design: Oslo Session of the "Millennium Programme", handout, 1999), 4.

learning model. Based on James Mursell's six principles for teaching, a brief educational view of the MIABE is presented and so are some of its components. Additionally, the reader is introduced to the issue of planning practice seen as a link between knowledge and organised action.

Chapter number four is called "Tell the Story". This is where the main empirical reference of this thesis is presented. The chapter is about application of the MIABE in the municipally initiated pilot project on "Embellishment of the Small Ugly Places". The purpose of the chapter is to report a complete practice story about children, participation and the built environment. Nearly two years passed from the early preparations to the final exhibition of the children's work in the City Hall Gallery(Oslo).

Chapter five is named "Positioning of the MIABE in a Broader Context". The chapter offers a brief outline of children and their participation in Norway. Then follows an evaluation-based presentation and reflections of some, mainly Scandinavian, projects. Research in my area is scarce, and the number of scholarly contributions is small.

The sixth chapter "The MIABE Revisited" relates a reunion with some of the former participating children, now aged 18 to 26. This reunion is not based on interviews but in research-targeted conversations. The former users of the MIABE reflect upon some of the key components of the model, and also contribute to a view about the possible expanded potential of the MIABE Plus.

Chapter 7, "The Discussion" attempts to address the second objective of my thesis and is based in parts on the theory of communicative planning. The shared aims of communicative planners and the practitioners of the MIABE for preparing a process for participation already mentioned are all discussed in this chapter. Additionally, light is shed on the concept of power linked to the MIABE and John Forester's concept of design as a sense-making activity is introduced. The chapter concludes by evolvement of an expansion of the MIABE and also of the "room for participation" – the room for provision of a foundation for young people's reflective argument and political dialogue.

The eighth and final chapter is based on the emerged understanding that this extended potential of the MIABE, the MIABE Plus, might possibly also serve as a platform for enhancement of participatory democratic practices for the children, now and later. From this the question arose; would there be room for a MIABE Plus? The answer no doubt goes beyond the limits of this thesis. However, to indicate a future pathway of investigation a brief overview of a possible contextual positioning is offered. This chapter I have named "Leaving the Door Ajar".

2. THE RESEARCH DESIGN

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The term "research design" has been well established for at least two decades as a framework for designing "qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods research in the human and social sciences."[1] However, its usefulness for research in general has become broadly recognised not only for these groups of disciplines. For my project the term "research design" is useful to denote the interplay of research strategies, methods and techniques as well as the use of the theoretical references in my arguments.

In the established academic disciplines there is usually no tradition for presenting the research strategy and methods applied in the doctoral study and researchers usually operate within acknowledged theoretical and methodological frameworks. This was not the case with my research project which is practice-based. In order to prepare for an appropriate research approach, an adequate research design had to be constructed and this is discussed below.

I shall present and discuss several adequate research strategies and consider their relevance with regard to the objectives of my thesis. Among them there are qualitative research methods in general, and the narrative method, the reflexive method and the method of "conversation as production of knowledge" in particular. As mentioned in my previous chapter, Linn Mo who has been teaching prospective researchers recruited from the Making Professions argues that: "Studying professional practice can be research, but professional practice itself is not research."[2] How then, could I possibly try and comply with the requirements for making my practice researchable? This I assume is my major research question.

My area of research does not exist as an independent academic notion of study. For my project it entails initiating a small, modest "field of research".

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[1] John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2003), preface, p.xix.
[2] Linn Mo, "How to Write a Good Thesis," (Oslo School of Architecture and Design: Oslo Session of the "Millennium Programme", handout, 1999), 4.

Physical planning or more specifically, parts of the communicative planning theory constitute the main reference basis of my discussion. As mentioned in my previous chapter the reason for the choice of communicative planning, as well as for the application of the MIABE, can be divided into benefits for society as well as for the individual. Although the theory of planning deals with children only to a limited extent, communicative planners and the practitioners of the MIABE share a wish to prepare a process for active participation. Other common aims are 1) personal growth, 2) exercise in becoming citizens within a democracy, 3) ability to communicate with authorities, 4) stimulation of responsibility and interest in the public place, and 5) to gain generally positive experience from dialogue.

My main empirical reference is the pilot-project on the "Embellishment of the Small Ugly Places", a project about schoolchildren, the built environment and participation. This point of departure made me assume that the most appropriate strategy of research would be the qualitative.

Why would a thesis about schoolchildren, the built environment and participation be linked to parts of the theory of planning rather than for instance environmental psychology or pedagogy? My Doctoral training course did, in many respects, provide me with substantial new knowledge. In my group, two other candidates were also working with children and the young. However, their interest and approach proved to be different from mine – and so were their cases and their raw data. I learned to know that the often cited expression the "children's perspective", requires knowledge in multiple disciplines periphery to my disciplinary education as well as my interests.

Another frequently used expression in participation projects with children is "in the interest of the child". This view is not consistent with application to the MIABE. Benefit for the individual as well as for the society is a prerequisite for my model. The use of public places in the built environment as a basis for teaching and learning, encourages the children to become involved in matters that concern the community as such.

Thus, a slight shift in my focal interest evolved from the idea of participation based on ideas for change as in the "Small Ugly Places" projects, to that of introducing children to democratic practices which could be valuable also later in life.

How to establish a research strategy deriving from practice? I have already mentioned Linn Moe who argues that professional practice itself is not research, but that the study of such practice is. To illustrate this argument, Linn Moe uses a doctor and his thorough examination of a patient as an example – laboratory tests and "a great deal of apparatus and machinery"[3] included. This, she argues, is not research, but ordinary clinical practice.

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[3] Ibid., 3.

> The aim is to benefit the particular patient. A doctor on sabbatical who examines the records and results of treatment of a sample of patients in order to improve medical knowledge of a specific type of illness is doing research. The aim is to increase or improve the knowledge in the discipline of medicine.[4]

If I replace the doctor with a planner who, after conversations with colleagues or attendance at a conference, improves his practice and brings it up to date, then this would be ordinary planning practice, not research. However, if the planner examines his records of application – to let us say a model about how to possibly enhance children's increased awareness of the built environment to achieve participation – in order to improve planning knowledge about this particular issue, then he would be doing research. The aim would be to increase or improve the knowledge in the field of planning.

> Thorough investigation of all kinds of relevant facts is an important part of the practice of any profession, but as long as the aim is practice, the investigation is simply a part of normal practice. A great deal of knowledge can come from professional practice, as well as even informal experience, but this new knowledge needs then to be checked by the rigors of scientific research before it can be said to be research-based knowledge.[5]

In the chapter "Positioning of the MIABE in a Broader Context" it is obvious that there is a striking lack of research since all empirical work is the result of practice projects. During my practice I accumulated a large amount of empirical data which was difficult to interpret with regards to the work of others of whom I was critical or that I was not critical enough of myself. At times, as a practitioner, I might have overlooked the importance of what the children had to say. Thus I later had conversations with some of those who had taken part in the MIABE projects to try and counteract this. The role of practitioner and researcher is best summed up by Linn Moe who argues, "A great deal of professional activity is not scientific and does not need to become so. [...] "Whoever heard of scientific social work or a scientific priest, for example?"[6]

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[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid., 3-4.
[6] Ibid., 4.

2.2 AN OUTLINE OF A POSSIBLE RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN ACTION RESEARCH AND THE MIABE PROCEDURES

Before explaining the specific research methods used in my work I want to outline a possible resemblance between action research and the MIABE procedures used first in the "Slemdal" project and later in the "Råholt" and the "Small Ugly Places" projects. In all three, my role was not that of a researcher but of a practitioner. I worked closely with the groups involved and monitored my own involvement by recording the conversations I had with individuals. Thus my strategy resembled what Donald Schön has called "reflective practice".[7] He considers this alternation between acting and observing as crucial to participatory action research. In the following I will discuss how such an approach and my own work possibly relate to different ways of defining action research.

Hans Lorentz argues that today's action research might mean rather different things to different people in different contexts. However, an action research project usually is about change and the researcher is strongly engaged in the planning process, the process of implementation, and in analysis of the process of change.[8]

From the many variations in action research, Lorentz points to Practitioner Research which, he argues, implicit means Educational Practitioner Research. In definitions of Practitioner Research, which I believe would be the one closest to my own procedures, the practitioner is seen to be doing his own research aiming at betterment of his own practices.[9] If this kind of research aims at betterment of one's own practice, it would only partly apply to me as my concern is mainly about a possible betterment of practices about children and participation in general. Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart argue that the action research process is generally "thought to involve a spiral of self-reflective cycles of the following": (i) planning a change, (ii) acting and observing the process and consequences of the change, (iii) reflecting on these processes and consequences, (iv) re-planning, (v) acting and observing again, (vi) reflecting again, and so on.[10]

Although the reader is not yet familiar with the MIABE development, my argument would be easy to follow. I believe that resemblance to action research related to my model might be seen in the developmental phase: My intention (i) was to enhance an increased awareness of the built environment

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[7] Donald A. Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).
[8] Hans Lorentz, "Aksjonsforskning: Om Likheter Och Olikheter I Använding Och Benämning Inom Predagogisk Forskning," (2004).
[9] Ibid.: 10.
[10] Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart, "Particpatory Action Research. Communiucative Action and the Public Sphere," in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2005), 563.

for all children, preferably as part of the ordinary teaching and learning process in primary school. In the "Slemdal" project my role was a facilitator as well as a designer of the model for achieving aims, the MIABE. I was also an active participatory observer (ii). In the preparations for the "Råholt" project my experience from the "Slemdal" project guided the refinement necessary to meet the new project aims, thus new components were added to my model (iii). Based in the revised MIABE, (iv) I once again acted an observing participant (v). Experience from this process, unveiled the MIABE's suitability also for achieving participation. This new experience, in its turn, constituted the basis of my preparations for the next MIABE application, the pilot-project of the "Small Ugly Places" (vi).

In my opinion, resemblance to action research is seen in the above mentioned developmental phase of my model, not in its implementation. Evaluation of the MIABE took place after termination of the different projects, thus the implementation was a linear process. However, if facilitating the model had been tested during the project period, then the process would have been cyclic and thus closer to the identity of action research.

According to Leif Chr. Lahn, the key features of practitioner research, based on the above mentioned ideas of Donald Schön, are self-reflection and retrospection. This iterative process is presented in different shapes, as for instance the already mentioned action research spiral.[11]

In the following, my attempt to try and act as a sufficiently skilled tailor to design a research strategy that could possibly aid my analysis and improve professional judgement is presented.

2.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS IN GENERAL

From readings in my Doctoral training course, I came across a "recipe" on how research should be conducted: (i) Formulation of the focal theme (ii) Focus on problems (iii) Methods and theory (iv) Gathering information and (v) Presentation of the result. However, in my research the order appeared to be slightly different; (i), (iv), (ii), (iii) and (v). Why this disorderly approach? My empirical reference already existed as the research process began and it was not conducted as part of a research programme. The "Small Ugly Places" project approach was a practical action for children and aimed at changes in the public places.

Bengt Starrin, who has investigated identifications of qualitative methodology, has arrived at some indicative concepts like; soft,

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[11] Personal communication with Professor Leif Chr. Lahn, Institute for Educational Research, University of Oslo June 19th. 2007

hermeneutics, micro, closeness, word, and phenomenology.[12] Are any of these identifications shared with the concepts recognised in my own work? My three MIABE related projects referred to in this thesis did, in all respects, take place on micro level; schoolchildren were the main actors, the details of the built environment comprised the base for teaching and learning and participation was conducted in co-operation with local authorities. The public places in the local neighbourhood of the school belong to the children's life-world, thus the concept of closeness would be looked after. Words, as opposed to figures, are dominating. A phenomenological approach will be recognised in my chapter "The MIABE Revisited".

My raw data appeared to be multiple and comprised a variety of collected material produced by the children; log books, drawings, maps, photos, letters, models and reports. Additionally, my raw data comprised newspaper articles, tapes from radio interviews with the children and myself, transcription of conversations, and a video. Written communication, mainly in the form of correspondence with the Municipality of Oslo also comprised an extensive part of my raw data. As I do not interpret the intentions behind the different laws and other public documents governing the structural preconditions of my research, these are not considered part of my raw data.

Case studies

Case studies as research strategy links, Rolf Johansson argues, research and practice.[13] Action oriented professions base their capability to act in a repertoire of known cases built up from, for example, one's own experiences. Such a repertoire, Johansson writes, is built up from one's own experiences as well as transmitted cases. This transmission might take different directions, like criticism or presentations of various kinds. He defines a case this way: Within the extended field of architecture, "from the spoon to the city"

> the case might be constituted from an example on design, presentation or application to the artefact or a combination of these which means the more physical design – the planning or the process of display or the experiences of the artefact, are all different aspect which might constitute the focus of a case study, in their own or in combination.[14]

My practice is based in application to the MIABE and in my thesis three different examples constitute the repertoire of cases. Additionally, my repertoire of cases draws on experience from related projects which will be

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[12] Bengt Starrin, "Om Distinktionen Kvalitativ-Kvantitativ I Social Forskning," in *Kvalitativ Metod Och Vetenskapsteori*, ed. Bengt Starrin and Per-Gunnar Svensson (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 1994), 35.
[13] Rolf Johansson, "Ett Explikativt Angreppssätt - Fallstudiemetodikens Utveckling, Logiska Grund Och Betydelse I Arkitekturforskningen," *Nordisk Arkitekturforskning. Nordic Journal of Architectural Research*, no. 2 (2002).
[14] Ibid.: 19.

reported from in the chapter, "Positioning of the MIABE in a Broader Context". My model no doubt, is based on architecture in its widest sense with an application ranging from the children's design of street furniture, via urban studies on micro level to participation in physical planning processes. The focus of my study is a critical reflection of my model for increased awareness of the built environment and its application. The MIABE therefore, complies with Johansson's claims for being a case.

Rolf Johansson expresses a difference in opinion to the interpretation of the criteria of case studies in Robert Stake and also in Robert Yin. I shall not enter the discussion, but proceed with Johansson's own interpretation of the concept: "A cases study is recognised from an approach which aims at explanation and understanding *one* case in its context – including as many relevant variables as possible."[15] Johansson refers to this way of approaching the case to be explicative. This approach should serve as attacking another problem without limitations of variables to try and encircle the issue at stake. In my thesis the MIABE is the case and it is explained with reference to the public place in the local neighbourhood. What would the relevant variables comply with? My many variables derive from the structural level as well as the practical level. The MIABE has formed part of a project closely linked to prearranged municipal co-ordination, like in the "Small Ugly Places" to one without such support as in the "Slemdal" project. It has been carried out in close co-operation with devoted teachers and with those not so devoted. Selection of working groups in the MIABE was the choice of the children. However, the teachers occasionally insisted on composing the groups which sometimes was a success, sometimes not. Children aged nine to fifteen have worked in accordance with my model, and the subjects related to the various projects have differed widely. The model has been used in central areas as well as in suburban areas.

This way of approaching the case has proven explicative in that it has served as a basis for tackling another problem by examining a possible extended potential of the MIABE. The many variables are, Johansson argues, "changed and rearranged during the work. They evolve."[16] And so they did – as a result of completion of the two first objectives of my thesis.

Analysis of data

The research strategy of Matthews B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman as applied to the analysis of qualitative data, seemed to answer my demands. From what then, is a qualitative analysis recognised? Miles and Huberman,[17] like Bengt Starrin, share the view on the prominence of words as opposed to

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[15] Ibid.: 19-20.
[16] Ibid.: 20.
[17] Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Sourcebook of New Methods* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1984), 21.

numbers. Although my data already existed at the start of my research and were not collected, they correspond with the variety of ways of data collection referred to by Miles and Huberman.

Miles and Huberman argue that qualitative data are attractive because "They are a source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes occurring in local contexts. With qualitative data one can preserve chronological flow, assess local casualty, and derive fruitful explanations." They also claim words to have a much stronger impact on the reader "than pages of numbers.[18]

Data have to be "processed" before they are ready for use, via for example editing or typing up, "but they remain words, usually organized into extended text."[19] The term analysis comprises "three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification." […] "Data reduction refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the 'raw' data that appear in written-up field notes."[20]

To me, the term verification, the third component in the above mentioned "concurrent flows of activity" in Miles and Huberman, seems closer to a vocabulary linked to quantitative rather than qualitative research. However, in their analysis, verification "may be as brief as a fleeting 'second thought' crossing the analyst's mind during writing, with a short excursion back to the field notes – or it may be thoroughgoing and elaborate.[21]

Following the recommendations of Miles and Huberman I have aimed throughout my thesis, at reduction of my data to make them sharper and more focused. As the process of selection proceeded, I have met new demands for "economy of thought." Reduction of my data "through sheer selection, through summary or paraphrase, through being subsumed in a larger pattern, and so on" has proven a useful as well as necessary approach.[22]

To illustrate a couple of my data reduction processes, the selection and the summary that have taken place, the pilot-project of the "Small Ugly Places" project serves as an example. The project was based in application to the MIABE, which comprised 29 different components for achieving goals. The components served all sorts of purposes: (i) structural preconditions, (ii) components to assist in the children's expression of their impressions from working in the field, and (iii) general as well as specific aims. A demanding, concurrent flow of activities, like selection and summary, had to be established to discuss the process of their application as well as to assist in examination of a possible base for a MIABE Plus. The process forms part of my following chapters, and should allow for a transparency in conclusions.

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[18] Ibid., 15.
[19] Ibid., 21.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid., 22.
[22] Ibid., 21.

The numerous practical initiatives on children and participation that comprised the point of departure for my chapter "Positioning of the MIABE in a Broader Context" could serve as an example of another challenging process of selection.

Miles and Huberman define the display of data to be an "organized assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action taking."[23] A narrative text as in my chapter "Tell the Story" and partly also in my chapter "The MIABE Revisited", are seen to be the most frequently used way of displaying qualitative data.

Conclusions, the final of the three concurrent flows of activities comprising the Miles and Huberman analysis of qualitative data, are based in noting regularities, deciding "what things *mean*", propositions, and more.[24] They argue that "the meanings emerging from the data have to be *tested* for their plausibility, their sturdiness, their 'confirmability' – that is, their *validity*."[25] Such testing of validity has taken different directions. However, in my thesis, like in my model, I am not concerned about arriving at any "right" answers. In this thesis, I have no hypothesis to test. The challenge to try and make the results arrived at verified to the utmost possible extent is not present.

Criticism has been raised to the qualitative data analysis of Miles and Huberman. Tove Thagaard has reservations about using their qualitative data analysis. In my understanding, her main objection is given proof of in her preference of the one case study rather than to the "cross-case comparisons" of Miles and Huberman.[26] Having chosen the interpretation offered by Rolf Johansson, I have no problems in following Thagaard in this. However, she values their methods of analysis to arrive at an overview of tendencies and connections within the raw data, as positive. Additionally, the fact that Miles and Huberman have mainly presented studies on system level, for instance on developments of schools and school reforms within American education, has been criticised.

I have not followed all steps in the qualitative data analysis of Miles and Huberman. However, the parts of their qualitative data analysis necessary for processing my multiple and many facetted raw data have proven a useful aid as a first step in making my practice researchable. Maybe to more confusion than to practical interest – I have not adapted their concept of "site" to that of "case". Although arguing that the meaning is rather similar, Miles and Huberman claim that they "cannot study individual 'cases' devoid of their context in the way that a qualitative researcher often does."[27]

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[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid., 22.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Tove Thagaard, *A Structural Approach to Qualitative Data Analysis: A Presentation and Discussion of Miles and Huberman's Method, Rapport / Institutt for Sosiologi, Universitetet I Oslo; 31* (Oslo: Department of Sociology, University of Oslo, 1993), 28.

[27] Miles and Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Sourcebook of New Methods*, 28.

My thesis is presented as a personal monograph. Michael Quinn Patton writes of the personal voice to be "more than grammar". What is presented, should be trustworthy and appear in a contextual clarity to offer the reader a possibility to join "the inquirer in the search for meaning."[28] A similar statement is found in Miles and Huberman, as well as in John Forester. The latter writes:

> To be ethically illuminating, an account of practice must begin with the recognition that no theory of action can be fundamentally neutral, for any theory reflects an organization of our attention, to the neglect of other possibilities.[29]

2.4 THE REFLEXIVE METHOD

My own position is outlined in the very beginning of this thesis. Although aiming to prevent transmission of my cultural, political and personal points of view, my voice is heard throughout the thesis. This means that my interpretations might differ from those of another person. Within qualitative research there seems to be room for such differences. As will be seen below, in all three MIABE related projects I have taken on the role as an active participant myself, not just an observer of facts. However, being critically subjective is not synonymous with not being reliable. I have, to the best of my capabilities, acted ethically and truthfully.

A narrative text has already been referred to as the most frequently used way of displaying qualitative data. At the start, a narrative approach has been used when explaining the results from the "Small Ugly Places" project in the chapter entitled "Tell the Story". In the chapter "The MIABE Revisited" "conversation as a means of knowledge production" is chosen to display the thoughts, ideas and reflections of some former users of the MIABE.

The subtitle for my thesis reads: "Reflections on Communicative Practices in an Educational Context". What then, is meant by reflection in connection to a research strategy? Bertil Rolf argues that reflective knowledge is the kind of knowledge which, through articulation, is focused upon and subordinated logical operations. The purpose is to interpret, analyse, compare and criticise to be able to draw any conclusions. "Reflection", he emphasises,

> is a process in which man distances himself from the knowledge performed by anyone but himself. The reflection opens up the road to adaptation, one clarifies, investigates

[28] Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2002), 65.

[29] John Forester, *Critical Theory, Public Policy, and Planning Practice: Toward a Critical Pragmatism, Suny Series in Political Theory Contemporary Issues* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1993), 18.

alternatives, one studies reasons or consequences, the pros and cons are assessed. Reflections normally take place in a social process. In our reflections, we bring with us social patterns, roles, symbols, attitudes and techniques from which we are assisted.[30]

To me, this last sentence is an extended explanation of the concept of personal voice already referred to.

From the arguments in favour of reflection referred to in Rolf, I would like to add the aspect of time which I have experienced as most useful. The closer one is to an incident in mind, the more difficult it is to capture its meaning. For example, as I wrote the chapter "The MIABE Revisited" which had taken place nearly 18 months previously, I found from my notes that questions and answers I had missed contained valuable information. Douglas MacBeth offers an additional useful explanation to the concept of reflexivity:

> In the rush of interest in qualitative research in the past 15 years, few topics have developed as broad a consensus as the relevance of analytic 'reflexivity'. By most accounts, reflexivity is a deconstructive exercise for locating of the intersections of author, other, text, and world, and for penetrating the representational exercise itself.[31]

On the other hand, Quinn Patton, argues that "Reflexivity has entered the qualitative lexicon as a way of emphasising the importance of self-awareness, political/cultural consciousness, and ownership of one's perspective."[32]

Mary and Kenneth Gergen argue that investigators emphasising reflexivity are concerned about ways to inform their audience of the "various biases they bring to the work, their surprises and 'undoings' in the process of the research."[33] However, Gergen and Gergen argue that reflexivity is weak on claims for validity: "Ultimately, the act of reflexivity asks the reader to accept itself as authentic, that is, as a conscientious effort to 'tell the truth' about the making of the account"[34] – a potential pitfall being endless reflection upon reflection.

Professional competence is recognised from the skill to reflect *over* practice. "All professions", Bertil Rolf argues, "have in them a kind of reflection *within* practice to make decisions in real situations."[35] The latter is often

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[30] Bertil Rolf, "In the Search for an Epistemology of Professional Practice," (Oslo School of Architecture and Design: Ph.D Course, handout, October 2, 2002), 4.
[31] Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*, 64.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Mary M. Gergen and Kenneth J. Gergen, "Qualitative Inquiry. Tensions and Transformations," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2000), 1027.
[34] Ibid., 1028.
[35] Rolf, "In the Search for an Epistemology of Professional Practice," 4.

linked to Donald Schöns's concept "the reflective practitioner", already briefly mentioned in my section about action research. Judith Innes explains his concept this way:

> The way to serve a client is for the practitioner and client to share their understandings in a cooperative way, to define and redefine problems, exploring assumptions and creating new possibilities until they jointly find a solution. […] Schön contends such 'reflective practitioners' use their knowledge in highly contextual and contingent ways and are prepared to modify that knowledge in response to the client's understanding.[36]

According to Innes, such shared understanding "respects the importance of ordinary knowledge."[37]

One of the MIABE components is about learning to "see" better – in the sense of acquiring knowledge from. Donald Schön, in referring to his reflective designing example involving the supervisor and the young student, writes:

> Quist and the Supervisor reflect on their students' intuitive understandings of the phenomena before them and construct new problems and models derived, not from application of research-based theories, but from their repertoires of familiar examples and themes. Through *seeing as* and *doing as*, they make and test new models of the situation.[38]

In my thesis, examples of reflection in action, or as Bertil Rolf argues, the kind of reflection used to better make a decision in concrete situations are probably most easy to spot in the two chapters "Tell the Story" and the "MIABE Revisited". My reflection performed throughout the thesis is consistent with the interpretations of the concept of reflection seen in Bertil Rolf as well as in MacBeth, Quinn Patton and Gergen and Gergen.

2.5 THE NARRATIVE METHOD

According to the argument of Miles and Huberman already mentioned, display of qualitative data in the shape of a narrative is rather common. Bent Flyvbjerg enhances researchers to follow his example in developing narratives, arguing they are needed as points of reference for praxis in planning research:

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[36] Judith Eleanor Innes, *Knowledge and Public Policy: The Search for Meaningful Indicators*, 2nd expanded ed. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1989), 14.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*, 166.

It is hoped that other researchers will develop other narratives. We need them as points of reference for praxis in planning research. The aim is not to tell planners in the usual manner how we think they can make a difference but to understand how we ourselves may make a difference with the work we do.[39]

In Barbara Czarniawska, the narrative is explained as "texts that present events developing in time according to (impersonal) causes or (human) intentions – that are the main carriers of knowledge in modern societies toward the end of the 20th century."[40] Connection of the person and the personal to social events, processes and organizations are underlined. Most work in narratives concerns, like mine, personal narratives or stories.

Steinar Kvale offers an encouraging explanation of the identity of narratives, arguing that they "do what they do". Kvale writes;

Narratives themselves contain the criteria of competence and illustrate how they ought to be applied; they are legitimated by the simple fact that they do what they do. A narrative is not merely a transmission of information. In the very act of telling a story the position of the storyteller and the listener, and their place in the societal order, is constituted; the story creates and maintain social bonds.[41]

In the introduction to Czarniawska's book "A narrative approach to organization studies", the editors write: "Qualitative research using narrative methods enables researchers to place themselves in the interface between persons, stories, and organizations, and to place the person in emotional and organizational context."[42]

Susan E. Chase argues that narrative researchers treat narratives –whether oral or written – as a distinct form of discourse, arguing that

Narrative is retrospective meaning making – the shaping or ordering of past experience. Narrative is a way of understanding one's own and others' actions, of organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, and of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time.

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[39] Bent Flyvbjerg, "Bringing Power to Planning Research: One Researcher's Praxis Story," *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 21, no. 4 (2002): 365.

[40] Barbara Czarniawska, *A Narrative Approach to Organization Studies, Qualitative Research Methods; Vol. 43* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998), preface p. vii.

[41] Steinar Kvale, *Psychology and Postmodernism, Inquiries in Social Construction* (London: Sage Publications, 1992), 34.

[42] Czarniawska, *A Narrative Approach to Organization Studies*. The quotation stems from the series editors' John Van Maanen, Peter K. Manning and Marc L. Miller , p. v.

Unlike a chronology, which also reports events over time, a narrative communicates the narrator's point of view, including why the narrative is worth telling in the first place. Thus, in addition to describing what happened, narratives also express emotions, thoughts, and interpretations.[43] […] "Among other things, narrators explain, entertain, inform, defend, complain, and confirm or challenge the status quo. Whatever the particular action, when someone tells a story, he or she shapes, constructs, and perform the self, experience and reality. When researchers treat narration as actively creative in this way, they emphasize the narrator's voice(s).[44]

This is an accurate description of how I would like to present my story about the "Small Ugly Places", and thus also an answer to why a narrative mode was chosen to present the chapter "Tell the Story".

Bertil Rolf, Robert Stake and Miles and Huberman in their presentations of the identities of narratives, all refer to John Van Maanen who has identified the following different modes of telling a story; (i) realistic (ii) impressionistic, (iii) confessional, (iv) critical, (v) formal (vi) literary, and (vii) jointly.[45] The impressionistic mode is recognised from "personalized, atheoretical accounts, often story-like, aiming to link reality and the field-worker, and to enable reader reliving of the experience."[46] This description is close to how I have presented the "Small Ugly Places" project.

Somehow it is a contradiction in that my chapter, "Tell the Story" about the MIABE in context is built on accurate data. Nearly all incidents referred to are based on written raw data in the form of letters, faxes, notes to, or from, the participating adults. Additionally, there are logbooks, reports and drawings from all the children and the newspaper articles already mentioned.

Could there be too many stories? Håkon Gundersen seems to think there are. In an article in the Norwegian weekly newspaper "Morgenbladet", he reports from what he names the "Tyranny of Stories", arguing that the biographers are discussing the dangers of story telling while "out there" it is unrestrainedly practised. He makes us part of a memory trip back to the science of literature in the early 1990s when "it all started as a theory of analyses". Then, Gundersen argues, what so often happens actually did happen; the tools of criticism end as a tool of construction.[47] Keeping his challenging opinions in mind, I would still argue in favour of the justification

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[43] Susan E Chase, "Narrative Inquiry. Multiple Lenses, Approaches, Voices," in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2005), 656.

[44] Ibid., 657.

[45] Robert E. Stake, "Case Studies," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2000), 441.

[46] Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1994), 300.

[47] Håkon Gundersen, "Fortellingens Tyranni," *Morgenbladet* (1.-7. Oktober 2004): 6.

of my use of a narrative. This way of presentation allows for the possibility to impart the full width of a participatory project involving children as a tool for a shared base for interpretation and criticism as well for construction of increased knowledge.

However, I have tried to balance my story – not to hide anything, but to make sure that the reader and I do not get too close. The challenging ideas of Richard Sennet back in 1974, warning about the "tyrannies of intimacy" still apply.[48]

In my chapter "The MIABE Revisited" I intended to present a second opinion on the application of my model as well as a reflection upon a potential of the MIABE Plus. Who, then, could possibly assist in accomplishing my intentions? Interviewing so called key persons linked to the issue at stake is an often used strategy in gathering information, but who were the key persons and would an interview serve my purpose well? Would the key persons be the Chief Commissioner of the City Council, the principals of the different schools, a journalist, or a bureaucrat? The answer is the users of the MIABE, the children and the young, because they are the only ones who had experienced working in accordance to my model.

Application to my model enhances critical thinking and group discussions rather than any "right "answers. This is what I was hoping to achieve also in my reunion with the former users of the MIABE. I wished for a shared reflection which would contribute to an added elucidation of what might be achieved from having experienced the participatory part of democracy through an increased awareness of the built environment.

In the "Slemdal" and the "Råholt" projects, and also in the "Small Ugly Places" project, I have functioned like what in physical planning terms often is referred to as a facilitator.[49] Part of the work processed on collecting data, the raw data produced by the children, might look like "observing participation" as I also spent time with the pupils, particularly during the field work.[50] From the problems likely to occur in such cases, the so called "Hawthorne-effect" is often referred to.[51] A similar effect observed in the project of the "Small Ugly Places" cannot be contradicted but it is not very likely as the main purpose was to facilitate action to enhance an increased awareness of the built environment rather than to value the skills of each pupil. In the chapter "The MIABE Revisited", a possible "Hawthorne-like effect" might be present.

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[48] Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: Norton, 1992), 337.

[49] My role in the projects is shed light upon in the chapter "The Discussion"

[50] Erling Krogh, "Etnosentrisk Sosialantropologi Og Angsten for Det Nære.," *Norsk antropologisk tidsskrift* 7, no. 4 (1996). Krogh has turned around the anthropological expression "participating observer", arguing that in this way the participatory part of the observation is stressed rather than the observing.

[51] After the factory studies of Elton Mayos in the 1920 and 1930s, in which increased productivity by the workers in the end had to be explained by the fact that they were being studied by people from the outside.

2.6 THE METHOD OF CONVERSATION AS ACQUIRING KNOWLEDGE

Nine years have passed since I last met with the pupils and now they are adults or nearly so, and I have become a researcher. Did I wish to take on a new role, a role different from the rather close relationship established during the projects? I did not – mainly because that way of collaboration reflects much of me. Which methodological consequences would this entail? Erling Krogh refers to Michael Jackson who points at radical empiricism in which the point of departure is that "self" is a function of our meetings and interaction with others in a world of pluralistic and impressionable interests and situations.[52] The methodological consequence drawn from this is that my interaction and conversations "in the field" comprise the basis of what Krogh refers to as the creation of developing knowledge[53] by use of qualitative methodology.[54] The presupposition of which is the understanding being built in a text that reflects my practical, personal and participatory experience.

As already mentioned, I was not convinced that an interview would enhance the chapter "The MIABE Revisited". Steinar Kvale offers an interesting approach. "The research interview is based on the conversations of daily life and is a professional conversation", and one form of it "is defined as *an interview whose purpose is to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena.*"[55] This was exactly what I was hoping to do. Therefore, in describing my research strategy, I refer to my reunion with some of the former users of the MIABE, as the strategy in the form of a research conversation. However, whereas Steinar Kvale uses the term "interviewee", I have employed the term conversation partner.

Erling Krogh speaks of the researcher's role as a partner of co-operation as well as of conversation – a description that fits my role in the reunion with the former participants of my projects.[56] I shall not go into details about how I performed. Although I lacked some of the qualities recommended, I knew what I wanted, and the tapes reveal some interesting conversations. I would perform a semi-structured research conversation. Such conversations are known to be slightly different from an interview in that the dialogue is given a broader consideration. The dialogue of the research conversation allows for an added openness in incorporation of what is being said.[57] This is equivalent to what Steinar Kvale refers to as a qualitative research interview.

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[52] Krogh, "Etnosentrisk Sosialantropologi Og Angsten for Det Nære."

[53] "kunnskaping" is the Norwegian expression used by Krogh.

[54] Krogh, "Etnosentrisk Sosialantropologi Og Angsten for Det Nære."

[55] Steinar Kvale, *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1996), 5-6.

[56] Krogh, "Etnosentrisk Sosialantropologi Og Angsten for Det Nære."

[57] Personal conversation with Erling Krogh and Edvin Østergaard. The Norwegian University of Life Sciences (UMB)19.12.2006

The qualitative research conversation depends on active listening from the conversation partner. Steinar Kvale lists a number of qualities that ought to be present in the interviewer. These qualities also comply with the research conversation. To a novice like me, in relation to research conversations, they seemed overwhelming. The interviewer should be "clear", "pleasant", "sensitive", "open", and guiding the direction, that is he should know what he wanted and he should be "interpreting".[58] From what then, is active listening recognised? In short, Edvin Østergaard argues that it means we are listening to those of the words carrying meaning, not listening to the words as sound or noise, carrying no significance.[59] A more comprehensive approach is offered by John Forester who draws attention the attentiveness of listening.

> Planners not only must be able to hear words; they also must be
> able to listen to others carefully and critically. Such careful
> listening requires sensitivity, self-possession, and judgement.
> This is a critical part of paying attention – to other people and
> to substantive issues.[60]

"But", Forester asks "what can we do and bring into being when we listen?"[61] To answer the question, he has produced five points deserving attention. However, they are all relating to ordinary conversations, which are different from a research conversation: "When we listen well, we integrate hermeneutics and critical theory, phenomenology and the critique of ideology, and put them into practice together."[62] Consequently, his points about attentive listening are dealt with in the section on "Stimulating and informing public dialogue" in my chapter "The Discussion".

Steinar Kvale argues that "At first the qualitative interview may appear as an easy research method to use, it seems so close to the everyday conversations we already master."[63] The difficulties in such research will appear at a later stage in the research. He is right.

Could any conversation be seen as research? Do all conversations contribute to the creation of knowledge? Why conversation rather than a structured interview in the shape of questions? Conversations based on questions might, slightly caricatured be such as: How old are you now? When did you leave Råholt? The answers might easily be short and "final" and probably contribute to limited new knowledge. Such questions are recognised from not

[58] Kvale, *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*, 148-49.
[59] Edvin Østergaard, "Å Forstå Fenomener: Erfaringer Med Fenomenologi Som Vitenskap," (Ås: 2001).
[60] John Forester, *Planning in the Face of Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 107.
[61] Ibid., 111.
[62] Ibid., 113.
[63] Steinar Kvale, "Dialogue as Oppression and Interview Research" (paper presented at the The Nordic Educational research Association Conference, Tallin, Estonia, March 7-9, 2002, http://mit.psy.au.dk/ckm/newsletter/nb32/nb32-02.html), 1.

being researchable in the sense that they are facts.[64] I have already mentioned that the research conversation is slightly different from an interview. A research conversation is recognised from; (i) being more open, more oriented towards dialogue and less "input-output" – it is a floating, integrated, dual conversation, (ii) the research goal is openly expressed, and (iii) its methodological demands require that the choices of the researcher are accounted for.[65] As already mentioned research conversation is recognised from being a professional conversation based on everyday talk. The two partners involved are the researcher and his research partner – thus not all conversations are research.

From a conventional point of view, the analysis forms part of the method, following the collection of data. But, Edvin Østergaard asks, is it as simple as that in application to the method of research conversation? He answers by pointing at different levels of analysis. (i) analysis of the design phase, (ii) the analysis within the conversation itself, (iii) empirical analysis of data and (iv) analysis throughout the writing process.[66] This confirms the already mentioned argument of Kvale; this kind of research strategy is a time consuming enterprise. Analysis within the conversation means asking interpretative questions. This is an active role, which also comprises active listening.

Interpretation is the final component in the list of Steinar Kvale. In his book about the human sciences, Søren Kjørup refers to what he cheerfully names the "line of scholarly kings" within hermeneutics, starting with Friedrich Schleiermacher early in the 1800 century and culminating after the Second World War by Martin Heidegger's pupil, the philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer.[67] The break between new and old hermeneutics is seen in the role of the interpreter who now inscribes himself into the text, which is concurrent with my own choice.

Approaching the "thing-in-itself", was the point of departure of Edmund Husserl's aim to turn philosophy into science. Østergaard argues that this stands as the true motto of the phenomenology. Its inner nature does not reveal itself until the thing-in-itself has been viewed from different perspectives and through repeated views over time.[68] In the chapter "The MIABE Revisited" to which conversation as a method for acquiring knowledge applies, the thing-in-itself is participation.

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[64] Kari Bjørka Hodneland, "Conversation as a Tool for Development of New Knowledge? Reporting from the Field," in *DesignDialog -Design og fagdidaktiske utfordringer*, ed. Liv Merete Nielsen og Ingvild Digranes (red.) (Oslo: Høgskolen i Oslo Avdeling for estetiske fag, 2006), 73.

[65] Personal conversation with Erling Krogh and Edvin Østergaard. The Norwegian University of Life Sciences (UMB) 19.12.2006

[66] Edvin Østergaard, "Analyse Som Ferdighet Og Metode. Innledning Til Samtale.," in *Å være forskende deltager. Samtale og kunnskaping gjennom kvalitativ metode, Handout* (Research Seminar: The Norwegian University of Life Sciences (UMB). Fokhol Gård February 28 - March 3 and May 25-27, 2005.), 3.

[67] Søren Kjørup, *Menneskevidenskaberne: Problemer Og Traditioner I Humanioras Videnskabsteori* (Frederiksberg: Roskilde Universitetsforlag, 1996), 266.

[68] Østergaard, "Å Forstå Fenomener: Erfaringer Med Fenomenologi Som Vitenskap."
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The three concepts of "generality, reliability and validity" comprise what Steinar Kvale names a "scientific, holy trinity"[69] within modern social sciences. I find it comforting to read in Kvale that Yvonne S. Lincoln and Egon G. Guba more than twenty years ago made use of ordinary linguistic concepts in their discussions about the value of truth, reliability, trust, safety and confirmation. Steinar Kvale rejects the idea of an objective, universal truth. However, he accepts the possibility of a specific local personal and social kind of truth, focusing on everyday life and the local narratives.[70]

The concepts of reliability, generality and validity are not rejected, but are reconceptualised to become relevant for qualitative research. Kvale argues that understanding the problems of verification begins within the "lived world and daily language".[71] Reliable observations, generalisation from one case to another and valid arguments are part of our everyday social interaction. Reliability thus is the trust of the empiricism. As a researcher, I therefore have to ask myself; is the result arrived at based on subjective interpretations? Positioning myself is already accounted for; my answer thus is affirmative – yes, the result arrived at is based on subjective interpretations. However, my results might very well be representative, not for a population, but for my research question asked. This is what Robert Yin refers to as "analytic generalisation".[72]

Kvale's acceptance of a specific local, personal and societal kind of truth seems to be close to my wish for the former users of the MIABE to join me in dialogue and reflections rather than aiming at arriving at any "right", and thus maybe "true" answers. The kind of truth that emerged was focused on everyday life represented by the children's life-world, the public places in their local neighbourhood area. The stories told by the children would, therefore, be equivalent to a local narrative and thereby coincide with what Kvale refers to as a societal kind of truth.

A quick look back into the remaining parts of Kvale's "holy trinity" brings about the following questions; is the result arrived at valid in accordance to the above re-conception and could it possibly be generalised? Do I practice so called pragmatic validity? Steinar Kvale argues that pragmatic validity is verifying in the literary sense – "to make true". Pragmatic truth is what helps us act so that the result we desire will be achieved. "Knowledge is action rather than observation, the efficiency of our knowledge is demonstrated by the efficiency of our action."[73] In the pragmatic validity of a statement of knowledge, reason is replaced by application. A pragmatic concept of validity goes further than to communication. It represents a stronger

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[69] Kvale, *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*, 229.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid., 231.

[72] Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 2nd ed., *Applied Social Research Methods Series; Vol. 5* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1994), 10.

[73] Kvale, *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*, 248.

knowledge claim than consensus through dialogue. It depends on observations and interpretations in which one is obliged to act according to grounds from the interpretations; "Actions speak louder than words".[74] This is exactly what I have tried to do. A research conversation implies something more than communication, it has an aim and it will be subject to interpretation. It thus inhabits a stronger knowledge claim than sheer consensus arrived at through dialogue. So, yes I do practice so-called pragmatic validity.

Kvale makes a division between two kinds of pragmatic validity; knowledge assertions followed by action, and knowledge assertions contributing to a change of action. The latter is the stronger of the two and concerns the question of whether or not interventions based on the knowledge of the researcher might create true behaviour changes. The different kinds of pragmatic validity vary and might for instance be the interaction of co-operation between the researcher and his conversation partner. Steinar Kvale argues that according to a post-modern knowledge concept, the conversation about utilising the knowledge forms an important part of construction of the social world. "Rather than providing fixed criteria, communicative and pragmatic validation, refer to extended ways of posing the question of validity."[75] The aim should be research that makes the claim for validity superfluous.

Steinar Kvale calls attention to what he names the "asymmetrical power relation of the interview."[76] Such power relation is, he argues: "a one-way dialogue, it is an indirect and an instrumental conversation, and the interviewer upholds a monopoly of interpretation."[77] The researcher is the one who defines the interview situation:

> He initiates the interview, determines its theme, poses questions and critically follows up the answers, and terminates the conversation. The research interview is not a dominance-free dialogue between equal partners; the interviewer's research project and knowledge interest rules the conversation.[78]

In the chapter "The Discussion", the section on the concept of "power", some light is shed on the different power relations likely to be present in projects where children and adults are co-operating. When interpreting the children's behaviour, such aspects as thoughts, likes and dislikes do not form part of my thesis nor are they applied MIABE. Likewise, the aspect of power linked to interpretation is not dealt with. However, in the chapter reporting the reunion with some former users of the MIABE, the interpretation of the now young

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[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid., 251.

[76] Steinar Kvale, "Dialogue as Oppression and Interview Research" (paper presented at the The Nordic Educational research Association Conference, Tallin, Estonia, March 7-9, 2002, 2002), 3.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid.

people's conversations, appears to be part of the research strategy. What does this possibly entail?

To me the researcher's "monopoly of interpretation" would be close to a "power over"-situation, which would not be consistent with my view of power. However, if I replace the preposition *over,* to that of *to,* I would still be close to an interpretation of Kvale's argument. This would allow me as a researcher to interpret the conversation as a means to "capacity to act – power to, not power over".[79] This is an expression borrowed from Clarence Stone and is discussed in the section on power in the chapter "The Discussion".

How, then, did I perform as a researcher? I initiated the conversations. I determined their themes – although I was open to other approaches from my conversation partners. I critically followed up the answers given and I concluded the conversations. It was indeed my research project. Knowledge interest did not exactly rule, but were undoubtedly present.

Kvale argues that the popularity of this research strategy might be that it provides the researcher "with a feeling of equality, personal closeness and common interests with the interviewee, while at the same time exerting power over the interview interaction and the later use of the interview produced knowledge."[80]

Edvin Østergaard points at the fundamental claims of reliability that should be present; (i) others might check what I have been doing and perhaps accomplish a similar study, (ii) transmission of the results would most likely be seen in relation to cases sharing essential common traits, and (iii) the claim of the problem presented in the case and the results should involve current themes of the time.[81] To the best of my ability I have tried to meet the three claims of reliability.

2.7 MY RESEARCH QUESTION

Robert Yin has described the research design as an action plan to get from here to there, in which "from here" could be defined as "the initial set of questions to be answered."[82]

How, then, could I possibly "get from here", i.e how could I possibly arrive at the research question? As already mentioned, not all questions would respond to the claims for being a research question. Research questions are recognised from the "who", "what "where", "how" and "why". Yin argues that the "what"

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[79] Nigel Taylor, *Urban Planning Theory since 1945* (London: Sage Publications, 1998), 140.
[80] Kvale, "Dialogue as Oppression and Interview Research".
[81] Edvin Østergaard, *Ett Skritt Tilbake Og to Frem: En Fenomenologisk Studie Av Bønder I Omstilling Til Økologisk Landbruk, Doctor Scientiarum Theses / Norges Landbrukshøgskole; 1998:25* (Ås: Institutt for plantefag, Norges landbrukshøgskole, 1998).
[82] Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 19.

question could be exploratory or belong to the "how much" line of inquiry.[83] Rolf Johansson presents three fundamentally different ways of attacking a research problem when investigating the reality; the reductive, the experimental, and the explicative. The latter is recognised from being synthesising, "aiming at focusing on one case in its context", all in compliance with my approach.[84]

As a means for arriving at the research question, an added part of the process of processing in Miles and Huberman should be mentioned. This part includes use of different "bins" as a means to formulating the research questions – based in a conceptual framework.[85] As an example of their use of "bins" related to my work, one might be labelled "participation" another might be labelled "children". To these "bins" a variety of general as well as specific questions should be asked – followed by specifying the questions to each "bin" and also between the two, or more, bins. Miles and Huberman would argue that these questions contribute in making my theoretical assumptions more explicit. Leif Chr. Lahn refers to this way of working as economising concepts. Such economising has not been an easy task, and as Lahn argues: the more complex the task, the more complex the methodological approach.[86]

The research question I arrived at was: How do I study and research my own micro-practices in an educational context in which children work with details of the built environment in the local neighbourhood, and are in a dialogue with real situations of participation?

2.8 SUMMING UP

My research design consists of several qualitative research strategies, the narrative, the reflexive and the method of conversation as production of knowledge. I have introduced the reader to the positioning of my research area in the field of practice-based research, and my above research question is arrived at.

In the next chapter, "The MIABE", the case of my study, will be presented.

[83] Ibid., 5.
[84] Johansson, "Ett Explikativt Angreppssätt - Fallstudiemetodikens Utveckling, Logiska Grund Och Betydelse I Arkitekturforskningen," 20.
[85] Miles and Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Sourcebook of New Methods*, 28.
[86] Leif Chr. Lahn, "Grounded Theory: Prosedyrer Og Teknikker," (Kurs i grounded theory. 15-17 November 2000. Arkitekthøgskolen i Oslo. Personal communication).

3. THE MIABE

3.1 THE MIABE AND ITS MAKING

> We must learn through experience, and by using our eyes and
> analysing what we see. The environment is the best possible
> lesson, a perfect tool, a perfect test case. We need to analyse
> the existing built form and the spaces between buildings.[1]

As already reported in the introductory chapter, the MIABE is a context
bound teaching and learning model closely linked to parts of the Norwegian
National Curriculum of 1997. The school and its neighbouring areas
constitute the basis for application of my model which has been developed
for use by all children in primary and lower secondary schools.

This chapter consists of five sections. In the fist section I introduce the reader
to the MIABE and its making, its aim and its many components. The
component about learning to "see" better is introduced.

In the second section the "Slemdal" project and the "Råholt" project are
reported.

In the third section the question is posed "Does my model possibly contain
components relevant for teaching and learning?" and an answer is given with
reference to James Mursell's six principles of teaching.

In the forth section the following MIABE prerequisites are reported: (i) the
school as the chosen arena for the teaching and learning process, (ii) the
details of the built environment, and (iii) the public place as an arena for
investigations. Additionally, the MIABE components about the link to the
National Curriculum of 1997, the subject Arts and Crafts, and
interdisciplinary project work are presented.

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[1] Sir Richard Rogers, "Presentation " (paper presented at the International Conference for Built Environment
Education in Schools 13-15 April, Cambridge, UK, 1992), 13.

The theory of planning or more specifically, parts of the theory of communicative planning, form the base of my major theoretical discussion.[2] However, in the fifth section of this chapter I would like to first introduce a general view of the concept of planning. John Friedmann and Barclay Hudson argue that "A useful way to look at planning is to consider it an activity centrally concerned with the linkage between knowledge and organized action."[3] The different kinds of knowledge relevant to the MIABE are briefly presented as is my own role in the three MIABE related projects reported here.

The MIABE components range from learning to "see" better by observing via interdisciplinary project work based on registrations of details of the built environment, to the composition of a formal letter to the local municipal administration. Working with my model is a many-faceted task. The teacher is the one responsible for the pedagogical part of the process. Based on their many years of experience working with schoolchildren and the built environment, Eileen Adams and Sue Ingham have described the role of the teacher thus:

> Teacher's expertise is to be found not necessarily in their
> knowledge of the environment, but in an understanding of how
> children learn. Teachers tend to take their own professional
> skills for granted – how to address children and young people,
> how to stimulate and hold their interest and concentration, how
> to communicate with them, how to organise a group, how to
> support and direct a range of learning activities, how to juggle
> a range of interests and engagements at the same time, how to
> anticipate problems, how to deal with learning difficulties;
> these are all part of the teacher's daily routine.[4]

Additionally, through previous work, the teachers know each child well and what might be expected from him. The teacher is, therefore, a most welcome partner.

My model is process-oriented. A precondition for application is to encourage exercise in learning to "see" more actively, in the sense of achieving increased knowledge of the built environment. The former UK Minister for the Arts, Alan Howarth, once quoted Oscar Wilde who wrote: "Education is an admirable thing, but it is well to remember from time to time that nothing that is worth knowing can be taught." "Oscar Wilde would", the Minister of Arts added, "perhaps have included the act of looking amongst the valuable things which cannot be taught, and at first sight we might agree with him. In

[2] My chapter "The Diuscussion".
[3] John Friedmann and Barclay Hudson, "Knowledge and Action: A Guide to Planning Theory," *American Institute of Planners Journal* 40, no. 1 (1974): 2.
[4] Eileen Adams and Sue Ingham, *Changing Places. Children's Participation in Environmental Planning*, (London: Children's Society, 1998), 124.

any case, why should an innate sense need instruction at all?"[5] However, the Minister is not alone in arguing that even the act of looking has to be properly taught so that everyone – the children in particular – should "learn how to see properly if they are to appreciate, understand and later improve the built environment around them."[6]

Mikael Alexandersson argues that people's knowledge of the world might be understood as multiple understandings of different parts of the world and the relations between these. When understanding is seen as a relation between people and the surrounding world, this relation is dynamic in its character. From this, our understanding might change over time. We "see" the world with different eyes, which, Alexandersson argues, might be expressed as having achieved new knowledge about something in the world.[7]

Through use of my model the children are encouraged to ask questions, to be curious and to make registrations. Learning to "see" better is a crucial MIABE component leading to an extended vocabulary necessary for communicating with different professions and age groups taking part in a project. On learning to see better, Katherine Massey and Simon Lewis argue that the more often we see something, the less attention we seem to pay to it. Therefore they and the MIABE encourage a closer look into "the different things that together make up the whole picture."[8]

The above mentioned component about acquiring an extended vocabulary is linked to the details of the built environment as well as to public administration. This vocabulary aims at working as some kind of an "equaliser", which means that everybody involved in its application, the children and the young, the teachers, the bureaucrats, and the planners all speak the same language. A more detailed elucidation of this component is offered in the chapters "Tell the Story" and "The Discussion".

More than 400 children in most age groups within the primary school and their teachers have worked with my model.[9]

3.2 THE AIM OF MY MODEL

The aim of the MIABE is two-fold: to increase the children's awareness of the details of the public place in their neighbourhood environment by means of practical work, and to assist as an introduction to participation. It does not expect any "right" answers, but the stimulation of critical thinking and

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[5] Katherine Massey and Simon Lewis, "Our Street. Learning to See," (London: CABE, 2000), foreword.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Mikael Alexandersson, "Den Fenomenografiska Forskningsansatsens Fokus," in *Kvalitativ Metod Och Vetenskapsteori*, ed. Bengt Starrin and Per-Gunnar Svensson (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 1994), 117.
[8] Massey and Lewis, "Our Street. Learning to See," 2.
[9] Most of the participating schools are primary schools in Oslo.

discussion that evolves from informed knowledge obtained in working with the details of the public places like bus shelters, benches and litter bins.

From where does my wish to create the MIABE derive? As mentioned in the acknowledgement section of this thesis, the model grew out of interest and concern to possibly assist schoolchildren in becoming more aware of their immediate built environment. My ideas were based on former practice obtained during my studies on projects concerned with the development of identity of places. In the 1990s various governmental initiatives indicated an interest in the built environment such as the Report to the Storting[10], "Culture Today" (Kultur i tiden)[11] and the 1995 report "Cultural Policy of the Norwegian Government, Architecture and Design."[12] Additionally, the Minister of Cultural Affairs, Aase Kleveland, signed the World Declaration on Architecture in Schools.[13]

Although children from the age of nine to the age of sixteen have worked with the MIABE, 11-12 year olds (5th grade[14]) are my main reference group. The general capability of that age group, their responsibility when working in the field, and their knowledge of writing and reading were decisive for my choice. Additionally, my model and some of the subjects of that grade, particularly the Arts and Crafts and the social science share a number of components.[15]

In the initial model, some of the components were indicating how the children should express their impressions from the registration process like making maps, making sketches, taking photos, and building models.

Some of the other components were more like guidelines on how to accomplish the process of registration. The children should (i) learn to "see" more properly, not just look around, (ii) make use of all senses, (iii) register patterns of movements (throughout the year), (iv) design questionnaires, (v) patterns of movements, and (vi) investigate into access for the physically disabled.

My model also encouraged (i) acquiring a new language, that of architecture, so that expressions linked to the details of the built environment could be shared with the professionals, (ii) learning about the history of place, (iii) producing a summary, (iv) meeting people responsible for maintenance and/or some of the architects responsible for the main building of the site (in this case the Slemdal Centre) (v) reflections on "likes and dislikes" of the place, and (vii) producing a future design for the area, whether it be a realistic

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[10] Stortinget is the name of the Norwegian Parliament.
[11] Kulturdepartementet, *Kultur I Tiden, St.Meld.; Nr 61 (1991-92)* ([Oslo]: [Departementet], 1992).
[12] Royal Norwegian Ministry of Cultural Affairs, "Cultural Policy of the Norwegian Government: Architecture and Design," ([Oslo]: 1995).
[13] Notice Arkitektnytt, "Kulturministeren Er Med," *Arkitektnytt*, no. 11, June 21 (1993).
[14] This refers to the curriculum in use before 1997, now this age group would be 6th grade.
[15] The subjects referred to form part of the National Curriculum of 1997.

or utopian approach. Additionally, the children were encouraged to investigate whether or not they were comfortable walking through the area by night.

In the table on page 59, all the MIABE components of the "Slemdal" project are listed. Examples of how they were facilitated are presented in my story about the "Small Ugly Places" (the chapter "Tell the Story").

3.3 THE "SLEMDAL" PROJECT

The "Slemdal" project was initiated in 1993. The full title of the project was: "An Introduction to Qualitative Awareness Making Use of the Local Identity as the Point of Departure. Architecture and Environment in the Place Slemdal, Oslo". The participation part of the model, i.e. participation in the sense of an introduction to democracy, deriving from practical experience, was still to be defined. The concept of participation was not a particular component, nor was it an aim.

Pupils from Oslo Montessori School, aged 12-14, participated. The project was personally initiated after a long time preparing and designing a kind of working manual that might possibly assist in fulfilling the project title which also constituted the aim of the approach.[16]

The "Slemdal" project took place during the school year of 1993-1994. To celebrate the work of the children an exhibition was arranged at the school in June 1994. Later, in January 1995, the project was exhibited in the Galleri Falsen, an integral part of the Norsk Form, the Foundation for Design and Architecture in Norway.[17] This was a flying start for my teaching-and-learning model of the built environment. In a pamphlet explaining the exhibition, I wrote that I did not wish to bring another subject into school, but to complement the existing ones by new ways of working, enhance discussions and encourage the curiosity and the creativity in the children. My model was not after any "right" answers. This made the work exiting for the children in that they arrived at some solution together, sometimes even in co-

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[16] All Montessori schools are named after their founder, the Italian doctor and psychiatrist Maria Montessori, (1870–1952). Freedom of choice, democracy and responsibility are key elements of her philosophy. In Norway all Montessori schools are privately run. As I wished for all children to learn more of their built environment, public schools were at the core of my interest. Why then, did my very first initiative take place in a private school? The reasons why a Montessori School was chosen were many: (i) Oslo Montessori School was recently established, and wished, as part of its policy to make use of as well as to be part of the local neighbourhood in all respects. (ii) In testing of my ideas on children and the built environment, I wished to learn about the life of a school from the inside in order to unveil which were the obstacles in the daily routine of a teacher. (iii) At that time, there were some important differences in the way of teaching at a Montessori school from those of an "ordinary" school. These were linked to formalities, but also with the practical way of preparing for a teaching-and-learning process. (iv) Last, but not least, in response to my second reason I joined the staff to be in charge of the woodwork lessons.

[17] Norsk Form.

operation with the teacher.[18] The work was interdisciplinary and involved the subjects Norwegian, English, mathematics, social science, history, handicrafts and data.[19] On the method of working I argued that even though it was a process, which in itself might constitute some value, the aim was to arrive at something substantial as the end product.[20] In the "Slemdal" project this was seen in the shape of the above mentioned exhibition which was arranged by the children working with me in close co-operation. In preparing for the exhibition in the Galleri Falsen the children co-operated with the professional exhibition designer Aud Dalseg. The importance of taking into account achievement of some short term results is important in projects with children. This is also the concern of the Council of Europe which argues that "visibility of results" is a key criterion for success in participation projects with children.[21]

Slemdal seemed well suited for my wish to make use of the public place to identify. It is a typical suburban area, haphazardly planned and rather poorly maintained. The children wrote "It might have been anywhere. We are fed up with lack of maintenance. Why doesn't anyone mend what is broken? Slemdal has a very mixed look." The advertising clutter on the wall of the shopping centre was so bad that it made a youngster write "If we did not know better, we would think this place was named 'Rimi'."[22] The registration process helps diagnose the elements that make up the place. This process also makes the children see the possibilities for change. Such visual awareness is often followed by criticism which, in its turn might develop some qualitative judgements about buildings and places.[23]

In an interview related to the exhibition in the Gallery Falsen, I was asked about the future of my model. I expressed the wish for a kind of future repetition of related projects so that the children could possibly experience the concepts of architecture, environment and design in a practical way more than once during primary school and lower secondary school. A kind of a "spiral of understanding" should be encouraged with an increasing degree of difficulty, whether in mathematics by measuring a car park or learning to see better in the sense of achieving a more informed knowledge of the built environment. A reinvesting in subsequent studies is likely to assist in an extended understanding of the issue at stake or a deeper understanding of a concept. Would an early exposure to knowledge of the built environment possibly benefit a wider understanding of the concept later in life? Answering the question is beyond the scope of this thesis, but is briefly reflected upon by

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[18] Kari Bjørka Hodneland, "Form Og Arkitektur. Et Tverrfaglig Prosjektarbeide I Grunnskolen.," ([Oslo]: Utstillingsbrosjyre, 1994).

[19] In the National Curriculum of 1997, the subject Arts and Crafts (kunst og håndverk) replaced the subject "forming" (handicrafts).

[20] Kari Bjørka Hodneland, "Slemdal-Prosjektet. Form Og Arkitektur - Tverrfaglig Prosjektarbeid I Grunnskolen," FORM - et fagpedagogisk tidsskrift (FORM - a pedagogical journal), no. 1 (1996).

[21] Council of Europe, "Children, Participation, Projects - How to Make It Work!" (Strasbourg: 2004), 14.

[22] "Rimi" is a chain of shops like for instance "TESCO" in the UK.

