EQUAL SPACES EQUAL VOICES

Kids as Today's Citizens

AG2129 HT24 | Project Sustainable Urban Planning
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1 Introduction

We often hear the saying that children are the future, but they are also the citizens of today. As urban planners, it is crucial that we recognise and account for children‘s needs within our urban environments. Yet, despite making up a significant portion of the population, youth are often overlooked in the planning and design of public spaces (van der Burgt & Cele, 2014). Children and youth deserve their own spaces, just as adults do.

Public spaces, such as parks, playgrounds, and streets, are central to the well-being of children and youth. These spaces provide not only places for play but also opportunities for social interaction and physical activity. Research has shown that access to green spaces and proximity to nature can significantly improve children‘s mental health, even influencing their academic performance (Gill, 2021). For example, a study in Denmark found that children living in greener neighborhoods have a 55% lower risk of developing mental health issues later in life (Gill, 2021). The need for play and physical activity is more pressing than ever. Globally, 80% of children and youth do not meet the recommended levels of physical activity, contributing to the rise of child obesity and related health concerns (Gill, 2021).

In terms of why it is important for kids and youth to play, there are multiple positive benefits. In terms of mental benefits, it helps with their cognitive, emotional, and communicative development. This will lead to furthering children‘s abilities to solve problems and conflict (Järfälla, 2017). In terms of physical, it helps motor skills and physical health. There is also a connection between outdoor play in nature as a kid and the interest to be in nature later in life as an adult. On top of that, kids and youth that enjoy sports are more likely to maintain active lifestyles into adulthood, promoting long-term health (Faskunger & Sjöblom, 2017).

Yet, poor urban planning affects children‘s mental and physical health. Issues such as traffic dangers, noise pollution, and air contamination pose threats to children‘s safety and well-being (Gill, 2021). A 2018 UNICEF report highlighted that unplanned urbanisation leads to unhealthy, unsafe environments with limited opportunities for walking, playing, and
accessing nature (Gill, 2021).

In Järfälla, children and youth make up 25% of the population, yet they are underrepresented in both physical space and the planning process. By prioritising the needs of children and youth in urban planning and public space, we can create more inclusive, vibrant, and sustainable communities.

1.1 Problem Formulation

In public space kids and youth are underrepresented, both in physical space and planning practices. Järfälla does not currently have an adequate amount of public space designed and planned for children and young people, even though they make up 25% of the population.

Currently around 7% of the public space designated for children is missing in the focus area of Jakobsberg and Söderhöjden, which equates to 39.000 square meters, roughly 3.5 football fields (see chapter 4.2).

Without involving kids and youth in decisions about public space design, the urban environment fails to meet their specific needs and desires.

1.2 Project Goal

This report aims to elevate the status of children in urban public space, to convince and educate adults that children‘s perspective on the urban environments, public space and urban planning matters, and to suggest a framework how this can be achieved. It is directed towards those with influence: the people who help to shape urban environments, the decision makers.

Equal Representation: This goal emphasises that 25% of public space should be allocated to children and youth, reflecting their proportion of the population in Järfälla. Kids and youth should be seen in public space and it needs to be ensured that they and their needs are represented. Children and young people have the need and the right to their own, accessible public spaces, the right to being equal citizens and participants in urban space.

Accessibility: equal access to their own public spaces for children and youth, enabling them to navigate their neighbourhoods independently and safely.

Participation: This goal emphasises that children and youth should be included in the urban planning process to ensure that their preferences, needs, and experiences are incorporated into the design of public spaces.

Community: Creating public spaces that foster interaction, play, and community-building, strengthening the connection between children, their communities, and their urban environment.

2 Methodology

Following a first site visit in Järfälla, the starting point of the project was initially public space, how it is perceived and used or not used. With this in mind, we began the first phase of the project by splitting into individual research as a literature review on the topics of spatial justice, placemaking and tactical urbanism. In order to learn more about public space in Järfälla and to get to know the residents' perspective, further site visits and a survey were conducted (see 2.2 & 2.5). After an insightful interview with someone from a youth centre in Järfälla (see 2.4), the project group decided to focus on kids and youth.

After this first phase of the project, we further limited our focus group to older kids and youth and decided to closer look and work with a focus area, Jakobsberg and Söderhöjden. Further research was carried out on the needs of the selected focus group (chapter 3.3 & 3.4) as well as an analysis of the focus group in the context of the Järfälla and a detailed analysis of the public space in the focus area.

After this phase of the project, we started to develop the idea for a concept for the equal representation of children and youth in public spaces. At this point the title 'Equal Spaces, Equal Voices, Kids as today's citizens' was created, which introduced the second phase of the project work: the concept. As a start for the conceptual work, a workshop was held with children and young people in a youth centre in Järfälla (see chapter 5.2). In order to further develop and get feedback on the concept, another interview was conducted with an expert in place making and the integration of children and youth in the planning process.

Finally, the concept is presented in chapter 7 with the three pillars consisting of representation, accessibility and participation, as a framework on how kids and youth should be represented equally in public space and in the planning process.

An overview of the methods that we used during our project process is shown in figure 01.