[23] Massey and Lewis, "Our Street. Learning to See," 1.

some of the former users of the MIABE as part of our conversations reported in the chapter "The MIABE Revisited".

The "Slemdal" project might be an example of what happens if caught by the "snowball effect". However, in contrast to a snowball, the model soon developed an apparently sustainable core constituted from the details of the built environment, communication and participation, concurrent with the now main components of the MIABE.

Table: The MIABE Slemdal

THE MIABE COMPONENTS	SLEMDAL
1. Learning to "see" more actively	YES
2. Learning a new language linked to architecture (the built environment) *	YES
3. Make use of all senses	YES
4. Learning about the history of place	YES
5. Making maps	YES
6. Sketching/drawing	YES
7. Photography	YES
8. Building models	YES
9. Patterns of movements	YES
10. Access for the physically disabled	YES
11. Walking through the area by night	NO
12 Likes and dislikes	YES
13. Meet the architect responsible for the design of the "Slemdal Centre"	YES
14 Designing questionnaires	YES
15. Future design of the place, realistic or utopian	YES
16. Production of a summary	YES
17. Exhibition	YES

* This is what the component was named before I became a Doctoral student and learned that the correct phrase would be "an extended vocabulary linked to architecture and the built environment".

SLEMDAL
Project aim: to introduce schoolchildren to the local identity of Slemdal, its architecture and design.

My reflections

Reflections on application of the components for achieving aims in the "Slemdal" project indicate that all but one component was used: the "walking through the area by night". Learning to see more actively in the sense of developing both "sight and insight" has already been mentioned as a core

component. Additionally, to provide an alternative perception of one's capacity the children were blindfolded so as to imagine what it is like to be blind. To make the children experience what it is like to be immobile, a wheel chair was kindly lent from the old people's home. Traffic noise was recorded, the number of cars passing during the rush hour was registered and the variety of fixtures and fittings of signs on the buildings as well as traffic signs became an issue for serious discussions. Questionnaires were made to investigate how people liked living at Slemdal, where they shopped and so on. Knowledge of the history of place was offered by a local pensioner. Newspaper kiosks were also a topic of historic investigation. The architect of the shopping centre welcomed all the children to his office to discuss their ideas for change.

Additionally, although not appearing as a component, the pupils were given an introductory lecture to learn what the project was all about. I also gave a short evening lecture to the teaching staff. Some of the children were given the opportunity to learn how to use the Internet. Others produced computer drawings of new street furniture such as jam jar-shaped containers for glass to be recycled. Taking part in an interdisciplinary project of this kind called for the initiative of the children in making telephone calls, arranging meetings, checking library opening hours etc. Access for the young participants to phones and computers at school contributed to making the project run more smoothly. Some children wished for a complete change in venue for the newspaper kiosk as well as a new design of the shelter for people waiting for the tram. Some students from the Oslo School of Architecture assisted in the process. One school girl presented an idea for a new location of the car park of the Slemdal Centre which included a road diversion. Her keen and serious interest in the matter made her apply for a meeting at the office of the Planning and Building Authority. Her initiative and the seriousness with which her application was met, was my first experience of participation of children and young people within the framework of the Planning and Building Act. This incident initiated my interest in linking the concept of participation to my model for increasing awareness of the built environment.

What about my own role in the initiative? Looking back, I combined the roles necessary to make the project run; I had designed the model for fulfilling aims, I was an observing participant, a co-ordinator, a facilitator, an enabler, and, sometimes, a teacher. I frequently spent time with the children, occasionally also after school to attend lectures of interest to the project.[24]

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[24] My own role particularly in the pilot-project of the "Small Ugly Places" is shed light upon later in this chapter.

3.4 THE "RÅHOLT" PROJECT

In 1998 Oslo's new airport was opened at Gardermoen. Construction of a new railway track from the city of Oslo to the airport also included an extended network of stations in the area north of the airport, one of which was Eidsvoll Verk, near the centre of Råholt. Following this it was expected that pressure for further development in the area would increase and the Akershus County Administration therefore wished to use Råholt as an example for holistic planning and analysis.[25]

The "Råholt" project began in the autumn of 1995 and finished at the end of February 1996. The municipality of Eidsvoll, Division Schools and Kindergartens, was responsible for the field of "social life" linked to the work on the municipal sector plan. Additionally, the division in its plan of activities for 1995-1998 had made "participation and democratisation" a local area of commitment. Initiation of a participation project was therefore linked to the National Policy Guidelines to promote the interests of children and adolescents in planning as part of preparations of the municipal sector plan.[26]

The lower secondary school, the primary schools and the kindergartens in Råholt all formed part of the municipal initiative and I was given the opportunity to co-operate with three lower secondary school classes at Råholt ungdomsskole. The school headmaster was concerned about the future short distance to Oslo by train and how this might possibly affect the pupil's life and attitude to their place of origin. The challenging question he raised pinpointed the main issue of the approach, "What would it take to make the youngsters stay in Råholt?"

To try and possibly answer this question, registration of the present situation was a prerequisite. Therefore I initiated a half day seminar for the three participating classes, their class teachers and the school administration. My focal points were: (i) learning to "see" better, to develop both sight and insight (ii) learn to prepare notes in the field as well as to analyse a situation (iii) introducing participants to new terms, like the "Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research", the NIBR[27], a "municipal sector plan", and more. This was the first step towards refining the MIABE. From then on, the MIABE component about acquiring a new "language" linked to the built

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[25] The main initiative, of which the participatory projects in the schools formed only a small part, was named "Fortetting med kvalitet". Co-operating partners were the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR), Centre for Development and the Environment and the Institute for Landscape Planning at the Agricultural College, Ås (now the University of Life Sciences, UMB). The initiative was funded from the Ministry of Environment, the Directorate for Nature Management, The Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development and The Akershus County Administration.

[26] Kari Bjørka Hodneland, "Tettstedprosjekt Råholt," *FORM - et fagpedagogisk tidsskrift (FORM - a pedagogical journal)*, no. 4-5 (1996).The National Policy Guidelines are accounted for in my following chapter.

[27] Because the NIBR was one of the co-operating partners of the project, its name frequently appeared in reports and more.

environment also included some concepts relating to the public administration.

The youngsters designed their own questionnaires, sorted out the answers, drew maps of the area, built models and came up with suggestions for future initiatives such as the need for a youth club. All information collected was presented in an extensive, illustrated report and submitted to the municipal administration at the opening of an exhibition in which the work performed in all the schools was displayed.

Reflections upon my practice in the "Slemdal" project and an introduction of some new MIABE components developed to better suit the project aims of the "Råholt" project, contributed to a second version of my model. These components are presented in the table below.

Table: The MIABE Råholt (Råholt = an extended Slemdal)

MIABE COMPONENTS	SLEMDAL	RÅHOLT
1. Learning to "see" more actively	YES	YES
2. Learning a new language linked to architecture (the built environment) *	YES	
3. Make use of all senses	YES	YES
4. Learning about the history of place	YES	YES
5. Making maps	YES	YES
6. Sketching/drawing	YES	YES
7. Photography	YES	YES
8. Building models	YES	YES
9. Patterns of movements	YES	YES
10. Access for the physically disabled	YES	YES
11. Walking through the area by night	NO	NO
12 Likes and dislikes	YES	YES
13. Meet the architect responsible for the design of the "Slemdal Centre"	YES	NO
14 Designing questionnaires	YES	YES
15. Future design of the place, realistic or utopian	YES	YES
16. Production of a summary	YES	YES
17. Exhibition	YES	YES
18. Introduction seminar for teachers		YES
19. Introduction course for children		YES
20. Interdisciplinary project work		YES
21. Link to the National Curriculum of 1997, particularly the subject Arts and Crafts		YES
22. Like 2, but also included the language of public administration		YES
23. Choice of places		YES

* This is what the component was named before I became a Doctoral student and learned that the correct phrase would be "an extended vocabulary linked to architecture and the built environment".

RÅHOLT
Project aim: analysis of place as a means for participation from young people in the area to contribute to a revision of the municipal sector plan in accordance with the National Policy Guidelines.

My reflections

Reflections after the "Råholt" project indicate that my own position was like a visiting professional or what Barrie Percy-Smith calls an "interpretative professional". An interpretative professional is explained to be a person who "engages in a process of dialogue and negotiation with respect to children's views, experiences and abilities as competent, social actors."[28] Professionals coming from outside the school environment according to Eileen Adams and Sue Ingham, should aim at encouraging a working relationship at an early stage, with the children and the young as well as with the teachers. In the Råholt lower secondary school this was already prepared when I met the classes for the first time. In some of my later approaches, the well functioning co-ordinating process of the "Råholt" project, particularly within the school's own administration has served as an example on how to prepare for "long-distance teaching". As opposed to the "Slemdal" project in which I already formed part of the school staff, I met the classes at Råholt six times. The smooth progress of the project no doubt was founded in the strong commitment and co-operation between the teachers and the school administration. One teacher was appointed as co-ordinator to keep the parents as well as myself informed of what was going on. A teacher's day is usually filled with unpredictable duties. An external professional involved in a project should, therefore, aim at becoming a useful and inspiring supplement to the staff rather than another commitment. To try and prevent a halt in the progression of the teacher's as well as the pupils' work they were encouraged to phone me at home in the evenings. The Council of Europe in its pamphlet about how to make projects with children and participation work, argues that commitment in terms of different resources is required. If a project is to be successful, consideration of "staff time, including time for training, ongoing communication with the working group and other involved or affected people" should be attended to.[29]

Although the new National Curriculum of 1997 had not yet started, its content was known.[30] The National Policy Guidelines to promote the

[28] Barrie Percy-Smith, "Children's Participation in Neighbourhood Settings" (paper presented at the Symposium on Children's Participation in Community Settings, University of Oslo, 26-28 June 2000), 8.
[29] Council of Europe, "Children, Participation, Projects - How to Make It Work!" 10.
[30] Forming part of a group of authors responsible for some of the new text books in the subject Arts and Crafts, I had access to early information about its content.

interests of children and adolescents in planning,[31] and the forthcoming subject Arts and Crafts, stressing particularly the part of architecture and design, proved a suitable point of departure for a participatory project with pupils in the lower secondary school.[32]

In the "Råholt" initiative, my model for increasing awareness of the built environment was, for the first time, made applicable to an initiative aiming at participation. From then on, this has formed a permanent part of application to the MIABE. It was also the first and only time it has been linked to contribution to a municipal sector plan based in the above mentioned National Policy Guidelines.

Reunion with some of the youngsters participating in the initiative is reported in the chapter the "MIABE Revisited".

3.5 THE "SMALL UGLY PLACES"

The "Slemdal" and the "Råholt" projects had different aims. In the pilot project about the "Small Ugly Places", which makes up for the main reference project of this thesis, a third approach to the MIABE is seen. As mentioned in my introductory chapter; the project title was immediately abbreviated by the children to just the "Small Ugly Places", a title used with enthusiasm by everyone who has come to know the project. However, it is important not to forget the term "embellishment", which indicates some kind of promise for change, hence the experiencing of participation. The project and the preparations for the many MIABE components are reported in my next chapter, "Tell the Story".

3.6 THE MIABE AND JAMES MURSELL'S SIX PRINCIPLES OF TEACHING

I argue that the MIABE is a teaching and learning model – a model of education – which is concurrent with its application. Does this possibly indicate that the building up of the MIABE would be concurrent with some basic educational prerequisites, unknown to me in the making of my model?

James Mursell has established a set of six principles of teaching. His point of departure is that "in teaching, *it is the long pull that counts*."[33] Mursell argues that the proper learning of the topic dealt with "is a process of discovery, of creative thinking, of cooperative endeavour, of significant achievement, and

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[31] The National Policy Guidelines are reported in more detail in my chapter, "Positioning of the MIABE in a Broader Context."
[32] Anne-Karine Halvorsen Thorén and Kari Bjørka Hodneland, "Tettstedprosjekt Råholt. Et Eksempel På Barn Og Unges Medvirkning I Planleggingen," *Arkitektnytt no. 9* 1996.
[33] James L. Mursell, *Successful Teaching: Its Psychological Principles* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954), 2.

of the realization of one's own powers. It is a process that, in and of itself, fosters and favours the development of personality."[34]

Could James Mursell's set of principles possibly assist in unveiling the weak and the stronger components of the MIABE viewed as a context-bound teaching and learning model?

His six principles are: (1) context, (2) focus, (3) socialization, (4) individualization, (5) sequence, and (6) evaluation.[35] To each principle a scale of different levels is produced – the higher the scale, the better the alternative would serve the pupils. As I can see no resemblance to the MIABE on any of the lower levels described, I shall move directly on to the higher levels.

In the first principle, context, the top two levels comprise demonstrations, visits to museums, excursions, and visiting "experts" in class representing different occupational groups. Additionally, "Personal, social, community undertakings, either in school or out" are encouraged.[36] In the "Slemdal" and the "Råholt" projects all the first principle requirements were met. Encouragement of community undertakings out of school is the base for all applications to the MIABE.

Likewise, I find Mursell's second principle, focus, to correspond with the MIABE. Levels three and four comprise establishing a comprehensive concept which is to be understood, or a problem to be solved, preferably linked to actual experience.[37] Efforts should be made to cut down on routine and learning by heart. To enhance understanding the issue at stake, the MIABE departs from practical experiences in the children's life-world. Routines and learning by heart are not any outspoken MIABE components.

Gunn Imsen argues that Mursell's principle about focus is interesting because it is about accentuating the central parts of the subject or the theme. "From a learning perspective creating a 'whole' to assist in structuring the skills so that they are not left out of context is viewed to be an advantage."[38] This is what the MIABE aims at and why its core components are linked to the already familiar built environment – the life-world of the children.

Mursell's third principle deals with socialisation. Establishing a good relationship between everyone involved in the project never formed part of the MIABE since I took for granted the competence of the teachers in this matter. James Mursell's third principle holds three levels only. The second is

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[34] Ibid., 4.
[35] Ibid., 69-289. Principles (1) and (4) comprise six different levels each, principles (2) and (5) comprise four different levels each, and principles (3) and (6) comprise three only.
[36] Ibid., 88.
[37] An example is given in my section "Two stories of the local neighbourhood", the chapter "The Discussion".
[38] Gunn Imsen, *Lærerens Verden: Innføring I Generell Didaktikk* (Oslo: Tano Aschehoug, 1997), 250.

about "Social pattern characterised typically by contribution"[39] which implies that the pupils might suggest activities. The third is about the "Social pattern characterized chiefly by cooperation: group function is to carry through common undertaking in which all have responsible share; self generated discipline."[40] Group work is a core component of the MIABE. The children choose a group leader and develop routines for responsibilities. In level two, discipline is seen to be instructed but sympathetic, while on the third level it is seen as self generating. As for the discipline, my reflections from working in close co-operation with 10–12 year old children during the "Small Ugly Places" project indicate a combination of the two.

Positive social patterns characterised from collaboration in groups are seen in small incidents reported in the chapter "Tell the Story". In all three of my projects reported in this thesis, the pupils were encouraged to suggest ideas for further progression as well as for change in the public places. Accomplishing shared actions and responsibility never formed part of the MIABE, but has been viewed as a prerequisite for the kind of group work recommended. This also applies to the children being encouraged to choose their own, little ugly place of investigations. Shared action and responsibility are discussed as part of the section on personal growth in the chapter "The Discussion".

James Mursell's principle number four, individualisation, comprises six different levels. Levels four, five and six deal with individual teaching, possibilities for individual choices, and individual initiatives – still making the class experience a feeling of community. As the structure of the MIABE is sufficiently open to allow for individual choices, I trust the teachers to handle the fourth of Mursell's principles in a professional way.

The fifth principle is about sequence and the concern about which parts of the education material should build upon what, followed by the question about its relation to the maturity of the children or to their growing understanding. To repeat myself, I see this as part of the everyday teaching-and-learning process in a class, thus attended to by the skilled teacher. I have sometimes described the role of the teacher when working in accordance with the MIABE to be similar to that of setting the track in the alpine skiing field of giant slalom. In short, this means few, but obligatory poles, the start and the finishing line being the crucial points. Some competitors ski out of the track at an early stage, and some fall – but most end up safely to the finish. A skilled teacher would act as a skilled sports coach; he would know how to encourage each individual actor to perform to the best of his ability. Knowing the children's strengths and weaknesses, he would also know how to encourage those ending "off piste" not to give in, but to aim for the finishing line. As with a national team of skiers, the children would form a strong group ready for new challenges.

[39] Mursell, *Successful Teaching: Its Psychological Principles*, 153.
[40] Ibid.

Mursell's final principle is about evaluation. His three levels are: "I. Evaluation of results only", "II. Evaluation chiefly on results, emphasizing transferability and objectives: some attention paid to process", and finally, "III. Evaluation on the total learning process, including results."[41] The theme of evaluation in the sense of evaluation of the pupil's work as well as of the learning process as such never formed part of the MIABE. Gunn Imsen argues that although Musell's levels might be applicable also in aiming at evaluating education, their use presupposes an agreement on "the fundamental premises on what is good teaching."[42]

From multiple principles on teaching, why did I choose to view the MIABE from those of James Mursell? There are four reasons: (i) The MIABE is closely linked to different subjects in the National Curriculum of 1997 as well as to parts of its superior aims (ii) Gunn Imsen argues that the highest levels of Mursell's six principles are easily rediscovered in this curriculum. This is where correspondence is seen between the MIABE, the principles of Mursell and the National Curriculum. (iii) Imsen also argues that Mursell aims at unifying the academic and the activity-oriented tradition, and that, although his ideas were "out of fashion" in the 1970s, the principles never faded.[43] (iv) Mursell argues that the proper learning of the topic dealt with "is a process of discovery, of creative thinking, of cooperative endeavour, of significant achievement, and of the realization of one's own powers. It is a process that, in and of itself, fosters and favours the development of personality."[44]

The MIABE is a model of education. Does this imply that it is also a pedagogical model? In my understanding this is not the case. Gunn Imsen offers a useful distinction between pedagogy and didactics, emphasising that the first is about education, upbringing and socialisation, in its widest sense, at home, amongst friends and through mass media, while the latter is about "*the education, upbringing and socialisation that take place in schools and in institutions of education of a more specific pedagogic mandate.*"[45] I am not familiar with Imsen's interpretation of the above concepts socialisation and education. However, I shall instead address my own view of the difference: My thesis is about children and participation in an educational context, and in my text the two concepts of socialization and education interlock. I view the former to be an informal education about the formal, and the latter to be about organised learning built on pedagogy – aiming at acquiring knowledge. An example would be the "Small Ugly Places" project. The main goal of the project was for the children to take measures to improve the design and to report about lack of maintenance in the public places. Preventing vandalism

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[41] Ibid., 263.
[42] Imsen, *Lærerens Verden: Innføring I Generell Didaktikk*, 250.
[43] Ibid., 252-53.
[44] Mursell, *Successful Teaching: Its Psychological Principles*, 4.
[45] Imsen, *Lærerens Verden: Innføring I Generell Didaktikk*, 27.

was also on the agenda. From registrations of for instance wrecked benches in the local neighbourhood area, the children were meant to learn something about taking care of the local environment rather than vandalising it. Thus it was hoped that this aspect of identity-shaping would counteract the participating children's socialisation into groups of vandals. In application to the MIABE, and also to a possible MIABE Plus, interlocking aspects of identity-shaping and educational goals for learning are likely to appear frequently.

Throughout all levels of education, ranging from the superior aims of the school system, determined by the Stortinget, via the National Curriculum to the individual teacher's plan of education, and thus also my making of the MIABE the three basic questions of "what, how and why" comprise the shared didactic base.[46]

What then is meant by didactics? Gunn Imsen argues that the meaning of the concept should be seen from its contemporary use rather than merely its etymology. In Norway, this is recognised from the three basic questions, the what, the how and the why of education. It is interesting also to learn from Imsen that in English-speaking countries related concepts like "classroom management" and "curriculum theory" are used, but that neither fully seems to cover the term didactics.[47]

Being neither a teacher nor professionally trained in pedagogy, I shall abstain from a discussion on whether or not working in accordance with the MIABE could possibly foster and promote development of the personality of the children. Examples about how application to the MIABE might possibly have enhanced creative thinking are reported in my chapter "Tell the Story". Efforts of co-operation were seen in most groups. To me, this co-operation also seemed to contribute to the children's achievements and capabilities. Although anticipating the course of events, it should be mentioned that "Pride, Participation and Identity" was the title of a pamphlet produced as part of the "Small Ugly Places" project. The meaning of the concept of identity as well as of pride were meant to be dual in that aiming at identity of place was hoped also to promote a kind of belonging to the neighbourhood area and might thus also contribute to strengthening a rise in the children's self identity.

3.7 WHY THE SCHOOL AS AN ARENA?

Making use of the school as an arena for application to the MIABE facilitates equal opportunity for the children to participate. This is unlike a sports club, in which membership implies that a selection has already been made based

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[46] Ibid., 29.
[47] Ibid., 27.

on interest. School democracy for the pupils takes the shape of a class council as well as a pupils' council. The organs resemble models of a direct democracy and a representative democracy respectively.[48] The children and the young are invited mainly to have their say in cases concerning themselves, i.e. the children and the school, as opposed to the MIABE which aims at facilitating a possibility for all children to experience participation based in matters concerning the local community. The importance of school as the base for processing the investigations which takes place in the local environment is underlined by many. Tom Bentley encourages rethinking "the structure of education to include learning beyond the classroom in community and neighbourhood settings."[49]

3.8 THE LINK TO THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM OF 1997

The school system of Norway is compulsory for children from the age of 6 to the age of 16 and is built upon three main stages.[50]

In the section below a brief overview of the content of the MIABE component named "Link to the National Curriculum of 1997 and the subject Arts and Crafts" is reported. As already mentioned, this component is also a prerequisite for application to the MIABE.

The 10 year compulsory school

> shall provide equitable and suitably adapted education for everyone.[…] the school shall preserve and develop the knowledge, skills, values and norms existing in the community. The education shall provide basic knowledge, shall give life to cultural heritage, and shall encourage and inspire the pupils to be active and creative. The school shall not only provide the pupils with theoretical insight, but shall encourage them to make use of all their senses. The education shall include a large share of practical work. […] The education shall improve the children's knowledge of the local community and promote a feeling of belonging.[51]

> The education shall help pupils from language minorities to participate as equally worthy and active members of

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[48] Two children from each class, preferably one boy and one girl, are elected members to the pupils' council
[49] Barrie Percy-Smith, "Children's Participation in Neighbourhood Settings" (paper presented at the Symposium on Children's Participation in Community Settings, University of Oslo, 26-28 June 2000, 26-28 June), 7.
[50] The initial stage, grades 1–4, the intermediate stage, grades 5–7, and the lower secondary stage, grade 8–10.
[51] Norwegian Ministry of Education. Research and Church Affairs, "Reform 97. The Compulsory School Reform," (Oslo: 1996), 4.

Norwegian society. It shall also help to stimulate the pupil's language development.[52]

The compulsory school shall also draw subject matter from the neighbourhood and the local community.[53]

The teachers are enhanced to co-act with parents, the work life and the authorities to encourage the process of a broad learning environment. Education in the subject Arts and Crafts aims at developing the pupil's skills, his creative enthusiasm, and his observation capacity through practical, creative work. Additionally, the pupils are encouraged to develop their visual communication. A brief overview of subject aims related to architecture and design – linked to grades, indicates that in grade two (age seven), the children should for example learn about architecture by visiting the outdoor room. The concept outdoor room refers to public places of different kinds. The children are encouraged to discus the different use of buildings in the school's neighbourhood area, and as part of the subject goals of the intermediate stage, grades 5-7 (age 10-12) the pupils should be encouraged to reflect upon places, buildings and building styles. Conversations with fore example local artists and architects should be prepared.[54]

Multi-disciplinary project work within the framework of an everyday teaching-and-learning process in school has been an important prerequisite in application to MIABE since its inception in 1993. This way of working was also encouraged by the National Curriculum of 1997;

> The new curriculum for the 10-year compulsory school attaches considerable weight to creating coherence and continuity in the education by organising the subject matter into themes and by working on projects. Organizing the subject matter into themes means combining several subjects into meaningful units. The themes shall be adapted to the unique features of each stage of the education and the pupils' abilities, experience and interests at different ages. The themes can also provide a basis for project work. Project work is a method whereby the pupils, by working on a specific problem, theme or task, define and deliberately work towards a specific objective, from conception to final product, concrete result or practical solution. The teachers play an important guiding and advisory role.[55]

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[52] Ibid., 5.

[53] Ibid., 10.

[54] Kirke- utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet, *Læreplanverket for Den 10-Årige Grunnskolen* ([Oslo]: Nasjonalt læremiddelsenter, 1996), 190-99.

[55] Norwegian Ministry of Education. Research and Church Affairs, "Reform 97. The Compulsory School Reform," 9.

The close link between the MIABE and parts of the National Curriculum of 1997 does not intend to replace any part of the everyday teaching-and-learning process, but rather to serve as a complementary part.

3.9 WHAT ARE THE DETAILS IN THE PUBLIC PLACE?

In the introductory chapter I argued that there are many similarities seen between the MIABE and physical planning, in that they both share an interest in the built environment. The physical reality of the MIABE is on a micro level, comprising the details of public places in the local neighbourhood. These details are often referred to as street furniture. What then is meant by the expression street furniture?

Morten Krogstad argues that streets and places are our shared, public sitting rooms. The two most typically shared pieces of furniture in the sense of the "homely" are, he writes, probably the bench and the lamp.[56] Other examples of street furniture are signs, junction boxes, fences, and kiosks. Additionally, there is the non-permanent equipment such as stalls, sales-counters and advertising boards. In principle, Krogstad writes, all objects permanently fixed to the street surface, in places or parks, would be street furniture. Street furniture is supposed to serve a rational purpose, namely the provision of a safe environment for different groups of road users, protection against different kinds of weather conditions, rain, snow, wind and more, information of geography ("you are here"), tram departure times, and street illumination. Additionally, there is a need for different kinds of devices which divide, protect, or signalise.[57]

During one of her first excursions in the neighbourhood area of the school, aiming at learning to see more actively, a girl wrote in her logbook: "I can see a house dating back to 1894[58] , I can see a sign with a number 6 on it, I can see an ugly sign, I can see a sign for directing to the city centre, I can see a nice bench surrounded by trees, I can see a fence which is tagged [59] upon, I can see a lamp, I see ducks, I see a tagged bridge." Another girl wrote: "I see a yellow house, I see many cars, I see the Church of Paulus, I see a bicycle, I see Grünerløkka." A boy wrote: "I can see Kuba. Why is Kuba here? Why do the trees form a circle? I can see an ugly litter bin, [another] tagged fence, litter and needles [from drug addicts]."[60]

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[56] Morten Krogstad, "Møblering Av Byens Uterom," ([Oslo]: Oslo Bys Vel, 1986), 4.

[57] Ibid., 5.

[58] The figures formed part of the ornamentation of the building facade.

[59] In my Oxford Dictionary, graffiti is explained to be a piece of writing or drawing, scribbled or sprayed on a surface. To me, some pieces of graffiti are close to a piece of art, while others are just scribbled signatures. In Norway, the latter is called "tagging" and is viewed as vandalism by most people. Throughout this thesis graffiti is defined as vandalism.

[60] Kuba is the name of part of the city district of Grünerløkka.Oslo The children participated in the "Small Ugly Places" project.

Ola Bettum and Peter Butenschøn have produced a list comprising the building blocks of the public spaces as well as of its furniture. The former comprise the entrance door, the main street, the market place, the park, the facade, ceilings and floors, the kiosk, the pavilion and more. Generally, the street furniture they list coincides with those of Krogstad and the MIABE.[61]

Summing up of their registrations in the neighbourhood area, a group of pupils from Lakkegata School also made notes about the positioning of the street furniture; "benches are misplaced, litter bins are placed too high up, the grass [in a small park area] is ruined from the tyres of the cars and so is the soil, and concrete blocks are left in places where there is no need for them."[62]

Where does this leave the MIABE? As my model is directed towards possibilities for change, registration of existing street furniture is a prerequisite for further action. But how could the children possibly know what might be missing in their own neighbourhood? In a possible refinement of the MIABE, this question should be seen related to the actions taking part. If you wish to rest, a bench would be welcome; if you wish to buy an ice cream, a kiosk as well as a litter bin would be required. Bettum and Butenschøn have suggested a division between the details and the furniture of the public place.[63] In my introduction lectures about the details of the public places I have made no division between its building blocks and its details. This difference might have been better explained in my model to make sure that the children do not think of the building blocks as details which might be easily changed or repaired – like for instance a bench or a sign. Thus the division seen in Bettum and Butenschøn might be worth considering in a possible refinement of the MIABE.

Experience from working with children and the young in my initiatives reported in this thesis, confirm an argument made in a government action plan on aesthetic qualities in the public environment. The plan argues that the details of the built environment are seen to encourage engagement in the local neighbourhoods.[64] Additionally in another report the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Cultural Affairs writes that

> Much of what surrounds us is transitory: signs, colour schemes,
> loose objects and furniture, advertisements and everything that
> is temporary and changing. And although buildings and many
> installations last a fairly long time, much can be done here and

[61] Ola Bettum and Peter Butenschøn, *Gode Byrom. Verktøykasse for Møtesteder I Byer Og Tettsteder* (Oslo: Norsk Form, 1997).

[62] Logbook note, Lakkegata School 1997.

[63] Bettum and Butenschøn, *Gode Byrom. Verktøykasse for Møtesteder I Byer Og Tettsteder*.

[64] Kulturdepartementet, "Omgivelser Som Kultur. Handlingsplan for Estetisk Kvalitet I Offentlig Miljø," ([Oslo]: Kulturdepartementet, 1992).

now with things more within our reach, in terms of both time and cost.[65]

This is what the MIABE aims at. Examples about what could "be done here and now with things more within our reach, in terms of both time and cost" are reported in the chapter "Tell the Story".

3.10 WHY THE PUBLIC PLACE?

The members of the Town Council, elected by the people, must bear in mind never to forget the citizens' right to the public places.[66]

The built environment in the shape of small public places forms the base of all MIABE related applications. The reasons why are many: (i) The public place belongs to us all. (ii) Provision and maintenance of the details of the public place, the benches, the lamp posts, the litter bins and more, are the responsibility of the municipality which makes it easy to know where to address questions or assistance, and where to complain. (iii) These places form part of the life-world of the children, and consequently act as an "equaliser" in that even before entering school, the children have walked through them many times. The children have probably also played there, walked their dog, sat on the benches, used, or not used, the litter bins, the phone booth and more. This means they have some kind of user experience with the details of the built environment. (iv) The details of the public place comprise the point of departure for the children's acquiring an extended vocabulary to enhance communication. (v) The contemporary society seems to have a flair for segregation, children in one area, adults in a second and dogs in a third. The public place still has the function of a meeting place for everyone, and (vi) The National Curriculum of 1997 encourages work in multidisciplinary settings as well as making use of the neighbourhood area of the school as a tool for teaching and learning.

From my reasons number (i) and (ii) follow the right of everybody to have his say on likes and dislikes of the design of the public places. From this right some obligations also follow, like not to act as litter bugs and to prevent vandalism. Related to the developing of attitudes in children and the young, Eileen Adams and Sue Ingham argue that a strong sense of place could "only be based on first-hand physical, social and emotional experience."[67]

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[65] Royal Norwegian Ministry of Cultural Affairs, "Cultural Policy of the Norwegian Government: Architecture and Design," 11.
[66] Per L. Andersen, "Bypatriot Hele Livet.," *Drammens Tidende*, 9. november 2005, 22. The article was a newspaper interview in celebration of my father, the architect MNAL Robert Bjørka, on his 85th birthday.
[67] Adams and Ingham, *Changing Places. Children's Participation in Environmental Planning*, 5.

The children participating in accordance with the MIABE are not mainly invited to promote their own interests, needs and desires. My model aims at an increased awareness of the built environment to benefit all users of the public places ranging from mothers or fathers pushing a pram, via the elderly and the disabled, to the children and the young.

As already mentioned in my chapter "The Research Design", the expression "in the interest of the child" is often seen in participatory initiatives with children. However, the expression seems to hold a different aim than the MIABE. My model is not primarily concerned about the number of sandpits and swings for the benefit of the children, but for the interest of the child in a wider perspective. From my experience, this perspective is easily accepted by the children as exemplified by Lakkegata School: "It is", the children write, "our opinion that we want some playground equipment for small children to be placed in our park. Families could then come and play there in the evenings."[68]

Anne Trine Kjørholt and Jens Qvortrup underline the need, in fact they call it an urgent need, to "explain to children (what we may not understand ourselves) the connection between their activities and those of society as a whole, [...] to convey an understanding of modern society as an intergenerational project."[69]

In my third of the above mentioned reasons arguing for the public place as a point of departure in achieving goals, I emphasise that the children even from preschool level are on familiar terms with their local neighbourhood area. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, Tore Sager argues that "The life-world perspective on society is reserved for the acting individual taking part in the events rather than observing them. The life-world signifies both a context of reference and a repository of intuitive knowledge and know-how for social actors."[70]

As the pilot-project of the "Small Ugly Places" is my main empirical reference to this thesis, the concept of "place" frequently appears in the text. The difference between place and space has been a matter of great concern within the theory of architecture, and has been heavily disputed over the years. My thesis does not relate to the theory of architecture, and the multiple contents of the two will therefore be left untouched. From a sociological point of view, Dieter Hassenpflug has arrived at the following distinction between the terms space and place: "Space is an objective category. It is non-personal. Place is subjective, with an effect of communication or interaction as the possibility of it. Space is everywhere. There are three factors that are

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[68] Logbook note, "The Small Ugly Places" project. The expression "our park" refers to a park which during the day forms part of the school yard for the elder of the children.

[69] Anne Trine Kjørholt and Jens Qvortrup, "Children's Participation in Neighbourhood Settings" (paper presented at the Symposium on Children's Participation in Community Settings, University of Oslo, 26-28 June 2000), 9.

[70] Tore Sager, *Communicative Planning Theory* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1994), 247.

necessary to make space into place: (i) communication, (ii) history or memory, and (iii) semiotic integrity."[71]

The National Curriculum of 1997 encourages the children to explore architecture in its widest sense, "from the spoon to the city", in the neighbourhood of the school. The outdoor room is explained as streets, places, market places and more. A similar explanation of an outdoor room is offered by the Municipality of Oslo which refers to the public outdoor room as streets, places and parks.[72] This simple, everyday content of the concept of an outdoor room is also used in the MIABE.

The encouragement of locally based project work is underlined in Barrie Percy-Smith, who argues that "the value of local place experiences for children goes beyond issues of place use and provisions, yielding also potential opportunities for developing a sense of belonging, identity, self worth and advocacy within neighbourhood communities as fellow citizens."[73]

In the booklet of ideas following the pilot-project about the "Small Ugly Places" I wrote that the public place was chosen because it is something which we relate to every day on our way to places such as school, the shop and the cinema. Still, we do not know very much about it. We rush through it on our way from A to B unaware of the physical environment as for example the shape of buildings or the details of the place. As the public places are the possession of the public, we have the opportunity to influence their design. To influence, knowledge is a prerequisite.[74]

The concept of "public" is also the concern of the governmental action plan on aesthetic qualities in the public environment which argues that the public place is seen to have been transformed into "a kind of non-place". "A revitalising", the report argues "of the historic concept of 'public' seems necessary."[75]

3.11 PLANNING, KNOWLEDGE AND THE MIABE

knowledge is not preformulated but is specifically created
anew in our communication through exchanging perceptions
and understanding and through drawing on the stock of life
experience and previously consolidated cultural and moral

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[71] Dieter Hassenpflug, (Personal communication, doctoral supervision, Bauhaus Universität, Weimar. Autumn 1998).

[72] Byrådet Oslo kommune, "Oslomiljøet. Byøkologisk Program 1998-2002(10)," (Oslo: Bystyremelding nr. 9/1998. Miljøstatus 1998).

[73] Percy-Smith, "Children's Participation in Neighbourhood Settings", 1.

[74] Kari Bjørka Hodneland and Jorunn Christoffersen, "Forskjønnelsen Av De Små, Stygge Stedene. Det Offentlige Uterom Som Pedagogisk Verktøy," ([Oslo]: Oslo kommune, 1998).

[75] Kulturdepartementet, "Omgivelser Som Kultur. Handlingsprogram for Estetisk Kvalitet I Offentlig Miljø," (Oslo: Rapport fra en arbeidsgruppe, 1992), 10.

knowledge available to participants. We cannot, therefore, predefine a set of tasks that planning must address, since these must be specifically discovered, learnt about, and understood through intercommunicative processes.[76]

3.12 WHAT IS PLANNING?

As mentioned in my introduction to this chapter, the theory of planning or more specifically, parts of the theory of communicative planning, forms the base of my major theoretical discussion. However, I would like to first introduce the concept of planning from its practice. As Gunn Imsen explains the concepts of "*what, how and why*" of education[77], so does John Forester explain the how and the what of planning. "A critical theory of planning," he argues, "helps us to understand what planners do as attention-shaping, communicative action rather than as instrumental action, as means to particular ends. Planning is deeply argumentative by its very nature: Planners must routinely argue, practically and politically, about desirable and possible futures."[78]

"Public planning is supposed to fill a number of functions in societies like ours."[79] The reasons for planning, in the same way as for the MIABE, could be divided into benefits for society as well as benefits for the individual. Additionally the MIABE and communicative planning (explained more fully below) both relate to the same physical reality, they are both process oriented, they both attempt to design a process for participation, and they both wish for a strengthening of the "bottom up" democracy. Process oriented planning is seen as a learning process as well as a means of promoting more democratic decisions. To me, the MIABE components aiming at experiencing participation all resemble those of a participatory planning process. The resemblance increases and even multiplies by moving to communicative planning. The parts of the theory of communicative planning corresponding to the main MIABE components are presented in the chapter "The Discussion".

"A useful way to look at planning", John Friedmann and Barclay Hudson argue, "is to consider it an activity centrally concerned with the linkage between knowledge and organized action."[80] Patsy Healy argues that planning is "link-making work".[81] As we have already seen in this chapter,

[76] Patsy Healey, "Planning through Debate: The Communicative Turn in Planning Theory," in *Readings in Planning Theory*, ed. Scott Campbell and Susan S. Fainstein (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1996), 246.
[77] Imsen, *Lærerens Verden: Innføring I Generell Didaktikk*, 29.
[78] John Forester, *Planning in the Face of Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 138.
[79] Jan Mønnesland, Arvid Strand, and Petter Næss, *Arealplanlegging Og Kostnadseffektivitet: Er Offentlig Arealplanlegging En Kostnadseffektiv Måte Å Styre Arealbruk Og Utbygging På? Nibr-Rapport; 1994:8* (Oslo: Norsk institutt for by- og regionforskning, 1994), xii.
[80] Friedmann and Hudson, "Knowledge and Action: A Guide to Planning Theory," 2.
[81] Patsy Healey, *Collaborative Planning: Shaping Places in Fragmented Societies*, 2nd ed., *Planning, Environment, Cities* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 69.

the MIABE, too, is concerned about such link making in the process of teaching and learning: (i) increased awareness of the built environment provides the base for (ii) acquiring an extended vocabulary which, in turn (iii) enhances dialogue in the group of children as well as with the local authorities.

Tore Sager reports his multiple definitions found of the term planning and argues that "even two decades ago there were enough definitions to warrant a bibliography."[82]

3.13 A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNICATIVE PLANNING

The history of planning would be too comprehensive and add little value to the main objectives of my thesis. My concern is related to what followed from the so-called shift in planning from strictly instrumental to practical-communicative action. To explain this shift, I have made use of John Forester's table on reformulation of planning practice.[83] Viewed from my own MIABE related practice, I would argue the most important shifts to be (i) from processing information to shaping attention, (ii) from gathering facts to addressing significance: gathering facts that matter and [are] interacting, (iii) from treating participation as a source of obstruction to treating participation as an opportunity to improve analysis, (iv) from informing decisions to organizing attention to formulate and clarify possibilities, (v) from supplying a single product, a document with "answers", to developing a process of questioning possibilities, shaping responses and engagement, and (vi) from passing on "solutions" to fostering policy and design criticism, argument, and political discourse.[84] However, I believe that John Forester's term "questioning possibilities" refers mainly to the misuse of power in the communicative planning process as opposed to the wider interpretation of the term used by the MIABE participants.

The shaping of attention is a core issue. The planner is a practical organiser of attention, not a processor of facts. This, to me, is consistent with my role as a facilitator (explained below). What then, does organising or shaping attention mean in relation to the MIABE? Rather simplified, I would argue that it carries the meaning of directing attention rather than limiting it[85], admittedly, careful limitation of the children's sometimes unstoppable activities has struck my mind.

[82] Tore Sager, "Teaching Planning Theory as Order or Fragments?" *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 14, no. 3 (1995): 167.
[83] John Forester, *Critical Theory, Public Policy, and Planning Practice: Toward a Critical Pragmatism*, Suny Series in Political Theory Contemporary Issues (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1993), 28.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Tore Sager, *Communicate or Calculate: Planning Theory and Social Science Concepts in a Contingency Perspective*, Dissertation / Nordic Institute for Studies in Urban and Regional Plann; 11 (Stockholm: Nordplan, 1990), 117.

John Forester argues that the shaping of attention, apart from description of the issue at stake includes a number of additional acts, which are all referred to as "speech acts": (i) warning problems, (ii) presenting information, (iii) suggesting new ideas, (iv) agreement in performing certain tasks as well as to meet at certain times, (v) argumentation for and against particular efforts, (vi) reporting from [relevant] events and finally, (vii) commenting upon proposals for action.[86] Although it is impossible to compare the roles of the planner and that of the children, the above mentioned speech acts all seem to coincide with the communicative acts of the children working in accordance with the MIABE: the children seldom hesitate to alarm the adults of problems of any kind, their presentation of information and suggesting new ideas are seen in multiple ways, oral, as well as in two and three dimensions like for example letters to the municipality, productions of site maps or building models. Encouragement of new ideas, from which multiple examples are reported throughout my thesis, is built into the design of the MIABE. The fourth communicative act of Forester is not particularly relevant to the children working in accordance with the MIABE as the school forms the base for these "speech acts". Agreement to perform certain tasks and meeting at certain times both follow from being a member of a class or a group of pupils. Argumentation for and against particular efforts is seen in reflections and discussions within each working group. Proposals for action are one of the core components of the MIABE which should be seen in close connection to the suggestion of new ideas. This component, particularly when directed towards new design is, no doubt, the favourite speech act of the children and the young.

The first of the above mentioned shifts in planning, from strictly instrumental to practical-communicative action, the shaping attention, inclusive of the seven speech acts of Forester, has now been commented upon. I shall, therefore, return to the remaining five shifts. Addressing significance by gathering facts that matter and are interacting, rather than just gathering facts, coincides with the MIABE component to the registration process. The facts gathered are of vital importance in the children's preparations for change of all kinds – information of vandalism, ideas for new design and more. The "Råholt" initiative can serve as an example on the shift from treating participation as a source of obstruction to treating participation as an opportunity to improve analysis: the children and the young all participated in assisting the ongoing municipal planning process. The next shift is identified by formulating and clarifying possibilities rather than informing decisions. Such clarification of possibilities does, as illustrated in my chapter "Tell the Story", make up an important part of the day-to-day work of the children.

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[86] Forester, *Planning in the Face of Power*, 142.

Development of a process of questioning possibilities, rather than presenting the children with questionnaires and work books to fill in, constitutes the base for my MIABE design. Examples from the children's response and engagement are given throughout my thesis, particularly in the two major chapters "Tell the Story" and "The Discussion", respectively. The final of John Forester's shifts referred to above is the fostering of policy and design criticism, argument and political discourse.

Did working in accordance with the MIABE possibly enhance any of these final shifts? Does experiencing participation based on increased awareness of the details of the built environment in the public space possibly also foster policy and design criticism and provide a foundation for argument and political discourse? How, and by whom, could these questions possibly be answered? Conversations with some former users of the MIABE based on the above questions are reported in my chapter, the "MIABE Revisited".

The importance of quality is stressed by Forester who argues that successful communicative actions are dependent upon "intentions, interests, and an audience."[87] How would the MIABE and its application respond to these three criteria? Although anticipating the course of events, a brief reflection on my practice from the "Small Ugly Places" initiative, indicates that intentions were the very best in all participating adults (from the bureaucrat to the teacher and me) as well as in the children. The goal should, preferably, be in accordance with the interests of everyone. In an initiative similar to the "Small Ugly Places", "everyone" would be the municipality, the teachers, the children and the facilitator. Everybody had a shared interest in achieving the project aims: (i) improvement of places in need for refurbishment, and (ii) children's experience of participation. Such mutual agreement no doubt facilitates a successful implementation of initiatives of this kind. An attentive audience has been present, represented by the above mentioned groups. To make the expectations of the children come true, dialogue is a precondition. One component of the MIABE is therefore the children's acquiring an extended vocabulary related to the details of the built environment as well as to the public administration.[88]

My role

The evolution of the planning profession, Ernest A. Alexander writes, has been accompanied "by a proliferation of roles" for the planner. Some roles are seen to be more effective in certain contexts than others.[89] Although working in accordance with the MIABE is not exactly the same as being part of planning process, there are many similarities between my own role and

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[87] Ibid.

[88] The concepts of communication and dialogue are further elaborated in my chapter "The Discussion".

[89] Ernest R. Alexander, "Planning Roles and Context," in *Introduction to Urban Planning*, ed. Anthony J. Catanese and James C. Snyder (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 123.

that of a planner: (i) practicalities like organising meetings, (ii) making sure the notes and the minutes are kept, (iii) present information about the process to the local community, and (iv) attentiveness to the concerns and interests of all participants.[90] Co-ordination of all the mentioned tasks is also shared by the planner and myself. The role of the children, as well as that of the teacher, has been mentioned. What about myself? What is my role? Forester claims the role of the planner to be a practical "organizer of attention" not a processor of facts.[91] Additionally, he emphasises the many roles of the planners as brokers, managers, and organisers of attention, shaping attention to the desirability and feasibility of actions, alternatives, and possibilities.[92] His statement is close to how I view my own position. I would, therefore, argue that by naming my role a facilitator, (based on the concept of Forester), the action part of the concept is also made clear: I am a facilitator, and I perform as a practical organiser of attention. Additionally, as already reported in my "Slemdal" project, I am the designer of the model and act as a participatory observer in the field. I am also an expert who knows the MIABE well. Additionally, I am familiar with the content of the National Curriculum of 1997. My role as a facilitator is illustrated in the next chapter.

The concept of "skilful meandering", a description on how the planner should act as a "skilled-voice-in-the-flow", has been introduced by James A. Throgmorton. In many ways his concept offers an additional description of my role and responsibilities, not particularly in co-operation with the children, but with the participating adults of different professions. By practising "skilful meandering" I should comply with: (i) construction of inclusive processes, (ii) negotiation of the meanings of the key concepts, and (iii) responding to unexpected events. Additionally, his components about relying on one's own substantive knowledge, while being open to other forms of knowledge and expertise as well as configuration of arguments, might apply to the children, as well as to those in charge of the initiative.[93] Viewed from a MIABE related perspective, the components of Throgmorton would correspond to (i) group work within the class, (ii) negotiation of the many key concepts comprising a MIABE initiative, from the vocabulary of the built environment and public administration, to (iii) unexpected events seen in many examples in the chapter "Tell the Story".

Stine Juul Praastrup who has worked in accordance with the "skilful meandering" argues that the weakness of the process is that it is rather time-consuming.[94] A majority of my readings about mutual learning and participation processes are concurrent with her conclusion. My own

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[90] John Forester, "Critical Theory and Planning Practice," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 46, no. 3 (1980).

[91] Forester, *Critical Theory, Public Policy, and Planning Practice: Toward a Critical Pragmatism*, 43.

[92] John Forester, "Understanding Planning Practice: An Empirical, Practical and Normative Account," *Journal of planning education and research* 1, no. (2) (1982): 43.

[93] James A. Throgmorton, "On the Virtues of Skillful Meandering: Acting as a Skilled-Voice-in-the-Flow of Persuasive Argumentation," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 66, no. 4 (2000): 367-75.

[94] Stine Juul Praastrup, "Handout," (Universtiy of Aalborg, PhD Course in Planning Theory, Advanced Study. April 17-21 2001).

experience from approaches to children and participation makes no exception. In instrumental action we compare the value of fulfilment of a certain goal with the value of the time spent. However, in communicative planning as well as in the MIABE, there are also personal growth and socialisation into democracy to be taken into consideration.

Where do all these claims linked to the role of the facilitator leave me? My role does not fully comply with John Forester's concept of a facilitator. However, I would very much like to think of my role when working in accordance with the MIABE as that of an organiser of shaping attention.

Different kinds of knowledge linked to the MIABE

The beginning of this chapter explained the MIABE component of learning to "see" better, aiming at enhancement of sight as well as insight. This insight or more precisely, this new knowledge about the built environment is a precondition for the MIABE component of acquiring an extended vocabulary. It is also a prerequisite for a possible turning of the children's ideas for change into action. The MIABE is a teaching and learning model. It is designed to facilitate improvement of the capacity to acquire an increased awareness of the built environment and to improve the children's capacity to act in a participatory process. What kind of knowledge would this possibly imply? My intention is not to enter a discussion on the concept of knowledge, but briefly to offer some examples on the kind of knowledge that might be useful to assist the children in achieving aims.

Processed and personal knowledge

The linkage between knowledge and organised action was mentioned in my introduction to the section "What is planning". In his argument for mutual learning, John Friedmann makes a distinction between processed and personal knowledge. The first is claimed to be analytical, legitimising the planner as an expert, while the latter is seen to rest on individual, subjective interpretations:

> The frame of reference of the argumentation of the layman may be subjective and narrow, but it rests on a nuanced and detailed picture of the local conditions This is exactly what provides the basis of mutual learning: The planner expands the frame of the local layman's assessment of the plan; the layman supplies nuances and particulars to the planner's outline of the consequences of the plan on the local community.[95]

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[95] Sager, *Communicate or Calculate: Planning Theory and Social Science Concepts in a Contingency Perspective*, 65. This seems to be corresponding with the explanation of John Forester already referred to in my passage on a brief introduction to communicative planning.

Does such mutual learning also take place in non-planning relations? In my opinion, the MIABE can be viewed as facilitating expansion of the frame of the children's assessment of the issue at stake, the public place. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, with the "Råholt "initiative, the children, the young and the laymen, supplied the planners with information. Furthermore, in the "Small Ugly Places" project, the children's ideas for change also assisted the municipal divisions in their regular area maintenance. Examples on such assistance are reported in my chapter "Tell the Story".

Social indicators and how they could possibly come to be of importance in public decisions are the concern of Judith Innes who argues that knowledge most often "has its influence when it has been internalized by the actors and has created frames of references *within* which discourse and action occur."[96] Although her argument relates to an adult context, it might have been a description of the children's acquiring knowledge when working in accordance with the MIABE, like in the "Small Ugly Places" project. The children pick their own small, ugly place and work in self-elected, self organising groups ("creation of frame of reference"). From their registrations of the state of "their" place, group dialogues follow ("discourse"). Finally, from the various decisions in the groups, suggestions for change are presented ("action occur"). Innes underlines that "Knowing, valuing and acting are interactive, ongoing processes," thus also having some of their influence *"during* knowledge production."[97]

Education of the citizens is a main concern in Judith Innes. However, her suggestions for alternatives on how to make this happen are mostly related to structural preconditions which override the theme of my thesis.

What knowledge then, is worth having? Jens Rasmussen is concerned about the competence to act, arguing that, as a didactic concept, this "usually is reasoned in identity-shaping of democracy in the children". Knowing how to act competently ", he argues, is "juxtaposed to the democratic ideal of identity-shaping that the citizens should be persons who are capable of participating freely and independently in the political life."[98] Thus, the school should also contribute to the pupil's capacity of using the knowledge acquired – not just not provide for it. In Norway the old idea of public development taking place within the school system, united two motives: one was the instrumental, the acquirement of "useful knowledge", the knowing how, second came the development of self, the shaping of identity.[99]

[96] Judith Eleanor Innes, *Knowledge and Public Policy: The Search for Meaningful Indicators*, 2nd expanded ed. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1989), 31.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Jens Rasmussen, *Sosialisering Og Læring I Det Refleksivt Moderne* (Oslo: Cappelen akademisk forl., 1998), 18.
[99] Rune Slagstad, *Kunnskapens Hus: Fra Hansteen Til Hanseid, [En Pax-Bok]* (Oslo: Pax, 2000).

Experience-based knowledge

Sigmund Asmervik argues that experience-based knowledge forms the base of what he refers to as "problematic knowledge" – a kind of knowledge which is "typically very context-dependent – connected to time and space."[100] This is a kind of knowledge that has to be interpreted as there is no right answer. This seems to be concurrent with the MIABE and in the beginning of the chapter it is reported that it does not expect any "right" answers, but the stimulation of critical thinking and discussion that evolves from knowledge of the built environment. Additionally, my model is recognised from context-dependency in that all teaching and learning is located to that particular small "ugly" place chosen by the children themselves. Asmervik emphasises that such knowledge is referred to also as assimilated knowledge, recognised from "life experiences in practical field work." He makes a useful distinction between accumulated and assimilated knowledge. The former is the kind of "general and empirical knowledge that can be taught theoretically". This kind of knowledge usually is independent of context. The latter is the one just described.[101]

In an educational context learning through experience is usually linked to practical or aesthetic education in the arts, the crafts or within the health sector. However, Gunn Imsen argues that "experience is also a central concept related to academic knowledge."[102]

She fills in on the concept of experience based knowledge, arguing that acquiring such knowledge is a continuous process which derives from our daily socialising in the world, from objects, nature or other people. However, "Practical experience alone does not lead to knowledge. At some level, the action must meet other ways of knowledge to achieve consideration and reflection."[103] The "spiral of understanding" which I referred to in the section about the "Slemdal" project might possibly enhance the kind of knowledge required by Imsen.

3.14 SUMMING UP

The making of the MIABE has now been presented from the time when it was a model used for investigations into the identity of a place ("Slemdal" project) its improvement and application ("Råholt" project) to the pilot-project of the "Small Ugly Places". The MIABE components learning to see better, the link to the National Curriculum of 1997, the subject Arts and

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[100] Sigmund Asmervik, "Experience-Based Knowledge and Teaching Planning" (paper presented at the XIII AESOP Congress July 7-11 1999, Bergen, Norway), 4.
[101] Ibid., 8.
[102] Imsen, *Lærerens Verden: Innføring I Generell Didaktikk*, 229.
[103] Ibid., 228.

Crafts, and interdisciplinary project work have been presented. Reflection on my own practice so far, unveils that both versions of my model were a mixture of structural preconditions, tools for the children's expression, and for achieving aims. Additionally important components like group work were taken for granted.

In the "Slemdal" project, Margrethe, aged 14, on her own initiative, wished to look into the possibilities for a new location of the car park next to the shopping centre. Her visit to the Planning and Building Authority to present her case was the incident that prompted me to include participation as an added MIABE goal.

From then on, the goal of the MIABE was dual: (i) enhancement of experience of participation (ii) increased awareness of the built environment. However, the two have been running parallel; the former dependent upon the latter.

In this chapter I have argued that the MIABE is a context bound teaching and learning model, aimed at participation for all children. Participation for all children is made possible in that its base for application is the primary school – which is compulsory for all children aged 6 to 16. Additionally, the MIABE is closely linked to parts of the National Curriculum of 1997, its subjects as well as parts of its superior guidelines and principles. To briefly view the MIABE and its application from an educational point of view, James Mursell's six principles for teaching have been presented. Similar characteristics are seen between the higher levels of his principles, the National Curriculum of 1997 and the MIABE.

Does the MIABE possibly answer the labelling of a "teaching and learning model"? I would argue that a combination of the MIABE and a skilled teacher in sum would meet the requirements of Mursell and thus defend its labelling.

The basis for application of the MIABE, as its name indicates, has been enhancement of an increased awareness of the built environment, or even more precisely, the details of the public place. The reason for my choice of making the public place the base for the children's investigation has been presented. So has the content of the concepts of its details as well as the component of learning to see better, in the sense of achieving increased knowledge of the built environment.

The reader has also been introduced to the practice of planning viewed as an activity which is particularly concerned with the linking of knowledge and organized action. What kind of knowledge, then, might be worth having in relation to the MIABE? Different kinds of knowledge are briefly presented. Relating to experience based knowledge, Gunn Imsen argues that, at some

level, it has to address other ways of knowledge to achieve consideration and reflection.

As mentioned in my introductory chapter, the theoretical approach of this thesis is based on parts of the theory of communicative planning. My concern is related to what followed from the so-called shift in planning from strictly instrumental to practical-communicative action.

To explain the shift, I have made use of John Forester's table of reformulation of planning practice.

In the previous chapter, my role as a researcher was briefly presented. In this chapter I have also shed light upon my own role as part of my communicative practices viewed from the role of the planner.

4. "TELL THE STORY"

> To think 'telling stories' as primarily describing events [...]
> would be as limited a view as thinking of 'playing music' as
> primarily making noise.[1]

4.1 INTRODUCTION

At the start of my doctoral training course in the summer of 1998, I attended
the AESOP conference in Bergen.[2] Beforehand, my supervisor, Professor
Tore Sager, asked me to convey his kind regards to Professor John Forester[3]
which I did. Forester was interested to learn of my Ph.D. study but I found it
hard to explain in so many words, the details of children participating in what
I called the "Small Ugly Places "project. However, Professor Forester
listened attentively before exclaiming "Why don't you just tell the story?"

The overall aim of this chapter is to report a complete practice story about
children, participation and the built environment based in application to the
MIABE. Hopefully, some lessons may be learned from this that might
contribute to improving this field of practice in general as well as refining my
model.

As reported in my introductory chapter, the project about "Embellishment of
the Small Ugly Places", was a co-operation between the Municipality of
Oslo, Chief Commissioner's Department (Byrådslederens avdeling), and me.[4]
Jorunn Christoffersen was the municipal project manager. In this story she is
usually referred to as just JC. Her position was Project Advisor to the Chief
Commissioner's Department. My formal position was external project leader
which meant that I was in charge of the project work in those schools

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[1] John Forester, *The Deliberative Practitioner: Encouraging Participatory Planning Processes* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), 41.
[2] AESOP stands for the Association of European Schools of Planning. Bergen is a city on the west coast of Norway.
[3] Tore Sager is professor at The Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), Department of Civil and Transport Engineering. John Forester is professor at Cornell University in the USA, Department of City and Regional Planning.
[4] My firm is an individual enterprise.

participating. In addition, I also co-ordinated decisions made by the municipality to the ten school classes involved.

How then, should I present my story? In the chapter about my research design, I explain the chosen narrative method. Susan E. Chase argues that narrative researchers "view stories as both enabled and constrained by a range of social resources and circumstances."[5], John Forester, in referring to what he calls planners' practice stories, specifies the view;

> Telling stories at work, planners not only describe events, but they may explain what has happened, warn of dangers, and identify 'benefits'; they report relevant details and search for others' meaning [...]; they confess mistakes, justify recommendations, prepare others, and do far, far more.[6]

And, he goes on:

> Planners' stories do deliberate work as well. Always told in constrained circumstances, these stories reflect their teller's ongoing search for value, for what matters, for what is relevant here, what is significant. Planners' stories are thus ethical not because they reflect right or wrong decisions, but because they reflect appreciation of what matters in the case at hand or blindness to it, because they reflect a responsible appropriation of norms and precedent or a callous disregard of them.[7]

Spurred by his challenging description, I shall therefore do my best to share with the reader the practical side of the MIABE, the difficulties and surprises met with and the unexpected outcomes which have formed the basis for my interpretation and my criticism.

The first part of the story is about the lengthy municipal preparations necessary to establish the practical part of the "Small Ugly Places" project. Additionally, reasons are explained why a slight refinement of the MIABE was necessary to better suit the aims of the project. Then follows a presentation of facilitating the many components introduced to the teachers and the children to enhance achievement of goals.

This is my story:

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[5] P. 657
[6] Forester, *The Deliberative Practitioner: Encouraging Participatory Planning Processes*, 57.
[7] Ibid.

One pleasant Friday night in June 2006, I got off a bus at Adamstuen in Oslo, on my way to an international sports event. Although I had been past this place many times before, I had not taken the time to give it a closer look. This time I simply could not resist stopping for a few minutes to make some quick notes. On the back of my tickets reservation, I wrote; "beautiful trees, some taxi-drivers having a nice chat around a table, an empty rack for "citycycles"[8] five tables, four benches, a wrecked phone booth, a letter box, litter bins, a fuse box covered with graffiti[9], and a bent sign for the bus stop. The containers for recycling of glass looked new. Why this sudden interest in the place, and why bother to take notes? Winding the clock back nearly ten years, the following scene was set:

Two ladies sat on a bench in the very same place. It was quite chilly for June, and a wind was blowing. There was nothing special about the place, it could have been anywhere. The city of Oslo has many public places, designed just like this. The two ladies on the bench were Jorunn Christoffersen and me. What were we doing there in the middle of a busy working day? For months we had worked to organise a project about schoolchildren and the urban environment in Oslo. To us this day was not just any day – it was when we were about to launch the pilot-project "Embellishment of the Small Ugly Places". A journalist and a photographer from Aftenposten, the main national newspaper, were invited to join us on the bench.