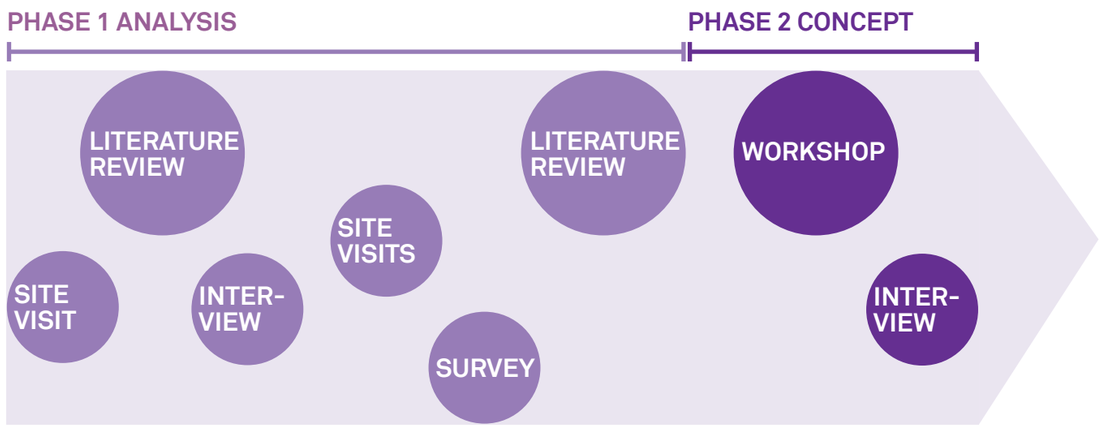


Figure 01: Project Process

2.1 Literature Review

A qualitative study using relevant literature to explore which concepts are relevant in enhancing and further developing public space. This started out with exploring the concepts of placemaking and tactical urbanism as general approaches of how to develop public space through small-scale interventions. Further, literature of how children are perceived in public spaces and in the planning system was examined to get a better understanding of what the shortcomings in current practices revolving children's participation and their perceived agency are, both in the context of Sweden and in other countries. To support both the workshop and the understanding of how children are included in planning practices, several case studies of child-oriented public spaces were explored, some more expert-led, aesthetically pleasing and fun spaces for children to play and hang around, as well as some more progressive planning practices, where children were engaged through participatory practices such as being part of designing the public spaces intended for them themselves. The findings of the literature review provided background, current conditions and inspiration for the final concept proposed in this project.

2.2 Site Visits

To explore the public spaces of Järfälla and to get an understanding of how these are used, we conducted several site visits. The observations we made during the site visits were also intended to help us further define the project in terms of problem definition and focus area. The observations took place on three separate occasions: in the afternoon during the week and during the day on the weekend when the weather was favourable for October.

Observations during the site visits were conducted without active involvement in the space, following the approach outlined by Gehl and Svarre (2013), which emphasises studying public spaces from an external perspective to understand the dynamics of city life. The decision was made to conduct the site visits during specific times when we expected the public spaces to be relatively busy. This timing allowed us to capture a more comprehensive picture of how these spaces function at different times.

Our fieldwork began at the commuter train (pendeltåg) stations, from where we walked around the centres of the districts: Bakarby, Jakobsberg and Kalhäll in Järfälla. We intentionally excluded single-family house areas, such as Viksjö, as public life there mainly takes place in private gardens and yards, which did not align with our study of public spaces.

The observation process was unstructured, which meant that we approached each visit without predefined expectations, simply noting what we came across and what stood out. Some consis-

Figure 02 & 03: Site Visit Photos

tent patterns emerged from our observations: many public spaces appeared empty, with a significant amount of parking lots dominating the landscape. Although there were some attempts to create more inviting spaces, such as urban gardening, 'PIFFL' or seating areas (see figures 02 & 03). We also noticed signs around some areas banning ball games (see figure 04 & 05), which could be a reflection of regulations limiting the use of public spaces.

For documentation both, photographs and observation sheets, were used. The observation sheets were based on the template provided by Setha Low in Why Public Space Matters (2023) (see appendix 11.2).

It should be avoided to make assumptions or judgments only based on the observations during the site visits as it is dependent on contextual factors such as the weather, season and time of day. Especially due to traditional fieldwork requiring at least several months to a year of observations, to get reliable results (Low, 2023).

After the site visits were conducted, we gathered to review and analyse the findings. This collaborative review helped us to define our understanding of the public spaces in Järfälla, guiding the next steps of the project.

Figure 04, 05 & 06: Site Visit Photos

2.3 Interviews

To get a further understanding of Järfälla and how place-making can be used to work together with children and youth in planning processes, two interviews were conducted. The first with a chair member of a youth centre, and the second with an urban planner with a specialisation in place-making for and with children and youth.

The first interview was semi-structured in character, where a few questions were planned beforehand, with room for follow up questions as the interview progressed. The questions presented were structured in three parts; firstly about the youth centre and its role in, secondly the community identity and social segregation in Järfälla, and lastly about places that are important in the community. For further information, see appendix 11.1. The interview provided a deeper understanding of the lived conditions in Järfälla, as well as the need for spaces where children can feel safe in public, and is referenced as Respondent 1 in the report.

The second interview was also semi-structured with pre-planned questions. The questions revolved around the topic of how to include children in the planning process, with a focus on place-making. The interview revolved around how and where place-making can be a strategy for including children in the planning process, which actors are involved, as well as challenges in the process. For further information, see appendix 11.1. The interview provided a view into how place-making strategies currently involve children and what challenges exist in doing so, and is referenced as Respondent 2 in the report.

2.4 Survey

When planning for different areas in a city, there is a challenge for urban planners to consider the inhabitant's needs. This is often because of the lack of participation in the process. However, a survey is a tool for planners to try to define boundaries in the context (Groves, 2009; Corley, n.d.). There are a lot of advantages to conducting a survey, it's low in cost, gathers a great general picture of an issue, is often time effective, may lead to a high number of responses, and is easy for people to participate (Groves, 2009; Corley, n.d.)