More than half a year earlier, in the autumn of 1995 I was invited by the Director of Cultural Affairs in Oslo, Johan Tønneson, to informally discuss the initiation of a project about children and architecture in schools. In his previous position in the Foundation for Design and Architecture in Norway[10] this topic was already placed high on the agenda, and through the "Slemdal" project exhibition in the Gallery Falsen,[11] he was already familiar with my practices in this field. Jorunn Christoffersen was also present in the meeting. During the next three months JC and I had some informal meetings preparing a concept for a project about children and the urban environment in some primary schools in Oslo. By the end of January 1996, JC invited me, together with representatives from different municipal departments, to a meeting about our planned pilot-project.

The initial project idea about architecture in schools, was modified so as to fit better the current overall aims of the municipal commitment in urban areas. Refurbishment of the public places and their street furniture was an important concern. An "Aesthetic Plan" for Oslo had already been confirmed by the

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[8] "citycycles" is a municipal initiative of cycles for rent at a very reasonable cost (NOK 70 for the summer season). There are 50 pick up and drop off sites in Oslo.
[9] Grafitti is expaline in footnote 60, chapter "The MIABE"
[10] Norsk Form
[11] At that time the gallery formed part of the Norsk Form

City Parliament[12] and a programme for design of street furniture had been established.[13] To offer the invited representatives an overview of our project draft and its aim, these two programmes were presented together with the "Slemdal" project. Additionally, parts of the municipal section plan of 1995-98 were reported. From the latter, the following issues should be particularly mentioned in relation to our initiative; improvement of the children's growing up conditions, a better geographical organisation of interdepartmental responsibility in areas in which issues concerning the local society and the local environment are at stake, and increased co-operation aiming at a better local environment.[14] Our base for the preliminary project description was also linked to parts of the parliamentary report "Culture Today" ("Kultur i tiden"), especially to an increased awareness about the influence of the built environment to the daily lives of people and its consequences for the conditions experienced by children as they grow up. The report encouraged initiatives on many levels to take part simultaneously, supported by central as well as local competencies, enthusiasm, resources and will of completion.[15]

JC also informed about the already established "Safer City" project. She argued that Oslo has many small ugly places in need of refurbishing, and that these places would be well suited as a point of departure also for a project linked to schoolchildren and the urban environment. She further argued that an embellishment of these small ugly places might serve as a contribution to the bringing up of a new and more responsible generation of Oslo-citizens. "By offering the children and the young the possibility to acquire a sense of ownership of the urban environment, they might hopefully also contribute to a greater responsibility for the environment and its maintenance – rather than vandalism and carelessness."[16] JC suggested that a practical-educational platform should comprise the base for achieving aims, just as in previous applications to the MIABE. The intention was to make parts of the forthcoming National Curriculum of 1997 for primary schools an integrated part of the initiative. In the 5th grade, the new subject Arts and Crafts, in which architecture and design were two new components, seemed well suited as a link to our project.

Although a project under the "Safer City" umbrella, the main part of the project was about architecture, design and participation. The "anti vandalism" and thus crime preventive part of the project was meant to be identity-shaping by learning the difference between a well kept and a vandalised urban place. In retrospect, I have realised that parts of the vandalism reported by the children participating in our project, particularly the registrations of litter, happen to be close to other initiatives about safer cities, particularly in

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[12] "Estetisk plan for Oslo. Del 1: Gategulvet I Oslo.", adopted by the City Parliament in 1991. A revised plan is prepared for processing in the City Government in June 2007. In Oslo, the System of Government is the Parliamentary (the Storting) Model.

[13] Programme for Park and Street Furniture. PPG, Program for park-og gatemøbler.

[14] Kari Bjørka Hodneland and Jorunn Christoffersen, "Forskjønnelsen Av De Små, Stygge Stedene. Det Offentlige Uterom Som Pedagogisk Verktøy," ([Oslo]: Oslo kommune, 1998).

[15] Kulturdepartementet, *Kultur I Tiden*, St.Meld.; Nr 61 (1991-92) ([Oslo]: [Departementet], 1992).

[16] The quotation stems from minutes of the Interim Project Group.

New York where the "theory of broken windows" was implemented for years.[17] To my knowledge this project did not involve children. However, the theory, which in short is a strategy for preventing vandalism by fixing the problems, like a broken window, while they are small, seems interesting. Later the theory in action also included cleaning graffiti. Although the practical settings are very different, this theory might be relevant also to projects in Oslo like the "Small Ugly Places".

Would 5th grade pupils[18] be capable of working in accordance with the MIABE and achieve the aims of the municipal project? JC and I believed they would. So far, my experience with the MIABE was related to older pupils. However, I had been a teacher for this age group, and 11-12 year old children usually master the language, both written and oral, well. Taking notes in a logbook and writing letters to the municipality would probably not cause any difficulties. JC, a previous deputy head of a primary school, shared my thoughts on this.

The members of the Interim Project Group[19] represented the Department of Culture, "Rusken"[20], the Department of Transport and Environmental Affairs, and Jorunn Christoffersen from the Chief Commissioner's Department. Additionally, I was appointed a member of the group. In the formal application to the City Council concerning approval of the project draft, JC suggested a widening of the interim Project Group to include representatives from the Chief Municipal Education Office and the Department of Sports and Parks. Later, a representative from the Planning and Building Authority also joined the group. I do not know how the representatives of the Project Group were picked, but from her central position, JC knew the political and administrative structures of the municipality well and she had also established an extensive network of contact persons in the municipal agencies. The group members were responsible for creating a buddy system in their respective departments aimed at facilitating contact between the participating children and the bureaucracy.

JC and I had many informal talks about how we should select the future participating schools and finally agreed to invite 5th grade classes from the primary schools of the inner city.[21] The reasons for this were that these

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[17] "The Theory of Broken Windows," (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fixing_Broken_Windows). The Theory of broken windows is reported in a 1996 book by George L. Kelling and Catherine Coles "about petty crime and strategies to contain or eliminate it from urban neighbourhoods".

[18] In the 5th grade, the pupils are 11-12 years old. It is worth noticing that this was the case before the National Curriculum of 1997 was put into effect. What happened after 1997 is accounted for in my illustration of age related to the different approaches to the project later in this chapter.

[19] Later formally named The Project Group to the Embellishment of the Small Ugly Places, in the following just named the Project group.

[20] "Rusken" is an initiative of the Municipality of Oslo that goes back more than 30 years. Its main goal is (i) to contribute in making Oslo appear a clean, healthy and nice city, and (ii) to make the inhabitants act in accordance with an environmentally correct behaviour. Finally, "Rusken" should contribute to the understanding that a good city environment is the shared task of all citizens.

[21] Bygdøy School would usually not match the description "inner city". However, from the division of city districts at that time, the school was positioned within the borders of the districts invited.

schools were near many public places each with a variety of street furniture. Vandalism, and thus also the need for regular refurbishment, were an added reason.

In many ways, collaboration with schools is different from collaboration with companies. A striking difference is that the school year does not match the calendar year. In Norway the school year begins in August and ends in June. September 1st was chosen as the closing date for the schools to register and this meant that the invitations had to be ready by the end of May. Contact with local businesses in each project area was also on the agenda. By the end of June, JC and I were ready to go public with the project and this was the time of the above mentioned "press conference" at Adamstuen.

The following day a journalist reported that schoolchildren participating in the pilot-project would be encouraged to choose their own "small ugly place", describe it, and come up with solutions for improvements which would benefit all age groups. "Thus every place will not be converted into a children's playground, there is also a need for 'benches on which the elderly can rest and the youngsters can kiss."[22]

Initially, it was planned that only two or three primary schools in the inner city would be invited to join the pilot-project "Embellishment of the Small Ugly Places", but by the second week of August, six schools were so keen to join that all were accepted. However, some of the schools had second thoughts while some new, such as Grünerløkka School, joined instead[23]. The Directorate for Cultural Heritage, Department of Buildings was, at that time, preparing the promotion of a cultural environment preservation plan in the city district Grünerløkka. As part of this plan, the directorate expressed a wish for children in that area to learn more about their local environment and thus possibly strengthen their pride of place.[24] Regrettably, one school had to terminate their participation before completion of the pilot-project. JC and I had worked on the project preparations for nearly nine months before the new school began in August and I had still not met the pupils or teachers of the six participating schools.

On re-reading the minutes of the first meeting in the interim Project Group, I noted that an intended aim was to get hold of teachers who were "enthusiastic and willing to put the necessary effort into the project."[25] However, by inviting the 5th grades to participate in our project, the choice of teachers was already settled. Looking back, I believe our non-conscious top-down handling of this important issue might easily have caused some problems. A better way to get hold of committed and enthusiastic teachers for this kind of

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[22] The newspaper Aftenposten. The quote originally stems from an interview with one of the youngsters in the "Slemdal" project

[23] A complete list of participating schools is presented on page 73

[24] The Directorate for Cultural Heritage, Riksantikvaren, financially supported the project at Grünerløkka School.

[25] Minutes from meeting, reference 96085987.TDO

project, would be to address each teacher personally rather than pass on the invitation via the school's administration, as we did.

A school's administration might have had many reasons for accepting an invitation like ours. The teachers were offered an introduction to the forthcoming National Curriculum of 1997, particularly the subject Arts and Crafts, all expenses for substitute teachers[26], equipment for model building, photography and more would be covered by the project means, and the children's work would be exhibited in the City Hall Gallery. Whatever the reasons for accepting the invitations, "our" teachers all happened to meet our expectations.

The MIABE now comprised the following components:

Table: the "Small Ugly Places" project (Small Ugly Places = an extended Råholt)

MIABE COMPONENTS	SLEMDAL	RÅHOLT	SMALL UGLY PLACES
1. Learning to "see" more actively	YES	YES	YES
2. Learning a new language linked to architecture (the built environment) *	YES		
3. Make use of all senses	YES	YES	YES
4. Learning about the history of place	YES	YES	YES
5. Making maps	YES	YES	YES
6. Sketching/drawing	YES	YES	YES
7. Photography	YES	YES	YES
8. Building models	YES	YES	YES
9. Patterns of movements	YES	YES	YES
10. Access for the physically disabled	YES	YES	YES
11. Walking through the area by night	NO	NO	NO
12 Likes and dislikes	YES	YES	YES
13. Meet the architect responsible for the design of the "Slemdal Centre"	YES	NO	NO
14 Designing questionnaires	YES	YES	YES
15. Future design of the place, realistic or utopian	YES	YES	NO

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[26] The introductory seminar for teachers as well as the follow-up course both took place during school hours, hence the need of substitute teachers.

MIABE COMPONENTS	SLEMDAL	RÅHOLT	SMALL UGLY PLACES
16. Production of a summary	YES	YES	YES
17. Exhibition	YES	YES	YES
18. Introduction seminar for teachers		YES	YES
19. Introduction course for children		YES	YES
20. Interdisciplinary project work		YES	YES
21. Link to the National Curriculum of 1997, particularly the subject Arts and Crafts		YES	YES
22. Like 2, but also included the language of public administration		YES	YES
23. Choice of places		YES	YES
24. Follow-up seminar for teachers			YES
25. Long term development for this kind of projects			YES
26. Logbooks and tool box			YES
27. Group work			YES
28. New design of street furniture			YES
29. Writing letters to authorities			YES

* This is what the component was named before I became a Doctoral student and learned that the correct phrase would be "an extended vocabulary linked to architecture and the built environment".

The MIABE components number 1-17 refer to the "Slemdal" project. Numbers 18- 23 are the components added to fit the aim of the "Råholt" project. Components number 24-29 were the components added to fit the aims of the "Small Ugly Places" project.

SLEMDAL
Project aim: to introduce schoolchildren to the local identity of Slemdal, its architecture and design.

RÅHOLT
Project aim: analysis of place as a means for participation from young people in the area to contribute to a revision of the municipal sector plan in accordance with the National Policy Guidelines.

THE SMALL UGLY PLACES
Project aim: to make use of the public places in a practical-educational context. Knowledge of the details of the local environment and identification of public places in need for improvement were used as basis for the children's work. The schoolchildren should, in contact with the municipal agencies report lack of maintenance in these places to help fight decline and thus assist in making the urban environment more safe and pleasant for all users. The children were also encouraged to present new ideas for the design of street furniture

Introduction seminar for teachers

On September 16th 1996, all participating teachers and some representatives from the municipal administration, particularly the Chief Municipal Education Office, were invited to a workshop.

The seminar was initiated to assist in: (i) experiencing a MIABE related project in a nutshell, (ii) achieving some basic knowledge about the details of the built environment and the concept of an "outdoor room", (iii) a general as well as a more subject specific introduction to the forthcoming National Curriculum of 1997, inclusive of how to make the "Small Ugly Places" project part of an interdisciplinary project work (iv) establishing an understanding about the scope, the aim and the responsibilities of the pilot-project, and (v) establishing a network for the participating teachers. The introduction to the "outdoor room" was followed by some practical exercises including a survey in some nearby public places. Some "ugly" as well as "aesthetically perfect" places in the neighbourhood area were chosen by the teachers for investigation. The teachers were encouraged to work in groups with their colleagues and with teachers from other schools in an attempt at creating a network of shared interests. By the end of the day, the teachers displayed their work in a minor exhibition. Exhibiting the teachers' work by the end of the seminar day was useful for all of us. I learned what more preparations were needed before a full start of the project and the teachers strengthened their confidence in how it should be run. Most teachers came up with ideas about how to implement the project work in the day-to-day teaching process of their class, and some also managed to produce a rough outline of a possible interdisciplinary base for the process.

In my lecture given about the "outdoor room", I stressed the meaning of the term "public", arguing that public places are our places; they simply belong to you and me, the children and the young, the disabled, the elderly. I also underlined that this means we are free to sit down on a bench to rest, but, that from this freedom to do so, some obligations follow. The pilot-project aimed at encouraging the children, in their suggestions for change, to take particular interest in benefit for all generations, not just their own. This was a subsidiary, but nevertheless important project aim. The outdoor rooms should be kept clean and tidy just like an indoor room. Prevention of vandalism of the street furniture and vegetation should be our shared concern.

I argued that if we ask the children about, for example, their wishes for change in a public place, some knowledge about the present condition is required in order to get a voice heard. To improve communication with the authorities and the different groups of professionals who would be responsible for the public places, acquiring an extended vocabulary linked to architecture, design, and public administration, was viewed to be a core MIABE component.

As part of a slide presentation of the "Slemdal" project I explained the idea about learning to see more actively and thus acquire new knowledge. The teachers also learned that information collected from the registrations should form the base for the children's questions, discussion and reflections; what did they want the place to look like and why – as a step towards the final report about the ideas for change in the area. I also argued that to most of the children's questions about the small ugly places, there would hardly be any "right" or "wrong" answers. This, in my experience, often makes the children arrive at an answer by themselves, without having to check a textbook.

What to focus upon when you wish to take a photograph – a detail or the complete streetscape? As part of my preparations for the "Slemdal" project I learned from a teacher in photography how to make this a low budget exercise by just cutting a very small hole in a piece of black cardboard, hold it in front of your eye, peep through the hole and – there is your "camera". The children were free to choose as many motives as they liked – free of charge. Quite often the "camera" became a small design project in itself. I have seen "cameras" heart-shaped, circular, square, rectangular, or shaped like a house – the "outside" sometimes beautifully decorated "so that it would be nice to look at for other people."[27]

From the very beginning of the project the children should be encouraged to prepare their contact with the municipality by writing letters informing about their ideas and their reasons for change. With the help of JC, their applications would be forwarded to the agency responsible for its completion. Composing letter to the authorities was a new MIABE component developed in accordance with the project aims. To make the project on the "Small Ugly Places" become a process and not only a party balloon which quickly loses its air, the intention was to make the initiative part of a more permanent teaching and learning process for 5th grades.

This MIABE component, too, was a new one, and should prove hard to realise. In short, the idea was to encourage the participating teachers and children to pass onto future 5th grades, their new experience about what it might be like to take part in an interdisciplinary project aimed at increased knowledge of the built environment. This transfer of knowledge might have taken many directions; lectures, slide shows, a walk in the neighbourhood area, a small exhibition in the classroom and more. By inviting the 5th grades in each of the Oslo schools, our hope was that during a period of 4-5 years, all children in Oslo primary schools should get to know better their local public places. In the years 1998-2001 the pilot project was made a more permanent initiative, given different names. This time the projects were located to schools in areas less urban than in the pilot-project.

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[27] The quotation stems from one of the participants in the "Slemdal" project.

My opening lecture at the introductory seminar for teachers also included a small slide presentation about public places, street furniture and building details in different countries as well as in the local neighbourhood areas of each of the participating schools. Children of today travel often, including abroad. In the "Slemdal" project one of the boys had travelled to a big city in California. On his return, the first thing he told us about was the design of the street furniture in that city.

The teachers were also informed about our plan for an exhibition of the children's work in the City Hall Gallery. First and foremost, the reasons for this idea were to celebrate the work of the children and to show that the municipality had cared about their efforts to contribute in making the public places look more pleasant for all users. Additionally, an exhibition would offer an opportunity for pupils from all over the city to learn about other local areas than their own. The exhibition aimed at a presentation of the whole process, not just the children's most beautiful drawings and models. We also hoped that the exhibition would serve as a tool of inspiration for teachers who would like to use the public places as a base for interdisciplinary project work.

The one day workshop which included an enjoyable lunch, payment beforehand to allow substitute teachers to participate and knowledge of a planned follow-up course after three months in December 1996 were examples of how JC had the ability to make teachers feel appreciated. The follow-up course was aimed at encouraging the teachers to strengthen the informal networks between participating schools which initially was difficult to achieve. A presentation of the children's work produced so far in each of the classes, formed a basis for discussion, and we also learned how the teachers managed to make the project part of the "day-to-day" teaching and learning process. Finally, JC and I presented our ideas for a future exhibition of the children's work. JC also spoke of inviting all participating children to join a design-competition for a poster about the exhibition.

Preparations for registrations: reporting the first walk in the school's neighbourhood area, facilitating the registration process

By the end of October 1996, nearly four months after launching the pilot-project, I met with some of the pupils for the first time. Two participating classes with teachers and 32 pupils from Sagene School, were ready for a walk in the neighbourhood area looking for small ugly places in need of refurbishment. Later, the children chose their places of investigation and the working groups were established. By allowing the children to choose their own place, a sense of "belonging" developed, and pupils worked hard to try and make the most of their own choice. Occasionally, children have asked permission to choose another site of investigation. However, this has been the exception, not the rule.

The six schools which now took part in our project were Bygdøy, Gamlebyen, Grünerløkka, Lakkegata, Tøyen, and Sagene. All but Bygdøy School, are amongst the oldest in the city, the Sagene School was built in 1861. The schools are beautifully designed brick buildings. The architect of Lakkegata School even received a prize for its design at the World Exhibition in Paris in 1900. Presently, the six schools have approximately 350 pupils each and with the exception of Bygdøy, the remainders have a large number of minority lingual children.[28] At Sagene, Norway's second language (nynorsk), is taught is some classes.[29] (For map, see below.)

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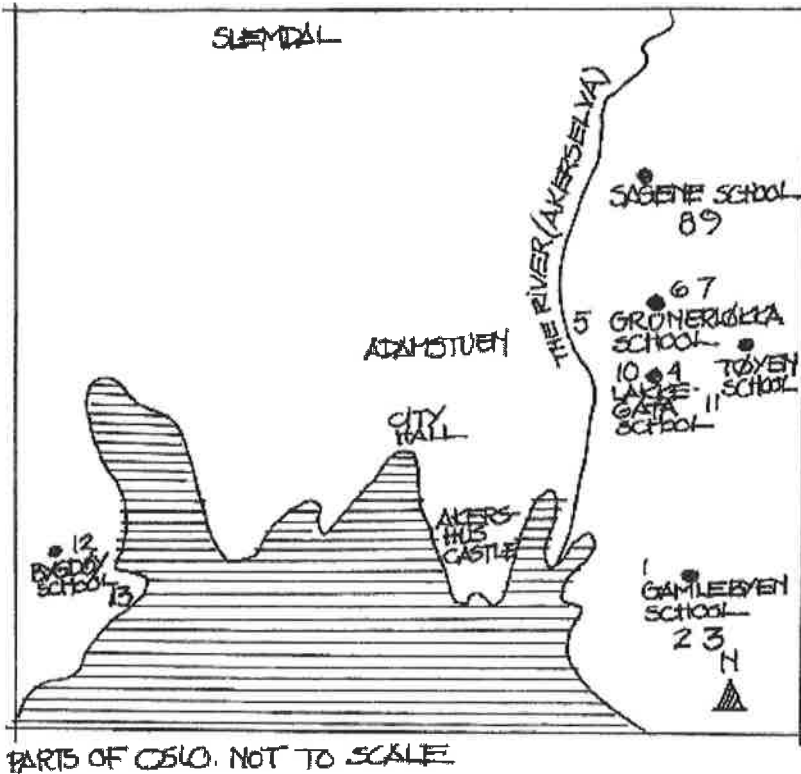
1. Harald Hårrådes Place	8. Toftesgate
2. Herb Garden	9. Sannergata
3. Memorial Park	10. Schous Place
4. Strykejernparken	11. Sørli Place
5. Kuba	12. Folk Museum
6. Olaf Ryes Place	13. Kon-Tiki Museum
7. Birkelunden	

[28] Figures by the Municipality of Oslo 2001 (latest available)
[29] New Norwegian, nynorsk, is one of Norway's two official written languages, and was the language taught in one of the participating classes.

As part of my preparations for the teacher training course, I had made a "tool box" which contained the equipment necessary for investigations in the local environment. All classes should make this kind of a box part of their preparations for project participation. The "tool box" contains the "cameras", a logbook and a pencil for each of the children – a ball pen seldom works when you try and take notes using the back of your friend as a table, and ink floats about in the rain. There should also be a tape measure and a piece of chalk in the box. The latter is used for markings when measuring lengths and widths of buildings, car parks and more. The log books and the tape measure should be made by the children. The logbook is just an ordinary notebook cut into three parts and given a green cardboard front and back. In case they would be lost, the name of the child, his school and class were written on the front. A couple of times this precaution has resulted in a return of logbooks lost in the neighbourhood area. The measuring tape was made from one or more balls of string – each meter was marked with a bright coloured ribbon. Working in the outdoor room, an ordinary measuring tape of two meters is not very practical for children to use when for instance measuring the size of a car park. Particularly for the younger children the making of the "measuring ball" also served an exercise in mathematics. The above mentioned preparations derived from the new MIABE component named "log book and tool box". In a follow-up project to the "Small Ugly Places", the tool box itself was made part of a design project.

During our walk in the local neighbourhood of Sagene School, we all took notes in our brand new logbooks – even the teachers. The children were encouraged to take notes and make sketches of the details of the public places which they had heard about in the introduction course. The logbooks also served as a tool for the teacher. They made it easy for him to see how the project was developing, what progress was made, and who needed some guidance. The logbooks also served as a shared base for discussions with the teacher and also with the other pupils of the working group. Occasionally, the children were allowed to bring the logbooks home to show their parents. Sometimes the children made their registrations even if it was pouring with rain, and more than once the small green books have been hung on a string across the classroom to dry.

Introduction course for children

The introductory course for the children might vary from being a lecture in the classroom to a seminar for all participating classes in one school. In the Råholt project, lunch was arranged by the children as part of the course and name tags were produced for each participant. The main purpose of the introduction course is to arrive at an awareness of the details of the built environment. Children aged 11-12 cannot be expected to be familiar with the terms "details of the built environment" and "outdoor room". A link between

the outdoor and the indoor room was, therefore, an important part of my preparations, but unfortunately turned out less successful than I had hoped. Enthusiastically, I was going to introduce the pupils to the new concept of the "public place", the outdoor room. I intended to start talking about an indoor room before comparing this with the outdoor room. To assist the pupils in taking notes, one pupil volunteered to write and draw on the blackboard. At this stage all agreed that a room has a floor. So far, so good.

Then I asked "What does the floor in your room at home look like?" Not all hands were raised so I turned to one boy who had not. I repeated my question, hoping this would be how a professional teacher would have acted. You have of course already guessed that the boy did not have a room of his own in which he could sleep or do his homework. He was sharing a room with two other brothers and therefore thought it would be wrong to answer my question. Years later, even now, I feel embarrassed at this as it never was my intention to hurt the feelings of the pupils, or even worse, to possibly humiliate them. I had worked hard to try and establish a shared knowledge base for an introduction to the "outdoor room", yet I failed in my endeavours to do it the right way. However, the boy was not the only one in that class sharing room with his brothers, and thus the embarrassment was minimized – for both of us.

My next question, therefore, was related to a more neutral ground, the sitting room, and for some time our conversation seemed to run smoothly. Some floors, the children argued, had carpets. This, they figured out, would be similar to grass in the outdoor room. Jokes were soon made from the fact that the "outdoor carpet" even had the capacity of changing colour throughout the year – green in the spring, yellow in the autumn and white during the winter. Additionally, the outdoor room might have a flooring of asphalt, pebble stones and so forth. There were tens of stories about purchases of sofas in all shapes and colours, of new kitchen curtains, etc, despite the fact that very few thought such objects were part of the street furniture in the outdoor room. More than half an hour was spent talking about flowers and plants of different kinds, as one child happened to mention that in her home there were flowers in the bay window of the sitting room. Finally, vegetation, the common denominator of "everything that grows", was introduced. Later on, as we were talking about the walls of the outdoor room serving the function of dividing as well as of sheltering, some children suggested that vegetation might well suit that purpose rather than concrete walls or fences of different kinds. In all my introduction lectures following this, the classroom was chosen as the point of departure to provide a neutral, but still shared basis for the children's learning.

This kind of close co-operation with children and the young is demanding, funny, and interesting, but never dull. Another small story about how my lecture preparations fell short would illustrate my point; the classroom of one of the participating classes was on the top floor. As a part of my introduction

about the differences and similarities of the outdoor and the indoor room, I argued that it never rains in an indoor room. A boy politely raised his hand and said, "Excuse me, Kari: look at the red bucket behind me." The roof had been leaking for weeks.

Back to the first walk with the classes of Sagene School.

Back in the classroom, after the walk in the local neighbourhood, the children were encouraged to make a memory drawing or some quick sketches of their impressions from our walk as well as a site map. We all tried to remember what we had seen, smelt, and heard. Some children always wish to draw their impressions close to a full scale, thus an A 3 or an A 4 size sheet of paper are not very useful. From experience, I have learned that a big roll of paper usually solves the problem in that it is rolled out meter by meter and the children move along as they memorise their walk of investigation. Luckily, the old city central schools have long and wide corridors well suited for this kind of work. In his book "Children's Participation", Roger Hart argues that he believes "The best way to raise awareness about local environmental issues is to experience them directly with all of one's senses while walking."[30] He also argues that surveys are "a straightforward and satisfying kind of research activity for facilitators and teachers to use in any culture, with children of all ages".[31]

Everyone had seen a lot during our walk, not surprisingly the "ugly" objects were outnumbering the "nice and pretty". However, during the project period, the children gradually became interested in the nice places. After a visit to the city centre, some children reported about nice examples of street furniture, and in a newspaper interview following the opening of the exhibition in the City Hall Gallery, a couple of boys argued that working in the small ugly places had made them appreciate more the well kept public places. What does a nice public place look like, and who decides the difference between nice and ugly? Answers to these questions are always left to the children. However, if they ask my opinion I try to give an honest answer. Examples of good design developed in accordance with the municipal programme for street furniture were presented to some classes. I believe that the teachers, the parents and I all contribute to colour their views – for the better or the worse.

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[30] Roger A. Hart, *Children's Participation: The Theory and Practice of Involving Young Citizens in Community Development and Environmental Care* (London: Earthscan, 1997), 147.
[31] Ibid.
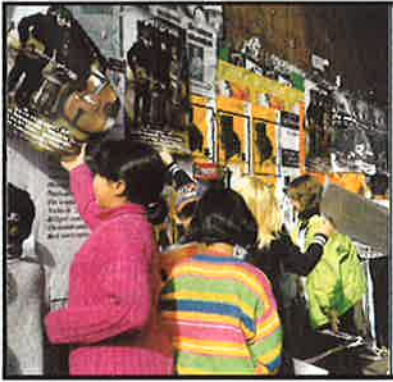
One group of children was particularly concerned about a plank fence of posters in the local neighbourhood area. The posters were torn down and the children bought some paint and brushes and repainted the wall. The full size litter bin in the shape of a yellow rabbit- like animal whose favourite dish is chocolate paper, was made by a boy in the 5th grade. What does a typical small "ugly" place look like? That is for the children to decide. In most of the participating classes, the containers for recycling glass was a matter of great concern and many ideas for new design were presented. The drawing of Lakkegata School and its school yard is made by Tjammal. One class made the wooden gates in the area of Grünerløkka their main field of investigation.

A facilitator's role is rarely described in projects about children and participation. A view of the facilitator acting as a participating observer like I did, is described by Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart who argue that viewing the facilitator's role as neutral would blind him to the manifoldness of practice and thus obscure the discursive, moral and political aspect of his practice.[32] As a rule, the children's likes and dislikes should be explained. However, sometimes their reasons were difficult to accept. A particular incident in which our views differed profoundly was about a plank fence of posters in the neighbourhood area of Sagene School. The plank fence was covered in posters of all sizes and colours and looked – in my opinion, quite attractive. I never told the children my opinion as the plank fence was considered to be ugly and thus soon became an object of embellishment. The posters were torn down by the children, who argued it was much more fun tearing them down than to dispose of all the paper. They bought brushes and paint and gave the fence a couple of layers of brown paint, thus ending the story of the poster wall.

During our walk in the neighbourhood of Sagene School, some of the children had heard the fire engines. Everyone had smelt production of beer from the brewery next to the school and the strong smell of exhaust in the main street. The children took quite a few photos, as did we all. In her logbook one of the teachers had noted during our walk: "Posters everywhere. Pillars for traffic signs without any function. The signs outside the school are crooked, broken, and look quite useless." She also made short notes about which subjects she thought might contribute to a multidisciplinary function of the project for her class: "Mathematics: count the benches, litter bins and more. Norwegian; spell the new words and concepts correctly. English: what would the concepts be in English?" Additionally, she wanted to have a map made, she would like some tape recordings of urban sounds, and she wanted her group of children to consider how places in the area could be made more accessible to the public.

Walking about with 32 children in the neighbourhood area was not a particularly good idea as the group is too large and attention to individuals is limited. I have already mentioned some of the reasons why JC and I made the 5th graders the target group of the project and to this list may be added that there is no difficulty with allowing 11-12 year olds to walk around in their neighbourhood without being accompanied by a teacher. A record of their movements was kept by signing an "in" and "out" list hanging next to the classroom door, in a similar manner to that used in the "Slemdal" and "Råholt" projects. The children and the young never misused this trust. Later, I asked one pupil why they behaved so well – "because we were at work", he answered.[33]

[32] Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart, "Particpatory Action Research. Communiucative Action and the Public Sphere," in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2005).
[33] Jens Martin, during our conversation reported in my chapter "The MIABE Revisted"

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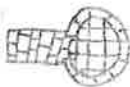
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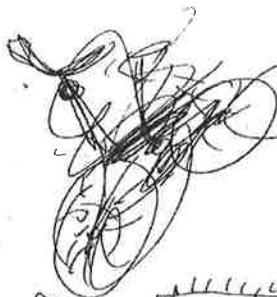
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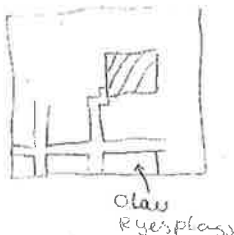
Notes and sketches from the children's logbooks made it easy for the teacher to see how the project was developing, what progress was made, and who needed some guidance. The logbooks also served as a shared base for discussions with the teacher and also with the other pupils of the working group. Occasionally, the children were allowed to bring the logbooks home to show their parents. One of the participating girls was particularly concerned about a rusty bicycle in the river. Her worries are reported in this chapter, and here is her image of the bike which caused so much frustration. One logbook note reports a nice place which unfortunately is not very well kept, another reports that it is quite warm and the third invites everyone to tell those who spray-paint their signature everywhere, to stop doing so.

4.3 DIFFERENT SCHOOLS – DIFFERENT APPROACHES.

Gamlebyen School

In October 1996, I met for the first time a small class of nine year olds from Gamlebyen School. Initially, we had planned only to invite 5th grades but four of the ten participating classes consisted of lower grade pupils. Together, the children, the teacher and I visited several places for study before deciding on Harald Hårrådes Place, a not particularly big or ugly site.[34] Part of the local environment in this city district was unfortunately tough and one where heavy drug abuse is common. The children, who were familiar with this area, were most concerned as we walked around. "Kari, watch out for that fix!" they warned.

Most of the places we had spotted were either too big to cope with, they were full of rubbish of different kinds or street furniture was scarce. A manageable size should be about 500 square meters but sometimes the children divided a larger area between two or more groups. How well the children coped with Harald Hårrådes Place can best be illustrated by what the teacher and the local parish newsletter wrote:

> People in the local area are very positive when they meet us in action in the neighbourhood. We have taken over the responsibility for the flower beds around the school. All kinds of bulbs are blooming. The children are good flower watchers!

The local parish newsletter wrote:

> Class 3b at the Gamlebyen School has taken the responsibility for keeping an eye on the Herb Garden as well as the Memorial Park.[35] The class also participates in the pilot project on the 'Small Ugly Places'. There are different opinions on whether or not the Harald Hårrådes Place is an ugly place, but it could certainly look better. The children's plan is to grow summer flowers from seeds, to weed and keep the place nice and tidy.

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[34] Named after Harald Hårråde (King Harald Hard-rule) a Norwegian king living from 1015 to 1066.
[35] The Herb Garden is part of the Memorial Park across the street from Gamlebyen School. The Memorial Park is often called the "Ruin Park" which has earned its name from the ruins of the St. Hallvard Cathedral (12th century) and its monastery.

Sagene School

From the very beginning, the teacher of one of the classes in this school had shown a particular interest in the design part of the project and they concentrated on the design of street furniture, while a parallel class chose the subject of Norwegian as the basis for their interdisciplinary approach. Although not part of our initiative, a group of children in this class also showed considerable interest in public places outside their own local area and while on an outing to Akershus Castle in the city centre, some children spotted a small "ugly" place. This resulted in a letter of complaint later published in the "Aftenposten" newspaper. The same class also produced some excellent questionnaires, and two of the boys held the children's speech at the opening of the exhibition in the City Hall Gallery.

At Sagene School, the children took the initiative to repaint a peeling sign on the school gate they thoroughly washed a statue in the school yard and presented ideas and reasons why it should be moved and tore down posters from a plank fence before repainting this. They also co-operated with the Ringnes Brewery across the street from the school, to try and remove the large number of stickers pasted illegally on walls, litter bins, signs and fences in the local area. A group of children also initiated their own little project named "Embellishment of the Small Ugly Chairs" connected with younger children entering school at the age of six (a result the National Curriculum of 1997) and arrangements for these to stay on after school (after school programme or SFO[36]). Some of the children participating in the 'Small Ugly Places' recognised that the SFO at Sagene School would need extra chairs which they found in the school loft and painted these. A similar initiative came after the "Small Ugly Places" when children repaired a couple of wooden benches in the schoolyard and also presented ideas for establishing a lawn in the part of the schoolyard nicknamed "the desert". Although it might seem unfair to the other schools going into such details about these children's ideas in particular, I believe their initiatives are important to report as they taught me something of great significance; the importance of i) ownership, (ii) relation to the children's life-world, (iii) the aspect of time (iv) pride, and (v) arriving at a substantial end product.

Finally, it should not be forgotten that both classes from Sagene School also registered details of the public places in their neighbourhood and were in contact with various municipal agencies about this.

Lakkegata School

At Lakkagata School two classes participated in the project. At an early stage, the children and the teachers presented ideas for making the schoolyard

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[36] Skolefritidsordningen

their place of investigation. One teacher had already been appointed safety deputy by the school with responsibility for the school yard and equipment such as climbing frames and swings. The question was: is a fenced in schoolyard a public place? In a letter to the Project Group the children explained that they also spent much time playing in the school yard after school. During school hours, older children are allowed to spend there break time is a small public park ("Strykejernsparken"[37]) adjacent to the school entrance and some of the groups wished to make this their object of investigation. The park is equipped with different kinds of street furniture including a ping-pong table, two wooden play horses, benches, tables and litter bins, and is used by the people living in the neighbourhood area after school hours. The Project Group accepted that both the public park and the enclosed school yard should be accepted as part of the "Small Ugly Places" initiative and the two classes divided these areas between them.

Encouraged by the idea to improve their schoolyard and its nearby environment, both classes also wished to redecorate their classrooms which they did with the help of parents and teachers. As part of the preparations for the exhibition in the City Hall Gallery, the children wrote a small story of the whole process which ended with "We in 7A and 7B have washed and painted the walls, the bookshelves and the cupboards, and made curtains. The Director of Education is very welcome to visit our 'new' classroom. Kind regards Ghizlan, Kashif, Mariann, Tina, Amer, Norin, Tony André, Khadija, Camilla, Geir Tony, Elisabeth, Hasnaa, Mura, Ali, Sajila, Jnaikel, Rizudria, Adeel, Pyline, Fallukk, Hamsia, Zuhaib, Ali, Karianne and Emir."

[37] An iron shaped park

Two groups of children were particularly interested in new design of signs. Even ideas for new traffic signs were produced. The three girls holding the B, E and C argued that the new sign above their head did not match the old brick wall. The other group was concerned about the fact that the main door and the side door were both difficult to find. A group of children at Lakkegata School were worried about the pallets left close to their school yard, the Strykejernsparken. "This is serious" the children wrote in a note about the matter. A group of children at Bygdøy School had chosen their site of investigation the place with the fruit stall outside the Folk Museum. Most children were eagerly taking notes in their logbooks. A wall, or sometimes even the ground, served the purpose of a desk.

Grünerløkka School

The 3rd grades at Grünerløkka School had chosen to investigate the identity of the area by its huge wooden gates leading to properties. Someone got the idea of making a Christmas calendar in which the windows to open would be exchanged with gates. The Christmas Calendar was professionally produced by an advertising agency and the calendar was the gift of the year from the Municipality of Oslo to all business relations of the "Safer City" initiative. The two other classes in Grünerløkka School did a fine job registering vandalism and street furniture at places such as Kuba, the plot next to the old silo, Olaf Ryes Place, Birkelunden and Schous Place.[38] Additionally, both classes showed a keen interest in the building details of the area, particularly the spires and plaster work. This resulted in the production of some excellent models.

Tøyen School

At Tøyen School the one participating class needed help and advice in finding a suitable place to investigate. The members of the Project Group were worried about the size of the proposed area and if the class would find the task too much. The Project Group suggested Sørli Place which did not prove to be successful. In the middle of December 1996, I received a fax from the teacher who wrote: "We have been out looking at the Sørli Place. Everyone has made a map of registration of the street furniture, an example is enclosed. We have also talked about the different components of the outdoor room like the floor, the walls etc."[39] After the Christmas holiday I received another fax in which the teacher told me that the class had tried to make a graphic presentation of the objects in the Sørli Place. "However, it feels hard to motivate the children to engage in this place. Personally, I believe this is because the place looks 'already finished'. Maybe we should [divide the class into two groups of 14 pupils and then] work in two different places, preferably one that looks more challenging – a place in need for a thousand ideas for change and improvements. Even if the children might experience that only a minor improvement comes true, this would just reflect the real world, would it not? There would still be a small trace of the children's work in the local environment which they could show their parents, saying 'I have contributed to this." A letter like this is hard to forget and I felt bad that the Project Group had made a bad choice. However, we had acted in the best interests and later replied: "The answer to you is absolutely clear, please choose the place or those places the children wish most. Motivation is a good and important driving force."[40] Regrettably nothing came out of the work, the teacher had to pull out of the project on personal grounds and she was unable to find a replacement.

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[38] See map page 98
[39] Fax, December 17th, 1996
[40] Fax January 14th, 1997

Bygdøy School

At Bygdøy School, two classes participated. This is not an inner city school and Bygdøy is a residential area where most residents live in detached houses with gardens and there are few public areas. However, the children found some places such as the area next door to the Folk Museum. Additionally, they were concerned with the graffiti on the back wall of the Kon-Tiki Museum as well as the design and situation of the bottle banks.

4.4 PREPARATIONS FOR COMPOSING LETTERS TO THE MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION – SOME EXAMPLES

Preliminary reports about progress in the different classes were submitted to the Project Group so as to assess the status of the "Small Ugly Places" initiative. Four boys from Sagene School, thus summed up their experience after interviewing people about grafitti. "From Tommy, Svein, Usman and Bendik, Sagene School. [...] We have walked in the rain interviewing people about graffiti, approximately ten." Results from the questionnaires prepared for the interviews had been summed up. A list of ideas for solving the problem was also included in the fax. I assume that the ideas comprised a mixture of their own views and the answers of the questionnaires.

> Graffiti is something we can stop if we work for it. What we could do to stop it, is to repaint [the walls] instead of using professional companies because they are quite expensive. By doing this, we can spend money on something different like for instance parks, kindergartens and schools. Instead of putting them in prison, we could make them remove the graffiti. The aerosols should be kept in a safer place in the shops, because many are stolen.

At an early stage of the project, JC was particularly concerned about the increasing amount of vandalism caused by graffiti. She therefore took action to try and let the children watch the process of graffiti-removal to teach them "that this kind of vandalism does not disappear 'by magic', but that hard work and specialised techniques are required."[41] Our efforts were not successful.

Designing questionnaires has been part of the MIABE from its very beginning. In the "Råholt" project, producing the result of the questions asked was made part of the lessons in mathematics and displayed in the shape of bar graphs. Some girls even embroidered the bar graphs as part of their art

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[41] JC note to me August 20th, 1996

lessons. Before designing the questionnaires, we discuss in class why we are doing this, about what do we wish for more information, and how do we style the questions to get the information we are out after. Leading questions would be of little value, while asking some young people and some old possibly might add strength to the matter of inquiry. From the answers the children might also learn that others sometimes have ideas different from their own. The children usually enjoy this component about making questionnaires; just like the above mentioned boys from Sagene School who told the municipality that they had been about in the area asking people their opinion – in the rain. I would argue that the component about making questionnaires is a good way to learn more about the particular concern of the participating children as well as of the project and certainly about what one forgot to ask. It has also proven a good exercise for those concerned with Norwegian, while mathematics and art have proven useful for presenting the results.

In the three MIABE projects reported, the children and the young have met with journalists from a newspaper, a radio station and the TV. Preparation for such meetings is a good exercise in the skill of summarising the project or to providing a detailed description of a particular theme. Sometimes I have been present during the children's conversations with the journalist, and as reported in my chapter "The Discussion" the children usually take the opportunity to make their new vocabulary part of the conversation, like the expression "visual pollution" which was a favourite at that time. Being well prepared before the interview, makes the children less shy, more motivated and enables them to convey their thoughts rather than those of the journalist. How successful the interview has been is very much reflected in the article the next day: usually the journalist does a god job, other times sometimes it is hard for the children to recognise their own arguments. The children always meet with a journalist as a group to make the project presentation a shared responsibility. Once, in the "Slemdal" project, the children made an extra "camera" for the journalist and also offered him a practical introduction to a core MIABE component about learning to "see" better by means of an exercise in photography.
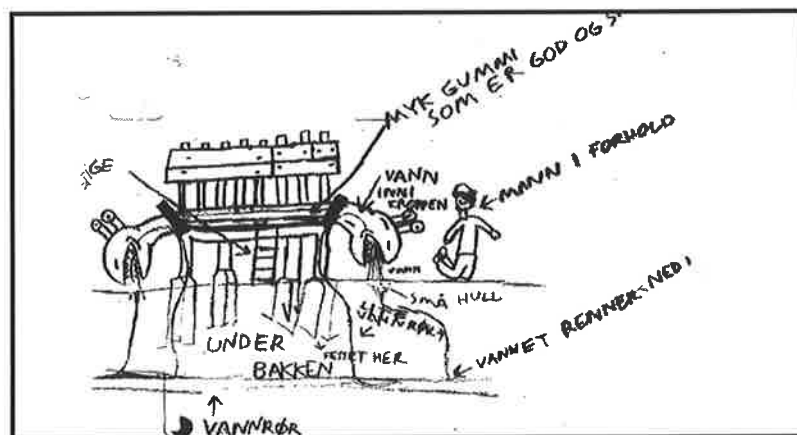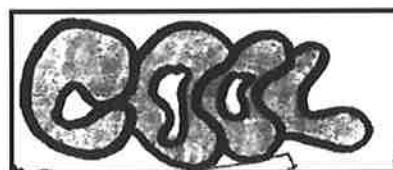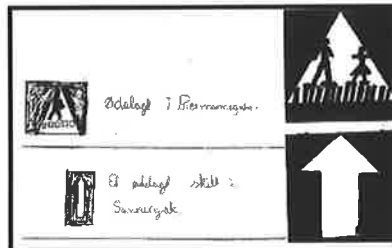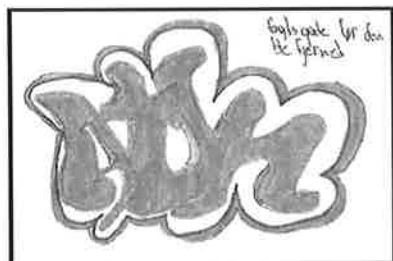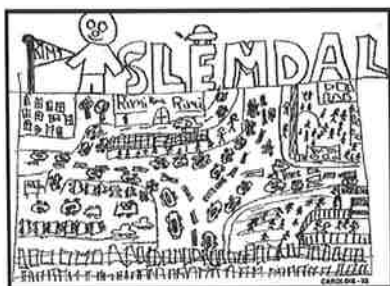
Caroline's impressions of the place Slemdal and Atif's and Ruben's logbook sketches. Some participating children were most concerned about spray painting on walls, the tagging, behind the Kon-Tiki Museum, Bygdøy. Graffiti on walls, litter bins and benches were reported by all classes and so were wrecked signs. Anders' idea for new design of a bench which looked like a dinosaur, caused a very interesting group discussion; was it a bench or a sculpture, and how could elderly ladies possibly climb the ladder to get seated? The water pouring out of the dinosaur's mouth was supposed to serve as a drinking fountain, an idea very much admired by all.

How to address the authorities by composition of a letter usually represents some interesting hours for the teacher and for me as a facilitator. The children soon notice the difference between writing a post card to a friend and the more formal message to the authorities. What are the differences? What is important in a letter to get your voice heard? From discussions, the children usually soon arrive at the importance of getting the name and the address of the receiver right. However, few seem to be concerned about the address of return, and many believe that putting this information on the envelope will do. The children are always encouraged to ask permission to use the school's stationary and this request has never has been refused. Although the children know exactly what their problem is and in which small ugly place they want the municipality to assist, they immediately understand the importance of passing on this knowledge to the receiver of the letter – not only in the shape of written information, but also supplemented by maps or photos. Arriving at a heading indicating the matter at stake also forms part of the exercise.

At Grünerløkka School, some children named their groups after the location of investigation, like the "Place Group" who wrote a letter to the municipality about the condition of the Schous Place.[42] "We are enclosing two maps: the small one to explain how you get there and the bigger to explain what the park and the nearby streets look like." This is an example of a letter written by one of the participating classes. The letter was addressed to the Oslo Road, the "Oslo Vei":

> About signs. Today I saw a wrecked sign. I also saw a tagged sign, and one that was bent and an old one. Could you please help us to put up a new one? This was in Toftesgate 2-12 and in Sannergata. We want the streets and parks to look pleasant. If you make the signs and the roads nice, it becomes more pleasant for everyone walking along the roads. If you start by making things look better, may be there would be less graffiti and rubbish? Could you please remove the stickers, too? They make everything look so filthy. Thank you very much indeed.

In this letter, the children inform about the issue at stake namely signs. The children have addressed the letter to the agency responsible for putting up and maintaining such objects, they tell exactly where the signs are (Toftesgate 2-12) and they present an informed reason for their wishes for change. Although not quite as accurate as the children at Grünerløkka School, this group of children was specific about informing the municipal agency about where to look for the damaged signs. As part of the project, the children had learned that the cost of removing stickers put up illegally was 500-1000 NOK each. These figures are comprehensible to children and they soon figured out that if this putting up of stickers did not take place, there would be more money for plants, benches and so on.

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[42] See map page 98
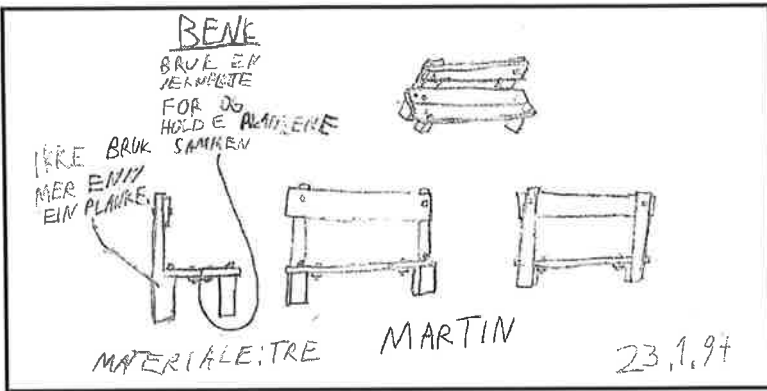
Martin's drawing of a bench includes specifications for construction just like the fantasy bench designed by Anders on page 112. The ideas for new design of street furniture took many directions from this conventional type of bench via the yellow rabbit-like litter bin to the dinosaur-like bench of Anders'.
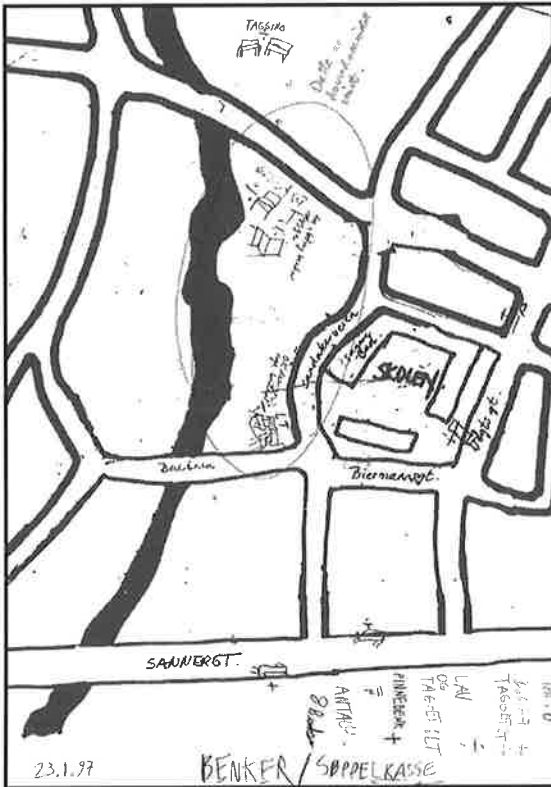
Making maps served many functions. This map contains registrations of the neighbourhood area. Majid was elected group leader and made sure that all new information was plotted on the map of their site.

Most children did a good job taking notes in their logbooks. Re-reading some of them has made me believe that this new MIABE component was rather useful – containing more information also for me as a researcher than I had expected.

"Silo news! At the back of the silo nothing is changed. What's the point spending one's time working with something one cannot do anything about? The place looks like shit."

A boy wrote: "A boring looking bench, ugly neon lighting, ugly number plates on the house and a wall full of tagging.[...] a fork, a beer can, half a loaf, plastic bags, vodka, newspaper, small candlelight, a gate full of graffiti in the Grünersgate."

A girl noted; "This is what I saw today: Birds die from the pollution, I sincerely hope that Oslo will become clean."

A group of pupils at Grünerløkka School had made registrations of telephone booths in the area; "Telephone booth in the Birkelunden: much graffiti, and there is no telephone directory in it. It is full of scratches, it just looks bad. Many have left stickers on it."

A member of the "Silo" group wrote: "There is graffiti on the silo walls. Nobody uses it. I think it should be demolished. But there is not room for that [to happen]."

Some other notes from the logbooks were obviously made for use in the model building process; "The length from the shop to the gate, width of gate, length from the corner to the school gate, measure the place and grass area." Notes were also made to indicate the material to be used like cotton, wooden sticks and so on.

Having spent the day out making sketches of the local places a pupil at Grünerløkka School summed up her impressions; "The summer is close. There are three men sitting in the park. It is nice there – plenty of vegetation and it is Olaf Ryes Place.[43] It is rather warm in the picture."

As we can see from the above quotations, a boy, in plain words, expresses his attitude to the project while simultaneously also presenting some accurate information about the state of "his" place. As part of their reporting about graffiti, broken street furniture and more, we also learn about some children's concern for pollution – what if the ducks are trapped in all the rubbish?

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[43] See map page 98

Additionally, we are allowed a glimpse of how poetic a child could present her registrations – like in the final example mentioned.

4.6 A SUMMARY OF THE CHILDREN'S FINAL INVESTIGATIONS

In the end of the school year 1996-97, the pupils at Bygdøy School, like the other participating schools, were busy sorting out their registrations and wishes for change. Letters to the municipality informing about their registrations were produced at high speed.

> The grounds in front of the Folk Museum: We do not approve of this messy place, and we do not like the look of the fruit stall. Maybe it could be painted in some bright colours? To make the car park more attractive, we would need someone to remove the graffiti and we would like flowers in lovely colours. The brick wall fencing in the museum is grey and dull. The area next to the entrance of the Viking ship Museum: We think it looks ugly because it is tagged and full of litter. […]. We think it looks so bad because all posters and messages in the pin board are out of date. The whole place looks messy.

From a selection of numerous registrations around Lakkegata School visualised by photos, came the following remarks applied to the school yard and the neighbouring "Strykejernsparken":

> Birds shit on the wall and on the table, lots of litter in the ditch; on the ground there is lots of litter, the whole park is ruined, cars are parked in the wrong positions; graffiti on the walls. There is broken glass on the ground. We wish for nice flowers; we want it [to look] nice and tidy around our school, we want the objects (like benches, table tennis and more) to be put in the right places. Bushes along the street are ruined. We wish to have the ping-pong table moved into another position. The benches are not in the right position, the lawn is ruined. We want the pallets to be removed.

A fax from Sagene School informs me that the children and teachers have been in the neighbourhood to see if any changes or improvements have taken place. "Somehow there has not. The graffiti is still there, the traffic signs are still out of angle. The pedestrian crossing is not painted, and the "poster wall" looks worse than ever (the local election).[44] The tram stop still looks rather

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[44] The teacher refers to all the extra campaign posters in connection with the forthcoming general election taking place in September (that autumn) My story is not always presented chronologically. The registrations referred to were thus made before the posters were removed.

dull, so do the litter bins. But (the teacher writes) there are some bright spots – the pupils recognise the importance of a pleasant looking neighbourhood. They report from having observed attractive bus shelters and litter bins in the city centre."[45] This fax was an important reminder about achieving some short term results and that the children could see that their voice had been heard. The bright spot was that the MIABE component of learning to "see" better had shown an awareness of the built environment and this was most encouraging.

At Grünerløkka School some of the children had taken notes of the changes spotted in their local environment: "Yes, things have changed outside the library. For example, new, pleasant benches." "It [a place] looks tidier. Old posters are cleaned away, we don't see all that many drug addicts; several trees are planted. Some scary looking men are still hanging about."
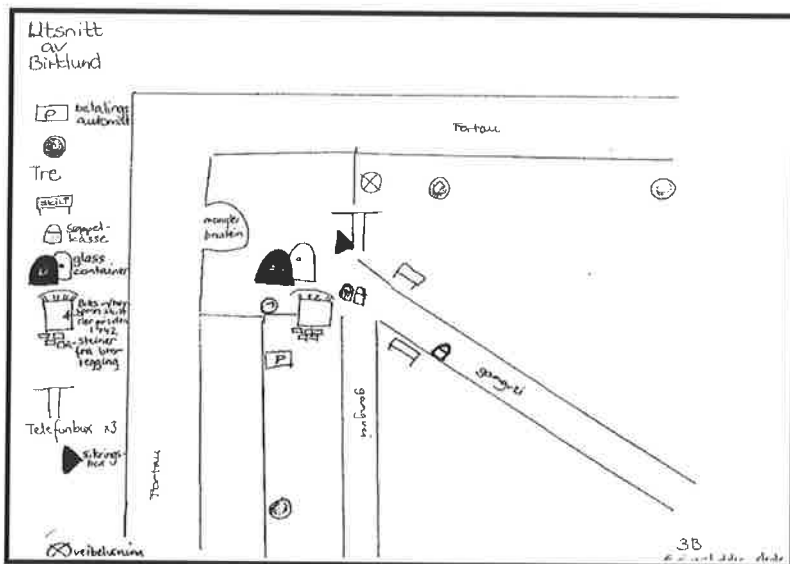
Sometimes the teacher had to assist the youngest of the children in for instance plotting the registrations on paper, while a group of children aged 11-12 managed well on their own (see next page).

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[45] Fax from teacher August 29th, 1997

PROBLEMER

"Rundingen"
på Cuba
Gruppe III.
Leder: Kristine Hår.
5A, Grünerløkka
skole

1. Mye hundebæsj.
2. Litt strødd.
3. Olje i smeltevannet.
4. mye tagging.
5. bot for folk som ikke tar opp
hundebæsj (skilt).
6. For mye søppel.
7. Sykler, bilhjul, handlevogner osv. i elva.
8. Ubrukte og stygge benker.
9. Vond lukt.
10. Ingen gjerder rundt siloen.
11. Olje i elva.
12. Bøyde trær.
13. Brukte kondomer.
14. Ligh/tere ligger og slenger
5. rakettrester rundt om kring
16. møbkete vann,
17. S...

Kristine, the group leader of the "Circle Group", had listed the registrations made by her group: dog excrement, graffiti, too much litter, a bicycle, a trolley, and a tyre in the river. Ugly benches, a nasty smell etc. etc. The Circle Group hade earned its name from the circular-shaped site of investigation.

4.7 ANSWERS FROM THE MUNICIPAL AGENCIES RESPONSIBLE FOR MAINTENANCE OF THE PUBLIC PLACES – SOME EXAMPLES

As already mentioned, co-ordinating the children's registered observations, was the responsibility of JC. Examining and summarizing the concluding registrations clearly indicated a repetition in the different kinds of vandalism reported by the participating children. Graffiti unfortunately was reported by all classes in all schools. The children seemed to be particularly concerned about a tendency seen in spray painting even on blocks of flats in their neighbourhood area. A girl made a big drawing of the Royal Castle vandalised by graffiti to illustrate her opinion on the matter.

On May 5th 1997 the Chief Commissioner's Department received a letter from the telephone company, Telenor:

> We have read your letter and looked at the enclosed
> registrations and maps from the children with great interest.
> [...] The telephone booths of our company placed outdoors are
> frequently exposed to vandalism, partly from younger people.
> From this point of view we also consider your initiative to be
> preventive. [...] The detailed description of the conditions in
> the many "small ugly places" tells us that there is much more
> to be done in this field. [...] The errors and malfunctions
> reported have been seen to.

The company also signalised a long term responsibility linked to possible similar future projects.

A couple of weeks later, an answer to the children's registrations arrived from the Oslo Energy Net (Oslo Energi Nett/OEN) "The Oslo Energy Net hereby wishes to say thank you to the pupils from Bygdøy, Lakkegata, Sagene and Grünerløkka schools for their well performed 'detective' work in embellishing their local environment. The OEN will shortly, and with pleasure, improve the conditions." In a note attached to a copy of this letter forwarded to my office, JC was drawing attention to the different municipal departments which all seemed positive towards the changes reported by the children. "From this the pupils experience that their work is appreciated and that what they worked at is not 'just pretending'."[46]

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[46] May 20th, 1997

4.8 THE EXHIBITION "EMBELLISHMENT OF THE SMALL UGLY PLACES"

Many people had accepted our invitation to the opening of the exhibition on November 10th 1997 in the City Hall Gallery. The Chief Commissioner, Fritz Huitfeldt, gave a short speech and declared the exhibition open. Bendik and Usman then shared the speech on behalf of the participating children. I so wish I had a copy. In my speech, I said:

> The first question JC and I always get when the project is presented is this: 'What does it take to do something similar?' A humorous answer would be: enthusiastic teachers and pupils, some money, a cross departmental municipal working team, a JC and a me. By learning to 'see' better, the children had focused on the ugly places. However, after some time, they also learned to spot the pleasant parts of their local neighbourhood areas. The aim of the project was to make use of the small, untidy and often haphazardly designed urban areas as a tool for the achievement, engagement and understanding of children and the young and thus hopefully get them to contribute to the improvement of the urban areas. Did we succeed? You, the children, were enthusiastic about the small ugly places – you certainly saw them as a challenge. In this project we were aiming at the children's experiencing awareness about architecture and design and also an introduction to which agency within the municipality is responsible for what. I do hope that each child has had, and will still have, much pleasure from having participated in a project like this.

4.9 WAS THIS THE END OF THE STORY?

It was not. Somehow it was just a beginning. In 1998, the booklet of ideas, or more precisely the "Embellishment of the Small Ugly Places: The Public Place as a Pedagogical Tool" was published and distributed to all primary schools in Oslo.

A small follow-up project took place at Sagene and Grünerløkka schools. The project became part of the international approach the "Common Threads: Participation for a Better World" which was organised by the Centre for Creative Communities and the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum in co-operation with the Consortium of Institutions for Development and Research in Education in Europe.

In December 1998 Jorunn Christoffersen and I both received the Oslo Municipality "Rusken" Award in gold, from the Mayor, Per Ditlev-Simonsen, to honour our efforts for introducing schoolchildren to an increased awareness of the built environment.

In the autumn of 1999 the Municipality of Oslo initiated a project on "The Public Place in the Local Neighbourhood." Through my firm, I was given the responsibility for the external project leadership and the implementation of the project in seven primary schools, this time in less urban areas. Two Swedish architects[47] were responsible for most classes participating. Parts of the project were exhibited in the City Hall, forming part of a municipal initiative named "Oslo – a Sustainable City". "My" projects were, as usual, facilitated by the many MIABE components while my two Swedish colleagues worked with their own model. From now on, communication with the different schools was co-ordinated from the Office of the Chief Municipal Education Officer. Since 1996, another 15 classes have participated in initiatives following the pilot-project of the "Small Ugly Places". In September 1999, the follow-up project about the "Small Ugly Places" was exhibited in Glasgow as part of the initiative "Common Threads: Participation for a Better World." In presenting my project in the exhibition catalogue, I wrote that public space is an expression of democracy, and that my aim was not only about the built environment, but it was also to help the children achieve skills for participation in their own community."[48] The exhibition, consisting of 14 projects from 10 European countries, later travelled to many European cities. From December the 3rd until January the 10th (1999-2000) the pilot-project on the "Small Ugly Places" was exhibited in the "Lighthouse"[49] in Scotland as part of the "Glasgow City of Architecture and Design 1999".[50] The opening speech was given by the Oslo Commissioner for City Development and Commerce, Grete Horntvedt, who referred to her previous position as the Commissioner for Culture and Education, arguing that "The 'Small Ugly Places' project might be placed exactly there – in the point of intersection of culture, education and city development." The Norwegian Ministry of Environment in May 2000 published a report " Advice and Examples: City Centre Development". The follow-up project of the "Small Ugly Places" was used as an example in the section "Advice in Planning for Safety". Additionally, the project was presented in the Scottish Arts Council's report on "Culture, Creativity and Citizenship in Scotland."[51]

[47] Christina Apell and Lena Månsson.
[48] Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum and Centre for Creative Communities, "Common Threads, Participation for a Better World. Exhibition Catalogue," (1999), 13.
[49] The Lighthouse is Scotland's Centre for Architecture, Design and the City.
[50] From its many goals the initiative also aimed at presenting projects that developed increased awareness of good design and enshrined the principles of professional and community collaboration.
[51] Scottish Arts Council and Christina Losito, "Culture, Creativity and Citizenship in Scotland. Case Studies and Discussion," (Edinburgh: 2002).

4.10 MY REFLECTIONS

Did any of the different presentations of my projects mentioned above, contribute to any new ideas for developing the MIABE? The answer would be "Yes" and "No"." No", because a model for achievement of aims is never fully presented as part of an exhibition, and a transfer value therefore is hard to find. "Yes", because there is always something to learn from others. Thus what was learned was mainly related to the different projects, their base and their aims. In addition to my own project, the "Common Threads" initiatives, comprised only one other approach concerning urban planning.[52] The project was based on a group of artists interested in community development and redefinition of the urban space who argued that, "People begin to realise that it is not just about getting together to have a nice time, but it also about getting together to make decisions in terms of urban planning."[53] The initiative included children and adults. I assume that the general interest taken in the follow-up project to the "Small Ugly Places" is to be found in its combining the aims of many of the other initiatives; rethinking the educational process, establishing the school as part of the community, cross cultural initiatives, environmental responsibility linked to decreased vandalism, and using the visual sense as a tool to opening up the children's understanding of reading and writing. As with so many other European initiatives about children and participation, most of the "Common Threads" projects were based in the arts. As already mentioned, from my presentations abroad, I also learned that application to the MIABE might serve as a catalyst for education in citizenship, and I learned that the abbreviation of the project name to just the "Small Ugly Places" was a catching name which seemed easy to identify with for all.

4.11 THE MIABE COMPONENTS AND THE "SMALL UGLY PLACES" PROJECT

In retrospect, which of the MIABE components were in active use, which were not, and why?[54] A broad introduction to the MIABE component *Learning to "see" more actively* was given in my previous chapter "The MIABE". This component is a prerequisite for working in accordance with my model and is, for example, facilitated by looking for pieces of street furniture to see how they function as they stand. The components concerning *interdisciplinary project work* and the *link to the National Curriculum of 1997, particularly the subject Arts and Crafts*, were facilitated through the introductory course for the teachers followed by their own integration of different subjects, sometimes in co-operation with me. Use of the component "learning to see more actively" was organised in all the classes, while the two

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[52] "Creative Neighbourhoods", Leeds, UK.
[53] Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum and Communities, "Common Threads, Participation for a Better World. Exhibition Catalogue," 6. Linda Strudwick, Development Director, Creative Neighbourhoods.
[54] MIABE components identified in italic.

other components are prerequisites for the whole process and thus were accounted for in the introduction course for teachers. Introduction to *learning a new language linked to the built environment and public administration* has been reported and so has an example about how the children *made use of all their senses* during a first site investigation. At Grünerløkka School, the component of *learning about the history of place* was linked to information about the preservation plan for the area. In the other schools I have no data or any recollection of this component. However, as already reported in my previous chapter, in the "Slemdal" project an elderly pensioner introduced the children to the history of place. The components about *sketching/drawing and photography* have both been reported used and so has the making of the logbooks and the "tool box". Although they were both actively used, I have not mentioned the components about *making maps* and the *model building*. Small scale model building took place in the classroom, while large scale or even full size models like the litter bins produced in one of the participating classes, could take place in a workshop or even outdoors. Model building which requires processing wood, plywood etc. took place in the school's specialised workshop. I recall very few registrations of *patterns of movement*, although particularly for the one class which chose the schoolyard as their site of investigation, detailed suggestions for registration of where the children ran, climbed, skipped, rested etc, were prepared. There are no indications about use of the component of *access for the physically disabled*. Maybe this component was viewed to be peripherally linked to achievement of the project aims? The only component that was not facilitated in the "Slemdal" project was the one about *walking through the area by night*. In the "Small Ugly Places" project, which was part of the "Safer City" initiative, JC and myself both assumed that this component would have been organised by most teachers. However, a combination of the teachers' working hours and the difficulty in assembling all the children after school hours, precluded any practical experience.[55] The component of *likes and dislikes* is usually one of the children's favourites, and thus hardly needs facilitating at all. However, use of the component demands a reason given for the children's judgement which, in its turn, breeds critical thinking and discussion.

The aim of establishing contact with municipal agencies responsible for change in the public places was made possible by means of the two components; *writing letters to authorities* and the already mentioned acquisition of an extended vocabulary. However, initially this component also comprised the idea about introducing the children to different municipal agencies to learn about the number of employees, budgets and more. JC was also enthusiastic about arranging a visit to some municipal workshops to watch all the technical equipment necessary for yearly maintenance of the public places. Additionally, a visit to a municipal tree nursery was on the agenda but unfortunately, this never happened. Why? In retrospect, I believe such visits for 250 children were time-consuming. Also, priority was given to

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[55] Although dark outdoors at 2 pm during winter in Oslo, this is not the same as walking through the area at night.

the graffiti removal, another subsidiary goal not achieved. However, I assume that if the participating children had been fourteen or fifteen year olds, they might have successfully taken the responsibility for arranging graffiti removal in co-operation with the municipal agency in charge. Facilitating the components about an *introduction seminar for teachers*, the *follow-up seminar for teachers* and *the introduction course for children* have all been reported. Teachers who do not attend the introductory course most likely fail to learn about important information for themselves and also for the children. Although based in limited experience, I would suggest that in initiatives involving more than one school, the MIABE component covering an introductory course for teachers, should be made compulsory. An evaluation report based in the opinions of the participating teachers in one of the follow-up projects to the "Small Ugly Places" initiative, indicated that the teachers wanted the introductory seminar to become a permanent part of such projects.[56] The European Council in its recommendations for preparations of a participatory initiative with children, encourages organising training for the adults involved in a project, as "this will greatly improve the results."[57] Eileen Adams and Sue Ingham underline that the first meeting between an out-of school professional and the teacher is more likely to be productive if it takes place away from lesson time.[58] Building not only the teacher's confidence, but also enhancing their networking, has proven important for them, as well as for me, the facilitator.

In my story, I have also reported the component about *designing questionnaires* and how the results from the children's interviews with people has been presented in different shapes ranging from computer designed graphs to embroidery. Unfortunately, the new component about a *long term development for this kind of projects* was not facilitated. However, this component was revitalised as part of one of the follow-up project to the "Small Ugly Places" in which the 5th grade teachers accepted the challenge of passing their experience on to the grade below to prepare a possible interest in a copy cat approach. The MIABE component about *choice of places*, like the mentioned component about likes and dislikes, seldom needs facilitating. However, as we have seen in my story, guidance might be required for the better (Gamlebyen School and Harald Hårrådes Place) or for worse (Tøyen School and Sørli Place). Although applied by all the participating classes, I have not reported that the component about *group work* is linked to free choice of group compositions. There are many stories about the success of this component, but there are also stories about teachers who disapproved of my idea and insisted on composing groups the way they wanted them to be such as all boys or all girls, or one difficult child together with one bright and two average children etc. On one occasion, two difficult boys from a particular class were left over after groups had been formed and I suggested

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[56] Extract from the evaluation report presented in a letter from me to Bettina A.Sagedahl, project leader at the Office of the School Administration, Department of Primary Schools, Municipality of Oslo, June 28th 2001.
[57] Council of Europe, "Children, Participation, Projects - How to Make It Work!" (Strasbourg: 2004), 10.
[58] Eileen Adams and Sue Ingham, *Changing Places. Children's Participation in Environmental Planning*, (London: Children's Society, 1998).

they should join me to get started. The result was mixed and as a rule, I believe facilitating this component, or not, should be the choice of the teachers. The component about new design of street furniture was added to the already existing MIABE components to meet the project aims. As already reported, this component was remarkably well facilitated in one of the classes at Sagene School: existing street furniture, such as benches, litter bins and bus shelters were measured and drawn, photographs were taken, ideas for new design were discussed and small scale models made. A full size litter bin was produced in papier maché and a group of children almost succeeded in having a prototype made by a local tinsmith. Some girls even came up with ideas for new signs to mark the many entrances to the school building. JC provided the class with information about the municipality's latest design scheme in accordance with the programme for street furniture (PPG) mentioned in my introduction to this chapter. A discussion following the design of a fantasy bench is reported in my chapter "The Discussion". This bench probably was the closest someone got to facilitating the MIABE component named future design of the place, realistic or utopian. I have no recollection of application to this component and in retrospect I believe that this component should not have formed part of the "Small Ugly Places" project at all. In the follow-up project to the pilot-project about the "Small Ugly Places" a visit to a class of industrial designers was arranged for the children from Sagene School who had shown such great interest in design of street furniture[59], and the young students kindly demonstrated how to make models. The component about production of a summary seldom presents problems as most children are keen to tell what they have been doing in the project. The summary is usually a written statement. However, it might well be a small play, a speech or a video.

The MIABE component named exhibition has been executed in different ways in the difernt MIABE applications. In the "Small Ugly Places" project as well as the "Slemdal" project, the children's work was exhibited in a gallery. From my experience, although limited, I would argue that the more the children and the young are allowed to contribute to the making of an exhibition, the better.[60] If possible, the children and the young should also act as guides to inform about their project. Such presentations strengthen the children's ownership of the project, also in its final phase. Arranging a competition for a poster advertising the exhibition, would be another example of strengthening ownership.

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[59] In the follow-up project to the pilot-project about the "Small Ugly Places" some of the "initial" classes from Grünerløkka and Sagene schools participated.

[60] Although not until the age of 15, putting up an exhibition forms part of the subject Arts and Crafts in the National Curriculum of 1997.

The MIABE components related to different age groups of children

As reported in the introductory part of my story, the reason for inviting particularly the 5th grades to take part of the "Small Ugly Places" project, was mainly based in a general view of the capabilities of this age group combined with the architecture and design part of the forthcoming subject Arts and Crafts. A brief overview of how the different classes approached the project, indicate that we were right (See table below). However, this is not the complete picture. The review also reveals the many different approaches initiated in addition to the project aims and more important, the youngest children taking part had not yet acquired the skills required for achieving the project aims. What consequences did this have and for whom? Despite the differences in age and thus in skills, all classes, in one way or the other, met the project aims. Why was this? Most likely this was due a combination of the wide range of components to choose from and the skilled teachers who facilitated those of the MIABE which matched the skills of their pupils. I believe that Gamlebyen School lived up to the initial aim of the model, as in the "Slemdal" project, in that an increased awareness of the built environment was facilitated, rather than co-action with municipal agencies to report vandalism and present ideas for new design of street furniture. The children at Grünerløkka School wished to work with the identity of the area in general and the wooden gates in particular. At Sagene School a group of young "Robinson Crousoe's" planned to capture a small river island. Let me rush to add that this group of "Robinsons" also seriously contributed to achievement of the main project goals. Realising the river island project, might illustrate my point made in the chapter about the MIABE, in which I compare running a MIABE related project with the alpine skiing field of giant slalom – some competitors ski out of the track at an early stage, and some fall – but most end up safely to the finish. Knowing the children's strengths and weaknesses, the teacher knew how to make also those "off piste" like the Robinsons reach the finishing line.

Table: Stages and different approaches to the project aim

NAME OF SCHOOL	STAGE*	DIFFERENT APPROACHES**	ADDITIONAL INITIATIVES***
BYGDØY	INTERMEDIATE STAGE (2 classes)	The areas around the Folks Museum and the Kon-Tiki-Museum. Graffiti, the fruit stall and container for recycling glass	Visit to another participating class at Grünerløkka School
GAMLEBYEN	INITIAL STAGE (1 class)	Harald Hårrådes Place, Herb garden, weeding the flower beds	Planting bulbs by the school entrance, weeding and watering the nearby Herb garden
GRÜNER-LØKKA	INTERMEDIATE STAGE (3 classes)	Schous Place, Kuba, litter in the river, graffiti, the "Silo" area, building details, particularly spires and plasterwork, Birkelunden, street furniture.	Wooden gates, Christmas calendar
LAKKEGATA	INTERMEDIATE STAGE (2 classes)	Schoolyard and adjacent area.	Refurbishing the classrooms
SAGENE	INTERMEDIATE STAGE (2 classes)	Tram shelter, graffiti, signs, new design of street furniture, removal of illegal stickers on litter bins and more	Repainting sign on the school gate, ideas for new signs by the school entrances, washing a statue, "the small ugly chairs", repainting the plank fence of posters, conquering a river island

*The new Norwegian National Curriculum of 1997 comprised three main stages: The initial stage (children 6-9 years of age), the intermediate stage (children 10-12 years of age) and the lower secondary stage (youth 13-16). In my story about the "Small Ugly Places" I report about

children in the 5th grade as our target group. In 1996 children in this grade would be 11-12 years old. However, as a consequence of the new National Curriculum of 1997, "our" children had to skip a level to match the new system, thus the 5th grade became 7th grade (autumn 1997). The children took part of the project for nearly a year and a half. To reduce any confusion, I have decided to use the new system in this presentation.

** Despite the aims given (the project aims), different approaches were seen in different classes. All approaches referred to would depend on municipal assistance for completion.

*** These projects were all initiated and completed by the children, apart from the final version of the Christmas Calendar which was made and printed commercially. (The refurbishing of classrooms was a co-operation between the children, the parents and the teachers).

Another MIABE challenge, although not age-related, was the wish to make the school yard at Lakkegata School, the place of investigation. The project goal was based on the MIABE components about registrations in the public places followed by contact with the municipal agencies responsible for their maintenance. This involved writing letters including use of newly learned terms and experience with the built environment and public administration. As none of this would be facilitated by the new MIABE components, this class, too, mainly worked in accordance with the initial model.

The approaches reported in the brief overview ranging from how to get to and from a river island, via weeding a herb garden to painting a sign on the school gate, indicate a broader flexibility of application to the MIABE than I had previously experienced. However, the adjustments made were not all that comprehensive and should, in my opinion, be viewed just like any adjustments made by reflective practitioners almost every day. The only snag about opening up the possibility for this kind of approaches is that the idea about participation as part of a democratic process will not be experienced.

The preparation process

On reading my story it seems that the lengthy preparatory process was rather comprehensive and was a prerequisite for municipal approval of the initiative as well as to ensure the objectives of the project. As a facilitator and a co-ordinator, I spent more time running the project than I did with the children. Working in close co-operation with JC, as well as other members of the Project Group, gave me new insights into the running of my model. Thus I realised that because of the long winters with snow and ice, those responsible for the maintenance of the public places have to do most their work during the months of June, July and August when the children are on summer vacation and co-action between them is difficult to organise. Moreover I learned that such cooperation would not be made possible without a committed project leader, with the qualities of JC, inside the municipality. In my experience as a practitioner and researcher, I have not known projects in which the preparation period was as long and only once has the role of the facilitator been considered.

4.13 HAVE THE AIMS OF THE PROJECT BEEN ACHIEVED?

The pilot-project about the "Small Ugly Places", received considerable attention. Why was this? The aim of the project was to make use of the public places in a practical-educational context. The schoolchildren should report lack of maintenance in these places to those agencies in charge and help fight decline and thus make the urban places safer and pleasant for all users. The children were also encouraged to present new ideas for the design of street furniture. A buddy system to realise co-action between the pupils and the municipal agencies was established. One was hoping that a caring municipality might encourage more responsible citizen behaviour. As we have seen in this chapter, the children did report lack of maintenance in the small "ugly" public places, and improvements were made in many different ways: tulip bulbs were planted, flower beds were weeded, a statue was washed (in a school yard) a plank wall was stripped of posters and painted, and the rubbish in the river was cleared away. New ideas for design of street furniture were presented in all shapes and colours; from a litter bin in the shape of a chocolate paper-eating yellow rabbit to a bench which looked more like a dinosaur and which also served the purpose of a drinking fountain.[61] The established buddy system functioned well, even though, as mentioned above, co-acting with regards to for instance repairing a bench was made difficult because such maintenance took place during the children's summer vacation. From a municipal point of view, nearly all the project aims were achieved. However, I assume that enhancement of more responsible citizen behaviour by the children is hard to measure, and I have no indication about such growth. In addition to achieving most aims, many people and organisations learned about the pilot-project from lectures, newspaper interviews, radio interviews and one local TV report. The financial budget held and the time schedule was kept. The city of Kristiansand initiated a copy cat project[62] and a handbook of ideas was sought after outside Oslo. So far, so good.

Learning from mistakes

Not all children were convinced that their efforts would make any difference, such as the boy who asked "What's the point spending one's time working with something one cannot do anything about?" Although I received many

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[61] Both are displayed in this chapter.
[62] Kristiansand, a city on the southern coast of Norway. The copy cat project is reported in my chapter "Positioning the MIABE in a Broader Contecxt"

faxes from teachers who expressed their joy about being part of the project, I also received some from a couple of frustrated teachers.

> We are sorry to inform you that we feel stuck in the proceedings. Most likely, there is something we have missed out. […] The pupils feel they have worked in vain. We do not know what to do to catch up the lost spirit neither of ourselves nor of the children.

In one school the teachers were rather disappointed by the improvements made by the municipal agencies: " Some of the improvements seem to be rather temporary. We are sceptical – but still hoping […]." An assumingly simple preparation for meetings with a class sometimes was exactly the opposite;

> We are in the middle of a very hectic period. Lots of different tasks have to be finished by the end of November, and we have not yet managed to get started. We would very much like to meet with you, but we have difficulties in finding a time and a place that suits all.

In her meeting with a journalist, a girl participating in the pilot-project, expressed her frustration about why she had to wait so long for an answer to her inquiry about a rusty bicycle in the river; "When we noticed the bicycle, we called the phone number given on the sign by the river bank. The bicycle is still there."[63] The bicycle was also mentioned in the report sent to the Oslo Water and Sewerage Authority (OVA) responsible for clearing the rivers and their nearby banks. In a copy of their answer, dated July 24th 1997, sent directly to her school, the OVA reported that the bicycle was now removed.[64] Unfortunately, from a note in her logbook dated November 11th 1997, I can tell that the girl was not informed about the answer. She writes; "I don't think it's right that we have to phone the Oslo Water and Sewerage Authority twice. The first time I phoned was in the autumn of 1996. The second time was today. They should keep their promises, particularly to children." How can these problems be solved and who should do so? No doubt any answer from me would be biased by the fact that I designed the model and also acted as facilitator of the project. Could any of the MIABE components possibly have prevented the teachers from becoming frustrated? A compulsory introductory seminar might go a long way to hinder frustrations. In the case of the frustrated teachers, these were helped to get back on track, but regrettably the children's complaints were not known to me until after the project was completed. Although I took action to sort things out on the spot, I believe I could have done a better job at an early stage by informing the teachers and the children about the role of the municipality – how each agency was run and how their schedules for maintenance were organised. In

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[63] Anette Aasheim, "Miljødetektiver Snuser Opp Stygge Oslo," *Aftenposten, oslopuls*, 12.februar 1997.
[64] The letter is reported in the chapter "The Discussion".

retrospect I believe that my idea, developed in the "Slemdal" project, of reporting short term results[65] was a good idea as was the information to children about how and what to expect from municipal reaction to ideas for change or maintenance.[66] Such information might possibly have contributed to less disappointment expressed also in the above mentioned fax about the plank fence and bent signs, from the teacher at Sagene School.

What differences would it have made if the children had been involved also in the preparatory phase of the project? As I have no experience in this matter, I shall restrain from any possible answers. However, I assume that, as opposed to in participation for adults, in which the idea of public participation from a very early stage is aimed at, including the children in planning of the whole project might possibly take the enthusiasm away from the action in the small ugly places, and thus counteract rather than motivate action.

There are many lessons to learn from my story about the pilot project of the "Small Ugly Places", so as having to avoid the "top-down" way of selecting teachers, the above mentioned frustrations and more. However, the particular incident that springs to mind, is what happened to the class at Tøyen School where the enthusiastic teacher only saw the class for a couple of hours a week, and the children who were disappointed after the Project Group, which in the best of intentions turned down their choice of study area. In retrospect I believe that what happened might have been prevented – at least partly. Initially, JC and myself wanted at least two participating classes from each school so that the teachers involved could form a small project team. Moreover, we wanted this project to be based on the day-to-day teaching and learning process, not just a kind of event two hours a week. We also envisaged that the class teacher would be in charge of the project rather than one who sees the class for a short time each week. This was the opposite at Tøyen School and we asked ourselves, were we wrong to accept only one class and have a specialist teacher take charge rather than the class teacher? Did we do him a disservice by making him part of the pilot project? Regrettably in this case the teacher had no support from others and the chance of an interdisciplinary base was absent.

4.14   SUMMING UP

I have now told my practice story about the pilot-project of the "Small Ugly Places" and how the MIABE components were facilitated to achieve the project aims. I have explained what happened before, during and also partly after the project period, and thus given my story a retrospective dimension. I have aimed at reporting the relevant details, I have admitted mistakes and

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[65] First mentioned in my chapter "The MIABE"
[66] The project is reported in my chapter "Positioning the MIABE in a Broader Context."

shown that not all MIABE components suit all ages. I have tried to organise the events into a meaningful entity and I have also attempted to view the consequences of actions and events over time. In doing this I have also challenged the status quo of the MIABE.

In my introductory chapter, the "room" concept was defined as (i) the physical room in the shape of the public place in the local neighbourhood, (ii) the administrative room which facilitates participation projects for children and the young, not at the political decision-making level of the City Council and its Standing Committees, but at the level of the agencies responsible for practical implementation of projects, as reported in my story about the "Small Ugly Places", and (iii) the political room which is formed by a government that is responsive in issues concerning children and participation. This room is also shaped by policy documents concerning children, participation and the built environment.

The story of the "Small Ugly Places" indicates that use of public places as a tool for achieving participation has proved successful. Administratively, there has been a strong and committed municipal engagement thanks to the efforts of JC, members of the Project Group and participants in the buddy system, all of whom contributed to achieving the project aims. The "Small Ugly Places" project was thus achieved within the framework of representative democracy and a responsive bureaucracy.

Challenging the status quo of my model made me realise that the Scottish report on citizenship was the seed to my growing interest in a possible extended room in which a MIABE Plus could be placed. However, at that time, I did not have any particular idea on how to build this extended room, I did not know which of the MIABE components would be decisive for achieving participation nor did I know where to look in order to refine or develop my model. Thus, in the following chapter "Positioning of the MIABE in a Broader Context", I attempt to shed light on some initiatives related to applications to my model and look for similarities and differences, while in the chapter "The MIABE Revisited" I report conversations with some of the former users of my model to possibly get a second opinion about some MIABE components and also to a possible MIABE Plus.

5. POSITIONING OF THE MIABE IN A BROADER CONTEXT

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I shall give an introduction to (i) the development of the national concern for children and participation, and (ii) an overview of some governmental publications which in the early 1990s assisted in influencing a general interest in architecture and design, also in relation to children and the young.

My reference base is Europe where projects concerning children and participation are mainly in the hands of many committed individuals and sector organisations. Following the establishment of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, a record number of participation projects developed. However, from the more than forty projects that I have come across during the years of my practice, most initiatives are of a non-permanent character and are recognised from non-existing evaluation. Unlike the situation in Norway, participation projects based mainly in the arts are quite common in the rest of Europe.

As mentioned in my chapter "The Research Design" my area of research does not exist as an independent enterprise and thus the number of scholarly contributions in this field is small. How then can the MIABE be viewed in a broader context? To attempt an answer to this question, the projects reported from in this chapter are chosen from accessibility to evaluation reports, books or conference papers.

Permanent arrangements like the pupils' council, although aiming at participation, are not included in my reporting from the field of practice. All of these are built on the model of a representative democracy and thus do not meet my aiming at participation from all children and the young.

In this section I shall present an outline of the structural preconditions for children and participation in Norway. Concern for the conditions under which children grow up, forms an important part of this development and will be briefly mentioned to fill in the picture. Since the 1970s, the Norwegian Government as well as parliament (Storting) has accomplished a number of reforms to improve children's welfare. However, most of these are of limited concern to the theme of my thesis and will be left unattended. The International Year of the Child, 1979, focused on children and their physical environment. In Norway, this initiative resulted in the issue of a set of manuals on how to look after the interests of children in physical planning.

In 1981 an increased focus on children and the young resulted in establishing the Children's Ombudsman (Barneombudet)[1] who, during the first years, was concerned with planning and the built environment. Documentation on children's physical environment became an important issue.

In the middle of the 1980s plans for children and the young were in progress in almost 400 of the at the time 449 municipalities.[2] Approximately ten years later, from the Official Norwegian Report on the Children's Ombudsman and Childhood in Norway, it states that plans for children and the young are prepared for in most municipalities. In the report the growing up conditions are central, while in my understanding participation from children and young linked to planning is not a matter of concern.[3] Use of the above mentioned set of manuals has proven modest.[4]

Since the mid-eighties there has been an increase in the interest in giving children a voice in matters concerning their own lives. Anne Trine Kjørholt argues that children are to be regarded as actors and subjects who have a right, as well as competence to, influence their own circumstances of life.[5] Hanne Wilhjelm speaks of a shift in viewing children as objects to that of a subject, to be coinciding with the shift from protection to participation and argues that The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989[6] assisted in the promotion of this distinction.[7]

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[1] The first Norwegian Ombudsman for Children was Målfrid Grude Flekkøy.

[2] Barne- og familiedepartementet and Kommunenes Sentralforbund, "Fra Barnetråkk Til Ungdomsting. Medvirkning Fra Barn Og Ungdom I Kommuner - Erfaringer Og Eksempler," (Oslo: 1997).

[3] Barne- og familiedepartementet, *Barneombud Og Barndom I Norge: Evaluering Av Barneombudsordningen Og Utredning Om Organiseringsformer for Barn Og Ungdom, Norges Offentlige Utredninger; Nou 1995:26* (Oslo: 1995).

[4] Hanne Wilhjelm, "Gir Samfunnet Rom for Leken?" (paper presented at the "Bare lek", Tønsberg, Norway., June 3rd.1994.).

[5] Anne Trine Kjørholt, "Norsk Barnepolitikk Og Barns Aktive Samfunnsdeltakelse. En Kartlegging Av Offentlige Prosjekter I Perioden 1985-1995," (Trondheim: Norsk senter for barneforskning, 1997).

[6] The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child of November the 11th 1989 was ratified in Norway on February the 8th 1991.

[7] Hanne Wilhjelm, *Barn Og Omgivelser: Virkelighet Med Flere Fortolkninger, Con-Text, Avhandling; 8* ([Oslo]: Arkitekthøgskolen i Oslo, 2002)., p 48-52

In the early 1980s, the city of Oslo initiated the Child Plan for Oslo inner city[8]. This was purely a physical plan, aimed at safe and sound outdoor areas in the children's local environments.[9] In 1986, the Ministry of Environment in co-operation with the Children's Ombudsman made a proposal for National Policy Guidelines linking the interest of children to the Planning and Building Act. The National Policy Guidelines to promote the interest of children and the adolescents in planning, hereafter the NPG was adopted by the King in Council on September 1st 1989.

The purposes of the NPG are to:

> a. Bring to light and emphasize the interests of children and adolescents in all planning and during consideration of building issues in accordance with the Planning and Building Act.
> b. Give the municipalities, during their everyday planning and consideration of building cases, a better foundation for integrating and taking care of the interests of children and adolescents.
> c. Provide a basis for evaluating cases where the interests of children and adolescents conflict with other considerations or interests.[10]

Responsibility for fulfilling the intentions of the NPG rests with an adult, appointed by the municipality and one preferably holding some professional competence with children, such as a teacher. The duty of this children's representative is seen in detailed guidelines. As his position mirrors the representative model of democracy, and thus not allows all children to have their voice heard directly, I shall not embark on a discussion on this particular arrangement.

However, in proposals for a forthcoming revision of the Planning and Building Act new ideas as well as improvements of its existing parts concerning children and participation are seen. Increased focus on the community planning part is underlined by many. In relation to my own view of the present system, the criticism and ideas for change concerning the present role of the children's representative seem promising.[11]

My main empirical contribution to this thesis is the pilot project about the "Small Ugly Places". The Planning and Building Act never formed part of the initiative. However, in the "Råholt" project, application of the MIABE was

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[8] "Barneplan for Oslo indre by"

[9] From 1983 to 1986 a similar initiative took place on city district level in the city of Trondheim.

[10] Ministry of Environment, "Children and Planning. National Policy Guidelines to Promote the Interests of Children and Adolescents in Planning," (1994), 3.

[11] Planlovutvalget, *Bedre Kommunal Og Regional Planlegging Etter Plan- Og Bygningsloven Ii: Planlovutvalgets Utredning Med Lovforslag: Avgitt Til Miljøverndepartementet, Norges Offentlige Utredninger; 2003: 14* (Oslo).

linked to the National Policy Guidelines to promote the interests of children and adolescents in planning as part of the municipal sector plan for land use.

Some years after the adoption of the NPG, in 1992, the city of Oslo was appointed a test municipality by the Ministry of Environment as part of the follow-up of the adoption of the NPC. The aim of this so-called second generation child plan for Oslo was to achieve new knowledge on how participation from children and the young might be integrated in "common" planning in accordance with the Planning and Building Act.[12]

The already mentioned Convention on the Rights of the Child, hereafter the CRC is, no doubt, a milestone in relation to children and participation. From the so-called "3P's" constituting the CRC: protection, provision and participation, respectively, the latter is seen to be the revolutionary one.[13] However, the CRC is not often referred to as forming the base for national approaches. Why is this? Empirical documentation and publications on children's right to participation is, Kjørholt argues, often linked to projects initiated from movements and advocates for the rights of children like for instance UNICEF, "Voice of the Children" and others.[14] Although holding a strong position also in Norway, these organisations no doubt have a limited area of impact compared to the municipalities who are responsible for implementing the NPG to promote the interests of children and adolescents in planning.

At least partly, the assumingly low impact from the CRC might be reasoned also in the fact that by the time of its national ratification, the concern for children and the conditions for their growing up had for nearly a decade been placed high on the political Norwegian agenda. Although influence from the CRC might not have had substantial influence on participation projects in Norway, they certainly have made legitimate the efforts to promote children's participation in many countries.

The Earth Summit, Rio 1992, resulting in the Agenda 21 programme of action, has been adopted by a number of countries around the world. In 1998, a national follow-up of the declaration was signed in Norway and named the Fredrikstad Declaration after the venue for signing. In this participation from all citizens on issues concerning the local society is emphasised.[15]

In 1997 a review of experience and examples from municipal initiatives on children and participation, revealed a lack of systematising results from their

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[12] A more detailed information is offered in presentation of the different approaches reported from in this chapter

[13] The UN Convention on the Right of the Child (1989) was ratified in Norway on January 8th 1991. On October 1st 2003, the CRC was incorporated in Norwegian legislation.

[14] Kjørholt, "Norsk Barnepolitikk Og Barns Aktive Samfunnsdeltakelse. En Kartlegging Av Offentlige Prosjekter I Perioden 1985-1995."

[15] Fredrikstad is a small town close to the border of Sweden, situated in the south-eastern part of Norway. In 2003, 267 out of the total of 431 municipalities had joined the declaration, so have all the county municipalities (19).

many approaches. A brief summary indicates that (i) methods for fulfilling aims did not yet form an integrated part of municipal practices, (ii) registration of the growing up conditions for children and the young seemed to have priority over a focus on children and participation.[16]

5.3 SOME BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE GENERAL GOVERNMENTAL INTEREST IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT, DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

My initial approach the "Slemdal" project which dates back to 1993-1994, in many ways mirrors contemporary national initiatives on an increased interest in the built environment. To me, during the 1990s, interesting initiatives on governmental level were produced: a Report to the Storting, "Culture Today" (Kultur i tiden)[17], accompanied by an action plan on environment as culture[18], and a new National Curriculum for the primary school. Additionally, the Norsk Form was established.[19] All, in their own way, influenced as well as initiating contemporary approaches, for children and the young. For the first time, a Report to the Storting on culture focused also on the concepts of architecture, design and physical planning. The above mentioned action plan was encouraging as was the initiation of projects which increased awareness on environmental qualities on micro level and of aesthetic quality in the public surroundings. This soon made the concept of aesthetics a fashionable part of the vocabulary of media as well as of the public, the full title of my "Slemdal" project being no exception.[20] The project on the "Small Ugly Places" comprises, in my opinion, components from all three governmental approaches mentioned. From 1992, the Arts Council Norway initiated possibilities for economic support to approaches on the visual environment.[21] General conditions for support were a comprehensive assessment also of the physical and artistic elements linked to the public space.

As already mentioned, the Minister of Culture, Aase Kleveland in 1993, signed the "World Declaration of Architecture in Schools".[22] In 1995 the

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[16] Barne- og familiedepartementet and Sentralforbund, "Fra Barnetråkk Til Ungdomsting. Medvirkning Fra Barn Og Ungdom I Kommuner - Erfaringer Og Eksempler."

[17] Kulturdepartementet, *Kultur I Tiden, St.Meld.; Nr 61 (1991-92)* ([Oslo]: [Departementet], 1992).

[18] Kulturdepartementet, "Omgivelser Som Kultur. Handlingsprogram for Estetisk Kvalitet I Offentlig Miljø," (Oslo: Rapport fra en arbeidsgruppe, 1992).

[19] Norsk Form. Stiftelsen for design og arkitektur i Norge, Norsk Form. Foundation for Design and Architecture in Norway. Established in 1992

[20] However, I found the content of the concept rather confusing and therefore chose to use the term qualitative awareness. This was the full title of my project: "An introduction to qualitative awareness. Architecture and Environment in the Place Slemdal in Oslo."

[21] Norsk kulturråd

[22] Arkitektnytt, "Kulturministeren Er Med," *Arkitektnytt*, no. 11 (1993). Norway thereby joined the "call for the recognition and establishment of the study of the Built Environment, which include enjoyment of its architecture, its design and technology, impact and cultural contribution to the whole environment. We call for

Norwegian Ministry of Cultural Affairs and the Norwegian Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs, developed the action plan "The Bridge and the Blue Horse".[23] The purpose of this joint venture was to strengthen the cultural dimension in schools. Resulting from this, the initiative the "Cultural Rucksack", was introduced.[24] In 1997, the already mentioned New National Curriculum came into effect.[25]

During the years of 1996-1997, a project on architecture and the environment was started in 15 schools,[26] throughout the country. The project was a co-operation between the Norwegian Associations of Architects, the NAL; the Society for Preservation of Ancient Monuments[27] and the Directorate for Cultural Heritage.[28] The interest of bringing architecture into schools was seen throughout Europe in the early 1990s.

In Norway the overall aim of the above initiative was to make the concept of "architecture and the environment" become part of the National Curriculum on a permanent base. Since the introduction of the National Curriculum of 1997 architecture and design have formed part of the subject Arts and Crafts, and the interest from organisations and committed individuals seems to be decreasing. However, a follow up of the above mentioned project about architecture and the environment forms part of the Cultural Rucksack in the County of Vestfold.[29] In my opinion, the governmental concern about architecture and design as part of the culture has faded since the Report to the Storting, "Culture Today" (Kultur i tiden) fifteen years ago. The Report to the Storting about "Cultural Policy Towards 2014" (Kulturpolitikk fram mot 2014) is vague in matters concerning the above issues.

5.4 HOW TO POSITION THE MIABE IN A BROADER CONTEXT?

The built environment, schoolchildren and practical experience of participation form the basis and the limits of my study. In my "Slemdal" project participation was not on the agenda. The purpose of the initiative was twofold: (i) to enhance the children's learning to know better their physical neighbourhood area, and (ii) to investigate the possibilities of making this kind of initiatives serve an integrated part of teaching and learning in primary

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this study to be incorporated into the mandatory education of young people and children in the general education school systems, in all countries throughout the world."

[23] Kulturdepartementet and Kirke- utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet, *Broen Og Den Blå Hesten* ([Oslo]: Kulturdepartementet: Kyrkje-, 1995).

[24] Kultur- og kirkedepartementet, *Den Kulturelle Skulesekken, St.Meld.; Nr 38 (2002-2003)* ([Oslo]: 2003).

[25] The superior aims and principles of the National Curriculum of 1997 has status as a regulation (1999), legally authorised in the Act to Primary and Secondary Education of 1998 (Opplæringsloven)

[26] Five primary schools, six secondary schools, and four upper secondary schools participated in the project.

[27] Fortidsminneforeningen

[28] Ole Rømer Sandberg, *Skoleprosjektet "Arkitektur Og Omgivelser": Idéhefte: Rapport Fra 15 Pilotskoler: Skoleåret 1996-97, Riksantikvarens Notater; 1-1998* (Oslo: Riksantikvaren, 1998).

[29] Jan Carlsen, "Arkitektur I Skolesekken," *Arkitektnytt*, no. 3 (2004).

schools. However, since the "Råholt" project in 1996, in which participation was linked to the National Policy Guidelines to promote the interests of children and adolescents in planning (NPG), my model for increasing awareness of the built environment has aimed to provide children with the experience of participation. In the pilot-project on the "Small Ugly Places" the children were, in contact with the municipal departments, to take measures to improve the design as well as report on the lack of maintenance in the public space, to fight decline and thus make them more safe and pleasant for all users of the local environment.

In the UK, Eileen Adams and Sue Ingham have examined documentation for more than 200 initiatives where young people have been participating in environmental change. The projects fell into six different categories: (i) local agenda 21 groups and youth forums, (ii) children as researchers, (iii) local plans and urban development plans, (iv) urban regeneration schemes, (v) art and/or design courses in schools and other centres, and (vi) school grounds development.[30]

In her cataloguing approaches involving children in local planning processes, Kimberley L. Knowles-Yànez has defined four different approaches; "scholarly, practice, educational and rights-based."[31] Kathryn I. Frank in her commenting upon these four approaches writes:

> She found that scholars study youths' views of their communities and capacity for expressing them, educators teach youth about planning practice, and process organizers engage youth in community development, often because the organizers recognize the right of youth to have their voices heard.[32]

Knowles-Yànez calls for an integration of these four activities, with each other as well as with local planning processes.

From different approaches to the understanding of the processes and the impact of youth participation, Kathryn Frank points at "empirical study *of the practice*."[33] Although referring to direct observations of youth participation in planning in a scholarly connection, her argument also corresponds to my own slightly wider field of practical experience with children and participation. She writes;

> The direct observations of youth participation in planning reported in the literature primarily consists of isolated case

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[30] Eileen Adams, "Child's Play: Urban Change for Beginners," *Urban Design Quaterly* Winter 2003, no. 85 (2003): 22.

[31] Kimberley L. Knowles-Yànez, "Children's Participation in Planning Processes," *Journal of Planning Literature* 20, no. 1 (2005): 3.

[32] Kathryn I. Frank, "The Potential of Youth Participation in Planning," *Journal of planning literature* 20, no. 4 (2006): 354.

[33] Ibid.: 353-54.

studies intended to address multiple, broadly defined research questions. The closest that the literature has come to reaching conclusions based upon a wide range of experiences are guides to the processes of youth participation that draw lessons from collections of short case studies conducted by the authors.[34]

In commenting on these short case studies and their guides, Frank argues that they are informative, but lacking "the scientific formality of a systematic analysis of the peer-reviewed, research-based literature that represents the observations of multiple authors."[35]

Although referring primarily to the numerous initiatives on children and participation following the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Roger Hart argued, nearly ten years ago, for a move from the level of experimentation into an accepted practice. His call for the need of systems of self-critical evaluation and reflection still seems to apply.[36]

What about the four different approaches defined by Knowles-Yànez? Although her concern is related to planning practice, my own general practice with the MIABE would probably fit both her educational and her practice approach.

Although a combination of the categories (i), (iii), and (iv) in Adams and Ingham might be a suitable point of departure for positioning the MIABE in a broader context, I have chosen to present some projects which are recognised from (i) the participating children being below the age of 16, (ii) the built environment in the local neighbourhood and the school being the arenas of the project work, and (iii) participation being stated a superior aim. As already mentioned in my introduction to this chapter, my projects presented are based on evaluation reports, books or articles.

5.5 CHILDREN AND PLANNING IN OSLO.[37] ("BARN OG PLAN I OSLO")

In the above section on the structural preconditions for children and participation in Norway, I mentioned that in 1992, the city of Oslo was appointed a trial municipality by the Ministry of Environment. The aim of the initiation of the project "Barn og Plan i Oslo" was to arrive at some methods whereby participation from children and the young could possibly be integrated in "common" planning in accordance with the Planning and

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[34] Ibid.: 354.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Roger A. Hart, "Recognizing Children's Perspectives in Local Government: A Comparative Review of Alternative Models" (paper presented at the Urban Childhood. An international, interdisciplinary conference, Trondheim, Norway, 1997).
[37] Trond Gabrielsen, "Sluttrapport. Modeller Og Metoder for Barns (7-13) Deltakelse I Kommunal Fysisk Planlegging," ([Oslo]: Oslo kommune. Miljøeteaten. Uranienborg Majorstuen bydel, 1993).

Building Act. The results arrived at, indicate that different methods should be used to different aspects of planning. "The Method for improvement of the environment" should for example be applied to the implementation part of the planning process while the "Method of registrations" seems to hold a general capacity for application. The "Method for improvement of the environment" aims at transformation of plans from an idea to a result which should be visible for the children in their local neighbourhood. Sometimes the children would come up with their own ideas for change or carry out the ideas of others. From application to this method, the children were seen to be "experiencing the preparations behind some environmental improvements and what it takes for their implementation, the result being a more responsible attitude towards preservation of their local neighbourhood."[38] The "Method of increased awareness" should also be mentioned. This method is intended to enhance increasing the children's interests in the local environment "through knowledge and local activities."[39] The method aims at preparations to comprehend a plan, and to make the children better prepared for arriving at constructive suggestions for change as well as for preservation of the local environment.

Children from Majorstuen School, aged seven to thirteen, participated in the initiative. A simplified summing up of the final report indicates that: (i) the children and the young are creative in finding solutions to problems spotted in their physical local neighbourhood. (ii) the children see the need of other age groups when assessing their own needs and wishes in the local areas, (iii) the children and the young are willing to initiate practical actions suggested by themselves as well as others, to improve their local neighbourhood and contribute to increased safety and (iv) to learn from approaches of this kind, the importance of evaluation must be attended to.

My reflections

The seven methods referred to in the evaluation report are; (i) the logbook method, (ii) the planning method, (iii) the method of hearings, (iv) the method for improvement of the environment, (v) the method of local place-names, (vi) the method of increased awareness, (vii) and the method of registration. The method of logbooks is not to be confused with those logbooks used during the registration process of the MIABE. The logbook method is one in which the children answer standard questions about where they play, what they think of the place and more, and demands a skilled interpretation. The method of hearings suggested the pupils' council to serve as a permanent arena of consultative statement in cases related to planning.[40] The intentions behind the methods number (ii), (iv), (v) and (vi) could all be rediscovered as parts of the MIABE.

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[38] Ibid., 5.
[39] Ibid., 6.
[40] Ibid., 3-4.

The children's concern for the interest of other age groups is an interesting observation which adds strength to my argument in favour of the usefulness of the public place the base for investigation also in enhancing benefit for the individual as well as for society. In a postscript to the evaluation report, a letter from the parents' organisation of the primary school as well a letter from the Chief Municipal Education Officer, both indicate a positive attitude to engaging schoolchildren in the development of their local environment based in the premises of the children. In my opinion, experience from the project about children and planning in Oslo, indicate a base for participation initiatives with children in general, not necessarily in approaches linked to the Planning and Building Act.

5.6 PARTICIPATION FROM CHILDREN AND THE YOUNG IN THEIR PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT, THE COUNTY MUNICIPALITY OF NORD-TRØNDELAG. (ET PROSJEKT OM BARN OG UNGES DELTAGELSE I FYSISK PLANLEGGING, NORD-TRØNDELAG FYLKESKOMMUNE)

Following the 1983 World Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland Commission) an environmental political programme was initiated in the county of Nord-Trøndelag. One of three areas of commitment was for children and their physical environment. A 1992-1995 following up programme on the "The growing up conditions of children and the young" was presented in 1992.

The initiative comprised three themes: (i) our meeting places (in 21 municipalities), (ii) the meeting place and the aesthetic environment (in 3 municipalities), and (iii) the school in the childhood environment (3 primary schools).[41] A multidisciplinary way of understanding was seen as central. Artists co-operating in the process of shaping the physical environment, were breaking new grounds. The concept of "meeting place" was defined to be a limited geographical area and the planned as well as non-planned activities taking place in it. In my opinion, the content of the three themes are easily recognised in the governmental approaches mentioned in the introductory part of this chapter: the inclusion of artists, a multidisciplinary way of understanding, and the concept of aesthetics.

Extensive and systematic participation from children and the young as well as co-operation between children, the young and the adults in mutual

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[41] Nord-Trøndelag fylkeskommune, "Miljøpolitisk Program for Nord-Trøndelag. Tema 3: Barn Og Unges Fysiske Oppvekstmiljø.," (1993). The report is unpaged.

learning, were underlined in the project preparations.[42] According to the project report, the methods of participation within physical planning can be recognised from three different levels; (i) Children and the young participate as informants in the initial stage. This procedure is reported to be time saving and commonly used, "but the adults plan **for** rather than **with** children and the young."[43] (ii) Children plan and accomplish actions on their own. The weak point is seen to be a limited exchange of information between adults and children. (iii) A shared process of children and adults. This method entails extensive co-operation between adults and children. This way of participation is viewed to be complicated and time consuming.
Argumentation of this kind is easy to understand from a point of efficiency. However, I would argue that the importance also of the aspects of personal growth and experiencing socialisation into democracy should be taken into consideration in evaluation of participation projects with children. The concepts of participation and personal growth are both presented in the chapter "The Discussion".

The project report argues that a problem about children's participation in physical planning is their lack of creativity. Their suggestions for change are often related to something already familiar. "This is not appreciated. It is, therefore, important that the children achieve increased knowledge in the issues at stake. The challenge is: In which way could this increase in knowledge possibly take place?"[44] Facilitating ways to enhance motivation, inspiration and creativity is suggested, but not specified. A seminar in the shape of a workshop for children and the young, the teachers, the artists, the architects and the planners formed part of the initiative.[45]

In their evaluation report of the project, Niels Arvid Sletterød and Torstein Gustavsen argue that participation as well as influence creates expectations to something substantial as the end product. Such expectations have, in the Nord-Trøndelag approach, been met to a very limited extent. A feeling of ownership to the project is claimed to be important to possibly enhance enthusiasm in the participating children. Allowing the children and the young to choose their own little place of investigation and change, in the MIABE related initiatives seemed to contribute to a feeling of ownership. However, the size of the places in the Nord Trøndelag project was much larger than those in any of the MIABE related surveys.

Despite the many positive results, experience from the projects indicates difficulties in offering what the evaluation report names true participation. Participation here is seen as different from just being part of the project. The

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[42] Niels Arvid Sletterød and Torstein Gustavsen, "Arti Å Lag Nå Skikkelig, Itj Berre Lego! Evaluering Av Barn Og Unges Medvirkning I Utforming Av Det Fysiske Oppvekstmiljøet," (Steinkjer: Nord-Trøndelagsforskning, 1995).
[43] Nord-Trøndelag fylkeskommune, "Miljøpolitisk Program for Nord-Trøndelag. Tema 3: Barn Og Unges Fysiske Oppvekstmiljø." The report is unpaged.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid. 20 youngsters aged twelve and above participated in the seminar. 20 adults representing different professions were also present. The Danish architect Aase Eriksen was in charge of the seminar.

children should have influence and responsibilities. Difficulties seen in fulfilment of aims might result from the children falling, as Sletterød and Gustavsen put it, "between two stools" as the children's interests were often seen conflicting with those of the adults.[46] Authoritarianism is warned against from the researchers evaluating the initiatives.[47] Developing specific models of interaction between children, the young and the adults rather than adjusting participation to suit the latter, are claimed to be a challenge of priority in improving participation from children and the young. There is, they argue, no prototype on what could be called a good process of participation.

My reflections

The evaluation report of the Nord Trøndelag initiative points at the importance about a concern for a combination of components rather than a tailor made model for facilitating participation projects with children. The report also addresses a concern for participation to include different levels of involvement. Although parts of the MIABE might be viewed as a model tailor made for each project, we have seen in the "Small Ugly Places" project that the high number of components facilitated flexibility in ways of approaching the project aims and thus also the children's practical experience of participation. In the "Small Ugly Places" project levels of participation varied from planting tulip bulbs to communication with the local authorities.

In the "Råholt" project which is the only MIABE reference to a planning process, it was not the intention for the children to be involved in the whole planning process. It is therefore hard to link my experience from this initiative directly to the three levels of participation in the above mentioned Nord Trøndelag initiative. Although the youngsters in the "Råholt" project did act as informants, they also provided ideas of their own, like establishing a youth club. A model of the building as well as detailed proposals for how to run the place, suggestions for financing and more, formed part of their report to the municipality.

5.7 THE BUSMI PROJECT.[48] (BUSMI-PROSJEKTET)

The initiative on "Children and the Young: Social Engagement, Participation and Influence", the BUSMI, 1998–2003, took place in the county of

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[46] Sletterød and Gustavsen, "Arti Å Lag Nå Skikkelig, Itj Berre Lego! Evaluering Av Barn Og Unges Medvirkning I Utforming Av Det Fysiske Oppvekstmiljøet," p.xiii.

[47] Different kinds of power relations will be shed light upon in my chapter "The Discussion".

[48] Heidi Haukelien and Terje Holsen, *Evaluering Av Busmi-Prosjektet, [Rapport] / Telemarksforsking; [211]* (Bø [Ås]: Telemarksforsking og Norges landbrukshøgskole, Institutt for landskapsplanlegging, 2004).

Vestfold.[49] Here, the municipalities assisted strategically in developing formal planning tools, as well as offering practical assistance during the project period. Participation in the project was anchored in the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities, the KS,[50] their initiative "Revival of the Local Democracy". Additionally, the county governor based the BUSMI project on the National Curriculum of 1997.

The aims of the BUSMI were defined to be: "1. Increased social engagement from children and the young, 2. Extensive and direct participation from children and the young in their own work place (in the school), in municipal planning and in (local/municipal) politics, 3. Particular attention should be paid to the interests of children and the young in planning, and also for their general growing up conditions."[51] The wish for developing methods for participation from children and the young was a focal issue, and so was the question of suitable arenas for fulfilling aims. A precondition claim from the children and the young was that their views were to be taken seriously.

The "Barnetråkk" is a method of registration of children's land use, established as a reasonably well known method of documentation within the county of Vestfold. Evaluation of the method indicates a potential for use also in participation projects.[52] A concern for the linguistic challenge likely to occur between the disciplinary vocabulary of the planners and the vocabulary of the children is expressed in the method, but no solution is offered.

The BUSMI was about co-responsibility of the public in developing collective benefits for the community, for and with the children and the young. Were the goals of the project achieved? The report answers: "No, not yet!" This project was based in participation from members of the pupil's councils which, the evaluation report argues; "does not offer the vital and important nerve for democracy education which would benefit all children."[53] In 2003, the European Council chose the BUSMI project as one their reference projects to provide experience for utility and inspiration on children, participation and democracy to its member counties.

My reflections

What could the MIABE learn from the BUSMI imitative, and has my model possibly addressed any of the questions raised in its evaluation report? Like the above mentioned Nord-Trøndelag programme, the approach was more comprehensive than any of the MIABE projects, involving a number of

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[49] The BUSMI is an acronym of the project title: "Barn og unge: Samfunnsengasjement, medvirkning og innflytelse"

[50] Kommunenes Sentralforbund (KS)

[51] Haukelien and Holsen, *Evaluering Av Busmi-Prosjektet*, 2-3.

[52] Designed by Eva Almhjell.

[53] Haukelien and Holsen, *Evaluering Av Busmi-Prosjektet*, 6.

municipalities and organisations. Participation took place in the shape of representation to the pupils' councils and the children's municipal council as opposed to MIABE which builds on participation for all children. Specific conclusions drawn could, therefore, hardly be compared. Although the "Barnetråkk" method is developed for application to land use registrations, its concern for the possible difficulties linked to the disciplinary vocabulary of the planners is interesting in relation to the MIABE component of acquiring an extended vocabulary linked to the details of the built environment. For the first time, I found support in favour of participation for all children – although this was not achieved as part of the project.

5.8 "MY CITY – OUR CITIES". ("MIN BY – VÅRE BYER"), BERGEN

In the year 2000 the city of Bergen was celebrating its position as a European City of Culture. Appointment to this position was shared also with the cities Avignon, Bologna, Brussels, Helsinki, Krakow, Prague, Reykjavik and Santiago de Compostella. The ambition of the Municipality of Bergen was to make the year a tool for achievement of long-term cultural-political goals. Concrete subsidiary goals should be linked to urban regeneration, the growing up conditions of children and strategies for the local environment. Efforts should be made to allow children and the young to enter the world of culture as critical and competent users. The project "My City – Our Cities", (Min by – våre byer) was initiated by the municipal Department of Cultural Affairs, the "Barnas Hus",[54] and the Department of Educational Affairs. The project was based in the National Curriculum of 1997 as well as in some of the contemporary governmental reports referred to in my introduction to this chapter, like the action plan to strengthen the cultural dimension for schoolchildren.

The superior goals of the project comprised three parts; (i) the children should "get an opportunity to express their own thoughts and experiences related to the city and the urban life in particular, in different artistic media. This might contribute to making the younger generation more visible in the city debate and offer preconditions for an active and constructive participation in the planning of their own local neighbourhood."[55] (ii) the practical pedagogical aim was to increase the cultural awareness of the children, and (iii) communication. "The city and the urban life contribute to the definition of experience, ideals and dreams of the young irrespective of where in the Europe they are living."[56]

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[54] *The Children's House*
[55] Frithjof Bringager, *Min by - Våre Byer: Et Tverrfaglig Skoleprosjekt I Forbindelse Med Det Europeiske Kulturbyåret I År 2000* (1998). 2
[56] Ibid. 3

In the city of Bergen more than 19 000 children and young people participated in the project.[57]

To facilitate comparison and communication, a set of six shared themes was introduced: (i) the city and the city plan, (ii) The city and the landscape, (iii) the city and its houses, (iv) the streets of the city, its parks and places,(v) the city and the water, and (vi) the city furnishing.

From the evaluation report we learn that "The themes relate to Professor Christian Norberg Schultz's categories of analysis of space."[58]

My reflections

The project "Min by – våre byer" is interesting for many reasons: (i) an exceptionally high number of schoolchildren participated, (ii) the built environment was made an integrated part of a culturally based program, (iii) the public places have proven a well suited tool for crossing cultural as well as geographical borders, and (iv) a strong municipal commitment has been present throughout the project period.

5.9 "EMBELLISHMENT OF SMALL, UGLY PLACES". A PROJECT ABOUT CHILDREN AND THE YOUNG AS A RESOURCE IN REVITALISATION OF THEIR OWN LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOOD. ("FORSKJØNNELSE AV SMÅ, STYGGE STEDER")

The project was a replication of the pilot-project on the "Small Ugly Places" which constitutes the main empirical reference of my thesis. Initiated from the coordinator of the crime prevention and the coordinator of the city districts in the municipality of Kristiansand[59], the project "Embellishment of Small, Ugly Places" commenced by the end of 1997. The project idea originated from the municipality of Oslo, and aimed at (i) using the children as "detectives of the local environment" and (ii) to accomplish their ideas for revitalising the local environment. The children were asked to localise small, untidy places in their own neighbourhood area and from registrations of the place to present suggestions of improvements. The pupils should report to the departments concerned.

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[57] In the autumn of 1999 preparatory seminars for teachers who wished to participate in the project ware offered by the municipality. Linked to these preparations more than 70 teachers attended my combined lectures and workshops based in application to parts of the MIABE.

[58] Ingebjørg E. Astrup, "Min by - Våre Byer," (Bergen: Byrådsavdeling for kultur, idrett og skole, 2001), 2.

[59] Kristiansand, a city on the southern coast of Norway.

The aims of the project were to (i) convert small ugly places into nice outdoor rooms to which the children would have a sense of belonging and responsibility (ii) to make the children learn about the different departments responsible for the urban environment and to learn about municipal decision-making processes (iii) to make the children experience what it is like to have influence on improvements of their own local areas and to experience that speaking up really matters. The visions of the project were many; to strengthen (i) the children's pride and feeling of identity, (ii) their understanding of the local area, and (iii) the joy of visual curiosity. (iv) To enable informed choices and the building of self respect, (v) to assist urban children in achieving a better quality of life, (vii) to reduce vandalism, and (viii) "to make the children smell, see and listen their way to the identity of place."[60]

The project was linked to parts of the National Curriculum of 1997, particularly stressing the interdisciplinary project work and practical work in the local neighbourhood. Children aged 10 to 12 participated. Drawings, photos, maps, notes, interviews and discussions followed the registration processes.

As reported in my previous chapter, in their efforts to respond to the changes suggested by the children; the municipality developed three different levels of feed back; (i) immediate action, (ii) action depending upon plans already made in the different departments, and (iii), matters unrealistic or outside the area of municipal responsibility. Response from the children and the teachers indicate that the children have experienced their work to be seriously considered in the municipality. The evaluation report argues that initiators of similar project might be the pupils' council, the head teacher the children's representative, municipal agencies linked to responsibility for the built environment, residents' associations and more.

My reflections

At first glimpse, the aims of the project seem to be nearly identical with the initial "Small Ugly Places" project. However, some differences are worth noticing. In Kristiansand the local neighbourhood as such, as opposed to the public places, seems to be the base for the children's investigations. From the evaluation report it looks as if this might have caused some unexpected difficulties. As mentioned in my previous chapter, facilitating a combination of short-and long term solutions in response of the children's ideas for change should be considered in a possible refinement of the MIABE.

[60] Tone Stang Astrup and Anne Aunevik, "Forskjønnelse Av Små, Stygge Steder". Et Prosjekt Om Barn Og Unge Som Ressurs I Utbedring Av Eget Nærmiljø.," ([Kristiansand]: Kristiansand kommune, Rådmannnen. Plan-og busjettseksjonen, 1998).

5.10 CHILDREN'S COMMUNITY, FINLAND 1991-1993

The project on the "Children's Community" was about children, participation and planning and comprised some national as well as international projects. Methods for use were developed at the Helsinki University of Technology in Finland.[61] Two of the initiatives were appointed by the European Union as examples on "Innovations for the Improvement of the Urban Environment".[62] The methodological package comprised components relating to the diagnostic, expressive, situational, conceptual, organisational and political parts of the initiatives. Examples of the methods relating to the diagnostic component were ecological analysis, historical analysis, traffic analysis, and behavioural mapping. Examples on the methods relating to the component of expression were drawing, modelling, making music, writing and photographing. Examples on methods relating to the situational component were walk-throughs, future workshops, and exhibitions. Examples on methods relating to the conceptual components seem mainly to be shared with the diagnostic components. The organisational and political components are rediscovered in the situational components of exhibitions and panels.