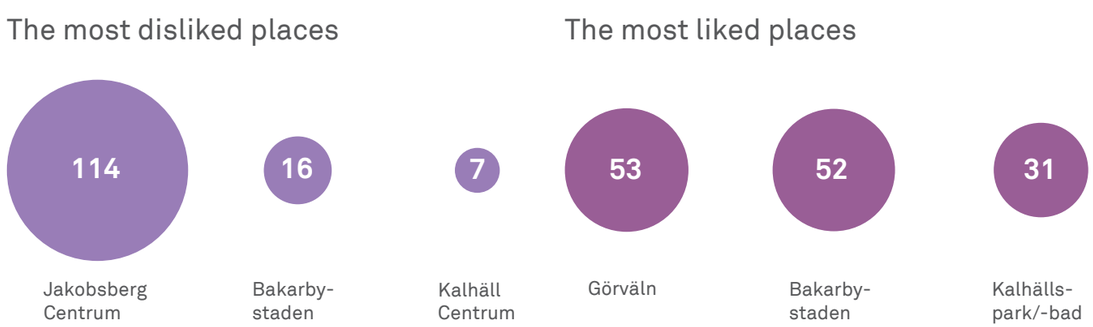
For this project, we therefore used a survey as a tool to collect opinions and ideas in order to tackle the problem of understanding residents' needs in urban planning. The survey was distributed via an online platform, accessible through a link. The questions focused on understanding specific needs, preferences, and challenges experienced by residents within places we thought were underutilized spaces or public spaces in Järfälla. Given the advantages of online surveys, such as ease of participation and potential for a high response rate, this format allowed us to quickly get a lot of opinions from a large number of inhabitants (275 participants). However, as noted by Corley (n.d.), one limitation of online surveys is accessibility, as participation is limited to individuals with internet access. This limitation was acknowledged during the process and was also one factor in the process of choosing kids and youth as a focus group, since this started a conversation about how they as a group can participate in the planning process.

The responses from the survey can provide a general overview of how public spaces are perceived and utilized, and help identify key themes for further analysis. The result of a survey does not however reflect a whole population or group. Even if the respondents are random, the information can not be seen as completely reliable. The result of a survey can however be used as a view of an issue and can serve as an inference based on the population for arguments made in the discussion; they will serve as a valuable inference tool for discussions and arguments related to ur-

ban planning decisions (Groves, 2009). By analyzing trends in the responses, we can gain insights into how inhabitants experience and perceive their surroundings and identify areas for improvement. Different respondents were interested in being involved in the development of public spaces to different degrees, which shows a range of levels of engagement with the community. Opinions ranged from enthusiastic engagement to not caring about possible outcomes of urban planning.

The most liked locations based on the survey were natural regions like Säby Gård, Järvafältet, and Görvälns Naturreservat. These places were valued for their peace, greenery, and closeness to the water; they provided peaceful settings for outdoor activities like walking and picnics.

In addition, parks like Hummelmora Äng and Kallhällsparken were praised for their family-friendly features and scenic beauty (see appendix 11.3). The locations people disliked in the survey were Riddarparken, Kallhälls Centrum, and Jakobsbergs Centrum were frequently condemned for feeling unsafe, abandoned, and ugly. Many respondents expressed worries about cleanliness and upkeep, characterizing these locations as gloomy, concrete-heavy, and devoid of flora. Additionally, Barkarbystaden's difficult traffic and lack of welcoming pedestrian areas were brought up (see appendix 11.3).



2.5 Workshop

Workshops in general can be used in pedagogical models, such as the problem-oriented project learning- model (PPL) as part of the process (Frandsen & Andersen, 2019). In short, workshops are a well rounded and versatile tool, which is also why we chose to use it in our study.

To create spaces for and by children is not a new concept. The same goes for doing so using workshops. One example of this is from the report "Flickrum i det offentliga" (Girl rooms in the public space) in which young girls got to cooperate with architects to create a public space for young girls (Åkerman et al., 2018). In this workshop, the architects participating got special instruction on how to interact with young girls to create a comfortable environment, such as always letting the girls finish their sentences and listen attentively. This example inspired us in using the creative aspect and focusing on communicating with children in a way that encouraged them to be creative. Although in our case, we did not have the same resources as the previous example had.

To figure out how to create a successful workshop, we consulted several teachers, collected research as well as brainstormed in the group on how this should be done before we settled on a structure. We started out by preparing some slides with a variety of pictures from Järfälla as well as some pictures of different case studies and activities they might enjoy and asked them what they thought about it. Some examples of that were the dansbana in Liljeholmen, playgrounds, Jakobsberg centrum and a sports field. The point of this was to get the children and youths to start reflecting on what kind of public place they wanted before attempting to create their own. After that, each participant got an A3 paper, pens and glue. Previous to this, we had prepared about 30 different pictures in small sizes (see appendix 11.4) that we spread out like a smorgasbord for them to pick the ones they liked. Meanwhile, we also tried to encourage them to draw their own addition if they felt like something was missing. The workshop outcome were unique collages (see chapter 5.2) that gave us inspiration on how children and young people imagine their own public spaces, and that helped us to draw conclusions on how children and youth can be involved in urban planning and the design of public spaces.

Figure 07: Workshop

Figure 08: Workshop

3
Public Space

In the following chapter, a definition of public space is provided and the importance of public space is discussed, reflecting on its potential, its accessibility and its nature as a space of exclusion. This provides a foundation for analysing public space from the perspective of children and young people. Then, the kids and youth's perspective on public space is explored by how they currently are involved in the planning process, and how current planning ideals affect children's spaces. Further, the capabilities and needs of the different ages in the children and youth are presented.

3.1 The Role of Public Space

Public space is all around us. It is an essential and vital part of everyday urban life (Franck & Huang, 2023; UN-Habitat, 2018). It's the streets we walk down on our way to school or work, the parks where children play and people gather. To be outdoors is partially a culture, partially a necessity, especially for people of ethnic background and low income, when public space (can) function as an „open-air living room", offering urban residents a place to socialise, relax, and interact with their surroundings. (Make Space for Girls, n.d.a; UN-Habitat, 2018).