To direct the action research based initiative in the place of Vaasa, an integrated framework of approaches from environmental psychology, ecological urban planning, and environment education was constructed. Additionally, establishing collaboration with teachers and city officials formed an important part of the preparations. The prerequisites for achieving aims were: (i) devoted key persons, (ii) cooperation across sectors, (iii) a favourable municipal council which would create pressure in new modes of action in participation, new contents in education, urban planning, service production, and new ways of organising, as for example the creation of networks.

From the many suggestions for new directions in environmental education, dialogue between children, parents, teachers, specialists and politicians would be of particular interest to the MIABE. Marketta Kyttä and Liisa Horelli, as several others, make use of a ladder as a metaphor for participation.[63] Their ladder comprises four levels: (i) adapting the children to the plans, (ii) listening to the children, (iii) children taking part in adults' planning, and iv) co-operation between children and adults. The children in one initiative reached the top level.

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[61] Liisa Horelli and Marketta Kyttä, "Children's Community," (The Research Institute for Built Environment. Helsinki University of Technology, Faculty of Architecture. Finland, 1991-93).

[62] Liisa Horelli and Marketta Kyttä were responsible for the initiative.

[63] The concept of participation is shed light upon in my chapter "the Discussion"

The conclusions of the initiative indicate that: (i) the children are capable of producing critical analysis of their environment as well as constructive suggestions for improvement, concerning not only the school yards, but the neighbourhood as a whole, (ii) children's perspective in urban planning is multidimensional consisting not only of developmental, and cultural aspects, but also of the children's direct participation in meaningful activities, (iii) children need alliances with adults and institutions to alter their reduced cultural and social position.

My reflections

Although not familiar with the details of the "Children's Community" project, the many similarities shared with applications to the MIABE are striking. However, I shall restrain from commenting on all but the first and main conclusion about the capability and will in children to suggest ideas for change also in matters concerning others than themselves. The Finnish children expressed a concern for the low number of meeting places for young and old in their neighbourhood area. My above mentioned three Norwegian projects the "Barn og Plan i Oslo", the Nord-Trøndelag project and the BUSMI project all express a shared concern in matters on collective benefits for the community.

In relation to my own theoretical approach in this thesis, it is interesting to learn that in a 1997 conference paper on children's participation in planning, Horelli and Kyttä argue that "the ongoing transformations in the European planning and educational systems towards more communicative paradigms might give new opportunities even for young people to participate in environmental improvement."[64] In her recently developed model of a network based approach to discuss the impact on the environmental competence of young people and youths work in practice, Liisa Horelli draws on an extensive multidisciplinary perspective also including participatory planning. The reason for this inclusion is that "The procedural theories of planning should be able to explain, how participation can be organized in such a way that the planning cycle becomes an arena for learning, and capacity building, for young people, experts, and decision makers."[65]

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[64] Liisa Horelli and Marketta Kyttä, "Children's Participation in Planning and Development - Methodological Challenge.," in *Urban Childhood. An international conference. Book of Abstracts.* (Trondheim, Norway: 1997), 215.
[65] Liisa Horelli, "A Learning-Based Network Approach to Urban Planning with Young People," in *Children and Their Environments. Learning, Using and Designing Spaces*, ed. Christopher Spencer and Mark Blades (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 242.

5.11 THE UK, CHILDREN AND PARTICIPATION – A BRIEF SUMMING UP OF KEY MESSAGES

The UK initiatives on children, the built environment and participation in the 1970s, reported in my chapter "The MIABE", were of good standing also in many other countries. Would any similar initiatives possibly still be on the agenda? Two of the pioneers of that time are Eileen Adams and Ken Baynes. To Eileen Adams in particular, the concern for children, participation, and the built environment still form part of her professional work. The latest shared project of the two is the project "The Campaign for Drawing".[66]

Adams argues that thousands of projects involving children, the built environment and participation have been initiated since she first took an interest in the field. From her nearly thirty years of experience, one of her key messages is that young people learn not only from competitions and "kits and packs" only, but also

> through cumulative experience and through practice which extends their experience of the environment, and which deepens their knowledge and understanding of how we shape and control it and which gives them opportunities to use the codes and conventions we use to visualise, plan, communicate and test ideas and proposals for change.[67]

This is exactly what the MIABE is all about.

"Play," Eileen Adams writes, "embodies the serious business of learning."[68] Photography, drawing, and computers are used to develop critical skills, skills of communication and design capability. From the may projects initiated, the ideas of the children and the young are sometimes realised in local small scale projects or in the school grounds. Although not adopting the planning expression of mutual learning, Adams refers to the learning process, as a process of shared experiences followed by reflection, criticism and the need or the opportunity for change. In her looking forward, she argues the need "to adopt more of an action research model to support the development of education for participation."[69]

My reflections

What could the MIABE learn from this? The tools for encouraging the children's capability of communication, design and criticism are all shared with those in the MIABE. As reported in the previous chapter, a couple of my

[66] Eileen Adams and Ken Baynes, *Drawing Attractions* (London: The Campaign for Drawing, 2006).
[67] Adams, "Child's Play: Urban Change for Beginners," 22.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.: 23.

projects have formed part of an international as well as well as a Scottish programme. I have therefore, learned of many initiatives in many European countries ranging from projects based in community development related to the built environment to that of achievement of peace and reconciliation to improve the children's understanding of the community. In the UK, the strong impact on initiatives based on creativity in learning and participation in cultural activities for schoolchildren also comprise the built environment.

5.12 MAKING BETTER PLACES

The CABE Education, UK, was established in 2002 and forms part of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment. The aim of the CABE Education is to allow all children to get the life long habit of participating in culture. The CABE functions mainly as a catalyst and coordinator of child related projects on the built environment. I shall briefly draw attention to an education package on the appreciation of the built environment which is additionally aiming at broadening the understanding of citizenship and cultivate the children's ability to participate actively. This package is based on the approach "Making Better Places", developed by the Joint Centre for Urban Design (JCUD) at Oxford Brookes University supported by CABE Education.[70] This is an online resource, designed particularly for "A" level students in Geography, but has also relevance to other parts of the curriculum. Although "A" level students of the UK would be aged 16 plus, I assume that the initiative also would be interesting in application also to primary school pupils.

5.13 YOUNG PEOPLE ARE CITIZENS, TOO – ON THE INFLUENCE OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN PLANNING.[71] (UNGA ÄR OCKSÅ MEDBORGARE – OM BARNS OCH UNGDOMARS INFLYTANDE I PLANERINGEN)

The above title refers to a Swedish report holding the same name. The report was prepared by the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning in response to an instruction from the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs.

A major question raised in the report is how to offer possibilities for participation from children and the young in the physical social planning. How to meet their needs and views and to make their voice heard? Two parts have to meet, the report argues, the municipal planners and politicians on the one hand, and children and the young on the other. The school is viewed as

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[70] CABE Education, "Making Better Places," *360°*, no. 5 (2004).
[71] Stadsmiljøavdelingen. Boverket, *Unga Är Också Medborgare - Om Barn Och Ungdomars Inflytande I Planeringen*, ed. Irène Tallhage Lönn (ed) ([Karlskrona, Sweden], 2000).

one of many possible arenas for such meetings. The fields of application for participation, based in key words include: Agenda 21, architecture in schools, children and the young, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, democracy, research and learning, physical planning, the street as classroom, curricular work, citizen participation, local environment, community planning, the school, school grounds, traffic planning, youth politics, youth councils, and more.

From the many examples on projects referred to in the report, I shall just briefly mention two; "The Street as the Classroom" ("Med gatan som klassrum") for which Lisbeth Williams is responsible[72] and Marie Ekblads "The School as the Meeting Place" ("Skolan är en bra mötesplats").[73]

Like Eileen Adams, Lisbeth Williams has worked in the field of children and the built environment since the 1970s, particularly stressing the applicability of the street as the classroom. In 1996 Williams investigated into the scope and field of studies in the built environment taking place within Swedish primary schools.[74] She found that eighty-five percent of the areas investigated by children were related to the local environment. Additionally, William's study indicates that the main difficulty in achieving aims in such initiatives is the school's organisation. Artists, craftsmen, or for example professional historians are, she argues, more often invited to schools than are the architects.

Marie Ekblad is concerned about facilitating children's participation in relation to physical planning in the local neighbourhood, and the school as the arena for this kind of approaches. During the 1980s, approaches to primary school education were developed in the department of Urban Studies at the Stockholm Technical University. Opportunities for more people to actively participate in physical planning in their local community were a key issue. Primary schools were chosen as an arena for the above mentioned initiative "The School as the Meeting Place".[75] The programme comprised three different projects aiming at: (i) investigating into the children's capability of being specialists of their local neighbourhood area, (ii) the school as a tool for teaching and learning about the built environment, and (ii) the school as arena for meeting between municipal planners and the young.

As part of her project about the school as a meeting place, Marie Ekblad designed a handbook about methods and ideas for children's urban studies. Some of the ideas for how to facilitate action resemble the MIABE components like for instance (i) the area of investigation should be within

[72] Lisbeth Williams, "Med Gatan Som Klassrum," in *Unga Är Också Medborgare - Om Barn Och Ungdomars Inflytande I Planeringen*, ed. Irène Tallhage Lönn (ed) ([Karlskrona, Sweden]: Boverket, 2000), 82.
[73] Marie Ekblad, "Skolan Är En Bra Mötesplass," in *Unga Är Också Medborgare - Om Barn Och Ungdomars Inflytande I Planeringen*, ed. Irène Tallhage Lönn (ed) ([Karlskrona, Sweden]: Boverket, 2000).
[74] Prosjektet At studera staden – en kunnskapsövesikt av stadsstudier i grunnskolan.
[75] Ekblad, "Skolan Är En Bra Mötesplass," 98.

walking distance from the school, (ii) a contact person from within the municipality should be appointed, (iii) the children should be critical to what they see in the urban places, (iv) drawings should be encouraged as an expression of their impressions of the site, (v) discussions in class should be encouraged, (vi) the children should try and get second opinions about their views from conversations with local residents in the area and also from bureaucrats employed in the planning and building division.

My reflections

What could the MIABE learn from the report of the National Board of Housing? Apart from the component of traffic planning, most of the key words of the Swedish report mentioned introductory would correspond to fields in which the MIABE might assist in facilitating participation without any changes from its present form.

As reported in my chapter "Tell the Story" one of the MIABE components is about an introductory seminar for teachers. In Sweden, the above mentioned handbook of Ekblad's about guidelines and methods for introducing the teachers to how to run project about children and participation based in the built environment, now is used as part of the teacher training education.

The results of the investigations of Williams and also the approach of Ekblad both serve as an added confirmation on the utility of the local environment as a well suited tool for investigations in the built environment as a point of departure for achieving participation. The school as an arena for teaching and learning in city studies was chosen because it is, Ekblad argues, a place in which all groups of people might meet.

5.14   SUMMING UP

In this chapter a brief overview of the national concern for children and participation has been offered. The establishing of the Children's Ombudsman in 1981 as well as the National Policy Guidelines of 1989 to promote the interests of children and the adolescents in planning (NPG) has been reported. Additionally, some background information on the general governmental interest in the built environment, design and architecture has been presented.

To possibly try and position the MIABE in a broader context, there was a need to define various categories. Three different criteria formed its base; (i) the participating children and the young should be under 16, (ii) built environment in the local neighbourhood and the school should be the arenas of the project work, and (iii) participation is a stated aim based in the Planning and Building Act and the NPG, the Local Agenda 21, and others.

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In my presentation of the Norwegian projects, a certain geographic variation was aimed at.

Reflections on the projects described made me understand that the MIABE and its components were quite common. Nearly all projects comprised the expressive components of drawing, building models and production of maps of the area. The superior aims also seem to resemble those of the MIABE.

A brief summing up of the projects reported from above indicates that: (i) The reported projects are mainly initiated in accordance with the NPG pursuant to the Planning and Building Act. Particularly in the project "Barn og Plan i Oslo" the many methods presented to enhance participation from children and the young indicate support to my own argument; planning practice and participation projects with children based in built environment seem to have many shared interests. (ii) A strong municipal commitment to the project seems to be of vital importance to a successful completion. This confirms my own experience reported in the previous chapter. However, the question arises; how could this possibly be planned for? (iii) The MIABE seems to be the only model comprising a component of acquiring an extended vocabulary linked to the built environment as well as to public administration. (iv) Elements from participatory planning are the concern of the Finnish environmental psychologist Liisa Horelli as they are in my work. (v) Finally the MIABE prerequisite of participation from all children seems to be hard to achieve in many of the projects. By looking at differences rather than at similarities, the MIABE component of acquiring an extended vocabulary emerged, and so did the superior aim of my model to allow for participation from all children.

Some of the projects presented seem to suffer from the lack of a systematic analysis as well as of a scientific formality called for by Kathryn Frank in my introduction to the project descriptions. However, the evaluation report from the Nord-Trøndelagforskning on participation from children and the young in their physical environment, offers an extensive explanation to the concept of participation. The evaluation report of the BUSMI project indicates a concern about participation taking place based in the representation rather than offering participation for all.

In my introduction to this chapter, I argue that the major part of the projects on children and participation I have come across during the last decade, are recognised by the lack of evaluation. From my point of view, this would most likely prevent rather than encourage an escalation in the process of establishing an area of research and probably also a more long term development in participation projects with children.

From positioning of the MIABE in a broader context we have learned that many of the MIABE components are used as tools for facilitating

participation also in other projects. However, as mentioned above, one important finding was that the MIABE component about an extended vocabulary linked to the built environment and public administration, seem to be unique.

Reflections upon this chapter have strengthened the applicability of the built environment as a point of departure in projects aiming at participation with children, thus also a strengthening of the first of my three rooms defined in this thesis, the physical room, the urban place. As mentioned in my introductory chapter, the political room is formed by a government that is responsive in issues concerning children and participation. This room is also shaped by policy documents concerning children, participation and the built environment. Unfortunately, indications towards a decline in responsiveness in issues about architecture and design seem to have evolved during the last fifteen years.

In the next chapter "The MIABE Revisited" semi structured conversations with some of former users of the MIABE are reported.

6. THE MIABE REVISITED

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, conversations with some of the former users of the MIABE are reported. As part of my preparations for meeting with the now young men and women, a conversation guide was prepared.[1] The purpose of my semi structured research conversations with the former users of the MIABE were two-fold; to possibly get a second opinion about use of my model as well as of its possible extended potential, the MIABE Plus. As the MIABE component of acquiring an extended vocabulary does not seem to be part of any similar models that I know of, I was particularly interested in comments on its legitimacy.

I am sitting in a local, north-bound train at night heading for the Råholt. It is Saturday before Palm Sunday, 2005. The train is packed with people. On a screen below the ceiling in front of me, digital figures and text give details of station stops and outside temperatures: "Lillestrøm minus 9°C" and it's getting colder, minus 13°C. "Next stop: Oslo Airport, Gardermoen."

Why was I sitting in a train on this particular Saturday night?

The building of the new Oslo airport, near Råholt was the reason for the project of the same name. At Råholt Secondary School (Råholt Ungdomsskole), the headmaster was concerned about the new local railway station under construction and its consequences to the local youngsters. The train would take them directly to the Oslo central railway station and the temptations of the capital in less than half an hour. What could possibly be done to encourage the young to stay in Råholt?

Travelling to Råholt was the beginning of a retrospective as well as prospective journey aimed at getting a second opinion about the application to the MIABE as well as views on the possible extended potential of the MIABE Plus as a platform for improving participatory practices for children and the young.

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[1] The conversation guide is presented in the end of this chapter.

Who, then could possibly assist in fulfilling my intentions? Interviews of so-called key persons are an often used strategy in gathering of information, but who were the key persons and would an interview serve my purpose right? Would the key persons be the Chief Commissioner of the City Council, the principals of the different schools, a journalist, or a bureaucrat? As already mentioned in my chapter on the research strategy, the answer was the former users of the MIABE, the children and the young.

For months I had tried to track down some of the former users of the MIABE. I had planned to arrange for a reunion of two persons from each of the four schools assigned to the "Small Ugly Places" initiative, plus two from the "Slemdal" and two from the "Råholt" projects, altogether twelve young people. I never thought this would take much effort. However, I was seriously mistaken. Why these unexpected difficulties? I had known the pupils from their first name only and I did not know their home address.[2] This left me with no leads. To make a long story short, I spent hours calling the different schools, the local TV station, the local newspapers and others. In the end, I had managed to track eight former users of my model who were willing to assist me in offering a second opinion on the MIABE as well as to the MIABE Plus. Steinar Kvale refers to different principles of selection of interviewees, often at random from a population, but "more often [...] by other criteria, such as typicality or extremeness, or simply by accessibility"[3], as in my case.

On arrival at Eidsvoll Verk station, it was bitterly cold as I headed for my first meeting with a former pupil of the "Råholt" project.

6.2 INGUNN

Igunn is a now studying to become a teacher and lives in Tronheim.[4] She is back home for the Easter vacation and I am invited to her childhood home for our conversation. Ingunn has worked in the local supermarket this evening, the place was crowded with people, and our conversation is postponed for nearly an hour.

Ingunn remembers that she formed part of a group working in the area of the planned new railway station. She remembers well the models made of the benches, the flower beds and more. Ingunn argues that being allowed to choose their own place to work most likely contributed to an increased interest in the issue at stake. "Engagement contributes to creativity" she

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[2] Part of the ethical standard for visiting professionals who co-operates with the schoolchildren implies the duty of confidentiality which means a strong limitation on personal information.
[3] Steinar Kvale, *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1996), 233.
[4] A well known Norwegian university town in the middle of Norway

argues, Igunn explains the project to be different from solving a task given in a text book in social science. Speaking about participation, she argues that "It [the project] was so realistic, it was kind of true, we saw for ourselves what it looked like [and what it could become], which contributes to engagement." Their ideas were, she remembers, taken seriously. Ingunn argues that the youngsters felt they were given responsibility for their own work. My position in the project was viewed like a visiting professional. "Did that possibly have any impact?" I ask her. "It made the approach feel more important – the teacher, somehow, is always present" she replies. We talk a little about the interdisciplinary base of the project, and Ingunn argues that "such teaching-and learning processes give room for all children; the bright ones as well as those not quite as bright, as the [work of the] bright ones as well as the others relates to their own fields of mastering." Ingunn's mother brings us tea and biscuits; the time passes quickly.

"The best way to learn", Ingunn argues, "is through practice, to make the knowledge your own – learning by doing." She underlines the importance of building upon the skills of each individual for acquiring new knowledge. "We should", she explains, "depart from the known – something we have seen, done or experienced." Discussing the MIABE component of an extended vocabulary and its possible positions also in a MIABE Plus, Ingunn argues that "if we, as pupils, should possibly have our voice heard, we must speak a different language than that of young people. Yes, the language is important to be taken seriously, to promote communication."

Sitting in the train returning to Oslo, I try and sort out my impressions. It has been a long day. Before travelling to Råholt, the first of my research conversations had taken place in my kitchen.

6.3 MARGRETHE

On the Saturday afternoon I had met with Margrethe, the girl who wanted to investigate the possibility of diverting the road next to the Slemdal centre. At the age of 14, she therefore, on her own, arranged for a meeting with the municipal Planning and Building division.

Margrethe is now 24 years old and studies abroad. When we met again at Slemdal, more than ten years had passed since she participated in my very first project on children and the built environment. To revive old memories we went for a walk in the project area. The place looked very much the same. Her previous main concern, the car park was left unattended. Margrethe described our stroll as nostalgic. Until I contacted her, she had not given the project "much thought".

Margrethe, like most young people studying abroad, usually came home for a ten day Easter holiday before returning to her university. Next morning she

was heading for the mountains to go skiing with friends. This was our only chance to meet.

I inform Margrethe about my work with the doctoral thesis, how my focus is now more directed towards the MIABE Plus – the "Plus" being potentially useful in the enhancement of democratic practices for the children and young people now and later in life.

I also tell her that an extended vocabulary linked to the details of the built environment, to me, seem to be a vital component to everyone taking part in an interdisciplinary initiative. Margrethe responds by telling me about her own studies in medicine which, she argues, "cultivate their own identity from a non-accessible vocabulary." A most interesting dialogue on the importance of accuracy in concepts followed. "To possess", Margrethe argues, "a vocabulary related to the setting gives confidence and credibility."

Our next theme was related to dialogue, democracy and citizenship, the key concepts also of the MIABE Plus. "Living and studying abroad, Margrethe says, "is a special situation. You don't fully comprehend the language and thus cannot keep up with what is going on around you. Somehow, I feel I live in an egocentric bubble in a 'narrow-minded' community of young and selfish students. We don't have any responsibilities to anyone but ourselves. Life as a student is, in a way, your own enterprise. I don't take an active part in society there, and I don't manage to keep up with what's going on in Norway." Margrethe viewed this to be a great disadvantage, a feeling she argued was shared with the other Norwegians at her university. "We have", she said, "paid the ballot box a visit without being sufficiently informed and thus not knowing much of the consequences of our choice."

However, Margrethe could not recall any situations in which she had been close to anything like the participatory process of a road diversion linked to a possible new location of the car park at Slemdal. What might a future participation process possibly comprise for her? Would it be establishing a kindergarten or resistance to a road extension? Margrethe's comments on this indicated a strong engagement to participate for the benefit of others rather than in matters only concerning herself "Participation for my own benefit would," she argued, "be of no interest."

Summing up our conversation, Margrethe was convinced that her taking part in the "Slemdal" project had increased her awareness of the built environment. She is a student in a beautiful, old city. Many of the buildings have a rich ornamentation, towers and spires. When friends come for a first visit and need to be told the way, she often refers to building details to navigate from. Even though her friends might have passed by some of the buildings "hundreds of times", they have, she argues, "rarely noticed any of their beautiful details. Then I tell them what you told us "Look up!"

Margrethe also pointed at the importance of having worked outside of the classroom. From this, an interesting dialogue on the importance of acquiring different kinds of knowledge followed. She was particularly concerned about the issue of practical skills. "Given the opportunity to choose what to, to be free to work on your own or as part of a group, that was what mattered at the time At our age, almost upper primary level, being theoretically interested was not compatible with being cool." She remembered her own enthusiasm and engagement with pleasure. "The challenge [for you]", she argued, "must be to stimulate engagement from the children."

My reflections. Ingunn and Margrethe

Ingunn and Margrethe were both of the same age when they participated in a MIABE related project. Now they were both students, and reflecting upon the importance of acquiring an extended vocabulary, their points of view were quite similar. Ingunn argued that the pupils must speak "a different language than that of young people" if they were to be heard and taken seriously. Margrethe drew an illustrative parallel to the vocabulary related to her own studies, arguing that possessing of "a vocabulary related to the setting gives confidence and credibility." Both of the young students seemed to value the MIABE as being a practical teaching and learning model. The best way to learn", Ingunn argued, "is through practice, to make the knowledge your own – learning by doing." Margrethe pointed at the fact that at the age of fourteen, "being theoretically interested was not compatible with being cool."

Margrethes' story of how she directed her fellow students to find where she lived, lends support to the MIABE component of learning to "see" better to; to develop "both sight and insight"[5]

6.4 JACK

Jack and I met outside his old primary school at Sagene in the spring of 2005. Jack participated in the "Small Ugly Places" project, and is now a young man in his final year of upper secondary school. On our way to a coffee bar in the neighbourhood he tells me of his preparations for celebrating the completion of his many years in school.[6]

I have brought along some photos from the project as well as a report Jack wrote at the age of ten. A photo of a very special bench catches his eye, in fact the same bench referred to in the chapter "The Discussion" and all of a sudden we are in the middle of a discussion about benches and litter bins, their shapes and colours. Jack remembers with pleasure, his own ideas for

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[5] Katherine Massey and Simon Lewis, "Our Street. Learning to See," (London: CABE, 2000), foreword.
[6] The "russetiden".

design of a new litter bin. The children's own project on the "Small Ugly Chairs" springs to his mind – particularly their bright colours.

Talking about the MIABE component of acquiring an extended vocabulary linked to the built environment as well as to public administration, Jack wonders if the children were supposed to understand that possessing such a vocabulary might be a tool in contributing to possibilities for change in the public places. "If", he says, "one of our benches had been placed somewhere in the city it would have been just great." I tell him that the municipality actually did reply to the children's letters, that an exhibition was put up in the City Hall Gallery and that the local TV presented some of their model work in the classroom. "I remember that we were pretty proud. I was quite proud because I accomplished [the model of] that litter bin." Jack says. I explain that the MIABE aims at benefit for the individual as well as the society, which makes Jack think of the winos and the drug addicts in the local neighbourhood of the school – that place with those used syringes […] If the place had looked better – been cleaner, it would somehow have been a nice place to be. Did our wishes materialize?" "No, not then", I reply. However, I have recently been there – the place looks better now. Unfortunately we did not succeed in our efforts during the project period. Things take time." Jack suddenly remembers some of what he wrote in his report. "I remember the syringes and some egg cups – was that what I wrote?"

Our conversation, once again, turns to the exhibition in the City Hall Gallery. "That is something I remember. I felt great at the time – I somehow experienced something, that we were heard in a way." I ask Jack if he thinks their ideas were taken seriously. "I don't know, I probably thought of it more like play", he answers.

By the end of our conversation, Jack and I touched upon the concept of responsibility. Jack argues that it never struck his mind. However, "reflecting upon it now, it feels differently." He tells me that he though it was great fun working outside the classroom, rather than "just sitting and talking about the project indoors – we were actually walking about taking notes. Somehow things are different when they are experienced [out there] rather than for example just reading about it in a book. I therefore believe it was important that we walked about making notes – or – may be we did not get all that much out of it? I don't know…"

However, Jack remembers his model [of the litter bin] with great pleasure. "That it actually was displayed at that exhibition, I remember that was something great. In that way we learned something from it." We return to his view upon the MIABE component of acquiring an extended vocabulary linked to the built environment. "It would" Jack argues, "have been exiting to know if those new words – if they could – in way – I'm not sure [make us] think that we might better be heard by knowing such words."

Jack returns to his reflections upon the matter of participation and what was actually achieved from the children taking part in the project. "Although we were that small – we succeeded in a way. Particularly when thinking about it in retrospect, one thinks something was actually achieved. But at that time we might have been too small to understand."

My reflections

Jack's class was particularly concerned about the design part of the "Small Ugly Places" project, and Jack also participated in my follow- up project in which a visit was paid to a class of industrial design students. The reading and re-reading of the transcriptions of our conversation leaves little doubt about his concern for the design part of the two projects. Although Jack did not seem to be quite sure about the value of acquiring an extended vocabulary, he seemed to have enjoyed the practical approach of the MIABE. "Somehow", he argued, "things are different when they are experienced [out there] rather than for example just reading about it in a book." Ingunn, Margrethe, and Jack all seemed to agree about the enjoyment linked to work outside the classroom. As already referred to in my chapter "The MIABE", the first of James Mursell's six principles of teaching encourages personal, social and community undertakings "either in school or out."[7] This also forms part of the National Curriculum of 1997. Many of Jack's reflections mirror the two important issues in a participation project with children (i) to arrive at something substantial as end product, and (ii) to facilitate establishing the one or the more end products on a short as well as long term perspective. Although Jack seemed to be happy about the exhibition in the City Hall Gallery, he asked about the park of the winos and the drug addicts in local neighbourhood of the school – "that place with those used syringes [...] If the place had looked better – been cleaner, it would somehow have been a nice place to be. Did our wishes materialize?" It was of course not easy for a ten year old to understand that things take time, may be particularly in cases dependent on assistance from various municipal agencies like in the "Small Ugly Places." To try and counteract any possible delays, the municipal buddy system was established. The children's letters of suggestions for change as well as those of complaints were answered by the responsible municipal agency. As the municipal project leader, Jorunn Christoffersen wrote, "In this way the children are experiencing being taken seriously and that what they working at is not just 'toy democracy.'"[8]

Nevertheless, major changes like cleaning up in the park referred to by Jack would have been beyond the scope of possible changes in project like this. However, this is not a problem linked specifically to applications to the MIABE, but to participation project with children in general. "When children participate in community settings", Louise Chawla argues, "the activities are

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[7] James L. Mursell, *Successful Teaching: Its Psychological Principles* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954), 88.
[8] Jorunn Christoffersen, personal note to me attached to a letter from the Oslo Engery Net. June 26th 1997.

often complex and the obstacles to success are often high.[…] Therefore in addition to long-term goals, it is important to create opportunities for mastery experiences at which children can be expected to more quickly succeed."[9] The establishing of three different steps for accomplishing the pupils' wishes for change like in the Municipality of Kristiansand, referred to in my previous chapter is a good way of handling the children's expectations as long as they know that these are the presuppositions of their participation.

6.5 PHILIP

Philip and I had spoken on the phone several times ahead of our meeting. I remembered him well. He was a most creative pupil who made some exiting investigations and built several models. He also participated in the follow-up initiative to the "Small Ugly Places". At the age of ten, he was deeply concerned about the lack of public toilets in the city district of his school. Philip is a modern young man who argued for the need of a baby care room also in the gent's. He produced lots of ideas of new design and made some impressive plan and elevation drawings.

Already during our first phone conversation after so many years Philip came up with some interesting contributions to my MIABE Plus. Now he is young man of 18, about to complete his upper secondary school in a few months.[10]

Philip and I met outside his former primary school. Strolling down towards "Birkelunden" park and looking for a place to sit and talk, he spotted a nice coffee bar. For a long time we had the place almost to ourselves. Then all of a sudden young families with their children invaded the room in which we were sitting; the children screamed and ran about. However, Philip and I were both so concerned about our shared reflections on application to the MIABE that, after some time, we did not take much notice. I had estimated our conversation to last for about half an hour. After nearly two hours we were still talking.

At the start, I asked Philip what he remembered. He remembered a lot which, he argued, "probably has to do with the fact that most of us lived here, we spent a lot of time in the area every day. The project was kind of close, kind of part of our local neighbourhood environment. It concerned us. Although, if it was not for your initiative, I am sure we had not cared that much about many of the details of the built environment." "Do you think taking part in the pilot project on the 'Small Ugly Places' possibly might have been a useful experience?" I ask. "Actually, I think", he replied "it means a lot to me, maybe because we were so young." Philip argues the practical approach

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[9] Louise Chawla, "Participation as a Means of Self-Development: Self-Efficiacy, Self-Esteem and Other Measures of Personal Change " (paper presented at the Children's Participation in Community Settings. A Research Symposium, University of Oslo 26-28 June, 2000), 3.
[10] The summer of 2005

rather than learning from text books was important. "In this city district – if we had not walked there, been there and seen it all, particularly bearing in mind we were so young then I don't think we would have taken much interest."

We briefly touch the concept of participation and the fact that, for schoolchildren this is usually linked to being elected a member to the pupils' council. Thinking back, Philip has a vague memory of once having been elected class representative for the pupils' council. "You see, Philip, I have this wish for all children to experience participation at least once during their school days. In democracy it is important that [...]." Philip exclaims: "Direct democracy you mean?" The tape recordings leave no doubt about my strong wish to discuss his question, particularly in relation to a possible future MIABE Plus. I was close to what Jette Fog refers to as exaggerated involvement – my enthusiasm was hard to hide.[11] "Do you think that is a good idea?" I ask. "I think it is, because it is something concrete, something that moved us, which was intimate, that we were an integrated part of – it is always easier to engage in something that concerns you. Instead of being an abstract concept, it becomes kind of down to earth." "This was a nice way of expressing it, Philip", I said, "that bit about being an integrated part of." "I'm quite surprised myself, thinking that much – maybe it would appear to be less fascinating as you grow older? The fact that we were children, was most decisive because then play was still part of us, we saw solutions which a child might spot immediately." "This is interesting, I argue, "the world certainly expands all along, you are not a child any more. You have seen more and had more experience." "Yes, that is right of course, that island, (Philip took part in the island project reported in my chapter "Tell the Story") that litter bin on the corner, they were both something big at the time, and there was also this element of play."

Our conversation has strongly accelerated. I have completely forgotten that I am a researcher and that Philip is my conversation partner. The division between our two roles seems to be non-existent. As an introduction to the MIABE Plus and its purpose, I argue that through life, in one way or the other, one will meet social challenges of different kinds. If you participate in something, possessing some knowledge linked to the issue at stake, would possibly contribute to achieving results. The MIABE as well as the MIABE Plus, have in them the component of acquiring an extended vocabulary to assist in establishing a base to facilitate communication between the different parties involved. Philip has no recollection of this. "But", he says, "during the process of designing you were part of the process, too, guiding us to attend to issues of our concern and passing on knowledge of the new concepts. In general, I believe assistance is important to transmission of a [view into] the world of adults learning new concepts also from public administration [...]

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[11] Jette Fog, *Med Samtalen Som Udgangspunkt: Det Kvalitative Forskningsinterview* (København: Akademisk Forlag, 1994). ("overinvolvering")

we hardly knew what the role of the municipality was […] that they were the ones responsible for the details of the public place."

I ask Philip if taking part in the "Small Ugly Places" project possibly might have had any retrospective impact on him. "I think that learning to know of it [democracy] at an early stage, to relate it to the aspect of power is important – I pay an interest in these matters, you see, I read social science." Philip spoke of the concept power as if was an everyday issue while I, for months, had tried to learn more about it. I could, therefore, not resist asking how he would explain the concept. Without any hesitation, Philip answered: "[that] what is directed from the top, which is regulated from somewhere not accessible [to an ordinary citizen]." I tell him about the discussion in my doctoral thesis relating to parts of the theory of communicative planning, the importance of participation as well as the "bottom up" perspective of my work.

Needless to say, at this stage of our conversation, we were miles away from what I had planned.[12]

Another tape is running, more green tea is ordered. The screaming children seem to have calmed down. I mention the possible importance of linking one's action to some "pegs" of knowledge from which to draw experience in preparation for a process of participation. "This is what you see in politics", Philip argues, "you see what happens when you pay a visit to the ballot without possessing those pegs. If you don't know how things work, how they are run or what kind of influence you might have, then you will suffer from no legal capacity. You might meet with populists whose views correspond with the Progress Party.[13] If you don't know how things work or how the society is bolted together, you are left without any influence. You will always have a negative approach to those in charge." This is exactly what I have in mind", I exclaim. Philip leaves the above mentioned political party little honour: "Tax revenue, for example, instead of learning anything about it, they choose rather to isolate themselves from the community." Philip goes on about the effect of not possessing what he calls 'the knowledge of knowing who is actually governing." "If", he argues, "they [the people] have an abstract relation to the power […] they blame the Prime Minister, people get dejected."

I ask Philip his opinion about introducing the concept of participation to young people. Is this possibly an issue that would suit the older schoolchildren better than the pupils of the 5th grade? "I myself did not get a clear picture of that part of the initiative, so yes. [However], the most important is not to do anything theoretical, I believe that's what matters. In upper secondary last year, we learned of something similar to this as part of our social science lessons. [we] learned of the progress in the executive work

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[12] In relation to the conversation guide prepared.
[13] Fremskrittspartiet.

in Parliament. There are incredibly many people who are not capable of learning from reading. [the text books]."

We switch to the theme of group work. To this Philip argues that "children should be given freedom under responsibility, the freedom to choose – then one understands the importance of standing up for the choice made. Today – I don't know – it would have been a different kind of responsibility. I have grown older, I'm more conscientious – I don't know if it would have felt more of a burden. I think it is interesting to look at the concept of freedom with the eyes of a child because as a child you are free, you are not worried about making a fool of yourself, you just let things happen. I would like to say one thing about responsibility; I remember when we were to look at those public toilets and other areas of interest to us, you lent us your camera." I tell Philip of other pupils in others schools for whom, being allowed to borrow my camera, seemed to be a surprise. "Yes", Philip says, "because you – meeting with the pupils on their terms, by allowing them – if a teacher treats the children, not patronizingly, but giving them equal status by offering them responsibility in a new role [like being responsible for taking photos in your group] that would enhance personal growth as well as responsibility."

I keep returning to the concept of participation, mentioning neighbourhood meetings as an example and at which one has the possibility to speak [primarily as an adult]. "That's not participation", Philip argues. "Participation is when you, quite simply, have the possibility to act, to interfere in a process, to engage." "Could the possibility to act for example be the composition of a letter to the municipality or does it imply a more personal action-oriented approach like the closing of a street or to sit down in the pedestrian crossing, or may be both?" I ask. "More like your last example", Philip replies. "It is this thing about bureaucracy – if you receive a letter, you somehow get such an impersonal [answer] a formal language, and then it says they recognise you [your letter] but deep down you understand they stick to their own view. Somehow that is not how it should be, and in my opinion there is no real action taking place." Discussing other ways of shaping attention, Philip suggests that addressing a newspaper would be an idea. However, he is concerned about the possibility that "your engagement then will be based in the conditions of the newspaper." "Don't you seem to be most concerned about the kind of participation which is based in non-permanent processes of organisations?" I asked. "Yes, that's what I have in mind", he answered.

Returning to the participatory part of the "Small Ugly Places" project, I ask Philip if he viewed our exhibition in the City Hall Gallery to be recognition of participation. "Yes" he answers, "and there was a pride linked to it as well. In a way exhibiting our work in that way was somehow [based] fully on our own terms, something that we and our eyes had seen. I experienced it as participation, because I – I don't know what kind of expectations we had, may be we believed it [their ideas] should be realised."

"In relation to that exhibition", Philip says, "we did not get anything, [we were not rewarded anything], like we talked about some children getting T-shirts. It was our work that was exhibited for the eyes of the adults. There was obviously an interest and there were newspaper articles and all this is what changed our opinion about it. We think, may be, we have opened up some eyes." In my opinion", I comment, "I believe you were heard, you were taken seriously, which is what it is all about."

Philip wonders if the aspect of play would have been even more prominent if "we had produced these drawings [and notes] and still not contacted the municipality. But in contacting the municipality – that it was not just for our sake, that it was not just an alternative way of teaching – I think we were concerned about our ideas becoming a reality, and to some extent they did, like for instance when we read about them in the newspaper."

I return to the point in our conversation in which Philip talked about letters received from the bureaucracy, telling him about the establishing a buddy system within the Municipality of Oslo to make sure all applications from the children were answered within a month or so. For adults, the process of preparation might be much more extensive and thus, in worst case, make people think communication with the public administration is worthless.

Philip argues this is reflected throughout bureaucracy; "If those being engaged [in an issue] are not heard, time after time, complaints about the roads to and from school or interest in the aesthetics of urban space – it will just be a sum of experience which leads to each person concluding that this does not work. What we experienced was very positive, if direct democracy had been designed that way, with a more extensive degree of participation, people would have been more proud of the society. The way they address you – you would feel there is no communication between the one who complains and the one sitting in [an office].The system of power should be directed more towards local and direct ways of acting" We discuss the difficulties of equal opportunities for all to participate. I argue in favour of making use of the school as an arena, as opposed to for example a sports club, in which membership already represents a selection.

We have had pots full of tea; we have talked and listened for well over two hours. To the best of my capability I have tried to pay attention to what John Forester refers to as paying "attention not to the person of the sound, but to the sound of the person."[14] My conversation with Philip no doubt has created a foundation for assessment of new strategies. "Thanks for the tea Kari, and best of luck" Philip said, hugged me – and off he went.

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[14] John Forester, *Planning in the Face of Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 109.

My reflections

Increased knowledge of the MIABE evolved already from my first reading of the transcriptions of our conversation, and the more I read, the more I learned. However, the purpose of my reunion with former users of the MIABE was, hopefully, to arrive at some new knowledge about the preconditions for developing a MIABE Plus. The component of an extended vocabulary was of particular interest to me. Additionally, I was hoping that some of my conversation partners would possibly also share their thoughts about a possible usefulness of the MIABE Plus not only as children but also later in their lives.

Like Ingunn, Margrethe and Jack, Philip argued that the practical approach rather than learning from text books was important. Philip, although just 19 years of age, seemed to think he was quite young when he participated in the project.

I therefore asked his opinion about introducing the concept of participation to young people. Is this possibly an issue that would suit the older schoolchildren better than for instance the 5th grade? I told Philip about my wish for the children to meet democratic practices in the shape of participation more than once, like for instance in the 5th grade and then at the age of 14-15, as in the "Råholt" project. Once again, Philip underlined the importance of "not to do anything theoretical." Philip was not sure which age group would be best suited for an introduction to participatory practices.

Philip recalled that taking part of the "Small Ugly Places" had been fun. Then he asked; "Maybe it would appear to be less fascinating as you grow older? The fact that we were children, was most decisive because then play was still part of us, we saw solutions which a child might spot immediately." Eileen Adams, focusing on the experience of children aged 5-18 in environmental design studies, argues that children's play "establishes a relationship between learning and play. Children learn through play. We all do. For children, play embodies the serious business of learning. [...] it involves children making sense of their experience, making meanings about the world they inhabit."[15] Adams mentions the making of choices, the planning ahead and the solving of problems all to be skills linked to environmental design education, which all seems to be shared with the MIABE. "These skills and capabilities are", Eileen Adams argues, "developed through learning and through practice."[16]

Reflecting upon the fact that the children participating in my projects, were allowed to walk about on their own as well as to pick their own little place in which to work, meant that they were also given some responsibility for their actions. "I think", Philip argued, that "children should be given freedom

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[15] Eileen Adams, "Child's Play: Urban Change for Beginners," *Urban Design Quaterly* Winter 2003, no. 85 (2003): 22.
[16] Ibid.

under responsibility, the freedom to choose – then one understands the importance of standing up for the choice made. Today – I don't know –it would have been a different kind of responsibility. I have grown older, I'm more conscientious – I don't know if it would have felt more of a burden. I think it is most interesting to look at the concept of freedom with the eyes of a child because as a child you are free, you are not worried about making a fool of yourself, you just let things happen."

I kept returning to the concept of participation, mentioning neighbourhood meetings as an example which offers the possibility to make your voice heard [primary as an adult] "That's not participation", Philip argued. "Participation is when you, quite simply, have the possibility to act, to interfere in a process, to engage [...]. It is this thing about bureaucracy – if you receive a letter, you somehow get such an impersonal [answer] a formal language, and then it says they recognise you [your letter] but deep down you understand they stick to their own view. Somehow that is not how it should be, and in my opinion there is no real action taking place." Discussing other ways of shaping attention, Philip suggested addressing a newspaper would be an idea. However, he was concerned about the possibility that "your engagement then will be based in the conditions of the newspaper. If you don't know how things work or how the society is bolted together", Philip argued, "you are left without any influence. You will always have a negative approach to those in charge"

Tore Sager argues that there are two kinds of involvement. The weak forms which "merely admit the right to be informed, to give information and to be heard, to protest and so on," and the stronger forms which "give some influence over means, and finally, in dialogue one will be able to influence ends as well."[17]

Philip's arguing in favour of different ways of making his opinions heard in society, made me comment that he seemed mostly to be concerned about the kind of participation which takes place from a non-permanent base. "Yes, that's what I have in mind", he replied. Erik Oddvar Eriksen and Marit Skivenes argue that there is a growing gap between the decisions on which the politicians have direct influence and those actually concerning the citizens. New ways of the establishing of participation between the state and the citizen are seen. However, these are not linked to elections, party-and organisation membership, but to extra parliamentary processes and organs representing alternative ways of canalising the public opinions.[18]

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[17] Tore Sager, *Communicate or Calculate: Planning Theory and Social Science Concepts in a Contingency Perspective, Dissertation / Nordic Institute for Studies in Urban and Regional Plann; 11* (Stockholm: Nordplan, 1990), 66-67. "That is, citizen participation ranges from exchange of information to self-government"

[18] Marit Skivenes and Erik Oddvar Eriksen, *Nye Deltagelsesformer Og Demokratisk Medvirkning, Rapport / Los-Senteret; R0010* (Bergen: LOS-senteret, 2000).

Maybe I should have included Philip's explanation of the concept of participation in my thesis?[19] "Participation is", he argues "when you, quite simply, have the possibility to act, to interfere in a process, to engage."

Philip did not seem to leave much credit for bureaucracy and the way it functions. His scepticism made me think of Malin, my next conversation partner, who seemed to share his view, arguing that "If I forward a letter there, it will just disappear in the red tape." More than eight years ago the two of them, as reported in my story about the "Small Ugly Places" project, were working in the same group, planning a system of blocks and tackles for a planned self made raft that could take them to a small island in the river – miles away from any reflections on the power of bureaucracy. Now they are nearly adults, holding a strong engagement in how the society is run.

6.6 MALIN

In the early morning of Wednesday April 6th 2005, I met Malin outside Sagene School. She had seen my advertisement in the local newspaper and contacted me via e-mail. Malin was in her final year of upper secondary school. In 2006, I phoned her about a question which occurred during the re-reading of my transcriptions of our conversation. Malin now reads medicine at the University of Oslo.

In the coffee bar she ordered green tea, just like Philip. She did not mind the tape running and was familiar with this kind of setting. While waiting for our tea, Malin flicked through the "Small Ugly Places" booklet of ideas. We had about half an hour before she had to return to school and I followed her to the school gate. A shy Malin, thought my wish for all children to experience participation was quite idealistic. She did, however, agree that trying to make something happen is the only way to possibly succeed – and, she admitted – far better than doing nothing.

As with the other former pupils I had met recently, I asked Malin what she remembered from the project. She had no recollection of me until she recognised my face and she thought I was a teacher. Malin remembers that she walked about in the local area taking notes. "I remember it all when I look at the photos" she says. "I remember we discussed and talked a lot about what we would like to do." She tells med she has "always been that kind of a girl who succeeds in school, what we did was, therefore, just something fun" "So you liked it?" I ask. "Yes, I remember it was kind of exciting and I thought it was nice because the relation between the boys and the girls [in my class] was not always all that good, but during that project the boys asked me if I could assist a little bit here and a little bit there because I was good at things they were doing. I was creative and came up with ideas." Malin tells

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me how her group planned to investigate the small island in the river and how they could pull the raft out there.[20] "I believe we planned to build some huts up in the trees or something. That was the plan", Malin says. We discuss compositions of groups for some time, and Malin argues that if chemistry is not right, the group will not arrive at any answers.

Malin and I talk about the design and participatory parts of the project. Like her former class mates, Jack and Philip, the design part is what she remembered best, particularly her model of a bus shed with a sloping roof so that the snow could easily slide off.

Malin has no recollection about my concern for acquiring an extended vocabulary. Time passes quickly. She must not be late for classes, so we turned to the subject of participation. "Looking back on that matter I think we actually learned a lot, because, yes, we were allowed to join that exhibition but I don't believe the letters forwarded to the municipality made much of a difference." I ask her why not. "All I remember is that we should come up with ideas. May be I thought this is absolutely hopeless, there is no one who would listen to us." I ask Malin if that really is what she thought. "Yes, at any rate that's what I think now. Who would listen to [...] when a small letter arrives they will probably just think, how sweet, here some children are enquiring [about assistance] writing about all that tagging." Our conversation about participation soon leads us in the direction of the concept of democracy. Malin argues that a ten year old child would not know what democracy means. We then switch the theme to talk a little about the pupils' council. "Were you ever elected a representative" I ask. From her affirmative answer I note that she has already experienced the participatory part of democracy. "However", Malin, argues, "from my position I never felt I had anything to say. I felt holding that position was just a pastime."

"How would you possibly explain the concept of participation?' I ask. She tells me she has joined an organisation for the rights of animals, and that she has also previously worked there for some time. "If I [when working for the organisation] receive a mail asking for a letter to be forwarded to stop this and that, I think that would be fine, but does it really help? If lots of people are doing it, then it will help, but nevertheless I get a little [...] Do I actually have any influence? Will my letter be the [decisive] drop? "If", Malin continues, "democracy should imply everyone has a voice which should be heard, I don't feel we have a democracy now, that Norway is not a democracy. If I forward a letter there, it will just disappear in the red tape." Asking her where "there" is, Malin replies it might for instance be the municipality.

Our conversation is nearly over. We try and sum up all the issues that have formed part of our conversation, like the importance of being informed about

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the question at stake when trying to get your voice heard. Malin argues that she would make sure she knew the issue well when trying to achieve of something important – "particularly if I was to write a proper letter, I would have to do that first." However, Malin questions whether people really possess such knowledge. "I suppose" she argues, "that is the problem [in the society]: not everyone possesses that knowledge."

We also touch upon the importance of arriving at something substantial as an end product in participation projects with children, like the painting of the fence which was performed by some fellow pupils. "Yes, of course" Malin replies "something has to happen. I fully agree. One has to experience there has been a difference."

My reflections

At an early stage of our conversation, Malin told me about her working group and their plans for occupation of the small island in the nearby river. She no doubt enjoyed being part of that particular group. However, she argued that "if chemistry is not right, the group will not arrive at any answers."

Following our discussion about participation Malin argued that "Looking back on that matter I think we actually learned a lot, because, yes, we were allowed to join that exhibition but I don't believe the letters forwarded to the municipality made much of a difference." I asked her why not and she answered that all she remembered was that they were supposed to come up with some new ideas. In retrospect she even thought that it was all in vain, as no one would care about what they had done." Who would listen to [...] when a small letter arrives they will probably jus think, how sweet, here some children are enquiring [about assistance] writing about all that tagging." Other classes in other schools had different and more positive experience. However, Malin and her class decided to stress the design part of the project, and approval of new design for litter bins, benches, bus sheds and public toilets no doubt would be too demanding within the scope of our project.

Our conversation about participation, soon led us in the direction of the concept of democracy. Malin argued that a ten year old child would not know what democracy means. If she is right, would it possibly be better to introduce the concept of democracy without stressing this part theoretically, just as in the "Small Ugly Places" project, and then go deeper into the into the matter at a later stage, like the possibility discussed with Philip?

From my conversation with Malin we learn that she has joined an organisation for the rights of animals, and that she somehow seems a little disenchanted about the possibilities of having a voice heard. However, Malin questions whether people possess such knowledge. Her argument lends some support to the acquiring of some "pegs" from which experience might be

drawn when faced with related situations as adults – which is at the core of the MIABE Plus and which Philip has already argued in favour of.

Malin in a nutshell sums up the purpose of working in accordance to a MIABE related project arguing "something has to happen. One has to experience there has been a difference."

6.7 JON INGE

My conversation with Jon Inge, a former participant of the "Råholt" project, took place in the library coffee bar at the University of Oslo. He is now a 25 year old student, living in Oslo. Jon Inge has also been a teacher in his former secondary school in Råholt.

Already during our introductory talk, Jon Inge tells me that he remembers that the project formed part of the municipal sector plan. To meet the possible challenge of understanding parts of the vocabulary of public administration, some new concepts were added to the already existing MIABE component of acquiring an extended vocabulary in connection with the built environment. I explain that my concern for a more accurate reference to objects and concepts stems from the frequent use by children of the expression "that thing you know" instead of, for example, the facade. Jon Inge agrees. "Absolutely", he exclaims, "this it most important within all communication – that when people speak about a subject, the definitions used are accurate." Commenting upon my argument about the personal computer, that children soon learn new concepts by using one, Jon Inge argues that "although children in general are fast learners, they are also a bit like copy cats. Children easily repeat things after you, but do they really understand what they are doing? From that point of view your argument becomes slightly more problematical, doesn't it? A girl of four", Jon Inge continues, "might know part of the vocabulary of the computer, but she certainly has no knowledge of what she is doing."

I ask "Do you have any recollections of the project being a participation process?" "Do you mean [if] some of what we contributed to from our investigations become true or were taken into consideration from the authorities? Yes, we had our voice heard, there were articles written in the newspaper about our project, and we had a kind of presentation in the community house, "Samfundet", didn't we? Yes, now I actually remember it quite well. Somehow I got the feeling that we were taken seriously, although I remember there was something about the number of bureaucrats and politicians attending the meeting?" His memory does not fail him. The presentation unfortunately coincided with a most important municipal meeting.

Participation no doubt is a difficult topic, particularly the content of the concepts. "What does it imply for children?" I ask. Jon Inge argues that the

possibility of being heard has to be part of a project aimed at participation. "We were given that opportunity – irrespective of what happened to our project report – we were allowed to be heard. It was kind of different from an ordinary learning-and teaching process. No doubt, from that point of view, our project could be said to as having achieved of participation. In upper secondary school we also had this pupils' council – I think I was elected a member a couple of times."

We discuss for a while the way in which these councils are built up and how the form of representation, which I argue, enhances exclusion rather than inclusion of all children's experience of democratic practices. "That is what it will always be like", Jon Inge, argues, "there is not room for everyone." However, he remembers everyone was offered an opportunity to participate within the "Råholt" project.

I tell Jon Inge that the reason why the MIABE departs from details of the built environment is that they comprise part of the children's life-world and thus contribute to establishing a shared horizon for everyone taking part in MIABE related projects. Jon Inge catches my point, and argues that an increased awareness in one's local environment is enhanced just from passing by or through the same places for years. He also reflects upon "how you extend your view of this little world as you are growing up. When you are young, the school, family and friends – and may be the football club – comprise your universe. Being introduced to an initiative such as the the "Råholt" project does something to you in that you have to view your everyday life from the outside. "

Having already introduced Jon Inge to the idea of my MIABE Plus, I ask if he has any comments to a possible transfer value of its application. "There are", he argues "things you don't learn in school, and many important issues are theoretically difficult to approach. How to pay a bill, for instance, you don't learn that in school." "Or", I add, "to write a letter such as to the Planning and Building administration as you did in the Råholt project." "Yes, practical experience like that." Jon Inge argues that the children "less theoretically interested" as well as the others experienced a kind of confirmation of their capabilities.

I tell him about Margretehe from the "Slemdal" project and her view in favour of a practical approach to comprehensive issues like participation rather than just learning about the concept from a text book. Jon Inge fully agrees with Margrethe's argument. Our conversation now turns to the Norwegian phenomenon of reaching the voting age while still not having finished upper secondary school, and I underline my view on participation comprising far more than paying a visit to the ballot every two years. Jon Inge reflects upon the fact that "nothing much has happened after the French revolution, it somehow stopped at that."

Returning to the question of participation, he tells me that once he was elected member of the Municipal Youth Parliament. From the many issues at stake, distribution of resources to playground equipment springs to his mind. What would the content of the concept possibly imply? Jon Inge tells me that as a teenager, he joined a youth centre in Bøn, where he lived, and that he once participated in a project where members wished for a wall against which they could play football. Their wish was met, and he remembers painting the wall. I think", he says, "what comes to your mind is the unusual, the special." Reflecting on this experience Jon Inge becomes almost poetic while arguing it is "easier to remember things that you have touched, looked at, smelt and more."

I make a sketch of Sherry Arnstein's "Ladder of participation"[21] on a coffee bar napkin. Jon Inge shows a keen interest in its different levels, we discuss the concept of manipulation – children viewed as a kind of topping on a cake for the benefit of adults. He argues a good way of considering children would be "to treat them like everyone else. They should not be lied to – they should be spared any harm." In discussing the many different ways of achieving influence, he argues this might also include utterances like throwing eggs and tomatoes at the windows of the major's office. This soon takes us to the entire concept of power, which in its turn took him all the way from the peaceful university coffee bar to a discussion on the development on the occupied West Bank.

My reflections

In my thesis, I underline the importance of both the rights and obligations following participation. In the "Råholt" project, as in the "Slemdal" project and the pilot-project of the "Small Ugly Places", the youngsters were free to walk about in the area during school hours. Everyone did their job, everyone returned to school in time for non-project related lessons. Jon Inge believed that when young people were given responsibility, everyone would do his best as "no one likes to let anyone down."

In explaining the MIABE concern for a more accurate reference to objects and concepts instead of the children referring to "that thing you know." Jon Inge, who had practised as a teacher in his former secondary school, argued that this was important not only as part of a project but "within all communication – that people speak about the same and that the definitions are accurate." In commenting upon my argument in favour of acquiring an extended vocabulary, Jon Inge was sceptical to whether or not the young children really understood what they are saying. "From that point of view your argument becomes slightly more problematical, doesn't it?" he asked. Would his challenging comment about children acting like copy cats,

[21] Sherry R. Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* (1969).

possibly change my attitude to the MIABE component of acquiring an extended vocabulary which, I argue, would be a prerequisite also in a MIABE Plus? A comprehensive answer is beyond the frame of this thesis. However, my reflection upon more than 400 children practising in accordance to the MIABE, indicates that most of the children seem to use the new words and concepts in their right context. Whether this is due to understanding or the copy cat way of acting or not, should be left to others to decide. An unexpected side effect of the above MIABE component will be reported in my chapter "The Discussion" in which I explain how children of language minorities learned of the concepts comprising their project related vocabulary because they were lectured to also in their native language.

Jon Inge argued that the possibility of being heard has to be present in a project aiming at participation. Irrespective of how the municipality would possibly take the ideas of the young into consideration in the planning process, Jon Inge argued that the pupils had their voice heard. "Our project no doubt could be referred to as having achieved participation since there were articles in the newspaper, and we had a kind of presentation in the community house." This, once again sheds light upon the importance of arriving at something substantial, like for instance an exhibition, as an end product, and also the importance of some short-term goals in participation projects with children.

In our discussion about the pupils' councils, I argued that their idea of participation through representation enhances exclusion rather than inclusion of experience of democratic practices. Jon Inge replied that this is how it will always be - "there is not room for everyone."

To possibly try and counteract his argument, the MIABE aims at the opposite approach: inclusion in the sense of enhancement of experiencing participation for all children at least once during their years in compulsory school – an aim which no doubt would also form part of a possible future MIABE Plus.

Commenting upon a foundation for the MIABE Plus, Jon Inge was concerned about the importance of a practical approach so that the children "less theoretically interested" as well as the others would experience "a kind of confirmation of their capabilities. His argument was, I take it, an approval.

Jon Inge's view of manipulation related to his experience as a teacher is comforting and adds strength to my belief that most teachers are most attentive in spotting possible negative power relations between themselves and the pupils. In my chapter "The Discussion" I argue that the concepts of manipulation and paternalism should be carefully watched in initiatives such as the "Råholt" project.

Jon Inge expressed that having been introduced to an initiative like the "Råholt" project in which he was encouraged to "view his everyday life from the outside", most likely had marked him in one way or the other.

6.8 HEDDA

On Monday April 4th 2005, I arranged to meet Hedda who had participated in the pilot-project on the "Small Ugly Places". Hedda was ten years old when she joined the project. Now she is in her final year of upper secondary school. She tells me she is a keen cyclist, and that she has a boy friend who is fond of playing football. Hedda argues that she does not remember anything of the project. Nevertheless, she wished to meet with me. From my collection of the children's work, I have chosen a nice handwritten report which she wrote about her investigations in the local neighbourhood and a photo of three girls proudly presenting their ideas for new signs for the different entrances of the school building. Without any apparent reason, Hedda appears to be slightly embarrassed about a couple of minor spelling mistakes in her report. I was hoping that one of the girls on the photo would be Hedda, and I was right.

The coffee bar is nearly full and the only free seats are next to the hot milk machine of which noise nearly drove us insane as well as disturbing our taped conversation which later was difficult to decipher. Having talked a little about the project, I refer to Hedda's nice report of the registrations made in the local area. Some of these reports include letters written to the municipality, and I ask Hedda if she would like to comment upon this part of the project. "In a way", she argues, "we learned to act a bit more like an adult [...] Instead of just standing there, explaining things kind of confused, we learned [...] – it was kind of clever in a way." I tell her that many children often refer to a particular object, say a bottle bank, as "that thing you know" and this makes it difficult for others to catch the meaning. Hedda agrees. Our conversation jumps from one issue to another, the milk and coffee machines still make a terrible noise. All of a sudden, Hedda returns to the question about the importance of acquiring an extended vocabulary "I think it was clever, that is when – did we learn a lot of new words?" "No, I answer, I guess [...]." Yes, there were not too many, right? That makes it easier to remember, too. Then it is, I don't know – somehow I feel that it seemed quite simple."

"The MIABE component of acquiring an extended vocabulary, could it possibly assist in creating a shared platform for communication between everyone involved in the initiative?" I ask. "I guess so", Hedda replies. "I don't know, there is this thing about learning when you are a child, then you remember [it] the rest of life, too." I tell her one of the reasons for letting the children work with the details of the built environment, like benches and signs, is because the street furniture consists of familiar objects. "Yes, bus shelter! – that word I have remembered ever since and I learned it from you. I

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remember I used to call it the box or something. The box on the tram stop, I'm not quite sure [...]"."But now you remember it is a bus shelter?" "Yes, that I remember, that's something I remember very well. I remember we were working with bus shelters. I remember that word, I have done so ever since."

The more we talk, the more Hedda seems to remember. What about group work, does she remember being part of a group? She does, she even remembers the names of a couple of other group members. I ask her if she is part of a work group also in upper secondary school. Hedda confirms my answer, arguing that "it works all right, but I sometimes feel we worked better together when we were younger – it feels better to work to your own speed – to be allowed to do that." However, she admits this way of working might be rather time consuming, adding that "Somehow one has to arrive at a shared point of view. If not, it does not work."

Hedda and I also talk about what, as an individual, she had learned from the "Small Ugly Places" project: "I learned something myself", she replies. "As part of the teaching process", I ask? "Yes, but it [taking part in the project], was not an ordinary way of learning – it was something different, I don't know [how to put it]."

The tape is nearly finished. Hedda should not be late for her gym. It is about time we sum up of our conversation. We talk a little about participation within society, and the form of representation of the pupils' school council. Hedda is a deputy representative of her class at present but she has yet to take part "since the representative is invariably present." Outside the coffee bar, as we were saying good bye, she told me her mother remembered the project well. "Maybe she remembered it from your log book?" I asked. As reported in the chapter "Tell the Story" the children were allowed to bring their logbook home every now and then to share their experiences from registration in the local area with their parents. "Oh yes!" Hedda exclaimed. "the green note pads – those I remember well."

My reflections

The more we spoke, the more Hedda seemed to recall from the project. Commenting upon the MIABE component of acquiring an extended vocabulary, Hedda argued that possessing these new words and expressions made her "act a bit more like an adult. [...] Instead of just standing there, explaining things kind of confused." Later in our conversation she suddenly returned to the topic; "Yes, there was not too many, right? That makes it easier to remember, too. Then it is, I don't know – somehow I feel that it seemed quite simple."

I take it her expression about this MIABE component as being " kind of clever in a way", to be an approval of learning about the concepts, but also a

reminder about keeping the number of new words low – preferably not exceeding ten to twelve. I also take her story about the term "bus shelter" to be viewed as a confirmation of the legitimacy of the component of acquiring an extended vocabulary.

Hedda and I discussed the pros and cons of group work, as part of the project and as a way of organising work also in her in class in upper secondary school. At this stage of our conversation it is difficult to read from the transcriptions which of Hedda's statements that refer to which period; the 5th grade or the present situation. In sum, I think I have got her right in drawing the conclusion that as part of the "Small Ugly Places" project, the groups were allowed to spend as long as it took to arrive at a conclusion, while today the time limits are strict. The present strict time schedule made her wish to work independently rather than being a member of a group.

Although Hedda argued that she did not know how to express her view about taking part in the "Small Ugly Places" project, she formulated her experiences nicely by arguing that "I learned something myself."

6.9 JENS MARTIN

Jens Martin is a now young man of 26. He works in a family company. Until their shop opened at Slemdal a few years ago, I had not met him since the time he took part in the "Slemdal" project in 1994. Now I often pop in to say "Hello!" on my way to the neighbouring food store and he knows about my thesis preparation and that I have had conversations with Margrethe, his former class mate from Oslo Montessori School. On a Tuesday morning at the end of September 2006, we have sat down in a blue sofa in the exhibition area of the shop and I ask him what he remembers from the project. "I remember everything", he answers: "the jam jars, the kiosk, the rolling about in the wheel chair." Jens Martin also remembers the time he met the former Minister of Culture, Aaase Kleveland as we were preparing the exhibit of the "Slemdal" project; "We actually shook hands", he tells me with a big smile. Jens Martin reminds me of the contents of a letter to a food producing company inquiring about sponsorship for a new design of bottle bank in the shape of a giant jam jar the children had produced. The idea was to have the company's log on the lid. I showed him an article about the "Slemdal" project in a journal I had and as he flicked through the pages he suddenly exclaimed "look, there it [the jam jar] is!" In my conversation with Margrethe, she mentioned the importance of working practically. This also happens to be a matter of great concern to Jens Martin. "To be allowed to work practically, not only in this project, changed my attitude to learning. Your engagement made us think it was fun. We were out there, we actually did something, you inspired us, we wanted to learn more." Sitting in the blue sofa, we are close to the show windows. Jens Martin tells me about a

forthcoming extension of the shop: a space bounded by columns right on the outside is to be fenced in.

I ask him if he remembers where in the Slemdal area his group had worked and what had been its main concern. He promptly answers: "jam jar with Nicolas and Philip, and the part of the tram platform with the safety bar. I was also part of the group concerned about the flower kiosk. We were a good team – we managed to get things done despite some discussions."

From a lot of activities following the registration process of the "Slemdalprosjektet", a visit to the Norsk Form, the Foundation for Design and Architecture in Norway and their exhibition "Elg i storm"[22] was also arranged. "We got crazy ideas from that", Jens Martin exclaims with a laugh.

Our conversation jumps from one topic to the next, and all of a sudden we are discussing the fact that Jens Martin and the other youngsters were free to go to Slemdal and work there during school hours. "Was that possibly too much of a responsibility?" I ask. Jens Martin replies that he never felt it that way. "We did what we wished and had the freedom to change [what we did not approve of at Slemdal]."

So far I have taken notes only. However, I would very much like to have a tape recorder running so that I could reflect on his ideas and arguments later. Thus the following conversation took place in the staff kitchen.

"Jens Martin, you mentioned the importance of learning more about the built environment, could you tell me a little bit more about it?" "I think", he replies, "it is important to bring to light. Children should know what their environment is like, go out there and experience it and see the different objects. In Frognerparken (The Vigeland Park), you cannot sit and read about it, it has to be experienced […] you must touch the people." (The stone and bronze sculptures.)

All the young participants of my former initiatives have given permission to make use of their first name in my thesis and Jens Martin was no exception. He tells me the reason why he so much favoured the "Slemdal "project; he is a dyslectic. "I did not know you were", I reply, slightly worried about having touched upon something that he would possibly rather have kept to himself. Jens Martin affirms there is no worry, "I am open about it, no problem."

I explain my particular concern about the MIABE possibly being built up in a way that allows for all children to find room for their particular skills and interests – "also children and young people like you having difficulties in reading and writing." I ask Jens Martin his opinion about this possibly added

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[22] The exhibition title is hard to translate. However, it hints at the average "taste" of Norwegians which is often manifested in the shape of a painting above the sofa in the sitting room; a huge mousse in the sunset; elg i solnedgang.

value of the MIABE: "Best way", he comments "everyone from the handicapped to the brightest ones in society can join this. Everyone can learn from each other." All can get pleasure from it. It [the practical way] is the best possible way of learning. I have made use of it myself. I am a skiing-instructor. I have used your way of teaching and learning in that setting. When the parents come to pick up their children, the boys and girls make a fast stop right in front of them to make the snow gush as high as possible, the dream of all children.". "That's mastering a skill, Jens Martin, isn't it", I ask. "The children of your skiing class, master the difficult art of skiing and you master the process of teaching." "That way of learning made me think there is a possibility out there for others, too", Jens Martin says. "Too many just read in a [text] book, they must get out there to learn." I would very much like to discuss with Jens Martin the MIABE component of acquiring an extended vocabulary. I ask him if he thinks receiving an answer from a municipal division might possibly contribute to a feeling of being part of the society even when you are a youngster and not yet allowed to vote. I tell him I think it is important to children to be taken seriously. "It's very important that the young ones are being listened to", Jens Martin comments. "To make the local environment the point of departure – we had not thought about our local environment at all."

I tell Jens Martin about Philip from the "Small Ugly Places" project who argued that being part of that initiative moved him in a particular way. "So it did with me", Jens Martin comments. "His argument is absolutely right. I have no bad or sad memories – we worked well in my group even if we might not have been such good friends during the breaks and after school. We wanted to succeed."

I also tell Jens Martin that I often meet with children referring to "that thing you know" instead of making use of the correct concept. "Imagine, I say, you were 14 years again, and you were to write a letter to the Planning and Building division about your concern for the kiosk area. Would it, you think, be easier to be heard if you used the 'professional' concepts?" "It should not be like that", Jens Martin answers. "I think it is more important that those being employed in the planning division should understand that not everybody has to know the difficult words." Jens Martin gives me a detailed explanation to his argument. Then he looks at me and asks with a smile; "Did I give you a new idea?"

From his question follows a long and pleasant conversation about the number of new concepts and how much time one should allow for their teaching and learning. Then Jens Martin suddenly says; "I am also trained to be a golf coach. The same occurs here. If we pass on too much advice and concepts to a pupil, – or a customer – there will be too many things going on in his head, and he will not remember anything – you must allow for a digestion of all new information."

My reflections

During our co-operation in the "Slemdal" project, I did not know that Jens Martin was dyslectic. Bearing this in mind, his good memories from the project is of course easier to understand. I did, as Jens Martin put it, indeed have to allow for some digestion of all the new information that evolved from our conversation. Jens Martin is a very polite young man. I believe he was not interested in praising my model but his fellow former users of the MIABE seem to share his opinion that working out of the classroom, in a small, self chosen public place, was fun: "We were out there, we actually did something, you inspired us, we wanted to learn more."

Reflecting upon the issue of group work, Jens Martin immediately remembered what he had been doing and with whom: "Jam jar with Nicolas and Philip, and in the part of the tram platform with the safety bar. He also remembered being part of the group working in the flower kiosk area on the northern side of the main road." We were a good team – we managed to get things done despite some discussions. I have no bad or sad memories we worked well in my group even though we might not be such good friends during the breaks and after school. We wanted to succeed."

When I asked Jens Martin if he would like to explain in some detail why he so much had appreciated working with the details of the built environment, he promptly answered that he thought the issue was important to bring to light. He argued "Children should know what their environment is like, go out there and experience it and see the different objects." To underpin his argument, he used the stone statues in the Vigeland Park as an example: "you cannot sit and read about the "Frognerparken", it has to be experienced […] you must touch the people." (The stone and bronze sculptures.)

Right in the middle of our conversation, sitting in the staff kitchen of the furniture design shop, Jens Martin informed me that he is a dyslectic. The reading and re-reading of my transcriptions of this particular incident unveiled some most important new knowledge in the shape of an added MIABE value: I explained my particular concern about the MIABE possibly being built up in a way that allows for all children to find room for their particular skills and interests. Then I added "also children and young people like you having difficulties in reading and writing." What did Jens Martin think of that? "Best way", he commented "everyone from the handicapped to the brightest ones in society can join this."

Apparently, my new insight was reached there and then. However, reflecting upon the incident over and over again, I realised what was the background of this sudden widening of the concept of room for all children to also cover the meaning of room for each individual child. Most of my conversation partners had, more than eighteen months earlier, presented their comments in favour

of the MIABE being a practical teaching and learning model. Ingunn had said that: "such teaching-and learning processes give room for all children; the bright ones as well as those not quite as bright, as the [work of the] bright ones as well as the others relates to their own fields of mastering." "At our age, almost upper primary level, being theoretically interested was not compatible with being cool." Margrethe argued. Philip claimed that the practical approach rather than learning from text books was important. "There are", he argued "incredibly many people who are not capable of learning from reading [the text books]." Jon Inge argued that the children "less theoretically interested" as well as the others experienced a kind of confirmation of their capabilities."

However, it is important to underline that these comments all were made without me asking any questions of its applicability linked to the children's differences in skills. "Everyone" Jens Martin argued, "from the handicapped to the brightest ones in society can join this."

The re-reading of the conversations ahead of the meeting with Jens Martin, combined with his information about his difficulties in reading and writing, no doubt was the reason behind my action. I believe this is a typical example on "reflextion-in action". I certainly did act "from their repertoires of familiar examples."[23]

Referring to the kiosk area, I asked Jens Martin if he thought it might be easier to have one's voice heard when making use of the professional concepts linked to the issue at stake, he answered that is not how it should work. "I think", he argued, "It is more important that those who are employed in the planning and building authority should know that not everybody has to know of the difficult words." In giving me a detailed explanation to his argument, he asked; "Did I give you a new idea?" He no doubt made me think twice. However, from our rather comprehensive conversation following his challenging question, it became clear that our interests are shared. Jens Martin reminded me of the importance of not passing on too many pieces of advice and concepts to a pupil, or a customer, at the same time because then "there will be too many things going on in his head, and he will not remember anything – you must allow for a digestion of all new information."

6.10 SUMMING UP THE CONVERSATIONS

As mentioned in my introduction to this chapter, the purpose of my research conversations with the former users of the MIABE were two-fold; to possibly get a second opinion about use of my model, particularly the component about acquiring an extended vocabulary, but also of the possible MIABE

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[23] Donald A. Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 166.

Plus. Nevertheless, as we can see from my conversation guide, the supplementary information allowed for an expansion of my initial questions. Thus, a number of the MIABE components were discussed. Margrethe remembered well the component about learning to "see" more actively, arguing that acquiring an increased awareness of Slemdal had contributed to an interest about the building details of her university city. All the children who participated in the "Small Ugly Places" project remembered well the component of design. The component about model building brought back good memories for Ingunn and Jens Martin, who participated in the "Råholt" and the "Slemdal " project respectively. Although referring to two different exhibitions, Jon Inge, Jack and Jens Martin all remembered well the preparations for and the opening of the project exhibition.

I never mentioned the concept of the life-world of the children in my conversation with Ingunn. Nevertheless, she particularly addressed the importance of "departing from something known" in an initiative like the "Råholt" project. Free choice of group compositions and also of the place of investigation was appreciated by many of my conversation partners. Malin particularly mentioned that "we were talking and discussing a lot." This was what the MIABE component about likes and dislikes was all about. As reported below, facilitating this component has contributed to arrive at the aim about gaining positive experience from dialogue when participating in a MIABE related initiative. Many of my conversation partners contributed to new views about a possible MIABE Plus, and Philip even assisted in underpinning the importance of a an accountable bureaucracy – not just for participation project with children like in the "Small Ugly Places", but also for adults inquiring about matters of concern in their local community.

Did the method of "conversations as production of knowledge" meet my requirements? Although, a rather time consuming process, I would argue that the answer is yes.

I learned that the MIABE seems to have functioned well as a teaching and learning model linked to parts of the National Curriculum of 1997. The former users of my model had lots of comments, positive and less positive, which would be most useful in a possible refining of the MIABE. The many comments on the component of acquiring an extended vocabulary were most interesting. It was also interesting to learn that the MIABE component of design seems to have been a favourite by all.

Most children having worked in accordance with the MIABE have been aged 10-12. Would this also be the target group in a possible MIABE Plus? From the above conversations, a slight scepticism seems to emerge concerning a shift from the stressing of an awareness of the built environment to the stressing of democratic practices at that age. In my final chapter, "Leaving the Door Ajar", the issue about age and the MIABE Plus are discussed.

All my conversation partners stressed the importance of learning from practice. Ingunn described it so well; "The best way to learn is through practice, to make the knowledge your own – learning by doing". She also argued that "Such teaching and learning processes give room for all children, the bright ones and those not quite as bright, as the [work of the] bright ones as well as the others relate to their own fields of mastering." Her argument was supported also by Jens Martin and Jon Inge. Would their arguments possibly indicate that the MIABE facilitates participation irrespective of the skills of each child?

Table: Conversation guide prepared for my meeting with former users of the MIABE

THEME	QUESTIONS	SUPPLEMENTARY INFO.
Introductory talk and reminiscences of the project.	What do you remember about the project?	Råholt: drawing, model making. "Small Ugly Places": street furniture design. Slemdal: re-planning of parking place, signs, façade.
Communication with officials and journalists.	What new terms and jargon did you learn?	Repository, councillor, illumination, ornament
Motivation and what this entails.	Is there anything you remember as being inspiring or dull?	Do you remember with whom you worked, were you keen on photography do you remember the exhibition we organised?
Connection with the local surroundings.	Was it a good idea to use an ugly place to learn from, in case why?	Importance of practical experience and participation.
	Did you learn something new from the area near your school?	Did you observe more or learn more after the project ended?
Participation as a part of democracy and satisfaction of having taken part.	A: Did you experience that the school or community took notice of what you or your group suggested? B: Have you since done something similar?	Protection of area around Grünerløkka, development in your neighbourhood, practical improvements by planting, painting, repairing
Social behaviour, changes in attitudes, improvement of self-esteem.	Do you think the experience you gained will be useful later in life?	In the English curriculum there is a place for a social conscience and democracy, but this is not at a practical level and is for older pupils.
Model	Can the model used be improved and how?	More projects? Alone or in groups? More design suggestions?

6.11 ARRIVING AT THE POINT OF DEPARTURE FOR MY CHAPTER "THE DISCUSSION"

At least twice I have already stated that the reason why I wish to discuss the MIABE and its application with regard to certain issues within parts of the theory of communicative planning is their shared interest in benefit for society as well as for the individual. Additionally communicative planners and the practitioners of the MIABE share a wish to prepare a process for active participation. Other common aims are 1) personal growth, 2) exercise in becoming citizens within a democracy, 3) communicate with authorities, 4) stimulation of responsibility and interest in the public place, and 5) gain positive experience from dialogue.

As in communicative planning, the MIABE aims at participation but altogether there are 29 components of which the above mentioned five are those discussed in detail below.

1) To start with, personal growth was not a MIABE component until the model was tested during my research and became a major concern after the "Small Ugly Places" project. During the project period, the municipal project leader Jorunn Christoffersen and I joined the international conference "Urban Childhood"[24] to which an information pamphlet "Pride, Identity and Participation" was made to present our project. Although pride and identity both mainly indicated pride and identity in place, we also wished to underline a concern for strengthening the self-esteem of children. In 2001 when the last MIABE- related project was completed, the model became an object of my research and the issue of encouraging personal growth was viewed to comprise an important entity if the model were to be used in the future. Although I do not know whether a rise in the children's self-esteem has occurred, conversations reported in this chapter show the children's pride in mastering new skills like an extended vocabulary or designing a litter bin. This might serve as an indication of self-esteem.

2) To me, the practical experience of participation, like in the pilot project about the "Small Ugly Places", was also an exercise in becoming citizens within a democracy. Nevertheless, this view was very vague until, as reported in my chapter "Tell the Story", a follow-up project to the "Small Ugly Places" was presented in a Scottish report about education for citizenship. Here, for the first time, I saw the possible expanded potential of the MIABE. Would the model possibly also hold some transfer value to similar participation initiatives met with later in the children's lives? This was how the MIABE Plus was conceived. My concern for a possible widening of the concept of participation was thus one of my topics in the conversation guide prepared for my meeting with some of the former users of the MIABE (displayed on page 186).

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[24] The international conference "Urban Childhood" took place in Trondheim, Norway, in the summer 1997.

3) In the MIABE, the ability to communicate with authorities is made possible through (i) writing letters to the municipality and (ii) an extended vocabulary deriving from architecture, design and public administration. As mentioned in my summing up of the chapter "Positioning of the MIABE in a Broader Context", a concern for the possible difficulties linked to the jargon of planners, was expressed in relation to the method "Barnetråkk"[25]. Nevertheless, from my knowledge of numerous projects about children, and participation in the built environment, acquirement of an extended vocabulary appeared only in the MIABE. No doubt, this finding contributed to the strengthening my belief in its legitimacy.

4) In the MIABE, stimulation of responsibility and interest in the public place is possible by making the public place in the local neighbourhood a prerequisite for its application. As reported in my chapter "The MIABE", these places form part of the life-world of the children, and consequently act as an "equaliser" in that even before starting school, the children have walked through them many times. The children have probably also played there, walked their dog, sat on the benches, used, or not used, the litter bins, the phone booth and more. This means they have some kind of user experience with the details of the built environment. Additionally, this prerequisite is strengthened by linking my model to parts of the National Curriculum of 1997, particularly the subject Arts and Crafts. Choosing an ugly rather than an aesthetically perfect public place the site of investigation seemed to encourage the children's interest in the place and also their feeling of responsibility for improvement of the conditions. The registration process of the MIABE is important to learn to know better your local public place, and so is the "ownership" of the ideas for change.

5) To gain positive experience from dialogue is not recognised as a separate MIABE component although the component about "likes and dislikes" seemed to enhance critical thinking and discussion. In turn, this critical thinking was strengthened by involving the component of an extended vocabulary and both make possible a basis for the children to gain positive experience from dialogue together and with adults involved in the project. In class, the feeling of safety and belonging in a group might add strength to the gaining of positive experience from oral dialogue, as the threshold for having one's say is low. At the public level, experience from receiving replies in letters from the municipal authorities, also contributed to gaining a positive experience from written dialogue.

The above five issues make up the MIABE components and prerequisites for discussion in my next chapter.

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[25] Referred to in the previous chapter, the BUSMI initiative.

7. THE DISCUSSION

It is true, of course, that theories do not solve problems in the world; people do. Nevertheless, good theory is what we need when we get stuck.[1]

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In my introductory chapter I argued that I wished to discuss parts of the MIABE and its application with regard to certain issues within the theory of communicative planning. This is the object of this chapter. Why do I wish to discuss the MIABE and its application with regard to certain issues within the theory of communicative planning? The reason for the choice of communicative planning, as well as for application of the MIABE, can be divided into benefits for society as well as for the individual. Although the theory of planning deals with children only to a limited extent, communicative planners and the practitioners of the MIABE share a wish to prepare a process for active participation. As a consequence of my reflections upon the MIABE and its applications so far, reported in my summing up of the previous chapter, these are the common aims that will be discussed in this chapter: 1) personal growth, 2) exercise in becoming citizens within a democracy, 3) ability to communicate with authorities, 4) stimulation of responsibility and interest in the public place, and 5) to gain positive experience from dialogue.

In this chapter the reader is first introduced to a brief overview of the development of the concept of participation in planning, inclusive of some UK initiatives on children, participation and the built environment in the early 1970s. Then the following MIABE components will be discussed; (i) participation, (ii) acquiring an extended vocabulary (iii) democracy (and the MIABE), (iv) personal growth, and (v) design. Additionally, the concept of power forms part of my discussion.

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[1] John Forester, *Planning in the Face of Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 12.

Participation constitutes the aim of my main empirical reference the "Small Ugly Places" project, it forms part of the title of my thesis, and it is seen as an important part of planning.

The MIABE component of acquiring an extended vocabulary deriving from the details of the built environment as well as from public administration is discussed as a means to enhance public dialogue and communication.

In my introductory chapter I argued that applications to the MIABE have taken place within a framework of representative democracy. In this chapter, light is briefly shed upon some different models of democracy which can possibly contribute to the existing system of representative democracy in child-related projects aimed at participation.

The concept of power never formed part of the MIABE, and my reluctance to its use in a study linked to children was strong. However, parts of the concept of power, like the concept of manipulation, should not be left overlooked in a discussion about children and participation and is, therefore, discussed in this chapter.

Finally, John Forester's interpretation of the content of the concept of design as "making sense together in practical conversations" is discussed.

7.2 THE CONCEPT OF PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING

By the end of the 1960s a broad criticism of society arose in many countries including the Scandinavian. The town planning ideas from the 1920s on healthy dwellings, air, light and green areas were still at stake, resulting in higher and higher blocks of flats and large areas of development. The new residential areas were, by most people, seen as sterile, non-human environments. People felt alienated in relation to the decision processes. Preservation of existing built areas, which were often varied and reflected a specific identity of the place, became of subordinated interest to planners and public authorities. Qualitative data representing "soft" values were rejected as being non-profitable or irrelevant. Instead, we witnessed priority of the economically profitable, rational and functional.

During the late 1960s and early 70s, planners began to respond to the escalating critical demands from inner city residents in the US and many European countries and listened more attentively to the voice of the people. So-called maximum feasible participation got an official blessing, particularly in England. In many countries this citizen's claim for participation resulted in an improvement of the routines of municipal information. In the British report "People and Planning", most often referred to as the Skeffington Report of 1969, the ninth and final of the

recommendations reads: "A general effort should be made to educate the public about planning matters and procedures." The questions on how and to what cost were not considered in the report.

> We understand participation to be the act of sharing in the formulation of policies and proposals. Clearly, the giving of information by the local planning authority and of an opportunity to comment on that information is a major part in the process of participation, but it is not the whole story. Participation involves doing as well as talking and there will be full participation only when the public are able to take an active part throughout the plan-making process.[2]

Commenting on this report, Nigel Taylor argues that "participation is primarily seen as involving more *consultation* with the public rather than the public actively *participating* in decision-making."[3] The Royal Town Planning Institute (UK) argues that planners welcomed the new responsibilities following participation, and that "time and effort were spent preparing exhibitions and organising public meetings. [...] Despite the enthusiasm, the response from the public was typically disappointing."[4]

However, it is argued that the first steps towards a statutory right to participate in the planning process might be seen as a more or less conscious attempt from the authorities to get control over the many conflicts amongst the population in the 1960s and 70s. In the US, John Friedmann was concerned about the structural problems seen in the general guidance system of the society which he believed were due to a rising level of ignorance in the public. In his "Transactive planning theory", which belongs to the so-called participatory planning theories, the concepts of mutual learning and the learning society were the core issues.[5]

Criticism of society took different directions such as establishing a number of activist groups with ideas about claims for participation. In Sweden, more than 900 different interest groups were registered in 1976.[6] Parallel to the extensiveness of the claim for participation and the "fight" against sterile residential areas, a new kind of literature on cities, streets, places and life between the buildings emerged. Book titles like the "Death and Life of Great American Cities", "Townscape" and "Life Between Houses" indicate that the late functionalistic theories of planning were coming to an end.[7]

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[2] Nigel Taylor, *Urban Planning Theory since 1945* (London: Sage Publications, 1998), 87.
[3] Ibid., 88.
[4] Royal Town Planning Institute UK, "Community-Planning,"
(http://www.rtpi.org.uk/resources/publications/community-planning/02text.html: 2006). August 24th 2006
[5] As reported in my section on "power" later in this chapter, criticism has been raised to the concept of John Friedmann about his concept of knowledge and organised action.
[6] Tom Miller, *Medborgardeltagande, Politiskt Inflytande Och Kommunal Planering, Meddelande / Nordiska Institutet För Samhällsplanering: 1979:2* (Stockholm: Nordplan, 1979).
[7] The authors being respectively: Jane Jacobs, US, Gordon Cullen, UK, and Jan Gehl, Denmark.

A radical debate on education linked to children's participation

A phenomenon concurrent in time with the claim for participation was a radical debate on education that led to establishing alternative ways of teaching and learning in the UK. Here it was hoped to provide a structure enabling children and adults to participate in planning. Part of this new way of education comprised making use of the built environment in the local areas as a teaching tool aimed at transfer to other subjects. Pioneering educators and professionals working with the built environment, developed the practice of environmental education by establishing centres of urban studies and architectural workshops. Despite the fact that response from the public following the Skeffington Report in the UK was poor, some planning authorities stayed committed to the principle of participation.

In the 1970s, the Ministry of Education in the UK, initiated two important seminars on children, education, the built environment and participation. Ideas from these seminars received widespread attention also outside the country. Three English initiatives representative of this period should be mentioned: "The Front Door Project" (1974–76), "Art and the Built Environment" (1976–79), and the "Working Place Project" (1978–79). Three names should also be mentioned: Eileen Adams, Ken Baynes, and last, but certainly not least, Colin Ward.[8] Inspired by the English idea, centres of urban studies became particularly popular in Sweden. Physical planning is sometimes referred to as a thief on the market, adopting concepts from other fields and disciplines. In the early days of urban studies with children in the UK, some key concepts used in environmental studies were transferred to urban studies: "field work" became "street work", "field studies centres" became "urban studies centres" and "landscape" became "townscape".[9]

The Scottish planner and biologist Patrick Geddes, forwarded the idea of engaging children and the young in participatory initiatives based in the built environment more than 50 years ahead of most others.[10] In his book "Cities in Evolution", first published in 1915, Geddes elaborates his interpretation of the term "citizen participation" within the planning process. He suggests that the public, inclusive of schoolchildren, might assist in gathering relevant information.[11] "Beside all the agencies just named," he writes, "there is another, weakest and least specially prepared hitherto, yet fullest of hope and possibility of all – the primary school."[12] The educational value of such borough surveys are referred to as "manifest and fruitful".[13] Geddes' logical

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[8] Eileen Adams and Ken Baynes are still concerned about approaches on children and participation, like in their recent initiative on "Power Drawing".(2006)

[9] Christina Apell, *Arkitekten I Skolan. Rapport Från Et Stadsstudieprosjekt I USA* (Göteborg: Chalmers Tekniska Högskola. Avdelningen för stadsbyggnad, 1983), 48.

[10] Patrick Geddes was a Scottish biologist and planner, 1854–1932.

[11] The term "relevant" is not, to my knowledge, further explained.

[12] Patrick Geddes, *Cities in Evolution. An Introduction to the Town Planning Movement and the Study of Civics* (London: Ernest Benn, 1968), 334.

[13] Ibid., 335.

reason for this kind of involvement is the value of learning by doing. He argues there is reason to believe that the children transmit their newly achieved knowledge in planning to friends and family. Patrick Geddes viewed children to be the next generation of potentially more informed inhabitants. To promote learning by doing he wished to extend the public awareness and to develop a more socially and environmentally conscious population.[14]

Ninety years after the visionary ideas of Patrick Geddes and twenty five years after the pioneering initiatives mentioned above, Norway introduced the ideas from the radical education debate as well as the ideas following participation within planning in the National Curriculum of 1997. They are also present in my model for increasing awareness of the built environment, the MIABE.[15]

7.3 PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING

In a survey on the theories of planning assessed by Michael Fagence during the period of 1968–1972, the wish for education in co-operation with the public was seen in many of the theories investigated.[16] In the same investigation the model of Margaret Roberts can be found. However, she does not follow the mainstream concerning the methodology of the planning process itself. The different activities are performed either directly or through the ordinary democratic system of participation. Roberts also has an interesting theory about communication within the planning process in the shape of a continuing dialogue. In many ways, participation in the 1970s was seen generally as an answer to planning problems. In the 1960s' US, "advocacy planning", meant that the planner became loyal to the client. The participatory turn in planning was later recognised also in the transactive planning, collaborative planning, and the communicative planning.

Communication, to which I shall return, is a prerequisite to participation. Another is knowledge, argues Benjamin Barber.[17] My argument in favour of a practical knowledge-based capacity to act has already been presented in the chapter "The MIABE".

At the national level, the Official Report Norway on the New Planning Law of 1977 is seen to represent the foundation of participation in planning.[18] The

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[14] Ibid.

[15] As reported in my chapter "Tell the Story", the "Small Ugly Places" project was exhibited in the Gallery of the City Hall in Oslo, the Rådhusgalleriet, and also in Glasgow, Scotland, following an invitation from the "Glasgow 1999 UK City of Architecture and Design". In my speech at the opening of the exhibition, I drew a parallel from the contemporary strong Scottish commitment on children, the built environment and participation back to the important work of Patrick Geddes.

[16] Michael Fagence, *Citizen Participation in Planning* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1977).

[17] Benjamin R. Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1984), 234.

[18] Miljøverndepartementet, *Ny Planleggingslov, Norges Offentlige Utredninger; Nou 1977:1* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1976).

users as well as the public should be allowed admission to active participation in cases regarding plans for concrete shaping or reshaping the local environment. The importance of active information was underlined, relating to a democratic planning process as well as to an effective and co-ordinated solution of the planning tasks. Terje Holsen argues that in the "early reasons for increased participation in official documents, the argument of efficiency might seem to dominate the arguments of democracy."[19]

Tore Sager argues that the reason for participation in planning, is the need to gather information, better underpinned decisions, a more efficient decision making process through prevention of conflicts, personal growth, to counteract alienation, and to increase confidence in our system of government. Additionally, participation in planning is seen to foster increased legitimacy to democracy as well as engagement in society. Fostering democratic problem solving and education in democratic practices are also seen as reasons for the participatory part of planning.[20]

Sherry Arnstein's analysis of citizen involvement in planning in the shape of her well-known "Ladder of participation" appeared in a much quoted article of 1969. The ladder was originally designed, she writes, to "encourage a more enlightened dialogue," as opposed to the "heated controversy over 'citizen participation', 'citizen control', and 'maximum feasible involvement of the poor" in the late 1960s. Arnstein humorously compares the idea of participation to the eating of spinach, arguing "no one is against it in principle because it is good for you."[21]

Tore Sager refers to a similar "ladder" in which the levels of participation are judged from levels of influence based on 16 different participation projects.[22] From the bottom upwards, five levels are shown, ranging from the planning issue at stake being made public via discussion in the shape of sporadic meetings, newspaper debates, conversations and more on level three, to the top level comprising the right of decision making. Unfortunately, no examples are shown. A brief comparison to the MIABE indicates many similarities. However, divergence is most likely to be found at the final step. Although the right of decision making also applies to children I take it the levels of decision would be different. Roger Hart argues that in participation projects with children, "child power" should not be aimed at. I fully support his argument. In my experience, decision making by children can follow many routes, like for example the planting of bulbs, washing a statue or

[19] Terje Holsen, "Medvirkning I Planlegging. Planleggingsteoretisk Analyse Av Lovgrunnlaget for Medvirking Etter Plan-Og Bygningsloven," in *NIBR-notat; 1996:105* (Oslo: Norsk institutt for by- og regionforskning, 1996), 6.
[20] Tore Sager, *Communicate or Calculate: Planning Theory and Social Science Concepts in a Contingency Perspective, Dissertation / Nordic Institute for Studies in Urban and Regional Plann; 11* (Stockholm: Nordplan, 1990), 67-69.
[21] Sherry R. Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* (1969): 216.
[22] Tore Sager, "Planning Theory," (Handout, Ph.D Course in Planning Theory. Advanced Course. Aalborg University, Denmark. April 17-21, 2001).

refurbishing some small "ugly" chairs.[23] Although these examples are all on micro level, I would argue that in the context given, they should count as decision making. The actions mentioned were initiated and completed by the children. Louise Chawla introduces the term of graduated participation, indicating an increase in competence and responsibility as the child grows older.[24]

As reported in my chapter "The MIABE", participation following my initiatives has been achieved in different ways, ranging from children and the young acting as informants to planners in a municipal planning process, via written dialogue with the authorities, to repairing an old bench in the school yard.

Somehow, the many different meanings seen in the content of the concept of participation make me think of snow. Snow, like participation, is a commonly used word in Norway. Everybody knows what the concept implies. Nevertheless, both are seen to comprise multiple meanings. I presume that this is why the concepts of participation, as well as snow, are often linked to an adjective; snow can be cold, new, coarse etc., participation might be active, informed or true, while the concept of influence is often seen to be strong or weak.

However, this lack of a shared meaning of the concept of participation is easy to understand as it often seems to be dependent on the context, which also makes evaluation aiming at best practices difficult.

Participation was one of the aims of the "Small Ugly Places" approach. It forms an important part of the rights and obligations of democracy, and it is seen a prerequisite for action corresponding to the possible extended potential for use of the MIABE. "In the planning process", Sager, argues "the democratic quest for openness, cooperation, and dialogue manifests itself as claims for information, public meetings, hearings, work-groups, and numerous other forms of public involvement."[25]

What then is participation? As mentioned in the previous chapter, Tore Sager argues there are two kinds of involvement. The weak forms which "merely admit the right to be informed, to give information and to be heard, to protest and so on", and the stronger forms which "give some influence over means, and finally, in dialogue one will be able to influence ends as well. That is, citizen participation ranges from exchange of information to self-government."[26] Participation in the sense reported in the many examples of my thesis, implies more than just receiving information and it thus belongs to

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[23] See my chapter "Tell the Story"

[24] Louise Chawla, "Evaluating Children's Participation: Seeking Areas of Consensus," *PLA notes, participatory learning and action* 42, no. October 2001.

[25] Sager, *Communicate or Calculate: Planning Theory and Social Science Concepts in a Contingency Perspective*, 66.

[26] Ibid., 66-67.

the "stronger forms". Having asked the question of what participation might possibly imply the next question might be: from what is a participant recognised? Sager answers: "One is a participant when the other is taken seriously and when his utterances are not objectivated, when one is engaged in what happens to him and enters his lifeworld in discussion."[27] No doubt, the children working in accordance with the MIABE are participants. The life-world of the children, the public places in their local neighbourhood, comprises the base for their discussions, and the children are all aiming at arriving at a shared concern for the issue at stake.

Benjamin Barber argues that: "As with so many central political terms, the idea of participation has an intrinsically normative dimension – a dimension that is circumscribed by citizenship." As already mentioned in my chapter "Positioning of the MIABE in a Broader Context", Norwegian children and the young are given status as independent individuals having the right to active influence and participation within the society. Barber views participation as being "deliberating, acting, sharing, and contributing". "Or," he argues, "to come at it from the other direction, to be a citizen is to participate in a certain conscious fashion that presumes awareness of and engagement in activity with others."[28] In the MIABE, engagement in activity with others is facilitated through group work aiming at contributing to changes in the built environment that would benefit all citizens.

Many have tried to define child-related participation. The European Council has explained the content of the concept of participation to mean that "the children express their views and relate their experiences, and that these are given weight in the decision-making process."[29]

Arnstein's analysis of citizen involvement in planning, already referred to as a "Ladder of participation" has been adapted by Roger Hart as a "ladder of children's participation" despite the fact that Sherry Arnstein's ladder was probably never designed with children in mind.[30] Arnstein explains her eight-rung ladder obviously to be a simplification, but, she argues, "it helps to illustrate the point that so many have missed – that there are significant gradations of citizen participation." Therefore, her eight rungs might just as well "in the real world of people and programs" have been 150, the distinctions among them being less sharp.[31] A graduation of the content of the concept of participation is a most important point in participatory initiatives with children and the young. Recognition of this graduation found in Arnstein seems to hold an important transfer value to participatory

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[27] Ibid., 79.
[28] Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age*, 154-55.
[29] Council of Europe, "Children, Participation, Projects - How to Make It Work!" (Strasbourg: 2004), 5. Children are defined to mean those under 18 years of age.
[30] Roger A. Hart, *Children's Participation: The Theory and Practice of Involving Young Citizens in Community Development and Environmental Care* (London: Earthscan, 1997).
[31] Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," 217. Sherry Arnstein speaks about types of participation and "nonparticipation". Manipulation, the lowest rung of her ladder, belongs to the latter and so does 'therapy'. This expression refers to participation initiatives with the poor and the powerless.

initiatives with children, particularly underlined in Hart and also in Chawla, as already mentioned.

A growing attentiveness in the shape of detachment from the lower rungs of the ladder like for instance manipulation seems to be a needed and welcome result from application to Sherry Arnstein's ladder of participation. Suzanne Speak puts it this way:

> However, a few children's participation projects are beginning to reach beyond the tokenist gestures of play ground design projects or mural painting, to involve children at the core of regeneration initiatives. This is particularly true of environmental initiatives. What we are learning from these is that those which are more committed, and longer term as opposed to short term and tokenist are producing valuable long term results.[32]

Kathryn I. Frank, in her summarising findings from empirical studies of youth participation in planning, argues that research in this field should be more attentive to the prospect of manipulation and tokenism. "Planners' incentives can then be matched to the known benefits and risks of youth participation, thus leading to more opportunities for participation as well as avoidance of improper practice."[33] I fully share the argument of Frank, although I wish her attention, particularly to the concept of manipulation had been directed to all adults involved in participation approaches with children. The concept of power in general and manipulation in particular, is presented in my section "Power" in this chapter.

Gerison Landsdown offers an interpretation on children's participation in practice: (i) it is an ongoing process of children's expression and active involvement in decision-making at different levels in matters that concern them, (ii) it requires information sharing and dialogue between children and adults, which is based on mutual respect and power sharing, (iii) it gives children the power to shape both the process and outcome, and (iv) it respects children's own evolving capacity, experience and interests in determining the nature of their participation.[34] Guy Cave and Lori Drummond-Mundal comment upon Landsdown's definition, and refer to "the importance of children's involvement at all levels of programming – conception, development, research, planning, implementation, and evaluating, where

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[32] Suzanne Speak, "Children in Urban Regeneration: Foundations for Sustainable Participation," *Community Development Journal* 35, no. 1 (2000): 38.

[33] Kathryn I. Frank, "The Potential of Youth Participation in Planning," *Journal of planning literature* 20, no. 4 (2006): 370.

[34] Gerison Landsdown, "Building a Culture of Respect for Children: Key Challenges in Child Participation" (paper presented at the Defence for Children International (DCI) symposium, Geneva, Switzerland, November 2004).

children have a stake. It also highlights the importance of recognising and honouring children's power and capacity."[35]

In my chapter "Tell the Story" I have reported the significance of age related to application of my model. What about age and participation in general? Anne B. Smith, in a paper about widening participation, expresses her hope, in fact she calls it a plea, that "we avoid stereotyping our expectations of what children can do according to age in any research we carry out."[36] She argues that participation varies "in how much children understand and own the goals of the activity; are able to make choices and take initiative; and how much they actually contribute to achieving the goals."[37] Although Smith's main concern seems to be children under school age, I assume that her argument would also be applicable in projects with older children. Roger Hart presents a similar argument, claiming that "we should not have universal notions of what children can or cannot do at certain ages. We should rather provide a diversity of ways to be involved and media to use in order to maximize the capacities for all children to take part."[38] Hopefully, the MIABE might assist in this kind maximising the capacity for all children to participate.

Landsdown uses the expression "in matters that concern them" when referring to children's active involvement. As I am not familiar with her intentions of that statement, I shall restrain from any comments. From her remaining arguments as well as those of Cave and Drummond-Mundal I have, however, tried to work out a kind of check list in evaluating the "Small Ugly Places" project. Did it comply with the above mentioned requirements to such an extent that it might be claimed that participation took place?

The project was an ongoing process with active participation from most of the children involved at different levels. For long, I have tried to avoid the expression active participation because I would like to think of all participation as active. However, from reflections on the "Small Ugly Places" project, I learned that participation might range from an active child who immediately volunteers to be the group leader, via the shy child whose voice might be rather low, to the one who is just silently present. An example about prevention of participation, although hopefully not consciously, was seen in the incident about the two boys who were not picked to join any of the working groups of their class.

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[35] Guy Cave and Lori Drummond-Mundal, "Are Children the Seeds of Peace? Exploring Children's Potential Contribution to Conflict Transformation and Peace-Building" (paper presented at the Childhoods 2005: Children and Youth in Emerging and Transforming Societies, University of Oslo, Norway. 29 June - 3 July 2005), 9.

[36] Anne B. Smith, "Development as Widening Participation in Sociocultural Activities.," (University of Oslo: Research Symposium. Children's Participation in Community Settings., 2000), 7.

[37] Ibid., 10.

[38] Hart, *Children's Participation: The Theory and Practice of Involving Young Citizens in Community Development and Environmental Care*, 28.

The children's initiative in matters concerning all citizens was seen in ideas for change in the public places such as the common outdoor room in their neighbourhood area. The two following issues are, I believe, already answered in my chapter on the MIABE. The requirements of Cave and Drummond-Mundal for programming indicate that my model is weak on evaluation. Hopefully, examples on recognising as well as honouring the children's power and capacity were reflected in my chapter "Tell the Story".

From Louise Chawla's seven different forms of participation with children, the concept of graduated participation has already been mentioned. The remaining six could be seen as prescribed, assigned, invited, negotiated and self-initiated participation. Assigned participation is taking place when adults such as parents and teachers, provide opportunities for practising and also direct the process. Chawla argues that the experiences have to be meaningful. In my three MIABE related initiatives, adults have provided the opportunities for practising. Whether or not the initiatives have been experienced as meaningful by the children is hard to judge. Indications of a positive answer were, as we have seen, reported in my chapter "The MIABE Revisited".

> Participation is a process in which children and youth engage with other people around issues that concern their individual and collective life conditions. Participants interact in ways that respect each other's dignity, with the intention of achieving a shared goal. In the process, the child experiences itself as playing a useful role in the community. Formal processes of participation deliberately create structures for children's engagement in constructing meaning and sharing decision making.[39]

Looking from the participation side of the "Small Ugly Places" project through Louise Chawla's interpretation of the concept, I have arrived at the following: the children were part of a process aimed at action based on embellishment of the public places in their local neighbourhood (her first claim); the children interacted with respect to each other's capabilities and interests, aimed at achieving a shared goal within their group (her second claim). Did the children experience themselves as playing a useful role in the community? Although from the "Råholt" initiative, this is what the youngsters wrote in their final report to the municipality: "Thus, you might be ahead of the development by already at this stage consider the possible expansion at Råholt. In this way, and together, we might prevent a flood of youngsters [going] to Oslo in their leisure time after 1998. Our advice to you is: Trust us. We are your future".[40] As referred to in my chapter "Tell the Story", a newspaper article reporting a walk in the local area of Grünerløkka School, quotes one of the participating children: "We believe things will be

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[39] Chawla, "Evaluating Children's Participation: Seeking Areas of Consensus," 9.
[40] Kari Bjørka Hodneland, "Tettstedprosjekt Råholt," *FORM - et fagpedagogisk tidsskrift (FORM - a pedagogical journal)*, no. 4-5 (1996).

better if [everybody] worked on cases likes this. We very much wish to do something ourselves. May be we could get some funding?"[41] To me, these statements leave no doubt that the participants experienced that they did play a useful role in the community. However, there is also the logbook note from the boy who, in the "Small Ugly Places "project asked the challenging question "What's the point spending one's time working with something one cannot do anything about?"

From the many above mentioned explanations of the concept of participation, which is the most appropriate and closest to mine? Louise Chawla assists in answering my question, arguing that: "Participation means different things to different people, and the form of participation that is most appropriate varies with circumstances, including culture, age, gender, setting, political conditions, available resources, and participants' goals."[42]

My own interpretation of the concept of participation is borrowed from the theory of communicative planning combined with experience from application to the MIABE. Participation, I would argue, is the kind of action in which all children have performed actively within the whole range of communicative acts, from critical group discussions via informed dialogue with grown ups of different professions, to reaching an end product in the shape of something substantial.

What then, if the aim of participation in child-related initiatives fails to succeed? If there is no substantial end product seen, would nothing be gained from a participatory project with children? Although the following argument of Judith Innes refers to the achieving of consensus, her argument also applies to MIABE related initiatives: "Even a process without any agreement may be a success if participants have learned about the problem, about each other's interests, and about what may be possible."[43] Thus, to me something would still be gained even if no substantial end product is seen.

The concepts of personal growth and self-esteem have already been revolving throughout my different chapters. Both concepts will therefore be presented in the sections to come.

Power and the MIABE

John Friedmann's view of planning as the linkage between knowledge and organised action, in a nutshell, also covers the initial intentions of the MIABE.[44] However, many authors criticise Friedmann and his knowledge-

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[41] Anette Aasheim, "Miljødetektiver Snuser Opp Stygge Oslo," *Aftenposten, oslopuls*, 12.februar 1997, 43.
[42] Chawla, "Evaluating Children's Participation: Seeking Areas of Consensus," 9.
[43] Judith Eleanor Innes and David E. Booher, "Consensus Building as Role Playing and Bricolage: Toward a Theory of Collaborative Planning," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 65, no. 1 (1999): 415.
[44] John Friedmann and Barclay Hudson, "Knowledge and Action: A Guide to Planning Theory," *American Institute of Planners Journal* 40, no. 1 (1974).

action concept. Their criticism is based on the lack of a more explicit view on power. To what extent does this criticism also apply to my model? Although aware of a contemporary as well as future possible empowerment of the children working with MIABE, the notion of power never formed part of my model. Power, to me, indicated something negative, like the concept power over[45] and was, therefore, not seen to be relevant to Norwegian schoolchildren or my model.

However, reflections on the power relations likely to exist in my model brought my reluctance into discredit. Although appearing in many different shades, a number of aspects of power relations were found, for example in (i) the teaching and learning process, i.e. between the teacher and the children, (ii) the relations between the children and myself (the facilitator), and (iii) relations between participating adults. Spurred from the above mentioned criticism as well as that of Kathryn I. Frank already referred to, I shall try and shed some light on the different types of power likely to occur in the MIABE.

However, I shall first try and arrive at a content of the concept which I find in accordance with application to the MIABE as well as to communicative planning. Øyvind Østerud, leader of the Norwegian Report on Power and Democracy (Makt- og demokratiutredningen) claims that the concept of power has "an unlimited fascination" while the concept of democracy does not fascinate quite as much.[46] With me, the fascination is more the other way round. Could my slight reluctance to the concept of power possibly be rooted in the fact that I represent the female section of the population? To me, Tore Sager offers an interesting view on the power observed in feminist writers in the shape of a "transformative" conception of the notion. Sager argues that centring on "helping the person over whom it is exercised instead of making him or her subservient," might arise from most women having experienced the notion of power through their roles as nurtures. Sager also argues this "transformative" conception of power to be most interesting in relation to the theory of participatory planning.[47] As so many of the primary school teachers in Norway are female, the view of power seen in feminist writers adds strength to the importance of an awareness of different power relations within the MIABE.[48]

In my readings on the concept of power I have come across explanations ranging from the power *over* as explained by Steven Lukes[49] via "The ability of individuals, or the members of a group, to achieve aims or further the

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[45] Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View*, 2nd ed. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

[46] Øivind Østerud, "Dagens Sitat," *Aftenposten*, 29.august 2003. The "Makt-og demokrati-utredningen" is the Norwegian report on power and democracy.

[47] Sager, *Communicate or Calculate: Planning Theory and Social Science Concepts in a Contingency Perspective*, 289.

[48] In the school year of 2001–2002, 108 000 teachers having an occupation in schools, were registered members of the Union of Education Norway. (Utdanningsforbundet) From these, 78 500 were female. Personal conversation with Tom Axelsen, Lærerlaget, May 30th 2006)

[49] Lukes, *Power: A Radical View*, 12.

interests they hold,"[50] to Clarence Stone who advances a model of "social production" in which power is viewed to be "not control and resistance, but gaining and fusing a capacity to act – *power to*, not *power over*."[51]

The term "power" in the sense of Tore Sager and to which I subscribe, is reserved for exertion by an actor. This follows Jack H. Nagel who argues: "A power relation, actual or potential, is an actual or potential [...] causal relation between the preferences of an actor regarding an outcome and the outcome itself."[52] What then is meant by an outcome? Tore Sager writes:

> An outcome may be the behaviour of individuals, dispositions to behave, attitudes, opinions, beliefs, emotions, nonindividual behaviour, etc. One way or another the preferences of the controller must be made known to the respondent. Communication is therefore at the core of power.[53]

Many have brought forward the idea of a positively loaded approach to the concept of power in planning. This has strongly contributed to eliminate my resistance to the notion in my interpretation of the exertion of power in social relations which include children. Based on the classification of Dennis Wrong, Sager describes four main types of social relations through which power is exerted: (i) force, (ii) manipulation, (iii) persuasion, and (iv) authority.[54] From these, the concept of manipulation in relation to the MIABE and its application is my main concern.

Manipulation

In his article "Manipulative features of planning styles", Sager says that manipulation entails that "individuals are caused to do something they would not otherwise have done, unaware that an act of power has been effected."[55] This, I presume, would apply even stronger to children than to adults. Deliberate withholding useful information makes manipulation a process of distorted communication.

Reflecting on the concept of manipulation in the "Small Ugly Places" project, I find it difficult to make a clear distinction between manipulation and paternalism. Although not belonging to the four main concepts of Sager's power relations, paternalism, in the sense of making decisions on behalf of others for their own good, should still be mentioned.

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[50] Anthony Giddens, *Sociology*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997), 584.

[51] Taylor, *Urban Planning Theory since 1945*, 140.

[52] Jack H. Nagel, *The Descriptive Analysis of Power* (New Haven, MI: Yale University Press, 1975), 29.

[53] Sager, *Communicate or Calculate: Planning Theory and Social Science Concepts in a Contingency Perspective*, 215.

[54] Tore Sager, *Communicative Planning Theory* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1994), 61.

[55] Tore Sager, "Manipulative Features of Planning Styles," *Environment and Planning* 33 (2001): 765.

The element of secrecy is of particular concern to communicative planning as it might conflict with the aim of open and informed debate. Sager does, however, argue that manipulatively withholding information occasionally might improve the social outcome and thus be given preference. The publication of inflation forecasts is mentioned as an example which "might stir the public to act in ways harmful to everybody."[56] Although his example can hardly be related to the MIABE, situations in which withholding information might be for the best of the children should be attended to during the project period. The financial status of the project or a possible cancellation of the arena for the final exhibition would, to me, justify the above mentioned kind of manipulation, particularly for the younger children.

Dennis H. Wrong brings forward an interesting view on the democratic ideal of enhancing autonomy versus manipulation, arguing that a manipulated person is being made less autonomous without realizing it. Although the concept of autonomy does not belong to the four main types of power relations referred to introductory, the view of Wrong should not be left unattended.[57] The National Curriculum of 1997 and the democratic planning both share the idea of enhancing autonomy. In relation to the MIABE, all participating adults should therefore be particularly concerned about the risk of non-realised hampering the autonomous person through manipulation without him realising.

Paternalism

In the traditional role of the planner, Tore Sager argues that paternalism "is founded on his claim to be an expert on how to convert political goals into concrete projects and then implement them." To me, this view of the planner could be shared with that of the teacher as well as of the collaborating adults. An illustration of my argument could be the meeting in the Project Group of the "Small Ugly Places" referred to in my chapter "Tell the Story" in which we tried to convince the children at Tøyen School to find a "better" place to work. Another example could be a note to the teacher at Grünerløkka School in which I suggested that the class should make their registrations in a particular part of the Birkelunden[58]. As manipulation always contains an element of secrecy, the final example might be viewed as manipulation of the children. As I see it they were never told why to make that particular place their area of investigation.

Tore Sager argues that Gerald Dworkin's definition of paternalism "catches the essential combination of power and benevolence." He "understands

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[56] Tore Sager, "Manipulation in Planning: The Social Choice Perspective," *Journal of planning education and research* 19, no. 2 (1999): 125.

[57] Dennis H. Wrong, *Power: Its Forms, Bases and Uses, Key Concepts in the Social Sciences* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979).

[58] The incident took place as part of the "Small Ugly Places" project. Birkelunden is a park in the Grünerløkka area.

paternalism as the interference with a person's liberty of action justified by reasons referring exclusively to the welfare, good, happiness, needs, interests or values of the person being coerced."[59]

As the teacher is the one responsible for the day-to-day work with the children, my recollections mainly relate to teacher–pupil interactions. To me, most of these incidents of manipulation are characterised from the best of intentions and therefore might be closer to paternalism. A typical example would be the teacher interfering with the model building of the children to make the end product of the class look the best possible at the exhibition.[60]

No doubt, the teacher carries heavy responsibilities of many kinds in his relationship with the children and the young. His position related to power might, to me, be viewed as asymmetric in that he should relate to the structural preconditions of the National Curriculum, as well as to the individual child. Additionally, I take it he would be loyal to the claims of the MIABE and thus also to me as a facilitator. I could for example, have manipulated the teacher to assist me in promotion of a successful end product in the shape of high marks in the evaluation process of the initiative.

What actions does my model presuppose in order to achieve the aims given? Communicative action is no doubt a prerequisite and so is instrumental action. The latter, the means - ends approach however, does not form part of my discussion.

The ideal communicative action is not consistent with the secrecy of manipulation as the communicative norms require dialogue where true and sincere arguments reflect mutual empathy and do not need the support of power relations.[61]

Communicative planning as well as the MIABE both rely on people capable of giving reasons for their actions. Sager brings forward a dilemma in planning which in my opinion could be directly applied to the MIABE: how can participants show empathy and be open to the arguments of other actors as required in communicative planning and simultaneously be sceptical and critical enough to avoid being manipulated?

Sherry Arnstein's "Ladder of participation" has already been referred to. Her metaphor has proven particularly useful detecting that there are "significant gradations of citizen participation."[62] Roger Hart, who has adopted her ladder as a base for illustrating children's participation, argues manipulation,

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[59] Sager, *Communicative Planning Theory*, 79.
[60] In my chapter "Tell the Story", more examples are reflected upon. I would argue that most incidents were for the good of the children. However, I did notice a couple of more strategic attempts of manipulation. In one incident in particular, the voice of a teacher or maybe a parent was easy to spot as the written statements of the children carried a message reserved another generation.
[61] Tore Sager, "Manipulative Features of Planning Styles," *Environment and planning* 33, no. 5 (2001).
[62] Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," 217.

decoration, deception and tokenism,[63] are all seen in projects where adults and children collaborate. Hart explains the concept of manipulation to refer to the kind of instances in which "adults consciously use children's voices to carry their own messages."[64] As manipulation has already been accounted for, and neither deception nor decoration has been an issue in any MIABE related initiative, I shall briefly mention his interpretation of tokenism. Roger Hart argues this is a difficult issue to deal with. The reason is that it is often

> carried out by adults who are strongly concerned with giving children a voice but have not begun to think carefully and self-critically about doing so. The result is that they design projects in which children seem to have a voice but in fact have little or no choice about the subject or the style of communicating it, or no time to formulate their own opinions.[65]

In relation to tokenism, Hart particularly draws attention to children's conferences in which it is common to choose articulate and charming children to sit on the panel. Hart does, however, argue that tokenism is not necessarily a consequence, as the children might also be involved at the highest levels of the ladder which are recognised from degrees of participation as opposed to non-participation. In reflecting on children's participation in conferences and a similar situation in part of a MIABE related initiative, I will mention two examples both of which are in the top half of Hart's ladder and are thus recognised as participation. In connection with the presentation of the project report to the municipality at Råholt,[66] some of the children and the young presented their results in a meeting where the Mayor, local politicians, representatives from different municipal divisions, and the public were present. Participation from pupils in presentation of the project was a municipal presupposition.[67]

In the 1997 conference "The Outdoor room of the Children" (Barnas uterom") two former participants of the "Slemdal" project presented their work and the local newspaper correctly wrote that the lecture given was produced by the two young speakers themselves.[68] Hart's mention of allowing articulate and charming children to present a case is no doubt worth considering. Roger Hart is concerned about how the selection of children is handled when it comes to who will be represented at conferences. I join him in his concern for those not particularly articulate or charming. In my opinion it is important also to bear in mind that, as with adults, not all children feel capable of taking on such a task.

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[63] the lowest rungs of his ladder, i.e. non-participation
[64] Hart, *Children's Participation: The Theory and Practice of Involving Young Citizens in Community Development and Environmental Care*, 40.
[65] Ibid., 41.
[66] The "Råholt" project
[67] Letter from the municipal division School and Kindergarten, the Municipality of Eidsvoll, January 15th 1996 to, amongst others, the principals of the participating schools
[68] Celine Irgens Aagaard, "Barnas Uterom," *Akersposten, Ullern avis*, 8.november 1995, 10.

Authority

From Tore Sager's four main types of social relations through which power is exerted, (i) force, (ii) manipulation, (iii) persuasion, and (iv) authority[69], I argued in my introduction to this section that the concept of manipulation would be my main concern. The aspect of force has been briefly mentioned, while persuasion has not been touched. Before summarising the aspect of power related to applications to the MIABE, I shall briefly mention the fourth of Tore Sager's power relations – authority. This, Sager argues, implies "the untested acceptance of another's judgement, whereas persuasion results in the tested acceptance of another's judgement."[70] In everyday life the most common way of exerting authority is probably by issuing commands. Thus, we all remember the teacher's demanding "sit down" as well as his exclamatory "no!" which both illustrate an effective way of blocking any discourse since we did not offer any counter-arguments. I do, however, join Sager in his claiming that "Authority, too, is useful in small doses, but exaggerated authority might lead to immediate subjugation."[71] An example of a small and useful dose could probably be the teacher's authority necessary to facilitate communication.

To be able to pose critical questions, planners need knowledge. To frame attention, power is required. As in so many aspects of planning, the ability to pose critical questions based on knowledge is shared with the MIABE. Assuming the framing of attention requires "power to", another shared presumption could be added.

7.4 SUMMING UP OF THIS SECTION

What about the issue of self criticism related to for instance manipulation in the "Small Ugly Places" project? Regrettably, the issue did not form part of any discussion ahead of initiating any of my different projects, nor does it form part of the MIABE.

As an example on the content of the concept of power I have, in this section, mentioned Steven Lukes and his "power over" which in its full length is defined thus: "A exercises power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to B's interests".[72] This was his definition some thirty years back. Today, he argues that power "is a capacity not the exercise of that capacity (it may never be, and never need to be, exercised); and you can be powerful by satisfying and advancing others' interests."[73] This last part seems, to me, to

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[69] Sager, *Communicative Planning Theory*, 61.

[70] Ibid., 74.

[71] Ibid., 75.

[72] Lukes, *Power: A Radical View*, 12.

[73] Ibid.

be close to the "capacity to act – *power to*, not *power over*" definition offered by Stone as well as the positive approach of Sager. All three authors have contributed to oppose my initial strong scepticism in linking the concept of power to the MIABE. Forester asks what types of mechanisms of power the planner as well as the citizens affected by the planning process are likely to face? Bearing his question in mind, I have tried to offer a MIABE-related answer based on the planner and the citizens changing places with the facilitator (me) and the children.

Where does this leave the MIABE? Reflection on my communicative practice has made me explore my previous reluctance towards the concept of power in relation to children. My new understanding has made me accept that (i) power has many faces, (ii) it appears to be everywhere, and (iii) it is not always easy to spot. Responsibility for its location as well for informing its many faces in MIABE related approaches has already been mentioned.

Looking further into the common features of what should be achieved from planning and the MIABE, I will shed some light on the aspect of personal growth.

7.5 PERSONAL GROWTH

> A planning process may be designed in a particular way because the resulting interaction is considered right or democratic in itself or believed to promote personal growth. These qualities are not stated ends in planning but rather essentially by-products.[74]

From the many shared common features of parts of communicative planning theory and the MIABE, I view promotion of the aspects of integration and "personal growth" to be of particular importance in participatory initiatives with children. The concept of personal growth never formed part of the many MIABE components. However, as explained in the summing up of my previous chapter, the concern for the children's self-esteem has long been on the agenda – aiming at promotion of integration and personal growth. In referring to my follow-up project to the "Small Ugly Places" initiative, The Scottish Arts Council echoed my concern by saying, "Her research suggests that with projects aimed at increasing children's participation, personal growth should be put at the top of the agenda."[75]

The terms self-worth, self-esteem, personal growth and empowering all inevitably seem to accompany reports of such initiatives. Louise Chawla

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[74] Sager, *Communicative Planning Theory*, 28.
[75] Scottish Arts Council and Christina Losito, "Culture, Creativity and Citizenship in Scotland. Case Studies and Discussion," (Edinburgh: 2002), 5. Also reported in my chapters "Tell the Story" and "Leaving the Door Ajar".

agrees that high self-esteem is a quality that should be considered: "It appears to be the closest translation in the psychological literature to the sense of the 'dignity and worth of the human person' that is central to the Charter of the United Nations, the Convention on the Rights of the Child". Additionally, Chawla argues that practices fostering self-esteem and self-efficacy encourage "opportunities for mastery experiences that bring self-satisfaction, realistic standards that allow self-acceptance and verbal encouragement that affirms self-worth."[76]

Affirmation of personal growth is hard to measure. Reflections on the three MIABE related approaches reported in this thesis do, however, indicate that opportunities for mastery of new experience were present. Notes from the children's logbooks as well as conversations with some of the former users of the MIABE reported in the previous chapter might seem to support the assumption that the MIABE encourages personal growth. Nevertheless, I have no evidence that permits me to draw a firm conclusion on this point.