Public space is generally defined as property open for public use, including streets, sidewalks, parks and plazas (Mitchell & Staeheli, 2009). Schools, universities, train stations, playgrounds, and sports fields are also considered types of public space (Franck & Huang, 2023). According to Franck and Huang (2023), public spaces have four key criteria:
1: Public spaces are free and accessible to all.
2: Different kinds of people, most of whom do not know each other can spend time.
3: One encounters people who may well differ from oneself in age, race, gender, nationality, life circumstances .
4: One can participate in or observe a great variety of activities public spaces define the character of a city.

Access to sufficient open public space is essential for cities to function efficiently and equitably, but accessibility of public spaces for everyone is not always ensured (UN-Habitat, 2018: Franck & Huang, 2023). Public space is socially constructed, and not all groups have equal access to, neither are equally represented in these spaces. Therefore, the UN Habitat has set a goal for 2030 to provide universal access to safe, inclusive, and accessible public spaces, with particular attention to women, children, elderly, and persons with disabilities (UN-Habitat, 2018).

Public space plays an important role, especially for children and young people, as they spend more time in public spaces, including streets, parks and playgrounds (Gill, 2021). In addition, there is evidence that environmental features such as green spaces and proximity to nature have a direct impact on mental health and can also influence children's academic performance (Gill, 2021). A study in Denmark of more than one million people found that children who lived in greener neighbourhoods had a 55% lower risk of developing mental health problems later in life, even when other known risk factors such as socioeconomic status, urbanisation and a family history of mental disorders were taken into account (Gill, 2021).

Local governments play a crucial role in ensuring the adequate provision of public spaces, as highlighted by UN Habitat (2018). According to UN Habitat, about 15-20% of urban areas should be dedicated to open public space. The challenge is to maintain and expand these spaces in the face of growing urban populations and the demands of city development.

Public spaces help define the character as they shape the city's identity and contribute to its visual and social fabric (UN-Habitat, 2018). But it is more than just a physical area, it is a social resource that shapes the dynamics of a city. While it is under pressure due to urbanisation, it remains crucial for well-being and should offer places for people of all backgrounds to interact, kids to play, and youth to hang out and spend their free-time (UN-Habitat, 2018).

3.2 Public Space is Exclusionary

Public space is not neutral. Public space is deeply interwoven with social, political and economic dynamics. It is a space that reflects and enacts power relations that influence how and by whom it is used. Despite the idealised notion of public space as an open, free place where anyone can be without fear of exclusion, this has never truly been the case. As Mitchell (1996) argues, public spaces have always been sites of exclusion.

In this sense, public space is a deeply political space. Who is represented in public space is often determined by the definition of the public itself and the 'appropriate use' of public space (Kilian, 1998). If a person or group is excluded from public space, their needs may be ignored (Kilian, 1998). Exclusions can manifest in a variety of ways, shaped by race, gender, class and not only reflect social inequalities, but can also reinforce them (Mitchell, 1996). Exclusion is not only a matter of who is kept out but also who is allowed in and under what conditions. While much attention has been given to exclusions based on race, gender, and class, an often overlooked dimension of public space is the role of age.

Mitchell (1996) raises the question of what happens when certain age groups are excluded from these spaces? And whether a space that excludes children can still be considered 'public' in the same sense? Urban public space is in many ways age-specific and is experienced differently by children, teenagers, adults and older people. Public space can contribute to restricting the experiences and rights of different age groups in the same urban environment.

However, public space also holds the potential to challenge and change social inequalities, depending on how public space is governed and who has the power to influence its design and use. When spaces are designed inclusively, they can serve as places of empowerment and social change. When they are reshaped through collective action and inclusive design to better serve all members of society, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity or class (Low, 2023).

In this project, as already mentioned, the focus is on (older) children and young people. The exploration of public space through the lens of (older) children and young people is used to explore public space as a potential space for social change. It should be mentioned here that there are naturally many perspectives, related to gender, age, ethnicity or class.

3.3 Kids and Youth's perspective on Public Space

Kids and youth are to a high extent excluded from planning questions, deeming them non-social actors which do not need to participate in questions regarding their surroundings (van der Burgt & Cele, 2014). This is rooted in the idea that childhood is and should be kept as an innocent position in society, where this group should not have to take on "adult" responsibilities such as planning. Instead, children are often highlighted as "future" citizens, where their future adulthood is deemed important, while neglecting their current capabilities and pushing certain agendas for their future lived reality to be the utopian version of plans created today (Cele, 2014).

The idea of children as innocent and something else compared to adulthood is prevalent in current discourse, but historically, is somewhat of a new phenomena. Children worked from a young age, but through legislation to protect children from labour and instead educating children from a young age, children went from being productive to useless from an economical perspective (Simpson, 1997). It is also through this change of children being protected from being part of the labour market that the idea of children as future citizens came about, and still manifests itself in all areas of society, according to Simpson (1997).

By applying the rhetoric of children as future citizens, while at the same time segregating children to schools and other places exclusively planned for children in the urban fabric, planners and politicians have been able to disregard children as capable actors in the planning process (Simpson, 1997). The notion of future citizens makes children invisible in areas they have a lived experience of, while also excluding them from urban life and decision-making. Cele (2014) claims that this might be the reason why planners and politicians neglect that children are experts in their realities, instead seeing themselves as experts in what children want and need in the urban fabric.

There are examples of when children are involved in the planning process, but it is often older children who are deemed to have a better understanding of the complexity of the planning system and consequences of their proposals. However, as stated by Cele (2014), these processes for engaging children in planning often result in consultation, rather than actual participation. There are examples of involvement in the planning process in cities such as Vienna, where children and youth have taken an active part in parliaments aimed at the different age-groups (Stadt Wien, 2019). In these institutions, children and youth have the opportunity to suggest interventions they want to see happen in public spaces in the city, with a specifically aimed budget allocated to fund and achieve these initiatives. When working with approaches like these, it could achieve health benefits, since it is shown that children and youth's health increase when they are allowed to participate and influence their surroundings, as well as increasing the understanding of democratic processes (Järfälla kommun, 2017).

One reason for how planning processes in general lack input from the youngest of the population might be because of how planners feel that children express that they want to see immediate results of their involvement in participatory planning processes, which is difficult to provide as a planner (Cele & van der Burgt, 2015). This might further be a reason why children often are mentioned in long-term comprehensive plans, rather than more relevant and near future detailed development plans.

While being deemed unfit to engage in questions of planning, children are as affected by planning decisions as adults in their everyday lives. Areas which are used by children to play and move freely are threatened by densification projects, affecting childrens' and others groups' access to these spaces in cities (Cele, 2014). This is something that is highlighted by Jansson & Sunding (2024), who walked around with children in a smaller Swedish city to hear their perspectives on current constructions. The children highlighted how several areas around their school were being developed, areas that they saw as their spaces with interesting characteristics and opportunities. The children were not entirely against all developments happening around their school, but the ones closest to it were critiqued, and the children had protested against these developments to the municipality, but did not feel like their perspectives were deemed interesting by planners and politicians. The children further highlighted how important it was for them to have their own spaces outside to be alone or to do the activities they liked without fighting for space with others (Jansson & Sunding, 2024). This might be linked to how the children felt pushed away from a newly built elderly home near their school, which had put up prohibition signs to walk through after the children had been attracted to the outdoor environments of the development.

Children are affected by how planning is conducted, and might further be with current planning ideals, where private building companies to a larger extent control development than before in Sweden. With this neoliberal tendency, how children are planned for by these companies are crucial in how children have access to places of their own, since play spaces for children are not an economically profitable investment for these companies (Cele & van der Burgt, 2015). Planners interviewed by Cele (2015) further state that the ideals of welfare planning in the 1950's through 1970's, where children's independent mobility was in mind, are impossible in today's Sweden. This is something that can be linked to the neoliberalisation of the planning process and the view of children as less equal in urban space and private actors taking over several parts of the planning process. Children being viewed as future citizens by municipalities might be more of a recognition of their existence in planning than what plans conducted by private companies will provide for currently and in the future.

3.4 Kids and Youth: Different Age Groups & their Needs

Depending on ages, gender, sex and mobility, different kids will have different needs and their backgrounds might also affect their priorities. When children in Sweden reach age 10 or 11, they have often started moving independently in the city and will want to explore new hobbies and interests independent of their parents (Jansson & Sunding, 2024). In Ung Livsstil Malmö, it was clear that although the differences of priorities are not extreme, it's still noticeable (Blomdahl et al., 2021). For example, young girls are more likely to want facilities for dancing, while boys prioritise football fields. The difference in how kids use public space changes across age. The gendered difference is small for younger kids in how they enjoy public space is small (Karsten, 2003). It's when they get older it's more noticeable. The change in behaviour is a possible consequence of society's gendered socialisation on boys and girls. Karsten noted that in public spaces such as playgrounds, girls are more likely to challenge the gendered division than boys, taking part in activities dominated by boys.

Other things might be very similar, for example, in Ung Livsstil Malmö, the municipality asked kids between middle school and gymnasium what kind of facilities they want the municipality to invest in. The percentage of kids wishing for certain activities generally differs, but more soccer fields are in the top five for all ages (Blomdahl et al., 2021). When they investigated the difference between social economic groups as well as comparing children with immigrant backgrounds compared to those without, the difference in what they wanted was much smaller. In general, immigrant kids' priorities are often more related to their individual cultural context than the fact that they're immigrants in itself (Karsten, 2003). They did comment that youth from poorer socioeconomic groups are more likely to be less physically active (Blomdahl et al., 2021). Kids from richer families tend to do more after school activities. A lot of these activities are costly, which is why it's important for the municipality to find ways of countering that issue to make physical activity accessible for all.

4 The under-represented 25%

Järfälla municipality states that their parks and squares cater to older children and youth, as well as activity spaces such as sport fields, ice skating rinks, basketball courts, and skateboard facilities. However, regarding the availability and quality of spaces specifically tailored for older children and youth, there is definitely a lack and underrepresentation that can be identified. Apart from that, one of the youth centers, Unga Örnar, nearly had to shut down due to lack of funding (Respondent 1, 2024). Despite the comprehensive plan's goal to support youth organisations (Järfälla kommun, 2014).

In the following chapter, a closer look will be taken on kids and youth in Järfälla and what the municipality is already planning for kids and youth. To space is explored by how they currently are involved in the planning process, and how current planning ideals affect children's spaces. Further, the capabilities and needs of the different ages in the children and youth are presented, as well as how much space is planned for children and youth in Järfälla's public spaces.

4.1 Kids & Youth in Järfälla

Kids and Youth 25% of the total population in Järfälla (figure 09). The proportion is, compared to the Stockholm region where the percentage of inhabitants below 19 years is 21 %, significantly higher (SCB, 2023). While the age group distribution of kids and youth from 0 until 19 years is evenly distributed (figure 10). How does the municipality take children and young people into account in the comprehensive plan and in other policy and planning documents?
And are there offers and considerations for all different age groups with their different needs and requirements?