Tore Sager argues that in a planning process, not many are likely to participate with the concept of personal growth when this is pronounced as the main goal. People will usually spend their time and effort to obtain something more concrete, like a better school, improved public communication and more. The argument of Sager no doubt addresses adults, but nevertheless has lent support to my claim also for "something substantial" as an end product of the children's participation. Additionally, Sager argues that personal growth is dependent on "a feeling among the participants of having substantive influence."[77] However, this is not intended to undermine the concept of personal growth when this is a goal as it tacitly was in the "Small Ugly Places" project. John Friedmann and Barclay Hudson argue that "Social learning is to take place in a loosely tied network consisting of small, non-hierarchic, temporary and task-oriented work-groups".[78] The process is judged just as important.

Sager raises an important question on how to assist in emancipation for some without oppressing others. In a Norwegian translation of Paulo Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed", Odd Are Berkaak offers what, for me, is an informative introductory essay in which he refers to Freire's view of the teacher as someone who assists in contributing aid for self reliance by being a facilitator. The educationalist should be more of a driving instructor than a guide. In Freire, education is about offering tools to achieve knowledge. Knowledge is seen to be of no value by itself unless leading to action and power of change. In Freire, methods for learning should not be prescribed or crammed, but should be developed in dialogue and co-operation between the teacher and the one who is to learn. They should both be pupils. The teacher

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[76] Louise Chawla, "Participation as a Means of Self-Development: Self-Efficiacy, Self-Esteem and Other Measures of Personal Change " (paper presented at the Children's Participation in Community Settings. A Research Symposium, University of Oslo 26-28 June, 2000), 5-6.

[77] Sager, *Communicative Planning Theory*, 162.

[78] Friedmann and Hudson, "Knowledge and Action: A Guide to Planning Theory," 7. (1974): 7

should listen to the pupil to gain insight in his "existential situation", while the teacher should offer expertise in systematising the situation. An open and equal dialogue between the parties of the learning process is seen important.[79]

In my participatory initiatives with children reported in this thesis, the role of the MIABE has been to serve as a tool for acquiring the kind of knowledge that would best suit the aims of achieving. As we have seen in the "Small Ugly Places" approach, the MIABE did support action for change, and description of my own role as a facilitator is already reported. The importance of listening to achieve knowledge is in this chapter, addressed in my section on dialogue. The idea of the teacher and the pupils, or rather the "driving instructor" and the pupils as both being students, seems to be close to the concept of mutual learning within planning.

Personal growth and participation are closely connected. Arguments for participation in planning are mainly based on the theory that involvement will serve the participatory lay people more or less indirectly. Tore Sager argues that "Successful participation counteracts apathy, isolation, and feeling of powerlessness. It promotes concord and the development of common values in the local community."[80]

In social connections, growth comprises increased shared understanding, communication and trust.

> The process of expansion can be called 'growth'. Growth in the individual or in the social system then includes two interdependent factors: Expansion of the problem area that can be mastered and increase of integrative capacity. In social relations, growth consists of increase in mutual understanding, communication, and trust; it implies increased mutual security, and increased ability to resolve differences and to tolerate differences that cannot be resolved. Growth may be regarded as an endlessly increasing integration.[81]

In the MIABE, human growth is believed to evolve from an escalation in mastering the various challenges met, as opposed to being proclaimed as the ultimate aim. Communicative co-operation rather than analytic techniques would be the key to arrive at personal growth in planning as well as in the MIABE. A process of expansion resulting from integration is a prerequisite in application to my model. Examples on mastering the problem area were presented in my chapter "The MIABE Revisted".

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[79] Paulo Freire and Odd Are Berkaak, *De Undertryktes Pedagogikk, Bokklubbens Kulturbibliotek* ([Oslo]: De norske bokklubbene, 2003), xi-xii.
[80] Sager, *Communicate or Calculate: Planning Theory and Social Science Concepts in a Contingency Perspective*, 68.
[81] Ibid., 101.

Tore Sager points at a dilemma in John Forester's theory of communicative planning which might also apply directly to application to the MIABE. "The dilemma is that planners propose to educate for emancipation and personal growth through undistorted communication by inviting lay people to participate in a process which serves to mobilize bias." Sager asks how communication can be free while at the same time directed. In planning seen as organising, the aspect of power is argued always to be present in one way or the other – "at least," Sager claims, "in the form of persuasion and authority necessary to shape attention."[82] Examples on different power relations are already presented.

Mark Warren asks the challenging question if participatory democracy can produce better selves. To explain his question, he calls attention to theorists of participatory democracy who

> hold that when individuals participate in democratic processes they are likely to become more tolerant of differences, more attuned to reciprocity, better able to engage in moral discourse and judgement, and more prone to examine their own preferences. These democratic dispositions in turn strengthen democratic processes.[83]

Warren argues that participatory democrats share the view that constitution of self takes place "through interactions with its social context." Taking part in democratic participation is seen to be an important social experience which is likely to provide development of the kind of values and capacity needed "to be a viable, thriving, and vibrant system of government."[84] Working in accordance with the MIABE aims at benefit for the individual as well as for the society. The younger the children, the more the social experiences should benefit their personal growth.

There is of course neither a single nor a simple answer to the question raised by Warren. He does, however, point at an important issue worth considering particularly in an evaluation of a possible achievement of personal growth in participatory initiatives with children. Values like happiness and meaningfulness of individuals are politically conditioned, but not politically achievable. They belong, Mark Warren argues, to the "nonpolitical realms and demand nonpolitical approaches."[85]

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[82] Ibid., 115-16.
[83] Mark E. Warren, "Can Participatory Democracy Produce Better Selves? Psychological Dimensions of Habermas's Discursive Model of Democracy," *Political psychology: Journal of the International Society of Political Psychology* 14, no. 2 (1993): 209.
[84] Ibid.: 210.
[85] Ibid.: 233.

7.6 DEMOCRACY AND THE MIABE

Public planning on local level is at the centre of my interest because it reflects the complexity of the built environment as well as the social actions taking place.

The local environment in today's democracy is the concern of a growing attentiveness. Additionally, discussions about new forms of direct democracy are often seen in different media. The MIABE took place within the framework of a representative democracy. Nevertheless, parts of the participatory process resemble the direct democracy: everyone represented himself, the lines to the decision making institutions were short. As reported in my chapter on "Positioning of the MIABE in a Broader Context", Norwegian children under voting age have a substantial right to participate. Today, this right is mainly seen in the shape of representative democracy in for instance the pupils' council. Participation following the Planning and Building Act is attended to by an adult, the so called Children's representative appointed in each municipality.[86] Also in the above mentioned chapter, the role of the children's representative and the role of children's participation in an extended view of planning, is discussed in the Official Report Norway on improved municipal and regional planning.[87] Formalising these proposals would, in my opinion, represent a challenge as well as an enhancement to a more long term commitment in approaches about children and participation in a wider perspective. As mentioned in my introductory chapter, a responsive government and an accountable bureaucracy would be presupposed for application of the MIABE and also for a possible MIABE Plus.

Could any components deriving from other models of democracy than the representative, possibly make a contribution to the existing system of representation in child-related approaches aiming at participation? If so, what kind of democracy would possibly correspond with the shared participatory and communicative interest in the MIABE and communicative planning?

"I can", Jürgen Habermas writes

> imagine the attempt to arrange a society democratically only as a self-controlled learning process. It is a question of finding arrangements which can ground the presumption that the basic institutions of the society and the basic political decisions would meet with the unforced agreement of all those involved,

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[86] The responsibility for fulfilling of this right rests with the municipalities.

[87] Planlovutvalget, *Bedre Kommunal Og Regional Planlegging Etter Plan- Og Bygningsloven Ii: Planlovutvalgets Utredning Med Lovforslag: Avgitt Til Miljøverndepartementet, Norges Offentlige Utredninger; 2003: 14* (Oslo).

if they could participate, as free and equal, in discursive will-formation. Democratization cannot mean an a priori preference for a specific type of organization, for example, for so-called direct democracy.[88]

Does his argument in favour of a discursive learning process possibly correspond with any models of democracy that could contribute rather than fight the representative or even the so-called "direct" democracy?

The interest in new forms of democracy is of course not a Norwegian phenomenon. Rather on the contrary: the issue is widely debated internationally. In Sweden, the US and the UK, and probably in many other countries, this discussion comprises the idea of a deliberative democracy. Jon Elster argues that the deliberative democracy is having a revival. He particularly insists on the term revival rather than innovation, arguing that "the idea of deliberative democracy and its practical implementation are as old as democracy itself."[89] Klas Roth argues that in Sweden, the idea of deliberative democracy is also discussed in an educational context. Moreover, he states that The Government Commission on Swedish Democracy contains suggestions for a "deliberative democracy as a policy for the new century."[90]

What, then, does a deliberative democracy imply? Jon Elster has offered a most useful explanation to me:

> All agree, I think, that the notion includes collective decision making with the participation of all who will be affected by the decision or their representatives: this is the democratic part. Also, all agree that it includes decision making by means of arguments offered *by* and *to* participants who are committed to the values of rationality and impartiality: this is the deliberative part.[91]

Amy Gutman and Dennis Thompson argue that

> Deliberative democracy is a conception of democratic policies in which decisions and politics are justified in a process of discussion among free and equal citizens or their accountable

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[88] Jürgen Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), 186.
[89] Jon Elster, *Deliberative Democracy, Cambridge Studies in the Theory of Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1.
[90] Klas Roth, *Democracy, Education and Citizenship: Towards a Theory on the Education of Deliberative Democratic Citizens, Studies in Educational Sciences; 32* (Lärarhögskolan i Stockholm. Institutionen för samhälle kultur och lärande, [Stockholm]: HLS Förlag, 2000), 3.
[91] Elster, *Deliberative Democracy*, 8. The governmental report referred to is named "Et uthållig demokrati! Politik för folkstyrelse på 2000-talet". (Sustainable Democracy – policy for Government by the People in the 2000s).

representatives. On our view, a deliberative theory contains a set of principles that prescribe fair terms of cooperation.[92]

How, then, would this correspond to application to the MIABE? To take the arguments of Jon Elster first: Claims for the democratic part are looked after as collective decisions from "all affected" take place. The decision-making process is recognised from arguments offered to and by the participants. Decisions are justified in a process of discussion among free and equal citizens within a framework of fair terms of cooperation as presumed in Gutman and Thompson.

Although Gutman and Thompson as well as Elster seemingly present a shared view on what deliberative democracy implies, the intentions with respect to what counts as deliberation seem to diverge widely in other contributions.

What about the above mentioned challenging suggestion of Habermas in favour of a discursive learning process? James D. Fearon, in elaborating upon the issue on deliberation as discussion, looks into what good reasons a group of people might have for discussing matters before making some collective decision. To me, his idea of "discussion" as a sort of exercise programme, seems to correspond well with the MIABE as well as with the idea of Jürgen Habermas. Fearon writes:

> One could argue for discussion rather than just voting on the grounds that discussion has good effects on the people who participate in it, independent of any effect it has on the quality of the decisions reached or their implementation. In this view, discussion or "deliberation" is seen as a sort of *exercise program* for developing human or civic virtues.[93]

The ideal of deliberation judged as a "process" by Gutman and Thompson and the "exercise program" of James D. Fearon, both correspond to the idea of Jürgen Habermas.

What parts of deliberative democracy could possibly be "transferred" to fit the existing representative democracy without major changes and thus application to the MIABE? To me, it would most likely be the communicative part of the "deliberation" that might provide my model as well as the MIABE Plus with some guidelines for future approaches. The idea of James D. Fearon about discussing matters before making some collective decision would correspond to the phase in a participation process prepared for in the MIABE.

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[92] Amy Gutman and Dennis Thompson, "Why Deliberative Democracy Is Different," *Social philosophy and policy*, no. 17 (1999): 161.

[93] James D. Fearon, "Deliberation as Discussion," in *Deliberative Democracy*, ed. Jon Elster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 58-59.

"But," Fearon argues:

> *by itself* this justification for discussion is rather backhanded. It would be strange to discuss matters purely for the sake of improving ourselves morally and intellectually if we had no expectation that discussion would have any positive effect on the quality of the collective choice.[94]

In my opinion, the children participating in my three initiatives reported were too young to possibly have any expectations relating to the quality of their collective choice. Today some of the children do, however, possess a vocabulary and a skill in reflection which enabled this topic to form part of our conversations reported in my chapter "The MIABE Revisited".

Communicative planning is deliberative

What then are the characteristics of communicative planning?[95] In communicative planning, contribution to stimulating and informing public dialogue about the physical environment in the local neighbourhood are seen as important. Additionally, as argued by Sager, "The ideas of dialogue as the conceptual bedrock of direct democracy have found their way into planning theory."

> Humanist planners stress that planning should not be carried out as a top-down activity within a hierarchical setting. Face-to-face contact with the people directly affected should be central in local planning. Dialogue and mutual learning are key concepts, as are self-governed groups and personal knowledge. The social-pedagogic function of participatory planning is underlined. Social learning is to take place in a loosely tied network consisting of small, non-hierarchic, temporary, and task-oriented work-groups. [...] It affects the participants' competence and self-esteem, their ability for self-government, their values and behaviour, and their capacity for personal growth in constructive co-operation with equals.[96]

The shared components of mutual learning, personal knowledge, and personal growth, respectively, have already been presented. As reported in my chapter "Tell the Story" the MIABE is based on self-elected groups of three to five children forming loosely tied networks open to, for instance, a circulation of leadership. Its temporality is taken care of as the group

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[94] Ibid., 59.
[95] The characteristics mentioned comprise parts of the theory of communicative planning, not the full scope.
[96] Sager, *Communicate or Calculate: Planning Theory and Social Science Concepts in a Contingency Perspective*, 64.

dissolves when the project comes to end, and the capacity for personal growth is looked after by the teacher to maintain constructive co-operation.

The MIABE is directed towards "bottom-up" activity, a kind of direct democracy on the local level.[97] The Norwegian model of democracy is, on all levels, from election to the Parliament (Storting) to the participation of pupils' council in school, based on representation.

As already reported, the democratic model closest to communicative planning, would be the deliberative. In a deliberate democracy, communication and dialogue play an even more important role than in a direct democracy. Examples on the social-pedagogic function of participatory planning and its link to the MIABE were illustrated in my chapter "The MIABE Revisited".

7.7 STIMULATING AND INFORMING PUBLIC DIALOGUE

How does the MIABE provide stimulation and information of public dialogue about the physical environment in the local neighbourhood? Increased awareness of the built environment in the shape of public places in the children's neighbourhood constitutes the initial aim of my model.

The importance of the details of these public places is already thrown light on in my chapter "The MIABE". From my seven reasons already given for the preference of the public places, number (iii) and (iv) comprise the base for enhancement of public dialogue. The former reads: These places form part of the life-world of the children, and consequently act as an "equaliser" in that even before entering the school, the children have walked through them lots of times. The children have probably also played there, walked their dog, sat on the benches, used or not used the litter bins, the phone booth and more. This means they have some kind of user experience with the details of the built environment. The latter reads: The details of the public space comprise the point of departure for the children's acquiring an extended vocabulary to enhance communication.

To stimulate dialogue with the different municipal departments as well as to assist in the children's understanding of everyday public dialogue, such as reading the newspaper or watching the TV, some concepts linked to the vocabulary of public administration form an additional part.

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[97] In the "Small Ugly Places" project, local level refers to the level of the Oslo municipality, not the level of the urban district. The latter is, however, referred to a couple of times as one teacher encouraged her class to address some enquiries locally. Although geographically close to each other, the schools belonged to different urban districts.

In Susan Leigh Star objects holding the function of an "equaliser" are named "boundary objects" These object are defined to include

> all of this – stuff and things, tools, artifacts and techniques, and ideas, stories and memories – objects that are treated as consequential by community members. They are used in the service of an action and mediate it in some way. Something actually becomes an object only in the context of action and use; it then becomes as well something that has force to mediate subsequent action.[98]

I have adopted her term as well as her explanation in accounting for the importance of the details of the built environment as a tool for understanding across all age groups and disciplines.[99] Boundary objects are seen to be objects about which different groups and different actors have different opinions, but still manage to agree on. The objects could be concrete or abstract. I would argue that the more specific the name of the object, the easier it is to come to an understanding of what the discourse is all about, and finally come to an agreement of what one is talking about so that decisions could follow – like writing a letter reporting wrecked signposts.

To me, indications on stimulation of public dialogue seem to emerge in the children from just being busily occupied with registration in "their" small "ugly" place. The children's impressions, thoughts and ideas are, in different ways, communicated to the other members of their working group, to their teacher, to me, and as reported in my chapter "Tell the Story", also to the authorities.

Choosing to focus on the "ugly" rather than the aesthetically well designed places, an idea brought forward by the municipal project leader, probably was crucial to the children's interest in the project. The need for improvements was easy to spot and encouraged the wish of the children to communicate their impressions to others.

Jorunn Christoffersen, the municipal project leader, being frank in identifying the ugly places contributed to recognition and enthusiasm from everyone involved. To our surprise, the abbreviation "de små stygge stedene"(the "Small Ugly Places") proved to be easy to pronounce and easy to remember also in English speaking countries. "I think", Lee Copeland argues, "it would be easy for most of us here in this room to agree on something ugly but we might not at all agree on what is beautiful."[100] To me, experience from the "Small Ugly Places" project indicate that the municipal project leader as well as Copeland were right in their assumptions.

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[98] Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star, *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences, Inside Technology* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), 298.
[99] adults vs. children
[100] Lee Copeland, "Presentation" (paper presented at the The International Conference for Built Environment Education in Schools 13-15 April, Cambridge UK, 1992), 30.

Stimulation and information about the physical environment in the local neighbourhood of the school run parallel with that of dialogue, the former being a prerequisite to the latter and vice versa. How communication in its widest sense, inclusive of dialogue is practically performed, is already reported in my chapter "Tell the Story". Lisbeth Birgersson agues communication in its broadest sense to comprise: "everything from legislative agreements to what the individual is able to experience with all senses and as a part of a cultural community."[101] Bengt Molander explains the term dialogue as a bedrock for all human existence and understanding. It means, however, not only understanding between two (or more) people, but also understanding texts, pieces of art and other cultural tasks carrying meaning.[102] In my section on dialogue in this chapter, I shall return to the two concepts of communication and dialogue respectively.

Some children seem to dislike writing, yet they soon forgot that eagerly taking notes in the logbook in the small ugly place of the local neighbourhood had anything to do with writing. The combination of communicating their observations to other members of the group and the informal taking of notes seem to me to take the distress off the writing. Taking photos seems to be an additional suitable tool in preparing for dialogue, as does visual impressions. Preparations for meetings with the press to report their own experience from the project work, proved a useful way of introducing the children to public dialogue with adults. Without exception, such meetings seem to have encouraged an escalation of the children's confidence in mastering the new vocabulary. Some examples about how the children expressed themselves might illustrate my argument: "This is what we call visual pollution, look at all the different signs, the packed litter bins and numerous traffic signs put up on just one pole." "The flower kiosk looks more like a barrack; it is to "boxy". It would have looked much better if it had been designed to fit in with the vicarage and the red house in the background."[103] "Outside the Folk Museum: We do not approve of the plot next to the car park being so messy. [...] To make it look better, we need someone who can remove the tagging."[104] The above expressions were given by youngsters aged 14 and children aged 9, respectively. In my opinion, these examples indicate that an increased awareness of the built environment also seems to enhance communication. Additionally, possessing these qualifications seems to be followed by preferences for change or refurbishment in the public place.[105] The children's view of mastering an

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[101] Lisbeth Birgersson, "In Touch with Place," *Nordisk Arkitekturforskning. Nordic Journal of Architectural Research*, no. 4 (2001): 79.
[102] Bengt Molander, *Kunskap I Handling*, 2. omarb. uppl. ed. (Göteborg: Daidalos, 1996).
[103] Quotations from the children participating in the "Slemdal"project"
[104] Kari Bjørka Hodneland and Jorunn Christoffersen, "Forskjønnelsen Av De Små, Stygge Stedene. Det Offentlige Uterom Som Pedagogisk Verktøy," ([Oslo]: Oslo kommune, 1998).
[105] These actions aiming at preparation for dialogue, have, in my opinion, some shared characteristics with the "speech acts" of Forester already referred to. In the "Small Ugly Places" project presentation of information also applies to preparing of an exhibition, the suggestion of new ideas, and the commenting upon proposals for action.

extended vocabulary and its possible implications to feel more secure in conversations with professionals were reported in the chapter "The MIABE Revisited".

The concept of questioning and shaping attention is a core issue for John Forester.[106] In relation to the MIABE, his concept strongly contributes as a tool well suited for stimulating dialogue. The activity of questioning, Forester argues,

> does not call for just any answers, any facts, or any responses. Our questions call for relevant and significant replies, thus calling forth concern and care. [...] Unlike other communicative acts such as making statements, for example, questioning directly calls forth the action of another person.[107]

In communication with Tore Sager, John Forester explains the background of the concept of questioning. We learn that the importance of asking critical questions is adopted from Paulo Freire, who begins his pedagogy by making the oppressed reflect upon the oppression and its motives. Critical questions are central to the reflection as well as the process of consciousness-raising, as is the case in application to the MIABE.[108]

The concept of dialogue and thus communication deriving from an extended vocabulary based in the details of the built environment are core elements of the MIABE. Before embarking on a discussion on this matter, I would, however, like to pay attention to an important, but rarely mentioned part of dialogue: the listening. An often used expression in John Forester is to "listen attentively."[109] What does this attentiveness to listening actually comprise? As briefly mentioned in my chapter "The Research Design", Forester has arrived at five components which he argues deserve our attention.

Number one is related to the importance of "being attentive – demonstrating an attitude of caring involvement, inquiry and wonder." From these qualities, fostering mutuality and dialogue might occur. Number two is about the importance of questioning, the third is about assessing "fundamental ambiguities of intentions and obligations". Number four is about "bringing speakers back to our shared language and the rules of its ordinary use." And number five is about listening seen as an act of respect.[110]

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[106] As already reported in relation to John Forester's concept of questioning, a wider interpretation than that of Forester's is used by the MIABE participants.

[107] John Forester, *Critical Theory, Public Policy, and Planning Practice: Toward a Critical Pragmatism, Suny Series in Political Theory Contemporary Issues* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1993), 51. In my chapter "The MIABE Revisited" many examples proving his argument are seen.

[108] Sager, "Planning Theory." The concept of attention- organising in Forester is, Sager writes, not intended or consciously adopted from others. Freire, representing a "left Sokratic" pedagogy based on dialogue, is, according to Sager, easy to combine with communicative planning.

[109] Forester, *Planning in the Face of Power*, 111. This is an expression borrowed from John Friedmann who in his turn seems to have quoted Karl Barth, originally claiming that 'You and I must speak with one another, must listen attentively to one another'.

[110] Ibid., 111-12.

Reflecting on working in accordance with the MIABE, attentiveness and caring, as required in Forester's first component, are qualities that teachers acquire as part of their pedagogical training. I believe Eileen Adams and Sue Ingham are right in arguing that "Teachers tend to take their own professional skills for granted – how they address children and young people, how to stimulate and hold their interest" and also how they seem to sense confusion.[111] What about the children and the young? Would they possibly benefit from an introduction to the concept of listening? Experience from the Norwegian initiative on "Philosophical Conversations with Children" (age 12-16) might be worth considering as a possibly extended potential of the MIABE. The philosophical conversations aim at informing and participating in philosophical conversations. The idea behind the initiative is to prepare children and the young to think, reflect and argue about central problems and ideas linked to knowledge, values and norms. Philosophical conversations have the aim of encouraging the independent thoughts of an individual and to stimulate participants to listen to each other. It is not about the capability to speak the most, but to find the best reason arrived at with others.[112]

Forester's second component is about the above mentioned questioning. Asking good questions might, he argues, "reveal and clarify unspoken significances, values, and concerns", which is a time consuming enterprise. The intentions behind the "philosophical conversations", once again seem to fit in with the purpose of Forester's intentions. Asking good questions should, I believe, be a concern of the children as well as of the adults.

In relation to his third component, Forester argues that: "By attending to the person and the situation of the speaker as well as to the words heard, when we listen we explore intended and contextual meaning as well as literal meaning."[113] "We hear with our ears, but we listen," he argues, "with our eyes as well as with our ears." Could this argument of Forester possibly be cited in support of my own argument of learning to see better in the sense of achieving knowledge? From John Forester's following quotation, the answer would be close to a yes: "There is," he argues, "more to seeing than meets our eyeball."[114]

The already mentioned fourth and fifth of Forester's components are both seen as applicable first and foremost to personal relationships. Viewing a possible application of these components related to the above mentioned philosophical conversations might be an interesting issue of investigation. This would, however, strongly exceed the purpose of my thesis.

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[111] Eileen Adams and Sue Ingham, *Changing Places. Children's Participation in Environmental Planning*, (London: Children's Society, 1998), 124.
[112] Beate Børresen and Bo Malmhester, *La Barna Filosofere: Den Filosofiske Samtale I Skolen* (Kristiansand: Høyskoleforl., 2003).and personal conversation with Beate Børresen
[113] Forester, *Planning in the Face of Power*, 111-12.
[114] Ibid., 110.

7.8 COMMUNICATION AND DIALOGUE

Light has already been shed on the diverging explanations of the concept of planning, as well as of participation. Dialogue is another concept to which many examinations are produced. D. Bohm, and F. D. Peat view dialogue to be "the free flow of meaning between communicating parties." According to Raine Mäntizalo, Bohm and Peat also make a distinction between "*dialogue* and *discussion* as the two basic forms of discourse."[115]

Lately, dialogue seem to have become a key concept in Norwegian politics and thus also in the media. Few have, however, tried to explain what this entails. However, The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jonas Gahr Støre, is an exception and treats "dialogue" as being a method to handle conflicts of interest and culture. This method, learned in Harvard Law School in the 1980s is his point of departure: "it is about maximising one's own interest by incorporating the point of view of the opponent." Gahr Støre argues that he always wants to get "inside" his opponent – to the core.[116]

Tore Sager argues that emphasis should be placed on a number of different aspects when defining the concept of communication such as, distinguishing between the transmission view and the ritual view, which, he argues, is deep rooted as well as inspired by John Dewey.[117]

> Two crucial aspects of the transmission view are 1) reduction of uncertainty – the hypothesized basic desire which leads to a search for information in the interest of adjustment, and 2) power – communication viewed as a means of gaining influence. The ritual view accentuates mutual understanding and commonality – aiming at an increase of what is shared or held in common.[118]

In my understanding the latter view would be the one corresponding to the MIABE which also aims at increasing what is shared or held in common, as well as accentuating mutual understanding. As applied to my model, what is shared and held in common would for example, be the interest in the public places.

Sager also draws an informative line between the concept of community which, like in application to the MIABE, refers to locality, and the concept of

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[115] Raine Mäntysalo, "Dilemmas in Critical Planning Theory," in *Aesop Yearbook*, ed. Alan Reeve (Oxford Brookes University, Department of Planning, 2003), 48-49.

[116] Kjetil S. Østli, "Støres Metode," *A-magasinet*, 24.02. 2006, 4.

[117] John Dewey (1859-1952) was an American philosopher, psychologist, and educational reformer.

[118] Sager, *Communicate or Calculate: Planning Theory and Social Science Concepts in a Contingency Perspective*, 54.

communication. Thus, we have to share expressions and imaginations with others to be capable of expressing ourselves as well as to understand what others want to share with us. Maybe a logbook note already referred to in my previous chapter could serve as an example of sharing expressions with others? Having spent the day out, making sketches of the local places a girl in Grünerløkka School wrote: "The summer is close. There are three men sitting in the park. It is nice there – plenty of vegetation and it is Olaf Ryes Place. It is rather warm in the picture."

To further underpin his argument, Sager refers to M. Taylor who writes of the temptation to treat communication "as a second universal characteristic of community – to say that between the members of a community there is communication and that the boundaries of a community are marked by a relative decline in the frequency of communication." On dialogue, Tore Sager argues its use in designation of communication is "aiming at mutual understanding and agreement in an ideal speech situation whether there are two or more interlocutors."[119] Communicative action takes place when the four validity claims of Jürgen Habermas are met:

> The speaker must choose a comprehensible [verständlich] expression so that speaker and hearer can understand one another. The speaker must have the intention of communicating a true [wahr] proposition (or a propositional content, the existential presuppositions of which are satisfied) so that the hearer can share the knowledge of the speaker. The speaker must want to express his intentions truthfully [*wahrhaftig*] so that the hearer can believe the utterance of the speaker (can trust him). Finally, the speaker must choose an utterance that is right [*richtig*] so that the hearer can accept the utterance and speaker and hearer can agree with one another in the utterance with respect to a recognized normative background. Moreover, communicative action can continue undisturbed only as long as participants suppose that the validity claims they reciprocally raise are justified.[120]

As opposed to the above referred Habermasian theoretical claims of validity, John Forester has given life to the claims in departing from the lifeworld of most people;

> Habermas suggests that speakers seeking mutual understanding – even if they only ask for the salt at the dinner table – ordinarily make four pragmatic claims upon their listeners, claims: (1) to the truth of what's referred to (there *is* salt on the table to be passed); (2) to the legitimacy of the norms invoked in the context (having prefaced my request, for example, with

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[119] Ibid., 54, 161, 57.
[120] Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, 2-3.

'please', I am now entitled as a full participant at the dinner table, to receive the salt); (3) to the trustworthy expression of self by the speaker (no, I'm not kidding); and (4) to the meaningful character of the words, gestures, or tokens used (perhaps a whispered "please" and a point of a finger toward the salt so that another conversation will not be interrupted).[121]

Tore Sager's interpretation of the Habermasian concept of dialogue is applied to planning. Sager writes:

> The ideal is an open and unconstrained communication among planners, politicians, and populace. In the terms of Jürgen Habermas, dialogue requires that each party in the conversation has equal possibility to set forth arguments and be listened to. Dialogue is achieved in the ideal speech situation when no power relations interfere with the interlocutors' aim for mutual understanding. In practice the communication will not be without distortions, because of external political and psychological constraints on the participants. Habermas's concept of dialogue is nevertheless important as a yardstick against which actual discourses can be judged.[122]

Would the Habermasian claims for communicative action as interpreted by Sager possibly be met with in the MIABE? Communication among the children and the adults involved meet the claim for being open and unconstrained. All children (and adults) have equal opportunities to set forth arguments and be listened to. From reflection on my practice with the three MIABE initiatives reported in this thesis, the power relations possibly interfering with the aim of mutual understanding are hard to identify. The shades of power to be particularly considered in relation to participation approaches with children are already presented in this chapter under the section on power.

Within communicative planning, which draws on the Habermasian theory of communicative action, the claim for undistorted communication has been widely debated. John Forester claims that: "the widely misunderstood notion of the 'ideal speech situation' plays almost no role [...]. It plays almost no significant role – widespread assumptions in the secondary literature notwithstanding – in Habermas's sociology either."

> It is the idea of the vulnerable precariousness of our speaking and acting together, and not the assumption of the holiness of ideal speech, that animates Habermas's fresh and strikingly fertile analysis of the practical-rhetorical structure of communicative action – an analysis that can in turn animate a

[121] Forester, *Critical Theory, Public Policy, and Planning Practice: Toward a Critical Pragmatism*, 8.
[122] Sager, *Communicative Planning Theory*, 200-01.

powerful, critical sociology of public policy, administration, and planning practice.[123]

Raine Mäntysalo, in his criticism of the Habermas concept of dialogue, reasoned the lack of an aspect of creativity:

> In Habermasian dialogue the lifeworld exists as a stable horizon, in reference to which societal ends are rationally derived in an undominated argumentation process. The concept does not reach the *changing* of the lifeworld. [...] As Forester comments: Habermas defines explicitly the process of lifeworld reproduction, but "[h]e does little, though, sociologically, to assess *how* these processes work, how worldviews, allegiances, identities are elaborated, routinized, established, or altered.[124]

Forester has addressed the difficulty of applying the work of Habermas directly, by designing his own concept: designing as making sense together. Examples on Forester's approach are given in the final part of this chapter.

One of the ideas behind the MIABE component of group work is production of approximate agreement for provision of a platform enhancing further investigations and practical action. In most cases, this is also how it works in practice. Initiatives with children seem to be much easier to bring in accordance with ideals of communicative planning than is the case with adults. At least two reasons why this is so are: (i) participation in planning is a serious and important social and legal matter, while the MIABE is a non-committed model of practical exercise for children below voting age; (ii) the school is the base for the process of participation and thus a permanent arena for dialogue provides for mutual learning. The MIABE precondition in favour of allowing all children to take part in a participatory process is looked after in that the school system in Norway is compulsory.

Judith Innes and David E. Booher argue that the "consensus building processes are not only about producing agreements and plans but also about experimentation, learning, change, and building shared meaning."[125] Although many different kinds of activities might be regarded consensus building, what they refer to, is "an array of practices in which stakeholders, selected to represent different interests, come together for a face-to-face, long term dialogue to address a policy issue of common concern. Typically they have a facilitator."[126] Klas Roth argues that "Consensus concerning

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[123] Forester, *Critical Theory, Public Policy, and Planning Practice: Toward a Critical Pragmatism*, p x.
[124] Mäntysalo, "Dilemmas in Critical Planning Theory," 50.
[125] Judith Eleanor Innes and David E. Booher, "Concensun Building and Complex Adaptive Systems - a Framework for Evaluating Collaborative Planning," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 65, no. 4 (1999): 412.
[126] Ibid.

universality does not necessarily relate to outcome but to the presuppositions for the procedure aiming at reaching understanding."[127]

Consensus is not an outspoken aim in the MIABE. However, the working process of my model seems to share some of the activities essential in the minds of Innes and Booher: Through working in groups, different interests are presented to the class. The argument for long term dialogue is taken care of in my model which usually extends over a school year. The children, therefore, are allowed to proceed in their own speed in addressing a policy issue of common concern. The role of the facilitator would usually be looked after by the teacher as the facilitator attends the classes on a non-permanent base. Klas Roth's argument about consensus judged more by the procedure of a communicative process than its outcome, would be an argument worth considering in a possible future MIABE Plus. In my opinion, his argument also seems to coincide with James Fearon's interpretation of a deliberative democracy viewed as "a sort of *exercise program* for developing human or civic virtues."[128]

Communication with the authorities

John Forester argues bureaucracy is based on impersonal relations, while critical pragmatism is built on dialogue.[129] Additionally, he argues that "By ignoring the effects of bureaucratic language, planning organizations may perpetuate the exclusion of all but those who already 'know the language'."[130] Healey writes of "an inclusionary argumentative approach", referring to a kind of common language that would "make a difference by targeting specifically the vocabulary of legal and administrative discourse."[131]

As already mentioned, stimulating the ability to communicate with authorities is of vital importance within the MIABE. The children are taught how to properly address bureaucrats, planners, journalists and others, oral as well as written, to make sure that their case is being seriously taken into consideration. In short, a vocabulary deriving from the built environment as well as from public administration is a core component for the kind of participation aimed at in my model. I would argue that achievement of a vocabulary equivalent also to that of the authorities represents an important prerequisite to mutual understanding. Resulting from this, an official letter will not be produced until after dialogue within the group, aiming at approximate consensus. Per Mollerup, in referring to official letters, claims

[127] Roth, *Democracy, Education and Citizenship: Towards a Theory on the Education of Deliberative Democratic Citizens*, 28.
[128] Fearon, "Deliberation as Discussion," 59.
[129] Sager, "Planning Theory."
[130] John Forester, "Critical Theory and Planning Practice," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 46, no. 3 (1980): 281.
[131] Patsy Healey, *Collaborative Planning: Shaping Places in Fragmented Societies*, 2nd ed., *Planning, Environment, Cities* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 305.

that "Many feel the public sector is an impersonal entity", in wording as well as in graphic design.[132] Obtaining an extended vocabulary for the children is aimed at interdisciplinary as well as intergenerational communication. Different disciplines hold different codes, so do different groups of children.

John Forester speaks of jargon, which of course might be difficult to understand whether it is being used amongst adults or children: "the more jargon in planning, the less public understanding, accessibility, and possibility of meaningful action or participation."[133] This certainly also applies to children whose language is filled with jargon. In my view, jargon like the language of professionals, might be a way of self-protection within groups, trying to, as Forester suggests, decrease accessibility. A possible prevention of decreased accessibility is also the concern of the National Curriculum of 1997 in which it is argued that without frames of reference it becomes harder for ordinary members of the public society, the non-specialists, to take part in decisions which deeply influence their lives. "The more specialised and technical our culture grows, the more difficult it becomes to communicate across disciplinary boundaries."[134] Education plays a main role in passing on this common background information. Such knowledge is viewed as part of the development process to which everyone should be familiar if society is to remain democratic. The MIABE component of acquiring an extended vocabulary deriving from the built environment as well as from public administration, might, hopefully serve as a small contribution to assist in achieving these aims. In my chapter "The MIABE", I argued that the history of planning would be too comprehensive and of limited value to the main objectives of my thesis. However, advocacy planning should be mentioned as my model and this kind of planning, both share an interest in assisting groups of clients to formulate their aims and arguments in a style of language that would have impact on politicians and bureaucrats.

Referring to the project "The Cruddas Park" in Newcastle, Suzanne Speak is also concerned about developing a way to make the children's voices heard by local government. Writing letters to local councillors to report their concerns for the local neighbourhood and its management has been facilitated as part of working within the national curriculum. The children did, she argues, express "in writing and pictures their desires and concern for their neighbourhood and its management."[135]

Liv Merete Nielsen points at the gap seen between democratic intentions and practice in matters of true participation. Her main concern is the call for a more knowledgeable population in the field of visual representation. To

[132] Per Mollerup, *Godt Nok Er Ikke Nok: Betragtninger Om Offentlig Design* (Copenhagen: Dansk Design Center, 1992), 98.
[133] Forester, *Critical Theory, Public Policy, and Planning Practice: Toward a Critical Pragmatism*, 26.
[134] Kirke- utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet, *Læreplanverket for Den 10-Årige Grunnskolen* ([Oslo]: Nasjonalt læremiddelsenter, 1996), 38.
[135] Speak, "Children in Urban Regeneration: Foundations for Sustainable Participation," 37.

possibly assist in achieving aims, Nielsen encourages improving a constructive dialogue so that lay people and the decision makers might contribute to innovation and participation in a more democratic process.[136] Her arguments might well be shared with a core MIABE component; the importance of a shared vocabulary to enhance informed dialogue.

How to address oneself to the authorities by composition of a formal letter is already reported in my chapter "Tell the Story". In that chapter I also told about the group of boys who, in their initial attempts of mastering composition of that type of letters, briefly informed of their registrations collected, despite the fact that "it was raining an awful lot". From noticing, discussing, and asking questions about what should be done, the different groups of children seem to get more concerned about the issue at stake.

(i) Another group of children wrote "We have had a photograph taken of the statue of Anna Sethne. We cut this [the photo] out and placed lots of flowers around the base, flowers that we thought she would have liked. We believe that this [the photo] looked much better than having the statue next to a filthy sandpit [as is the case today]. We also took some photos of ugly signs which we want to look nice." Some of the conversations reported in my chapter "The MIABE Revisited" took place in the neighbourhood area of Sagene School. Waiting outside I noticed, to my great pleasure, that the statue of the school founder is now better placed than it was 8 years ago.

(ii) "Municipality of Oslo, Technical Division. The classes 3C and 4C have investigated into the local environment and found some small ugly places. We have also designed new benches, litter bins and bus shelters. We need help from the Municipality to further develop our ideas. We appreciate your kind help." The growing capability of writing formal letters by making use of a vocabulary approximately shared with the receiver, makes the children feel they are on a kind of equal footing with the grown ups. "We did, in a way, learn to act a bit more like an adult [...] Instead of just standing there, explaining things kind of confused."[137] In the "Small Ugly Places" project it was seen important to help the children understand the wording of a letter received from the authorities such as the following letter from the Oslo Water and Sewerage Authority (OVA): "Concerning the "Embellishment of the Small Ugly Places; [...]: The "OVA" is responsible for clearing up of litter in the rivers, the streams and their nearby banks. This clearing up forms part of a continuing process. However, we are grateful to receive enquiries from schoolchildren and the public as such, in particularly messy areas. We appreciate your information about the ruined signs and maps as these are also part of our field of responsibility. Unfortunately they are exposed to tagging, and thus have to be renewed at regular intervals."[138] Additionally, an

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[136] Liv Merete Nielsen, "Design, Innovasjon Og Demokrati - Om Framveksten Av Forskernettverket *Design Dialog*," in *DesignDialog: designforskning i et demokratisk perspektiv. HiO-rapport; 2004 nr 22*, ed. Liv Merete Nielsen (Oslo: Høgskolen i Oslo, Avdeling for estetiske fag, 2004).

[137] Malin, in conversation with me, 2005. Our conversation form part of my chapter, "The MIABE Revisited."

[138] Letter from to OVA to the Municipality of July 24th 1997.

enclosed list informed the children how their registrations had been treated. The OVA wished the children all the best in their future project work. As mentioned in the chapter "Tell the Story", it is worth noticing that this letter was not sent to the municipal project only, but was also forwarded directly to the three schools engaged in registrations in this particular area. As I was not present in class when the letter arrived, I do not know to what extent the teacher had to explain its content.

Stimulation of responsibility and interest in the public place

Both planning and the MIABE are seen to stimulate responsibility and the interest in the public place. In my model, interest in the public place does emerge following an introductory lecture followed by the choosing of the small "ugly" place in which the process of registration takes place. As already mentioned, making the children work in places in need of considerable refurbishment, seems to encourage their critical senses, as well as spurring the wish for alternative solutions. These ideas for change are usually seen in suggestions to new design or the wish for something practical to be done, like for example the ideas for new signs on the school building and the painting of the wall of posters referred to in my chapter "Tell the Story". Getting to know their local neighbourhood and its identity also seem to stimulate the children's pride of place and thus possibly also a sense of responsibility for the public places.[139] Without exception, it comes as a surprise to the children that they, too, are entitled to a right to the public places. The increased awareness followed by the strong criticism serves as a means to help elucidate the preferences in the built environment. What do we want to keep, what do we want to get rid of, get more of, get repaired and so forth.

As reported in the chapter "The MIABE", the Action Programme of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs of 1992 was also concerned about the necessity of a revitalising of the historic concept of "public", particularly "related to the physical changes and the vulgarity of our urban spaces and common areas throughout the last decades."[140] The action programme also argues that standardising and extensive privatisation have resulted in the public space becoming "a kind of non-place."[141] I would also like to draw attention to the importance of management of the public spaces being the responsibility of the municipality. This, I argue, simplifies questions about where to seek help or answers to queries and where to direct complaints. Private enterprises might, however, become a threat. In a newspaper article with the challenging title: "Private might join in refurbishment of the public space" Alf G. Andersen and Per Jæger argue that private estate owners get higher profit

[139] Hodneland and Christoffersen, "Forskjønnelsen Av De Små, Stygge Stedene. Det Offentlige Uterom Som Pedagogisk Verktøy."
[140] Kulturdepartementet, "Omgivelser Som Kultur. Handlingsprogram for Estetisk Kvalitet I Offentlig Miljø," (Oslo: Rapport fra en arbeidsgruppe, 1992), 10.
[141] Ibid.

from their estates if the environment is upgraded. A joint venture between public authorities and private owners has, they write, been established in many countries, inclusive of Norway. Andersen and Jæger argue that the municipality and the private enterprises share the cost when faced with the good results. In their view, an important element is that an arrangement like this has to be privately established, as well as run.[142] What does this new trend imply to democracy in general and to initiatives like the "Small Ugly Places" in particular? I shall not embark on a discussion on this matter – just ask if a development in this direction implies that the citizens might be facing the possibility of the public places becoming privately owned, even without the public being properly informed in advance.

The MIABE and the National Curriculum of 1997, like planning and the MIABE share some important features. One is language. The National Curriculum notes that language is being taught interactively through activities between people. Learning a language is amongst the most social of all human phenomena. We therefore have to share expressions and imaginations with others to become capable of expressing ourselves as well as to understand what they want to share with us. As seen in the many examples already given from a MIABE in context, a main issue has been exactly that; to share expressions with others, aiming at mutual understanding. Although seen as a shared component to the reason for planning, benefits for society might make the aim of the MIABE and its application sound more pretentious than is the case. There are, however some small stories illustrating the issue of the benefit for society as recognised in the concern of certain children.

A growing sense of responsibility is seen at an early stage in most groups. The children's registration of an overwhelmingly increase in graffiti, not only in public places, but even on blocks of flats, is where I have most frequently seen the beginning of their despise of vandalism. However, this awareness gradually seems to lead to a kind of understanding that the public place is also the responsibility of the public, inclusive of children and the young.

As reported in my chapter "Tell the Story", two boys from Sagene School were particularly concerned about graffiti. In a letter to the Oslo Municipality they wrote; "There is a lot of tagging in the streets, Toftesgate and Biermannsgate, Thv. Meyers gate, Sannergata and on the Ringnes Brewery. Suggestion no1: it would be nice if you could do something about it, like for instance remove it, or put up some walls on which they might be tagging, and twice a year it is painted and thus the municipality does not have to spend a lot of money removing it. [Suggestion] number 2; prohibit sale of spray cans, Number 3; [on] tagging in trams and tubes: SUGGESTION: we think there is a lot of tagging on trams. We think surveillance cameras should be installed in trams [because] that is much cheaper, too. Tagging removal is expensive.

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[142] Per Jæger and Alf G. Andersen, "Private Kan Bli Med Og Ruste Opp Det Offentlige Rom.," *Aftenposten*, 05.09. 2004.

Then you can save a lot of money." The boys even produced a questionnaire, asking, in a most charming and leading way, people's opinion on their suggestions.

Jorunn Christoffersen in her introduction to the booklet of ideas following the "Small Ugly Places" initiative, underlines the importance of engaging this group in particular to prevent urban decline: "Children and the young unfortunately seem to be active in vandalising the city. It is therefore important to engage this group in particular in the work for a better local environment."[143] Having explored their own little, ugly place, the children seem to better understand the need for a shared responsibility between the municipality and the citizens in keeping the urban areas "in shape". An example of the concern of the children was seen in communication with the local authorities on how to proceed: "You must not give up", the children wrote, illustrated by two people shaking hands. The children's expression of a concern for community interests, although encouraged in the MIABE, would not necessarily derive from working in accordance with my model. A good model does not necessarily provide "good" children.

A shared vocabulary derived from the lifeworld of the children

The MIABE component about acquiring an extended vocabulary linked to the details of the public place has been referred to throughout this thesis. In order to make the children understand better that the public place is an "outdoor room" – an expression used in the National Curriculum of 1997, the subject Arts and Crafts, I used the classroom as an object of comparison.[144] Making use of the classroom as an example of a room everyone would be familiar with, resulted from personal trial-and-error in the very beginning of the "Small Ugly Places" project, as reported in my chapter "Tell the Story". Reflections on this little story strengthened my belief in the importance of a shared vocabulary as well as of a specific meaning of the objects at stake to facilitate meaning across the different groups and actors participating in the initiative. As we moved out of the classroom, to work in the small ugly places, the need for some additional concepts became apparent. The children were now all familiar with terms like floor, walls, benches, litter bins etc. However, some building terms like facade were more difficult for the children to understand, and in the beginning these were often referred to as "that thing you know". As I spent much time with the children, I already knew what they were referring to, but such non-specific description is certainly not an ideal base for communication with others as one person probably would think of a door, another of a staircase.

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[143] Hodneland and Christoffersen, "Forskjønnelsen Av De Små, Stygge Stedene. Det Offentlige Uterom Som Pedagogisk Verktøy."
[144] Kirke- utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet, *Læreplanverket for Den 10-Årige Grunnskolen*, 195.

Some have asked if I feel comfortable about having made acquisition of an extended vocabulary linked to the built environment, as well as to the public administration, part of the MIABE. Therefore, during my conversations with former users of my model, I asked for their opinion on the matter. Jon Inge reminded me of children being like copy cats, just repeating what they have heard without actually understanding the content of the new concepts, while Hedda, argued that acquiring the new concepts made her feel more proud, more like an adult.[145] I believe the pedagogic competence of the teacher who is in charge of the day-to-day teaching and learning process of the MIABE, serves the function as a stable control of quality to my model also in this matter. We have all seen how fast children in the same age group as my own, acquire the language of the personal computer. Despite the fact that English is the computer language, the children communicate with great confidence. After a few introductory hours by the machine they all seem familiar with terms such as "hard disk", the "delete button" etc. As children easily adopt new words, I have no reservation to introducing an additional limited vocabulary from the field of planning. To me, most children seemed to be proud of mastering the vocabulary of the "professionals" in conversations with their teacher, the project leader, the facilitator, journalists, politicians, bureaucrats and each other.

The small ugly places form the life-world of the children. These areas are "common ground" and thus function as an "equaliser" in that, even before entering the school, they have walked through them many times. They have probably also played there, walked their dog, sat on the benches, used or not used, the litter bins, the phone booth and so forth. This means they have some kind of "user experience" with the building details as well as the street furniture, hence they form part of the children's life-world.[146] Christos Doukas draws attention to the importance of learning representing "a person's relationship to the world, which surrounds him or her."[147] On the other hand, Marianne Gullestad is concerned about the break between everyday life as experienced life-world and the greater system of society. She argues a gap has arisen between everyday life, understood as a single person's experience of her world, and a societal description of structures and processes.[148] Gullestad's point of view reflects my argument using MIABE, to encourage the children and young to make use of the details of the built environment, the public space in the local neighbourhood as a point of departure for capacity to act. As referred to in my introductory chapter, Tore Sager argues that "The life-world perspective on society is reserved for the acting individual taking part in the events rather than observing them. The lifeworld signifies both a context of reference and a repository or intuitive

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[145] The courses mainly took place in the Oslo area and in Bergen. The lectures were parts of seminars arranged particularly to introduce the concepts of architecture and design within the National Curriculum of 1997.
[146] Also reported in the chapter "The MIABE".
[147] Christos Dokukas, "Education in Greece," in *Common Threads: an Agenda for Active Citizenship*. (London February 4-5, 2003. (Conference transcriptions)), 47.
[148] Marianne Gullestad, *Kultur Og Hverdagsliv: På Sporet Av Det Moderne Norge* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1989).

knowledge and know-how for social actors."[149] Particularly, the idea of training ones capacity to orient oneself towards communicative action is of vital importance in the MIABE.

By making use of the already familiar elements of the public place the MIABE, as seen in examples throughout this chapter and also in the chapter "Tell the Story", enhances what Benjamin Barber refers to as establishing the conditions for dialogue. From his "Nine functions of strong democratic talk" I shall particularly address number four, "Exploring mutality."[150] "The art of conversation is the art of finding language that is broad and novel enough to bridge conflicting perceptions of the world."[151] The ability to communicate with others is of course dependent on the circumstances. On communicative action, John Forester asks the question on how such practical communication actually works, answering that a simple but fundamental point in communication theorists seem to be an agreement upon all communication comprise:

> two deeply related aspects, content and context. *What* a planner talks *about* is the *content* of what is said; *when and in what situation and with whom* the planner talks begins to define the *context* of what is said. To communicate content, planners and their audience need to share a language – of word or gesture – with which first to call attention to particular things in the world and second to say something coherent about these things.[152]

What would this imply in application to the MIABE? To communicate content, the children and their audience need to share a language - that of the built environment comprising the objects constituting the boundary objects. This is why attention first is called to the particular things: the objects constituting the boundary objects, the already familiar street furniture of the children's local neighbourhood. Then the children are capable of saying something coherent about them as illustrated already in some of their letters to the municipality. In the same way as planners and their audience need to share a language "of word or gesture" so do the children and the adults working in accordance to the MIABE. Increased awareness and thus familiarity of the details of the public places from on site registrations, seem to work well as a tool for "saying something coherent" about them. Viewed from application to the MIABE, the conflicting perceptions of world are prepared to being bridged by use of the details of the built environment. As mentioned above, conversations with former users of my model reported in

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[149] Sager, *Communicative Planning Theory*, 247.
[150] Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age*, 178-79. His "Nine functions of strong democratic talk" are, respectively: (i) the articulation of interest, bargaining and exchange, (ii) persuasion, (iii) agenda-setting, (iv) exploring mutuality, (v) affiliation and affection, (vi) maintaining autonomy, (vii) witness and self-expression, (viii) reformulation and reconceptualization and finally (ix) community-building as the creation of public interests, common goods, and active citizens.
[151] Ibid., 186.
[152] Forester, *Critical Theory, Public Policy, and Planning Practice: Toward a Critical Pragmatism*, 90-91.

my chapter "The MIABE Revisted", indicate that verbal encouragement in the shape of acquiring an extended vocabulary linked to details of the built environment has been appreciated.

Critical pragmatism is a concept often seen in John Forester. It is therefore, interesting to learn from Tore Sager the double meaning of the term used by Forester in describing his style of planning.[153] Partly, Sager argues, the term informs of the intention which is to fulfil of practical improvements, although occasionally renounce on ideals and principles are seen. This is the everyday meaning of the word. Secondly, pragmatism refers to a philosophical movement to which Forester has been attracted.[154]

How to recognise pragmatism? Tore Sager refers to five components which are seen to be particularly important to Forester and communicative planning.[155] To my work, the most interesting of these would be that there is no sharp division between theory and practice. There is, however, a continuing connection between reflection on action and action based on reflection. To make these connections appear, John Forester often tells detailed stories based on studies of everyday communication in planning. In the following I shall attempt to illustrate the point of Forester by using one of his stories based in everyday communication in planning and a story about everyday communication in a class participating in the pilot-project on the "Small Ugly Places".

Two stories of the local neighbourhood

Story number one is told by John Forester. The location is a community planning meeting somewhere in the US, organised by the "Neighbourhood Housing Services Office." The purpose of the meeting is to discuss proposed improvements for a neighbourhood park. The participants are all adults.[156] Story number two is told to shed light upon the unexpected similarities recognised from reflections on my initiatives and the story of Forester. My examples relate to the "Small Ugly Places" project and the locations are the local environment of two city central schools in Oslo. The MIABE is the operational tool, the discussion therefore is mainly organised by the children themselves. The participants in my story are all children, except for the teacher and sometimes me as the facilitator. The shared background of two stories is a wish for problem solving in matters concerning the details of the built environment in the local neighbourhood.

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[153] In the Spring of 2002, I asked Tore Sager about who is who in contemporary planning theory. Sager answered he views John Forester and himself as belonging to critical pragmatism while Patsy Healey and Judith Innes belong to the collaborative planning. A shared concept on all four is the communicative planning.
[154] Sager, "Planning Theory."
[155] Ibid.
[156] Forester, *Planning in the Face of Power*.

John Forester tells: "At one point, following a good deal of discussion, the city planner asked the crowd of thirty local residents, 'What about benches – putting in some benches along with better lighting?" The answers that followed were a mixture of arguments, and new suggestions came up – like "What about a drinking fountain?" and so forth. After having been informed of all sorts of seating, vandal proof in particular, the audience returned to the questions of benches. A man uttered the wish for a bench under a tree – "I'd use it", he claimed. Another replied: "There's already one there – but it's usually well occupied. There's usually a wino sleeping on it."[157] If it was not for the fact that we know this is a story where the actors are all adults, it could, to me, easily be mistaken for being part of the "Small Ugly Places" project: This is what the children wrote: Report, Oct. 8th and February 4th.

> We are class 3 and 4 C from Sagene School. We have been on
> a survey in the local environment. We have found a place
> which we would have liked very much to do something about
> because of the garbage there, people taking their drugs there
> (we do not want that to take place near our school), ugly
> benches, signs being tagged upon.

Another group writes:

> Down by the waterfall we saw heaps of garbage: everything
> from pizza wrappings to lemonade bottles. Benches were
> tagged." From the nearby surrounding of the school, the groups
> also reported: [...] 2 cans of beer, Vodka, tin of gingerbread,
> newspaper, half a bread, lighter, tobacco.[158]

The little story of Forester and the children's reports seem to have many common denominators: The two related aspects of content and context were shared as the two stories both relate to the details of the built environment in the local neighbourhood, particularly the concern about some kind of refurbishment. In both cases the ideal claim in all participation initiatives, that everybody affected should take part on an equal footing, was looked after. However, I shall restrain from calling attention to whether or not the communicative acts were free from domination; just once again point at the general importance of attentiveness to this matter – particularly in co-operation with children. Two other shared aspects should be mentioned; both stories are linked to the lifeworld of the participants and in both stories the participants form a group of approximately 30 people.[159] A discussion deriving from the life-world of the participants enables communication through establishing a shared contextual framework. This, in its turn enhances a discussion among everyone involved about the topic at stake. This is important, as the communicative acts taking place are aimed at action. In

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[157] Ibid., 121-22.

[158] The school is located close to an old industrial area next to the Akerselva, (the river) and its waterfall.

[159] Maximum allowed number of children in primary school classes in Oslo was, at that time, 28.

the above mentioned stories the issues at stake were action oriented towards improvement of the local neighbourhood environment.

Forester does not share with his readers what finally happened to the meeting in charge of the local neighbourhood group. However, I know what happened to the children of the "Small Ugly Places". As we have seen from their reports, they did not want people on drugs to spend their days next to the school. Like the adults in Forester's story, they too despised the "winos". Incidentally, I was present in the classroom during a group discussion that followed these observations. The children seemed to agree upon wanting to get rid of the "winos" and the drug addicts because they "messed the place up". What could be done? Could the children start a "get-rid of the drug-addicts" process by using the place more actively themselves so that it was no longer an "attractive" sheltered place? Would the "unwanted guests" possibly wish to move somewhere else? There were more questions than answers amongst the group of children, followed by restless silence. This, undoubtedly, was a difficult matter. Then one boy suddenly asked: "But what will happen if we succeed?" Silence again – until the same boy answered his own question: "If our efforts to make more use of the place will make these people move further down the river bank, we would have done nothing but pass on the problem to someone else." A girl agreed and asked: "What do we do? The drug addicts and the "winos" certainly must stay somewhere, must they not?" In my section on "Why the public place" in the chapter "The MIABE", I report that some children, probably without thinking, showed an interest in the best for all generations in the neighbourhood park. This group of children from Lakkegata School was also concerned about the winos in their local neighbourhood. In their arguments for the purchase of some playground equipment for the small children as well as for families in the evenings, they wondered if this might possibly contribute to the winos in the park moving to somewhere else. "It is no good", they argued, "that children are in the same area as the winos and the drug addicts."

To me, the discussion was nearly free from prejudice, and far away from any "NIMBY" attitudes often faced with in similar local neighbourhood situations.[160] As Angela Eagle puts it: "Children have […] an ability to combine idealism with boundless energy and enthusiasm."[161] In John Forester's story, different kinds of benches were presented by the architect. In the "Small Ugly Places" project the children, after having registered all the wrecked and tagged benches, became very enthusiastic about presenting ideas for new design.[162]

Does a bench necessarily have to look like a bench or could it be more like a fantasy sculpture? Do all benches have to look the same? Could there

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[160] NIMBY is the acronym for "Not In My Backyard"
[161] Adams and Ingham, *Changing Places. Children's Participation in Environmental Planning*, ix.Angela Eagle, MP, Former Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions. (UK)
[162] Reported in the chapter "Tell the Story".

possibly be a litter bin fixed to it, so as to save the bother of walking to the nearest litter bin to get rid of some chocolate paper? Would such a solution benefit old people, those on crutches and lazy kids who could not be bothered to walk a few steps to the nearest one? Would people possibly be more motivated to use the litter bins if the bins do not look efficient, green and boring? All these questions were part of a discussion which followed a boy's design of a bench. As already reported in my story about the "Small Ugly Places" the bench was shaped as a dinosaur; water was pouring out of the dinosaur's mouth and one had to climb a ladder to get on top of it. After his presentation, the boy looked at me, with a little smile, hinting that the ladder might not be particularly easy for ladies of my age to climb. His group of fellow pupils immediately came to an agreement that not all benches necessarily have to fit all age groups. To quote Angela Eagle once more; "Children have a creativity not tempered by adult restrictions."[163]

When I paid the class a visit only few weeks later, I was presented with drawings of the most impressive benches and a full scale model of a litter bin in the shape of a rabbit whose favourite dish, I was told, was chocolate paper.

Design as making sense together

Throughout my previous chapters reflections on the MIABE and its application reveal that many components indicative of success never formed part of my model. In preparation for the "Small Ugly Places" project I made the concept of design an essential MIABE component. This component was viewed as form-giving, for example, street furniture or building details as part of the subject Arts and Crafts. John Forester's interpretation of the content of the concept of design to be "making sense together in practical conversations" made me think differently.