According to the municipality's Play and Activity Plan from 2017, in Järfälla, there are currently 52 public playgrounds existing (Järfälla kommun, 2017). Most of the existing playgrounds were built in the 1960s and 1970s. 48 of the total of 52 playgrounds are designed for younger children, leaving only four designated for older kids as well. In addition to playgrounds, the northern district of Kallhäll offers a '4 H farm' and several playground activity organisations. The area also features a popular horseback riding facility near Säby Gård, which engages many children and youth (Järfälla kommun, 2014).
In terms of sport fields, Järfälla is responsible for 48 of the 80 sport fields in the municipality.

While the municipality's current focus is on playgrounds for younger children, the play and activity plan also acknowledges that there is a noticeable gap in facilities for older children and youth (Järfälla kommun, 2017). Additionally, the existing playgrounds are not fully accessible for children with disabilities or mobility challenges. Furthermore, only 10 of these playgrounds were equipped with lighting for evening use (Järfälla kommun, 2017).

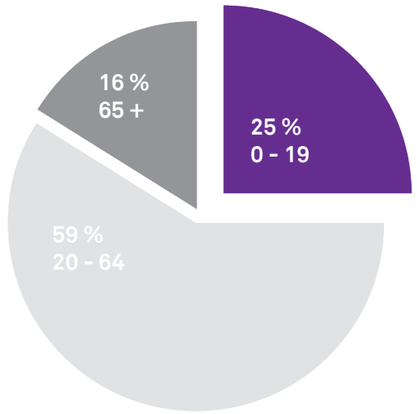


Figure 09: Total Age Group

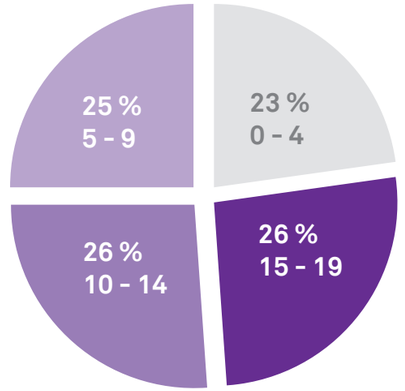


Figure 10: Kids Age Groups

4.2 How much Public Space is planned for Kids & Youth?

To find out how much public space is planned for children and youth, we used QGIS to analyse Jakobsberg and Söderhöjden as our main focus area. This decision was made as a result of the survey, in which Jakobsberg Centrum was often mentioned as a 'disliked place', as well as our first interview with someone from a youth center in that area. Furthermore, the area being is of the urban centres of Järfälla and and a higher populated and densified areas. In this context, Gill (2021) notes that for older children and youth in particular, high-density areas offer greater potential compared to single-family neighbourhoods, as services, schools, leisure facilities and friends can be found nearby and are therefore easily accessible on foot or by bike. In low-density areas, on the other hand, children and young people may be reliant on their carers to drive them somewhere and are more isolated, and public transport is not as frequently available (Gill, 2021). Furthermore, children do not grow up in cities, but in neighbourhoods (Gill, 2021)

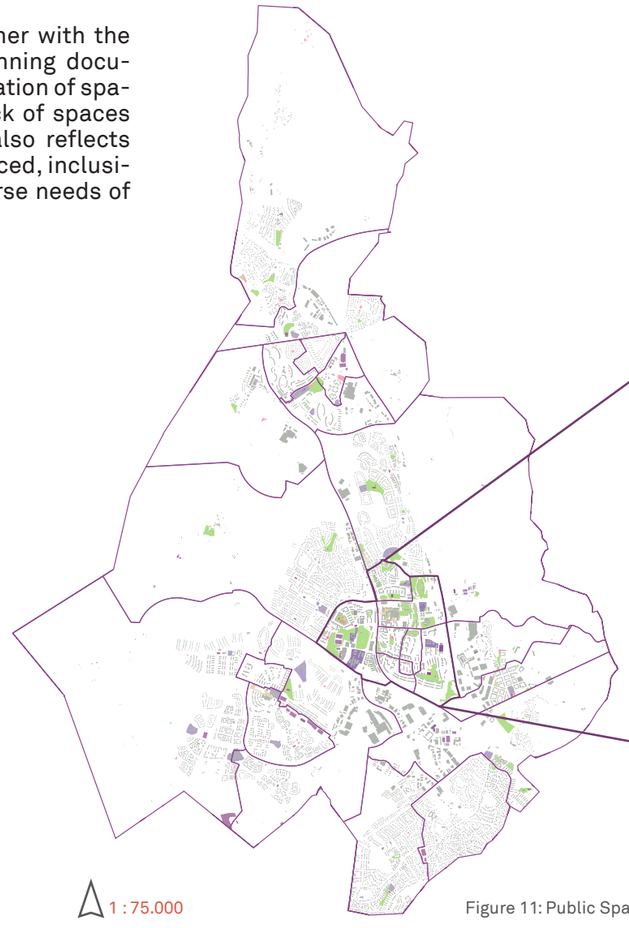
First, the following five categories were chosen for the analysis: squares, parks, schools, sports grounds, and playgrounds. Squares and parks were hereby defined as spaces intended for the general public, not specifically designed for chil-

dren or youth, while playgrounds, schools, and sports fields were considered as spaces planned with children and/or youth in mind. We excluded preschools from this analysis due to their limited public accessibility and age-specific focus on children under the age of six.

For the Jakobsberg and Söderhöjden focus area, our analysis showed that 76.5 % of public space is designated for green spaces and parks and a further 4 % of public space for squares (see figure 11). In total, 80.5 % of public space is used by the general public, while only 19.5 % is earmarked specifically for children and young people. Of this, 14.5 % is accounted for by schools, 2.5 % by playgrounds and a further 2.5 % by sports grounds (see figure 11).