His striking argument adds to the possible extended potential of the MIABE, The MIABE Plus, a new dimension to the design process in the shape of preparation for and practice of an extended vocabulary aiming at an including dialogue. "When form-giving", Forester argues, "is understood more as an activity of making sense together, it can then be situated in a world where social meaning is a perpetual practical accomplishment." The story told about the neighbourhood park, is, John Forester writes, exploring a "powerful yet problematic understanding of design activity."[164] "The participants considered various design elements: ordinary or 'vandal-proof' benches, better lighting, [...] a drinking fountain. And not only did the planner and the architect collect comments from the community, but they also worked to shape a design consensus."[165]

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[163] Ibid.

[164] Forester, *Planning in the Face of Power*, 120-21.

[165] Ibid., 122.

In practice, this story would be an example on his addressing the difficulty of fully applying the claims by Jürgen Habermas for communicative action, and serve as an answer to his absence of assessment of how a process works, and "how worldviews, allegiances, identities are elaborated, routinized, established, or altered."[166] In short, this would be an example on John Forester's concept: design as making sense together.

Did the local residents in Forester's story feel competent in their roles? Forester reports uncertainty about their ability to influence local authorities. What about the children working in the "Small Ugly Places" project? Did they feel vulnerable or competent when addressing the local authorities? Reflecting upon the many groups of children and their many letters written to the municipality during the project period, reveals, a belief in most children that their approaches and ideas for changes would become a reality.

In the "Small Ugly Places" project the distribution of roles was set ahead, as part of the MIABE. Distribution of roles, as shown in examples of how the group's work, is largely left to the children. "On site" ambiguities were hardly present as the children were in charge of "everything". They were free to choose a site of their own – "We have found a place which we would have liked very much to do something about." The bureaucrats involved are well aware of their role – which is that of actually "getting things done" to contribute to participation, as in this letter from the Oslo Energy Net[167]: "The Oslo Energy Net (OEN) hereby wishes to say thank you to the pupils in the schools Bygdøy, Lakkegata, Sagene and Grünerløkka for their well performed 'detective' work in embellishing their local environment. The OEN will shortly, and with pleasure, improve the conditions."[168]

The children hardly showed any signs of being unsure about their ability to influence the municipality.[169] However, as already rereported in this chapter, one boy wrote in his logbook: "Silo-news! Behind the silo nothing is changed. What's the point spending one's time working with something one cannot do anything about. The place looks like shit."

John Forester argues that there are many reasons why the "the notion of designing as an interpretive, sense-making process may account far more adequately for the behaviour in the community meeting than does the notion of 'search.'"[170] I shall refer to nearly all of his seven reasons in the following discussion.[171] The first is named "Facing Ambiguity: Reading Context and

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[166] Forester, *Critical Theory, Public Policy, and Planning Practice: Toward a Critical Pragmatism*, 126.
[167] Oslo Energi Nett AS
[168] Letter to Eldri Langåker, Director General, The Municipality of Oslo, Office of the Chief Commissioner; May 20th 1997.
[169] Another example on the confidence in the children about their ability to influence the municipality, is seen in the "Råholt" project reported in the section on "Participation" in this chapter
[170] Forester, *Planning in the Face of Power*, 125.
[171] John Forester's seven reasons are: (i) Facing Ambiguity: Reading Context and desire, (ii) World-Shaping, (iii) Practical Conversation and Communicative Action, (iv) Conversation and Learning, (v) practically Situated Action, (vi) Reproducing Identity and Social relations, and (vii)Political Rationality.

Desire". He argues that the meaning of a sentence or a physical form like that of a park only emerges in context. How to possibly manage reading the context at hand? Forester argues this is a "practical skill that is called into action when anyone attempts to communicate with someone else. [...] In everyday life we draw on a repertoire of subtle strategies with which we create as well as interpret ambiguities of context and desire."[172] Already here, in his first reason, Forester's ideas elucidate the importance of the MIABE component of acquiring an extended vocabulary derived from the details of the built environment as possessing some core value. Secondly, Forester speaks of the meeting between the native skills of the speakers and the learned skills of the designers[173] in a way which, to me, indicates a problematic situation. Could the design process be seen both as giving form and making sense together in practical conversation as in the MIABE and could it possibly assist in diminishing such difficulty in a similar future situation as the neighbourhood park meeting that Forester refers to? This would be a question for further investigation linked to a possible potential of the MIABE Plus.

Forester's second reason is about "World-Shaping" which comprises social meaning as well as the function of, in this case, the neighbourhood park." What sense does it make", Forester asks, "to have a park in which benches are torn up or used for beds, where litter mars the grounds, or decisions seem to be made without regard for the concerns of local residents?"[174] To me, the function as well as the social meaning of the two parks reported in my previous section seems to be two icons carved out of the same log. "Practical Conversation and Communicative Action" comprise the third of Forester's reasons. "The sense-making account suggests that design evolves through the communicative performances of many participants in practical conversations." John Forester reflects upon the many kinds of communicative actions comprising elementary as well as the more complex: "questioning, stating, answering, reporting, challenging, apologizing, suggesting, qualifying, and so on."[175] As mentioned in my chapter "The MIABE", and also previously in this chapter, I believe that John Forester's term "questioning" refers mainly to the misuse of power in the communicative planning process, as opposed to the wider interpretation of the term used by the MIABE participants. Would all the above mentioned communicative actions possibly be recognised also in a MIABE related initiative?

Children and young people working in accordance to my model enter their registration process by asking themselves: what do I see? The answer could be benches, a wooden gate or more. The registration process enhances focusing on details of the built environment which also serves as a guide to consider future possibilities for change as part of the children's practical

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[172] Forester, *Planning in the Face of Power*, 125-26.
[173] This distinction is similar to John Friedmann's "possessed" and "personal" knowledge referred to in my chapter "The MIABE", the section "Different kinds of knowledge"
[174] Forester, *Planning in the Face of Power*, 127.
[175] Ibid.

conversation and thus their communicative action. As the former UK Minister of Arts, Alan Howard encouraged learning from the built environment to assist in "developing both sight and insight", so does the MIABE component of learning to see better enhance acquiring more information about the issue at stake.[176] Following the children's survey in the local neighbourhood area, their findings are reported to the group and sometimes to the class. The discussion that follows is usually characterised by a lot of criticism which often represent a challenge for each member of the group. To the teacher as well as to the facilitator it takes some balancing between an expected (from the children) correction and that of influencing or even manipulating their views. I take it these would be the elementary communicative actions. The more complex communicative actions of Forester are to some extent also present in the MIABE. Forester points at the interesting phenomena that took place during the conversations in the park: "Notice how much more than information-processing, seen as the transmission of facts, goes on. [...] As the participants speak, and so act, together, they take and defend and modify positions; they create precedents, impressions, and expectations."[177] Forester additionally argues that "As the practical talk proceeds, proposals surface meeting differing support and resistance."[178] In my chapter "Tell the Story" examples are seen resembling all communicative actions claimed to follow such practical talk. The expectations created amongst the children should not be left unattended. In the "Embellishment of the Small Ugly Places" project, even the project title held a kind of expectation as the term embellishment indicates a change from the present state to something better. The challenging title was particularly demanding to the municipal divisions as a successful end result would largely depend on their capability to accomplish as well as to assist in the children's ideas for change.

"How", Barber asks, "can we expect either the self-interested or the apathetic to identify with a program of participation and civic renewal in which their most immediate interests would be ignored, at least in the short run?"[179] The aspect of time no doubt is an important component particularly in participation initiatives with children. As referred to in my chapter "Positioning of the MIABE in a Broader Context" consideration of such immediate interests, although of great concern, is often neglected. A group of children from Gamlebyen School put tulip bulbs in the flower beds next to the school gate in the beginning of our project, and was happy to see them bloom in the spring. To other groups, the meeting with a journalist followed by an illustrated article in the newspaper, or a small, local exhibition, might be seen as a fulfilment of expectations within a time span acceptable to children and the young.[180]

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[176] Katherine Massey and Simon Lewis, "Our Street. Learning to See," (London: CABE, 2000), foreword.

[177] Forester, *Planning in the Face of Power*, 127.

[178] Ibid., 128.

[179] Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age*, 265.

[180] Not necessarily as an end project, but as something substantial while waiting for the more demanding and time consuming parts of the embellishment which involve different municipal departments.

Returning to the next of Forester's seven reasons for sense making, I shall discuss his fourth reason named "Conversation and Learning". Forester argues that in a "search process", as opposed to learning within the sense making model "learning seems restricted to adoption or rejection of more or less promising paths to a solution." The sense-making model is about "changes in the very parameters of the definition of the problem", not just changes in strategies. "The sense-making process allows for contradictions, for we might wonder whether anyone speaks for the late-night park users or the winos driven to use park benches for their beds."[181] What about the sense making model and the children of Sagene School referred to above? Their discussion following the registrations of the winos and their belongings leaves no doubt about the deep concern of children for the future of this group of citizens. Not all children would necessarily act as reflected as these. The teacher certainly plays an important role, as a pedagogue, but certainly also as a "facilitator" in projects like this where the teaching of "facts" is very limited. The MIABE encourages acquirement of new knowledge but is not after any "right" answers. Tore Sager refers to Lawrence Susskind and Jeffrey Cruikshank who state a facilitators' importance lies in "monitoring the quality of communication", as well as coming up with questions made to reinforce common understanding.[182]

In his 6th paragraph "Reproducing Identity and Social Relations", John Forester writes: "the study of ordinary language gives us a striking insight into the richness of design processes. In ordinary speech, speakers reproduce their contextual relationships with one another while they simultaneously communicate messages with certain contents."[183] "Designing as making sense together", acknowledges the world-making nature of design, where the participants create new meanings together, regarding ends as well as means. Forester argues that the meaning of a physical form only emerges in a context. This corresponds to my argument for the MIABE being a context-dependent teaching and learning model.

Some of the key words linked to Forester's reasons for a sense making approach are questioning, reporting, challenging, suggesting, and qualifying. Additionally, to talk, to defend, to modify, to create expectations and to allow for contradictions are viewed as important. These are all reasons aimed at in the MIABE, although certainly not so well articulated. Designing as a sense making activity would no doubt strengthen as well as widen the concept of design in a possible MIABE Plus. The children's ideas for new design of a litter bin, for example, should also be viewed as a sense making activity. This activity would then serve a dual aim – for the children as a design activity, for the teacher and the facilitator as a rich source for acquiring new knowledge about how the project is running. This kind of information would,

[181] Forester, *Planning in the Face of Power*, 128.
[182] Sager, *Communicative Planning Theory*, 169.
[183] Forester, *Planning in the Face of Power*, 129.

I suppose, also be of value to the teacher to better sense the children's interests, views and expectations.

Although not forming part of my thesis, the aspect of a transcultural inclusion should be briefly mentioned. As referred to in the chapter "Tell the Story" the "Small Ugly Places" project took place in five city central primary schools in Oslo.[184] As reported, in four schools the number of minority-lingual children was high. In one school the possibility of improving use of the Norwegian language were made part of the "Small Ugly Places" initiative, thus enhancing inclusionary communication. The MIABE component of acquiring an extended vocabulary deriving from the built environment provided some unexpected value. Most concepts related to the built environment and to the public administration were novel for a majority of the children at the ages nine to eleven, irrespective of their cultural origin. To illustrate my point, I shall give an example from the city district of Grünerløkka. The built environment of the area mainly comprises blocks of flats dating back to the 1890s. As reported in the chapter "Tell the Story", the courtyard entrance is usually through a huge, wooden gate containing a smaller door. Few children knew of the difference between a gate and a door. At the end of project period, an improvement of the children's vocabulary was seen in most. Everybody was now able to take part in discussions. A first step towards the aim of mutual understanding of the issue at stake seemed to be reached. Maybe even more important – the retaining awareness of what was not understood was maintained, thanks to the presence of the minority-lingual teachers.

Patsy Healey, when speaking about her concern for a shared cultural understanding in communicative planning, adds the term "while living differently" to Forester's concept of designing as making sense together. However, Raine Mäntisalo refers to her attitudes as being "doubtful". He argues:

> Participants may share a concern, but arrive at it through different cultural, societal and personal experiences. They belong to different 'systems' of knowing and valuing that will remain nearer or farther from each other in relation to access to each other's languages. Planning communication should thus focus on reaching an achievable level of mutual understanding for the purposes at hand, while retaining awareness of that which is *not* understood.[185]

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[184] Figures available from the Oslo Education Authority (Utdanningsetaten) confirm a high number of minority-lingual children. Recent figures do, however, indicate a decrease.
[185] Mäntysalo, "Dilemmas in Critical Planning Theory," 51.

In this chapter I have given a brief outline of the development of the concept of participation in planning, and included some UK initiatives on children, participation and the built environment in the early 1970s. Interpretation of the concept of participation has been viewed in relation to the work of Sherry Arnstein, Tore Sager, Gerison Landsdown, Louise Chawla and Roger Hart. My own interpretation of the concept closes the section. In the "Small Ugly Places" project, we have seen that participation took place in many different ways. The aim of the project was to make use of the public places in a practical-educational context. Knowledge of the details of the local environment and identification of public places in need for improvement were used as basis for the children's work. The schoolchildren were to report lack of maintenance in these places to the local authorities, to help fight decline and thus assist in making the urban environment more safe and pleasant for all users. The children were also encouraged to present new ideas for the design of street furniture, and a buddy-system to facilitate co-action between the pupils and the local authorities was established. Additionally, it was hoped that a municipality that cares might enhance more responsible citizen behaviour. Although all the participating classes were sharing the same goal, some groups of children also initiated their own project, like washing a statue or planting some tulip bulbs. (Sagene School) and also of the classroom (Lakkegata School). The argument of Ann B. Smith about participation varying on how much the children own the goals of the activity, contributes to explain why some groups of children found their own ways of participating in the project. This, although not fully in accordance with the project aim, might explain why all children were allowed to experience participation at the practical level.

Somehow, the aim of the "Small Ugly Places" and the parts of the theory of communicative planning discussed in this chapter seem nearly identical. The pilot-project aimed at participation and involved co-operation with the local authorities responsible for maintenance of the public places. Stimulation of and responsibility for the public places was encouraged by working in the small "ugly" places. Responsibility, it was hoped, would be encouraged by an increased awareness of the public places by means of a registration process, ideas for change and improvement, including design of new street furniture followed.

John Friedmann and his knowledge-action concept referred to in my chapter "The MIABE" has been criticised by many who argue that the concept lacks a more explicit view of power. To what extent would this criticism also apply to my model? Reflection on my own communicative practice, spurred by the concept of power as interpreted by Tore Sager, has made me accept as well as understand that (i) power has many faces, (ii) it appears to be everywhere, and (iii) it is not always easy to spot. It is, therefore, an important issue of consideration in projects with children and participation. At its worst,

execution of power might hamper rather than promote room for children's participation. In the section about power, my examples are related to incidents that took place as part of the "Small Ugly Places" project.

From reflection on the concept of personal growth, I learned that in social connections, growth comprises increased shared understanding, communication and trust. I have also learned that personal growth is difficult to measure. However, my quoted argument of the Scottish report about creativity and citizenship, in which I maintained that with projects aimed at increasing children's participation, personal growth should be put at the top of the agenda, still stands. If I was asked if personal growth was achieved in any of my MIABE related initiatives, I could give neither a positive nor a negative answer – I simply do not have sufficient relevant information.

In my section about democracy and the MIABE I have particularly looked into the deliberative democracy in which communication and dialogue play an even more important role than in a direct democracy.

What part of deliberative democracy then, could possibly be "transferred" to the existing representative democracy without major changes, and thus be part of the MIABE or the MIABE Plus? In this chapter I have argued that most likely, this is the communicative part of the "deliberation". The idea of James D. Fearon about discussing matters before making some collective decisions would correspond to the phase in a participation process prepared for in the MIABE.

As mentioned in my introductory chapter, applications to the MIABE have taken place within the framework of representative democracy. In a possible application of the MIABE Plus, no structural or legal amendments would be required. However, a responsive government and an accountable bureaucracy like we have seen in the "Small Ugly Places" project would be presupposed also for the MIABE Plus.

Examples of the children's written communication with authorities in the "Small Ugly Places" are reported in the shape of the children's letters to those municipal agencies responsible for maintenance in the public places and their answers. In this project, facilitating ability to communicate with authorities was based in a wide range of MIABE components; an extended vocabulary linked to the built environment and public administration, the history of place, the making maps, drawings, photos, patterns of movements, making questionnaires, and the composing of letters. The extended vocabulary assisted in explaining what the children's applications were all about. Additionally, the composing of letters assisted in for instancing making sure that the letter was directed to the agency in charge and that the receiver knew where to address the answer, and the photos, drawings and sometimes also a brief knowledge about the history of place and also the results from the questionnaires made by the children, added strength the message of the letter

and also made it easier for the agency in charge to know exactly where the vandalism had taken place. A group of children from Sagene School in their letter to the Oslo Road, wrote: "About signs. Today I saw a wrecked sign. I also saw a tagged sign, and one that was bent and an old one. Could you please help us to put up a new one? This was in Toftesgate 2-12 and in the Sannergata."[186] I assume that examples on the children's communication with journalists, the headmaster and other adults involved in the project should be viewed as an exercise in becoming a citizen.

The MIABE component of the acquisition of an extended vocabulary based on the details of the built environment and public administration has been strengthened rather than weakened in consequence of the discussion in my sections on dialogue, communication with local authorities, the stimulation of responsibility, and interest in the public place in pursuit of the "common ground" – all aiming at enhancement of a shared vocabulary derived from the children's life-world.

In my section about stimulation and information of the public dialogue in this chapter, the five components of John Forester on attentive listening have been accounted for. When designing the MIABE and the component about making use of all senses, I did not know of this extended meaning of the concept of listening. Forester's interpretation of listening might imply an interesting possible future expansion of this MIABE component, particularly its ability to bridge also the already existing components about dialogue, criticism and reflection.

From reflection on the two stories of the local neighbourhood told in the end of this chapter an extended meaning of the MIABE component of design emerged as coherent in the shape of John Forester's concept of design as a sense making activity in practical conversations.

My discussion based on parts of the theory of communicative planning shows that this strand of planning theory is well suited as a theoretical foundation for the MIABE. Additionally, planning theory has enhanced my scrutiny of the aspects of power linked to my model. How could parts of the communicative planning theory possibly suit the discussion of a practical model about children and the built environment? In a nutshell the reason is that the MIABE and planning both aim at knowledge linked to action; they both aim at enhancing a process of participation and they both relate to people as well as to the organising of action in the built environment. In a possible revision of the MIABE and also in a possible preparation for the MIABE Plus, I believe that a much closer link to the parts of communicative planning theory discussed in this chapter should be applied. Although assumingly well functioning, I would argue that the MIABE components seem to be rather "shallow" compared to the rich content of the parts of

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[186] Reported in my chapter "Tell the Story"

communicative planning theory when aiming at participation. However, I believe that the strong link between the MIABE and a permanent base for learning, based in self-elected groups, would be an advantage compared to arenas established to facilitate participation for adults.

The second of the objectives of my thesis: To reflect on the process of achieving participation from the perspective of the theory of communicative planning has now been achieved.

So what?

So what? Did anything new evolve, or did the above chapter just serve to theoretically underpin my assumptions of the usefulness of some of the MIABE components for achieving participation?

Elucidating the MIABE from parts of the theory of communicative planning proved to provide the key to my concern about the extended potential of the MIABE Plus which previously has been hard to put into words. In my chapter "The MIABE", I explained John Forester's table of reformulation of planning practice viewed from my own MIABE related practice. The sixth of his shifts is about passing on "solutions" to fostering policy and design criticism, argument and political discourse. This contributed to a shift also in my own way of thinking about the MIABE Plus – from a concern about ends – to an approach to means. Although my concern for means to achieve ends is the main purpose of the MIABE, and the fact that I believed the component about an extended vocabulary deriving from the built environment and public administration was vital, I did not manage to arrive at anything but a vague aim of the MIABE Plus. However, from the discussion which has taken place in the above chapter, particularly from learning about John Forester's view about design as a sense making activity in practical conversations, made me think anew. The vague expanded potential of the MIABE was therefore replaced by a specified means and also an aim: the MIABE Plus should be a model of participation for children and the young, particularly facilitating provision for a foundation for a more reflective argument and political dialogue, now and later in their lives.

On the basis of the emerged understanding about some of the MIABE components and their usefulness, also as a foundation for an expanded potential for fostering a more reflected participation based in political argument and discussion, the MIABE Plus is now established.

Aiming at achievement of the third objective of this thesis, I shall, in my next and final chapter, try and examine the possible expanded MIABE potential, the MIABE Plus.

Table: The development and growth of the MIABE Plus

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ How to introduce schoolchildren to the details of│
│ the built environment?                            │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                   The MIABE                       │
│ The Model for Increasing Awareness of the Built   │
│ Environment                                       │
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│ The "Slemdal" project                             │
│ Aim: Identity of place                            │
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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ The "Råholt" project                              │
│ Aim: Participation in accordance with the National│
│ Policy Guidelines to promote the interests of     │
│ children and adolescents in planning              │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ The "Small Ugly Places" project                   │
│ Aim: Participation and embellishment of the public│
│ places                                            │
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┌──────────────────────────┐    ┌──────────────────────────┐
│ Follow up project         │    │ Conversations with former │
│ presented in a Scottish   │    │ users of the MIABE        │
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│ The MIABE Plus                                    │
│ Aim: To provide a foundation for young people's   │
│ reflective argument and political dialogue now and│
│ later in their lives                              │
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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ The MIABE Plus in a possible context              │
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8. LEAVING THE DOOR AJAR

8.1 INTRODUCTION

On the basis of the emerged understanding of the MIABE Plus as a possible model for young people's reflective argument and political dialogue, now and later in their lives, the question arises – how to examine this potential? That is what this chapter is all about.

One way of examination might be to discuss a possible transfer of some core MIABE components which have proven particularly important in achieving participation, like the component of acquiring an extended vocabulary linked to the built environment and public administration. Another way of examination might be to discuss an introduction of some new components or an expansion of some of the existing; like for instance to view the component of design also as a sense making activity as suggested in the previous chapter. However, investigation into the building of another model seems to exceed the limits of this thesis.

A third way of investigation might be to try and answer the following question: would there be room for a model aiming at enhancement of better democratic practices in the shape of a MIABE Plus? To indicate a possible future pathway of application and investigation, I shall give a brief overview of a contextual positioning.

8.2 EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP

As already mentioned in my chapter "Tell the Story", the report from the Scottish Art Council about culture, creativity and citizenship, was the first seed of the growth of the MIABE Plus.[1] This Scottish report followed the so-called "Paper for Discussion and Development" which is about education for citizenship.[2] The fact that my project was used as an example in relation to

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[1] Scottish Arts Council and Christina Losito, "Culture, Creativity and Citizenship in Scotland. Case Studies and Discussion," (Edinburgh: 2002).

[2] Learning and Teaching Scotland, "Education for Citizenship in Scotland: A Paper for Discussion and Development," ([Edinburgh, Scotland]: 2001).

these matters, encouraged my interest in a possible extended potential of the MIABE, from its present form to one which also forms the basis for improving the democratic participation of children.

A growing scepticism about traditional structures of representative democracy is the point of departure of the above mentioned Scottish report which argues that when people have been actively involved in determining the reasons for procedures and politics, they are more likely to "genuinely subscribe to them."[3] This argument agrees with the reasons for a possible use of the MIABE Plus and supports my belief in the legitimacy of projects like the "Small Ugly Places" as an introduction to participation on local level. The report states that the learning experience of the children and the young "should encourage them to be disposed to be active and responsible citizens both now and later in their lives."[4] The Scottish view of benefit for the children "now and later in their lives" has been adopted in my MIABE Plus.

The many small notes and reports made by the children who participated in the "Small Ugly Places" project, like their worries about graffiti, all seem to indicate an emerging understanding of the concept of responsibility, sparked by an increased awareness of the details of the public places. In my view, this practical experience might serve as a first introduction to the concept of responsible citizenship.

An example of an increase in the children's sense of social responsibility, from their concern about issues at the local level, like their above mentioned worries about graffiti, to a concern also for a wider social responsibility might be illustrated from one of my conversations reported in the chapter "The MIABE Revisited". Margrethe, in reflecting on my question about a possible extended potential of the MIABE aimed at democratic preparedness, said; "We don't have any responsibilities to anyone but ourselves. Life as a student [abroad] is, in a way, your own enterprise. I don't take an active part in society [in that country], and I don't manage to keep up with what's going on in Norway." She viewed this to be a great disadvantage, a feeling she argued was shared with the other Norwegians at her university. "We have", she said, "paid a visit to vote without being sufficiently informed and thus not knowing much of the consequences of our choice."[5]

I shall briefly add that the concept of citizenship in the Scottish report refers to an interpretation offered by the Advisory Council of Learning and Teaching Scotland, which subscribes to the view that "everyone should be recognised as being a citizen, in a variety of senses, from birth. Young people should be regarded as citizens of today rather than citizens in waiting."[6] Anne Trine Kjørholt, in her mapping of public projects about Norwegian

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[3] Ibid., 9.
[4] Ibid., 10.
[5] Referred to in my chapter "The MIABE Revisited".
[6] Learning and Teaching Scotland, "Education for Citizenship in Scotland: A Paper for Discussion and Development," 8.

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child policy and the children's active social participation, argues that children are considered competent actors and subjects who have a right, as well as the competence to influence their own circumstances of life.[7] The National Curriculum of 1997 in its introduction to the subject of social science refers to the following: "All pupils are members of the society and shall, successively and in different ways, participate in its design and governing."[8] The "successively and in different ways" is exactly what the possible MIABE Plus would be aiming at. Both Scotland and Norway seem to agree on what citizenship means. The Scottish Report argues that to be a "capable citizen is not just about possessing knowledge and skills. It is about being able and willing to use knowledge and skills to make decisions, and where appropriate, take action."[9] I assume that facilitating the phase that comes before the decision –making referred to would be the new room for participation prepared in the MIABE Plus. In Scotland, the concept of education for citizenship "does not involve the creation of a new subject labelled 'citizenship education' – or the adaptation of any single existing area of the curriculum for this purpose."[10] A presupposition of an application to the MIABE Plus would be its application to school work as a teaching and learning process based on an interdisciplinary project effort. Since the formation of the MIABE in 1996, a new national curriculum, the "Knowledge Promotion"[11], has been introduced. A new syllabus has been established aimed at reflection and critical practice related to competence in participatory organs such as the pupils' council for all children aged 6-16. It is important to underline that this is not a new subject, but a topic to be integrated in already existing subjects.[12]

In my previous chapter, I argued that in the MIABE, a growth in self-esteem is hoped to evolve from an escalation in mastering the various challenges met, as opposed to being proclaimed an ultimate aim. Hopefully, communicative co-operation rather than analytical techniques would be a means to achieve personal growth in planning as well as in the MIABE Plus. Personal growth is also a concern of the Scottish Report on Citizenship and Education, which argues that

> There are good reasons to expect that effective education for citizenship will contribute to improved attainment and achievement by, for instance, increasing the individual's confidence and self-esteem, helping young people make

[7] Anne Trine Kjørholt, "Norsk Barnepolitikk Og Barns Aktive Samfunnsdeltakelse. En Kartlegging Av Offentlige Prosjekter I Perioden 1985-1995," (Trondheim: Norsk senter for barneforskning, 1997).
[8] Kirke- utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet, *Læreplanverket for Den 10-Årige Grunnskolen* ([Oslo]: Nasjonalt læremiddelsenter, 1996), 175.
[9] Learning and Teaching Scotland, "Education for Citizenship in Scotland: A Paper for Discussion and Development," 11.
[10] Ibid., 16.
[11] "Kunnskapsløftet"
[12] Kunnskapsdepartementet, "Kunnskapsløftet: Læreplan for Elevrådsarbeid," (http://www.udir.no/templates/udir/TM_Læreplan.aspx?id=2100&laereplanid=170888).

connections between knowledge and skills gained in different contexts, and extending their vision and motivation.[13]

My argument about the difficulty of measuring personal growth, is shared by the Scottish report which claims that "the link between developing capability for citizenship and attainment is not a mechanistic one."[14]

The 1998 "Crick Report" in England, or more accurately, the report on "Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools" was published and in 2002, the teaching of citizenship was introduced as a compulsory part of the school curriculum.[15] The British Youth Council in their submission to the "Crick Report" expressed their concern about young people's lack of knowledge about the democratic practices of society and their own rights and responsibilities as citizens. However, Andrew Lockyer argues that from the many passages of the Crick Report, the main emphasis is on "preparing young people for active participation in democratic life."[16] Additionally, the report states that awareness of duties and rights are not enough. The intended learning outcome should therefore be ability and motivation to make the children and the young perform as responsible citizens. Preparations for more than personal goals imply that teaching pupils about political institutions is not enough. "They must learn about and be able to engage in politics, which requires deploying the language of political discourse."[17] Acquiring a vocabulary linked to the language of political discourse should be considered in the making of a possible MIABE Plus. Would this goal possibly be facilitated by provision of a platform for argument and political dialogue as aimed at in application to the MIABE Plus?

A brief look into the Scottish as well as the English reports on education for citizenship indicates that the MIABE Plus and the Scottish report are closer to each other, than is the MIABE Plus and the "Crick Report". From the latter a new subject is established for young people in the comprehensive school. Community services, unfamiliar to Norwegian pupils, are placed high on the agenda. However, the "Crick Report" has nourished the existing MIABE prerequisite of making school the arena for teaching and learning also in "democracy" projects and thus also in application to a MIABE Plus. The report has also made med reconsider the aspect of age related to an introduction of the MIABE Plus.

Different permanent participatory structures are established to link children and the young to decision-making in the community. In Norway, pupils'

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[13] Learning and Teaching Scotland, "Education for Citizenship in Scotland: A Paper for Discussion and Development," 33.
[14] Ibid.
[15] John Annette, Bernard Crick, and Andrew Lockyer, *Education for Democratic Citizenship: Issues of Theory and Practice* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 1.
[16] Ibid., 122.
[17] Ibid., 123.

councils are established in all schools and youth councils are established in approximately half of the 430 municipalities.[18] As with the pupils' councils, the youth councils are based on a system of representation. By the end of 1998, the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs established the Democracy Forum of Youth,[19] which aimed at participation from children and the young in political processes at local and national levels. The target group was young people between the age of 16 and 26. Experience from the approach indicate that few mechanisms were found to compensate for differences in skills to be made heard.[20] An added arena aiming at strengthening young people's knowledge about democratic processes is the Minitinget, a miniature parliament (Storting). In an article in the newspaper Aftenposten, the Minitinget was described this way:

> Politics and governmental issues could be learned from different sources. Through generations, the teachers in social science have drawn arrows on the blackboard between ministries and committees, between the Odelsting and the Lagting.[21] However, in the Minitinget, modern data technology is dominating the teaching and learning situation.

The children act as representatives of the various political parties and aim at solving the different problems presented.[22] In consequence of my curiosity about this initiative, I was allowed to join a class visiting the Minitinget shortly after its opening in September 2005. The place is impressively designed, in all respects. An interesting point is that all young people are allowed to experience the representative system of democracy. The Minitinget addresses pupils in upper secondary school only. I shall therefore refrain from further comments on the matter. However, an issue of interest for a possible future pathway of investigations might be to look closer into the idea of role play designed as a learning process aimed at consensus as described in the article "Consensus Building as Role Playing and Bricolage" by Judith Innes and David Booher. "Whatever else consensus building may be, it is definitely role playing. Participants come to the table representing stakeholders with different interests. It is each one's job to play the role of that stakeholder in the discussion."[23] This is how the Minitinget functions.

The following two newspaper cuttings might briefly illustrate young people's interest in political issues on local level and their concern for participation and democracy.

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[18] Hilde Lidén and Guro Ødegård, *Ungt Engasjement: Ungdoms Samfunnsengasjement Og Lokalpolitiske Deltagelse, Nova Rapport; 6/2002* (Oslo: Norsk institutt for forskning om oppvekst, velferd og aldring, 2002), 48.
[19] Ungdommens Demokratiforum
[20] Marit Skivenes and Erik Oddvar Eriksen, *Nye Deltagelsesformer Og Demokratisk Medvirkning, Rapport / Los-Senteret; R0010* (Bergen: LOS-senteret, 2000), 27.
[21] The two divisions of the Storting.
[22] Halvor Hegtun, "Fell En Regjering! Elever Lærer Demokrati I Politisk Rollespill.," *Aftenposten* (2006).
[23] Judith Eleanor Innes and David E. Booher, "Consensus Building as Role Playing and Bricolage: Toward a Theory of Collaborative Planning," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 65, no. 1 (1999): 16.

"Demands for their voice to be heard" was the heading of an article in the newspaper Aftenposten on April the 6th 2005:

> Forget about lax and indifferent teenagers. Yesterday the list of claims of priority from the youngsters was presented to Oslo's City Council. For two days 61 representatives from the Youth Council[24] of the city districts, youth organisations and representatives from some of the pupils' councils of the Oslo schools were gathered. The aim was to make their claims possibly become part of the political agenda; improvement of the collective transportation system inclusive of reduced prices for young people, increased frequency and night time departures, a car free city centre, obligatory introductory courses for parents, teachers and pupils on intoxication, and more.

In an interview with a girl aged 18 it is reported that "Politics and decision-making processes in society do not seem to be important to youth because youth politics seldom gets priority."[25]

Magnus Nystrand, a member of the Board of the School Student Union of Norway,[26] in the weekly newspaper Morgenbladet, asked the challenging question: "Shall we play democracy? [...] The school does not just serve the task of a knowledge factory, but should also have a general educational function. Education about democracy is an example which", he argues, "should be taught in different subjects as well as in the advisory organs like the pupils' council." Nystrand argues that some action should follow the decisions made.

> The pupils understand democracy, but do not see the point in making use of it. [...] In school a unique possibility for everyone to participate in democracy is offered, as opposed to for example in a youth council or other organisations. The many parents, journalists and others involved in the debate are irresponsible if they choose to sit on the fence, watching the school playing democracy.[27]

To me, it is interesting to notice that Nystrand seems to suggest experience about participation for all – not just the members of the advisory organs. The members of the School Student Union are all pupils of upper secondary school (aged 16-19). Nevertheless, could the idea about a combination of short-term as well as long-term goals as reported in my chapter "Tell the

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[24] ungdomsråd
[25] David Vojislav Krekling, "Krever En Stemme," *Aftenposten*, 6. april 2005. The Minister of Labour and Government Administration at that time was Laila Dåvøy.
[26] Elevorganisasjonen
[27] Nystrand Magnus, "Skal Vi Leke Demokrati?" *Morgenbladet* (2004).

Story" possibly be worth considering also for this age group? Could the lack of interest in making use of the democratic channels possibly be caused by the lack of practical experience? Children and the young under the voting age and the concern for their interests in democracy rarely appear on this agenda. Why is this? Answering this question is beyond the scope of my thesis. However, it might well be a topic for further research.

In the introduction to the National Curriculum of 1997 it is stated that education "should foster democracy, national identity and international consciousness. It should develop interaction with other people [...] so that our country shall become a creative member of the world society."[28] According to Rolf Mikkelsen and Dag Fjeldstad, this passage illuminates "the balance between the individual and the society".[29] Here the knowledge perspective on skills is underlined and a more practical approach to the challenges of life and how to master these, either alone or with others is defined. Communicative planning and the MIABE share the aim of benefit for society as well as for the individual. This aim is seen also in the Scottish report on education for citizenship, and would, no doubt, be a prerequisite in application to a possible MIABE Plus which aims at providing a foundation for reflective argument and political dialogue.

Mikkelsen and Fjeldstad in their discussion concerning children and power, argue that all democracies share a strong interest in preparing children and the young for democratic participation and a possible future exertion of power. In these democracies, the school is appointed a central arena for such preparation.[30] In my chapter "The Discussion" I expressed my initial scepticism to the application of the concept of power linked to children and young. I also referred to my present view based in the argument of Clarence Stone – "*power to*" rather than "*power over.*"[31] "*Power to*" would certainly be the kind of power prepared for in application to the MIABE Plus – as has been the case in the MIABE.

Marit Eriksen and Guro Skivenes also express their concern about the aspect of power. "Harmonising power in political processes will", they argue, "mainly be about harmonising imbalance of information and differences in argumentative competence. This might be set right by making knowledge about the issue known ahead."[32] Compared to the aspect of participation in planning, the view of Eriksen and Skivenes can be considered a weak form of involvement. As mentioned in my chapter "The Discussion", Tore Sager argues that the stronger forms of involvement, as opposed to the weak forms, give some influence over means and that "in dialogue, one will be able to

[28] Kirke- utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet, *Læreplanverket for Den 10-Årige Grunnskolen*, 15.
[29] Rolf Mikkelsen and Dag Fjeldstad, "Skole Og Demokratiopplæring," in *Ungdom, Makt Og Mening*, ed. Guro Ødegård, Fredrik Engelstad, and Makt- og demokratiutredningen 1998-2003 (Oslo: Gyldendal akademisk, 2003), 22.
[30] Ibid., 21.
[31] Nigel Taylor, *Urban Planning Theory since 1945* (London: Sage Publications, 1998), 140.
[32] Skivenes and Eriksen, *Nye Deltagelsesformer Og Demokratisk Medvirkning*, 15.

influence ends as well."[33] The stronger forms would be aimed at in a possible future MIABE Plus.

As part of their discussion about teaching and the learning of democracy at school, Mikkelsen and Fjeldstad argue that "In Norway the school has a double function in that it should teach the pupils about democracy and politics as well as offering exercise for preparedness to democratic citizenship."[34]

A possible application of the MIABE Plus would not exclude or interfere with the already existing structures of participation, but rather assist in a widening of their practices. What then, is meant by political participation? In the MIABE Plus, I take the term political to relate to decisions made by political authorities, on all levels. Lise Togeby argues that according to theory of democracy, political participation is important in that the citizens might promote their own interests and because political participation hold an educational effect and contribute to the creation of democratic citizens.[35] Related to my practice as well as to the MIABE Plus, which is a tool for provision of a platform for a more reflective argument and political dialogue, I have chosen to use the following simplified explanation: political participation refers to the whole repertoire of participation, not just the small part which is linked to voter participation.

Hilde Lidén and Guro Ødegård are concerned about different methodological approaches and arenas for political participation: (i) voter participation, (ii) direct political participation[36], (iii) participation in voluntary organisations, and (iv) the inclusion of youngsters in public participation initiatives. The methods chosen are based on data from the "Medborgerundersøkelsen 2001" (a citizen survey) and case studies of youth councils, and seem mainly to build on questionnaires and interviews.[37] The MIABE Plus would correspond with the fourth category. However, political interest does not necessarily correspond with the idea of community engagement. Lidén and Ødegård argue that engagement in political issues is most likely dependent on personal interests as well as opportunities. Their assumption corresponds with some of the answers that emerged from my conversations with the former users of the MIABE, now young men and women aged nineteen to twenty-six. The ideas of one of these (Philip), no doubt stems from his interest in political matters; "I think that learning about it [democracy] at an early stage, to relate it to the aspect of power is important – I take an interest in these matters, you see, I

[33] Tore Sager, *Communicate or Calculate: Planning Theory and Social Science Concepts in a Contingency Perspective, Dissertation / Nordic Institute for Studies in Urban and Regional Plann; 11* (Stockholm: Nordplan, 1990), 67.
[34] Mikkelsen and Fjeldstad, "Skole Og Demokratiopplæring," 21. italics, although translated, as in the authors.
[35] Lise Togeby, *Politisk Deltakelse*, ed. Øyvind Østerud, Kjell Goldmann, and Mogens N. Pedersen, *Statsvitenskapelig Leksikon* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1997).
[36] To me the report is not making a clear division between influence and participation. My translation might therefore not be fully concurrent with the intentions of the authors.
[37] Lidén and Ødegård, *Ungt Engasjement: Ungdoms Samfunnsengasjement Og Lokalpolitiske Deltagelse*, 12-17.

read social science." During my conversation with another (Malin), I asked if she was ever elected a member to the pupils' council. From her affirmative answer I argued that she had experienced the participatory part of democracy. However, from her position she never felt she had anything to say; "I felt holding that position was just a pastime." In answering my question on how to possibly explain the concept of participation, she told me that she had joined an organisation for the rights of animals, and that she has also previously worked there part time.

The Ministry of Children and Equality[38] recently published their report on voluntary organisations of children and young people.[39] In the report, Guro Ødegård views the voluntary organisations, related to for instance culture, sports, music or politics, as exercise arenas for an internal democratic training which in its turn is seen to contribute to external democratic training.[40] Although her view might be right, I would argue that such out-of-school democracy training might contribute to a widening of the gap between those who know the game and those who do not, rather than encouraging equal opportunities for all as part of the compulsory teaching and learning in schools, like in the MIABE and in a possible MIABE Plus. Membership in an organisation implies an aspect of selection. I view the voluntary organisations as valuable for those who wish to learn more about democratic processes. I also appreciate the aspect of personal growth which most likely will be nourished from the children being part of a group of shared interests. Membership in community oriented organisations in which children and youth might learn about democracy seems to be decreasing while organisations of personal interest or activities are increasing. This is a trend seen in many countries.[41] However, the above view of Ødegård in favour of out-of-school democratic practices, strengthens rather than weakens my belief in the prominence of the school as arena for education for citizenship. To underline the importance of the school as arena, I would argue that the classroom should form an added part of the first of my three interpretations of the meaning of room in this thesis, the physical room.

Just as in the Scottish report about education for citizenship referred to in the beginning of this chapter, Marit Irene Skivenes and Erik Oddvar Eriksen argue that new ways of establishing participation are evolving. However, these "are not linked to elections, party- and organisation membership, but to extra-parliamentary processes and organs representing alternative ways of channelling public opinions."[42] Would such extra parliamentary arrangements possibly become the new ways of democratic participation? Skivenes and Eriksen argue that a growing gap is seen between the decisions

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[38] Barne-og likestillingsdepartementet

[39] Barne- og likestillingsdepartementet, *Fritid Med Mening: Statlig Støttepolitikk for Frivillige Barne- Og Ungdomsorganisasjoner., Norges Offentlige Utredninger; Nou 2006:13* (Oslo: Departementenes servicesenter, Informasjonsforvaltning, 2006).

[40] Ibid, 95

[41] Hugh Matthews, Melanie Limb, and Mark Talyor, "Young People's Participation in Representation in Society," *Geoforum* (1999): 138.

[42] Skivenes and Eriksen, *Nye Deltagelsesformer Og Demokratisk Medvirkning*, 5.

on which the politicians have direct influence, and those actually concerning the citizens.[43]

In 1999 in her speech to the Storting on governmental administrative politics the Minister of Labour and Government Administration expressed the wish for "a living democracy in which the citizens might influence their everyday lives and their future, and actively participate in the decision-making process on all levels of society."[44] Objections to a statement like this, certainly are hard to find. However, I would argue that a living democracy most likely would neither appear nor grow without some organised effort, such as for example making teaching and learning about democratic practices a more deliberate part of interdisciplinary project work in schools. Although a most banal expression – the young people of today are the decision makers of tomorrow. The better the education about democratic citizenship that aims at benefit for the individual as well as for the society, the closer one might be to fulfilling the minister's wish.

8.3 MY REFLECTIONS

In this chapter I have reported a possible contextual base for the MIABE Plus: would there possibly be room for an extended MIABE which helps to form a foundation for young people's reflective argument and political dialogue, now and later in their lives?

In my chapter "Positioning of the MIABE in a Broader Context", I argued that the governmental commitment to children and participation seems strong. Experience from Norwegian municipalities throughout ten years of "participation projects"[45] involving children and the young indicate, however, a lack of a superior political commitment and a non-existing inter-departmental co-operation anchored in the "system" of the municipality. These issues were pointed out amongst quite a few factors that are seen to be the obstacles for feasibility of participation projects. However, in my chapter about the "Small Ugly Places" project which was initiated by the Municipality of Oslo, this was not the case. An accountable bureaucracy and also the establishment of a buddy system to assist the children across departmental boarders contributed to facilitate the children's participation.

Is there a decrease in the many governmental reports on children, the built environment and participation compared to the situation ten to fifteen years ago? If so, would this possibly result in a strengthening of the governmental interest of democracy and the young people aged 16 plus? Hilde Lidén and Guro Ødegård argue that in their research in political and social engagement,

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[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid., 4. The Minister of Labour and Government Administration at that time was Laila Dåvøy.
[45] Barne- og familiedepartementet and Kommunenes Sentralforbund, "Fra Barnetråkk Til Ungdomsting. Medvirkning Fra Barn Og Ungdom I Kommuner - Erfaringer Og Eksempler," (Oslo: 1997).

few empirical investigations were found of political engagement and participation in local politics amongst young people below the voting age.[46] Why is this? Would a practical project aiming at more deliberate attitude to political and social engagement, based for example in a possible application to the MIABE Plus, which aims at help to form a foundation for a more reflective argument and political dialogue, be reserved for the eldest of the pupils in compulsory school, the nine or ten grades? As mentioned in my chapter "The MIABE Revisited", a slight reluctance to a shift from aiming at an awareness of the built environment to the aiming at democratic practices already from the age of ten, seemed to emerge from my conversations with the former users of the MIABE.

Initially, I argued that application of my model applies to all age groups of the primary school, that is children and the young between the ages 6-16. This argument still applies. However, based in reflections on my own communicative practice with applications of the MIABE in an educational context, an interesting issue evolved in the shape of the aspect of age related to comprehension and thus facilitating of some of the MIABE components.

The initial MIABE, as applied in the "Slemdal" project would suit all the above age groups. In the "Small Ugly Places" project, we have seen that the target group of the initiative, the 10-12 year old children responded well to the MIABE components. However, we have also seen that the way the youngest of the children related to the model, resembles the initial MIABE and the seventeen components facilitated in the "Slemdal" project. The above mentioned scepticism of the former users of the MIABE about presenting the MIABE Plus to 10-12 year old children and also learning from the Crick Report that the target group of education for citizenship is youngsters in the lower secondary school, both assisted in drawing the following conclusions about the future of my model: The Model for Increasing Awareness of the Built Environment, the MIABE, might facilitate:

(i) learning about the details of the built environment
(ii) assisting in achievement of participation (based in (i))
(iii) offering an expanded room for participation aiming at provision of a foundation for young people's reflective argument and political dialogue (based in (i) and (ii)).

Use of my spiral of understanding referred to in the "Slemdal" project might thus be worth considering in preparations for a possible MIABE Plus. This implies that the two models, the MIABE and the MIABE Plus, might interact in this way: an increased awareness of the built environment should be the priority and thus also the aim for the youngest children (aged 6-10), whilst the practical experience of participation based in an increased awareness of the built environment, like in the pilot-project of the "Small Ugly Places"

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[46] Lidén and Ødegård, *Ungt Engasjement: Ungdoms Samfunnsengasjement Og Lokalpolitiske Deltagelse.*

would be the aim for the 10-13 year olds. Having already acquired a knowledge base about the built environment as well as about participation, the MIABE Plus, which aims at help to form a foundation for reflective argument and political dialogue, might be introduced for the elder of the children (aged 13-16).

Throughout this thesis, the MIABE component about a link to the National Curriculum of 1997, particularly the subject Arts and Crafts, has been reported and so has the importance of an inderdisciplinary base for application of my model. A possible application to the MIABE Plus, would demand a close link also to the subject of social science. In the introduction to the subject in the National Curriculum of 1997, different aspects of democracy are mentioned: "A living democracy presupposes that the members of society know and support basic democratic values. Each new generation should learn to participate in and maintain democratic behaviour in different areas of society."[47] Socialisation into the political community is also the concern of Benjamin Barber, who argues that

> Formal pedagogy, understood as formal socialization into the political community, is probably most useful as a training device for unitary democracy and least useful for strong democracy. A basic knowledge of the nation's constitution and legal system, of its political history and institutions, and of its culture and political practice is obviously indispensable to democracy in any form. But there is no necessary correlation between educational training and political or moral judgement, although there is a connection between knowledge and civic aptitude.[48]

As already mentioned, a possible development of a MIABE Plus facilitating action aiming at experience of democratic practices, does not necessarily mean that action will be taken, but that it is dependent upon "motivation to act."[49]

In my chapter "The Discussion", I refer to Mark Warren who argues that participating democrats share the view that constitution of self takes place "through interactions with its social context." Taking part in democratic participation is seen to be an important social experience which is likely to provide development of the kind of values and capacity needed "to be a viable, thriving, and vibrant system of government."[50] As part of my discussion about deliberative democracy in this thesis I referred to James D.

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[47] Kirke- utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet, *Læreplanverket for Den 10-Årige Grunnskolen*, 175.

[48] Benjamin R. Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1984), 234.

[49] Colin Fudge and Susan Barrett, *Policy and Action: Essays on the Implementation of Public Policy* (London: Methuen, 1981), 28.

[50] Mark E. Warren, "Can Participatory Democracy Produce Better Selves? Psychological Dimensions of Habermas's Discursive Model of Democracy," *Political psychology: Journal of the International Society of Political Psychology* 14, no. 2 (1993): 210.

Fearon. In explaining the issue on deliberation as discussion, he examines what good reasons a group of people might have for discussing matters before making some collective decisions. Fearon writes:

> One could argue for discussion rather than just voting on the grounds that discussion has good effects on the people who participate in it, independent of any effect it has on the quality of the decisions reached or their implementation. In this view, discussion or 'deliberation' is seen as a sort of *exercise program* for developing human or civic virtues. [51]

How this exercise program or the above mentioned formal pedagogy of Barber should possibly be implemented as parts of a possible MIABE Plus would be an issue of further investigation. The following argument of Gunn Imsen might serve as a well suited point of departure in preparation for the MIABE Plus: "Practical experience alone does not lead to knowledge. At some level, the action must meet other ways of knowledge to achieve consideration and reflection." [52] So far, the groups of people discussing matters as part of a MIABE related approach, have consisted of children. Jenny Cameron and Deanna Grant-Smith argue in favour of a step further – from separate group discussions to "broader forums where a range of groups express their views, and learn about and respond to the perspective of others in a process of public deliberation." The intention, Cameron and Grant-Smith argue, is to "move beyond the dialogue that takes place within the 'protected arenas', and to develop what Maclure calls a 'multilogue' involving diverse participants." [53] In relation to the MIABE Plus and its foundation for young people's reflective argument and political dialogue, the view of "multilogues" would add a challenging aspect to a possible future adaptation of the model.

8.4 ROOM FOR CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION? SUMMING UP OF THESIS

This thesis is about children, participation and the built environment. The MIABE, my Model for Increased Awareness of the Built Environment, its many components and their application play the main role throughout my reporting. The MIABE is a context-bound teaching and learning model closely linked to parts of the National Curriculum of 1997. The main target group for the model is children aged 10-12.

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[51] James D. Fearon, "Deliberation as Discussion," in *Deliberative Democracy*, ed. Jon Elster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 58-59.

[52] Gunn Imsen, *Lærerens Verden: Innføring I Generell Didaktikk* (Oslo: Tano Aschehoug, 1997), 228. Also referred to in my chapter "The MIABE".

[53] Jenny Cameron and Deanna Grant-Smith, "Building Citizens: Participatory Planning Practice and a Transformative Politics of Difference.," *Urban Policy and Research* 23, no. 1 (2005): 30.

It was my intention that all children should participate, not just those selected by the pupils' council. By linking the MIABE to parts of the National Curriculum of 1997, I assumed that participation for all would be taken care of. The practical side of the MIABE, including photography, drawing etc. related to every day life, seemed to have a meaning for each and every child and would also appeal to their teachers. Furthermore, it was my hope that interest in the local surroundings and the opportunity to improve them might contribute to enhancing the self-esteem of each child. However, no evidence permits me to draw a conclusion for this.

Presumably participation is viewed differently by each individual, from the active child who immediately volunteers to be the group leader, via the shy child whose voice might scarcely be heard, to the one who is just silently present. However, I believe that a model based in an increased awareness of the built environment, no matter how good, would not solve the problem of making all children equally active in a participative endeavour. The concern for each individual child is a main issue of the National Curriculum and, as mentioned several times in this thesis, the teacher is the one who knows the children best and is most likely to see what assistance they require.

How, then, does the model reflect my intention about participation for all children and the young? The MIABE (i) offers a variety of practical approaches for goal achievement, (ii) is a teaching and learning model and (iii) approaches are linked to parts of the National Curriculum which makes it part of the day-to-day teaching and learning process rather than being a one day event. Based in these arguments and also those above, I would argue that the MIABE seems to facilitate participation for all, which is the aim, although the model does not guarantee that all children are equally active.

What, then, is participation? In following my MIABE related initiatives, participation has been achieved in different ways, ranging from group studies in the neighbourhood of the school to writing letters to the local authority requesting improvements in the neighbourhood. However, the term is a broad one. Involvement comes in two forms, the weak and the strong, the latter having the ability to influence a change. Dialogue, which is present in the MIABE and especially in the MIABE Plus, is important in influencing change. My own interpretation of the concept of participation is borrowed from the theory of communicative planning combined with experience from application of the MIABE. In my view, participation involves action where all children have performed within the whole range of communicative acts, from critical group discussions via informed dialogue with grown-ups of different professions, to reaching an end product in the shape of something substantial. What is not participation has been explained in Sherry Arnstein's "Ladder of participation".

The general challenge of research on one's own practice is how one can establish a research identity. In this context mine is based on the use of the

narrative, the reflexive and the conversational methods as ways of acquiring knowledge. The narrative part of the thesis is best illustrated in the story about the pilot-project entitled the "Small Ugly Places" where the actors are presented and their activities are documented. For discussion, parts of the MIABE related to some central aspects of communicative planning theory are presented because these best explain the benefits for the individual and for society. Although the theory of planning has limited application for work with children, active participation is a central theme both for communicative planners and the practitioners of the MIABE. Other common aims of these two groups are 1) personal growth, 2) exercise in becoming citizens within a democracy, 3) ability to communicate with authorities, 4) stimulation of responsibility and interest in the public place, and (5) gaining positive experience from dialogue.

One method for studying my own practice was to have conversations with some pupils who had participated in MIABE related projects ten years previously. These now young men and women were asked for their views about some MIABE components and also for the potential of the MIABE Plus. In retrospect, I sometimes wish that I had paid more attention to the children's voices then than now. However, one of the snags about research on own practice is that if there is anything missing, such as the voice of the children, it is too late to add the empirical data in the research phase.

Criticism has been raised against research on participation about children because it all too often becomes too personal and parochial and thus fails to relate to the broader social processes of society. To counteract this and also to support the idea that there is room for children to participate in my research, I have throughout this thesis defined *room* as involving (1) the physical room, (2) the administrative room, and (3) the political room.

By the physical room, I mean the public places in the local neighbourhood. Experience, particularly from the pilot-project about the "Small Ugly Places", indicates that the public places have been a suitable basis for achieving participation: The public places belong to all of us, and their maintenance is the duty of the municipality. Thus, inquiries with ideas for change as well as complaints are easy to address. Additionally, the public places in the school's neighbourhood area are part of the life-world of the children – they have played there, walked their dog there, sat on the bench, used the litter bin etc.

The administrative room involves contact between children and those city departments responsible for the welfare of the local neighbourhood. This is best explained in the chapter describing the "Small Ugly Places" project.

The political room is concerned with children and participation and is shaped by policy documents concerning the built environment. Applications of the MIABE have taken place within the framework of representative democracy and no structural or legal amendments to the existing democratic form of

government have been required for successful implementation of the MIABE. Likewise, a possible application to the MIABE Plus, which involves active political participation of the youth, might be implemented without structural or legal amendments. I would argue that a responsive government, (like the Norwegian), which has endorsed the content of the many political documents concerning children, participation and the built environment reported in this thesis, has expanded the political room for children's participation. With regard to this third meaning of room I have taken the concept "political" to relate to decisions made by political authorities, at all levels.

Most research provides unanswered questions and opens up areas for future exploration, and my work is no exception. Thus I would like to know more of what the children think about their personal growth and experience having participated in my projects, of the experience of the teachers and cooperation with me, the facilitator and the views of the municipality. It would also be interesting to learn if the MIABE actually promotes an increase in the children's awareness of the details of the built environment. In all but one of the schools reported in my story about the "Small Ugly Places" project, the number of minority-linguistic children is high. The MIABE component about acquiring an extended vocabulary deriving from the built environment and public administration has, although on a small scale, proven useful also as a kind of lingual equaliser for the children. This, too, might be an interesting point for further study.

Previously, I have referred to Mark Warren who asks if participatory democracies could possibly produce better selves. Slightly re-written, it would be tempting to ask if more participation projects would possibly produce not just better selves, but also a better democracy.

In the beginning of my introductory chapter I refer to Bert Mulder and his call for a need of reflection on own practice, and a theoretical underpinning of all the existing projects about children and participation. He also called for new, interdisciplinary methods and a new "language". Hopefully, this thesis has contributed to answer his call.

By introducing the MIABE Plus, a possible extended room for children's experience of democratic practices based in a foundation for reflective argument and political dialogue, has emerged. Although related to deliberative democracy, the idea about discussing matters before making some collective decision would correspond to the phase in a participation process prepared in the existing MIABE – to register, to discuss, to criticise and to reflect. John Forster's view of design as a sense-making activity in practical conversations has already been reported. Although not intending to present the components that might comprise the MIABE Plus, the above view of Forester's could serve as an expansion of the already existing MIABE components about new design of street furniture and could therefore serve as

a tool also for using the MIABE Plus to establish a foundation for young people's reflective argument and political dialogue.

Thus, two added meanings of the concept "room" have emerged from my research. The first is about argumentation and dialogue which grew out of (1) an increased understanding of the possibilities for a more reflected participation aimed at in the theory of communicative planning and (2) John Forester's view of design as a sense-making activity. These points contribute to an added meaning of the political room. The second added meaning emerged is the classroom, which relates to the physical room. The classroom, used as a permanent base for education and as the MIABE link to parts of the National Curriculum of 1997, appears to be an important added meaning of the concept of room for achieving participation for all children. Returning to my thesis question, if there is room for children to participate, I would argue that the three rooms, the physical, the administrative and the political, and their expanded meanings, as just explained, all seem to contribute towards a positive answer.

If I should try and relate the possible contextual position of the MIABE Plus to an existing category of participation projects with children – which would it be? Would the model be linked to the categories of urban development plans or to design and architecture in schools? Or, would it be closer to fit the inclusion of youngsters in public participation initiatives aiming at education for citizenship? I suppose the model would be close to a position in the intersection of all three. The MIABE Plus is a model for experiencing general democratic practices, particularly stressing the concept of participation. The foundation for goal achievement is (i) reflective argument and political dialogue, based in (ii) an increased awareness of the built environment. Thus, rather than relating to a particular category of participation projects, I suggest that the MIABE Plus might be viewed as a contribution to a new perspective on participation – a possibility for renewal – in participation projects with children and the young. Not just in projects linked to the Planning and Building Act, but also to municipal sector plans like in the "Small Ugly Places" project.

What, then, about the future of the MIABE? The study and research of my model were based in an aim for a general improvement of practices about children and participation and the built environment rather than for a particular refinement of my own model. Positioning the MIABE in a broader context assisted in an assessment of the MIABE which indicates that a number of its components were commonly used also in other projects holding the same aim, such as the components of drawing, building models, photography, registrations of the area, putting up an exhibition and more. However, few, if any, of the other projects facilitated such a wide range of teaching tools as does the MIABE. A most important finding was that the MIABE component about acquiring an extended vocabulary seems to be unique.

Reflections on the MIABE development, from its initial application to the "Slemdal" project, via the "Råholt" project to the pilot-project about the "Small Ugly Places", have brought attention to age related to comprehension and thus facilitating of some of the MIABE components. This implies that the MIABE and the MIABE Plus might interact or be used separately depending on the age of the participating children. Thus, this thesis has contributed not just to a critical view of the MIABE and its application, but also to evolving an expanded potential in the shape of the MIABE Plus.

My thesis has three objectives. The first is about the MIABE, its many components and how they were facilitated to promote children's participation, and has mainly been achieved by telling my story about the "Small Ugly Places" project. The second objective was reached by reflecting upon this process for achieving participation from the perspective of the theory of communicative planning. Examination of the potential of the MIABE Plus is based on the understanding emerging from the above reflections. Additionally, the positioning of the MIABE in a broader context and the conversations with some of the former users of the model have contributed to achievement of my three thesis objectives.

Hopefully, my new insight will contribute not only to a refinement of the MIABE, but also to new insight for the practitioners in the field of children, participation and the built environment and to the building up of the small field of research to which my thesis belongs. Possibly, the most important lesson learned is that the theory of communicative planning can be a useful tool preparing for democratic citizenship in school projects concerned with children, the built environment and participation.

By introducing the MIABE Plus, my main concern has been to illuminate opportunities for a more deliberative attitude to participation projects with children and the young – in planning, in schools, in the municipalities, and at the governmental level – for the benefit of the individual as well as for society. The built environment would function as a catalyst combining general fostering of social engagement and a particular concern for the neighbourhoods in which the children live.

Hopefully, the many rooms for participation reported in this thesis might be explored and investigated further by teachers, politicians, practitioners in the field, and by researchers – also from other professions than mine.

I am leaving the door ajar…

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Photos: Some of the children, Jorunn Moe and the author.

Drawings and logbook sketches: Anders, Atif, Caroline, Hedda, Martin, Ruben and Tjammal.