This analysis of public space, together with the previous analysis of policy and planning documents, highlights an underrepresentation of spaces for children and especially a lack of spaces for older children and youth. This also reflects broader challenges in creating balanced, inclusive public spaces that serve the diverse needs of all age groups within the community.

As mentioned in chapter 3.4 children are affected by planning decisions in their everyday lives. As seen in Map (Figure 12) areas close to schools were developed between 2003 and 2022. Which can lead to space that is taken away from children and youth to play and move freely, being threatened by densification projects. This highlights a general issue of a decline of urban play spaces that Cele points out (Cele, 2015).



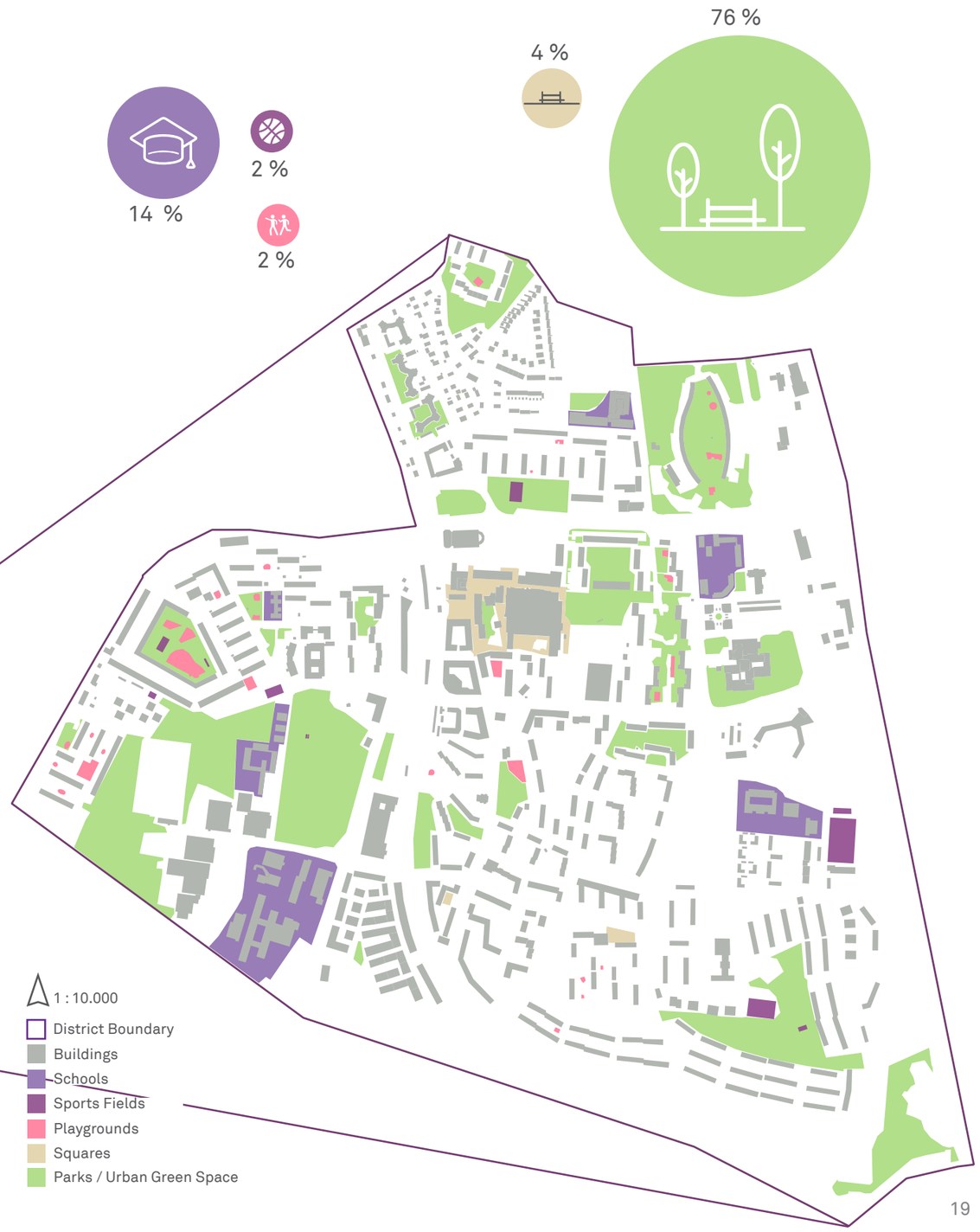
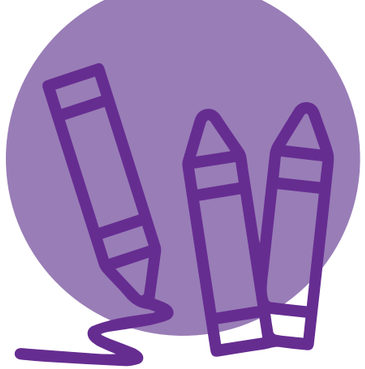


Figure 11: Public Space Map

Figure 12: Densification Map

5 Workshop



The following chapter introduces several case studies that are used as examples within the workshop and serve as inspiration for spaces for children and young people, as well as positive examples for the inclusion of children and youth in planning practice. The workshop and its results are then presented.

5.1 Case Studies

Dansbana in Liljeholmen, Stockholm
Throughout the summer, the pontoon in Liljeholmshamnen has been an active hub for dance enthusiasts, offering training and courses in various styles such as kizomba, semba, and hip-hop freestyle. This initiative is part of Stockholm's broader efforts to develop and activate public spaces, providing opportunities for creative expression and community engagement. The project, originally sponsored by ArkDes as part of the 2018 exhibition "Public Luxury," encourages public participation by allowing anyone to connect their music for a limited amount of time, creating a dynamic and inclusive atmosphere (Dansbana, 2022a). While its usage varies, a Facebook event related to the space showed that 36 people attended and 457 expressed interest, highlighting its potential to draw in a diverse audience (Dansbana, 2022b).

Figure 13: Dansbana

"En Frizon för unga tjejer", Umeå
As one of Sweden's first public spaces specifically focused on encouraging young girls to claim their place in the public realm, Frizon is a pioneering project. Participation was central to its development, reflecting the understanding that gender perspectives in urban planning remain underexplored, as noted by the consultation firm Tyréns and the municipality of Umeå. Frizon is guided by the motto: „A place free from expectations where one can feel safe." This initiative was born from the city of Umeå's realization that girls often do not frequent the same public spaces as boys, such as sports facilities and playgrounds. To address this, workshops were conducted with girls to design a space that prioritizes safety and inclusivity, creating a welcoming environment for all (Fastighetstidingen, 2016).

Figure 14: Umea

Rosens Röda Matta, Malmö, Sweden
The city of Malmö realised that its youth parks were dominated by boys. To tackle this problem, there was an initiative to redesign an old car park in the disadvantaged suburb of Rosengård (Make Space for Girls, n.d.b). The space was designed in consultation with a group of girls (aged 16 to 24) from the neighbourhood. The result was Rösens Roda Matta, an urban activity park with a climbing wall, a stage for performances and a series of bars for climbing and gymnastics. The area is also divided into a series of smaller spaces so that not one group can dominate (Make Space for Girls, n.d.b).
Most importantly, it is a park designed by and for girls, and the girls had a great experience when being consulted to influence their environment, which they found as satisfying as the redesign of the park (Make Space for Girls, n.d.b). Therefore, after the completion of Rösens Roda Matta, the city of Malmö established a permanent interest group to help other girls and women to participate in urban planning and influence the design of their city (Make Space for Girls, n.d.b).

Figure 15: Rosen Röda Matta

Einsiedler Park, Vienna, Austria
Einsiedler Park is a small enclosed square in an ethnically mixed neighbourhood of Vienna. The park serves as a central living room of the district due to the flats being really small in the area (Make Space for Girls, n.d.a). The park was redesigned in a gender-sensitive way to give girls and young women better positions in public spaces and public parks, who had no place of their own, were often the caretaker of their siblings and were excluded from spaces in the park due to older boys occupying spaces (Make Space for Girls, n.d.a). Therefore, visible and clear footpaths were implemented, as well as good lighting, spaces were divided into smaller sub-zones, wide entrances and exits, different areas for resting and lingering, as well as game and excitation zones (Make Space for Girls, n.d.a)

Figure 16: Einsiedler Park

Wall-Holla in Krakow, Poland
Initially, before building this playground, it was a few hectares of concrete and asphalt used as a MBK depot (MBK operates public transport in Krakow) and taxiway, at the time labeled as an unused space. This jungle gym is the first vertical playground in Poland, with the two walls and play decks inside. To create this playground, local residents got to participate in the planning process. Now it has something for all ages, seating and grassfields, playgrounds for kids, youths and adults can enjoy recreational activities such as gym and sports fields as well as boule courts for the elders. Thousands of plants and trees were planted to make this area green and biodiverse. This project was successful enough to win awards for creating a greener city (Green cities Europe, 2022).

Figure 17: Playground

Trissans hjärta in Bredäng, Stockholm
Trissans hjärta is an outdoor sports field in the Stockholm suburb of Bredäng, which was planned and envisioned through workshops with young girls to create opportunities for spontaneous play that is not just suited for boys (Nivå landskapsarkitektur, n.d.). The initiative came about as a response to the fact that children and youth are not getting enough physical activity, with teenage girls being the most inactive. An important aspect of the space was for it to feel safe and inclusive for everyone, not just for the young girls, but also for their parents, siblings and friends. After construction was finished, the same group of girls that were partaking in the workshops had the opportunity to activate the space with activities that they planned and led.

Figure 18: Trissans Hjärta

Grätzloasen/"Junge Grätzl", Vienna, Austria
Grätzloasen is a project initiated by the state of Vienna, where groups can seek funding for making their own improvements in public space in direct access to their homes, schools and workplaces (Grätloase, n.d.). One part of this, the Junge Grätzl, is directly aimed towards children and youth in the city, where public space can be transformed to tailor towards activities and places that children can help to plan and create subsidised by the local government by up to 5.000 euros. This can be seen as a part of the more general Children and youth strategy that the state of Vienna has established, which aims to make Vienna the most children and youth friendly city in the world (Stadt Wien, 2019). The plan consists of several aspects to make children and youth more present in decision-making, by for instance installing separate parliaments for children and youth, which highlights the importance for democracy now and in the future, where kids of today may be more keen on engaging in political activity due to their early inclusion. In total, 1 million euros are budgeted for children every second year, which is to be used for creating activities and places that children want in the city.

Figure 19: Grätzloasen

Dinosaur Playground, Madrid
Dinosaurio del Manzanares is a playground located in Madrid that houses a 40 metres long jungle gym shaped like a dinosaur. The construction includes several activities, such as an aerial cableway, slides, balancing elements, places to climb as well as seating. It also has a roof that might protect the kids from direct sun and rain (Lappset, 2019).

Figure 20: Dinosaur Playground

5.2 Workshop Outcome

On November 22, 2024, we held a workshop at a youth center in Järfälla from 15:00 pm to 16:30 pm. The workshop involved about 10 participants from the ages 9–15 years old, and 2 group leaders were present. The aim for the workshop was to explore children's perspectives on public spaces through discussion and creative activities. The first part of the workshop included a slideshow which showed examples of children's public spaces from around the world, but also local areas in Järfälla and Jakobsberg. This activity was designed to capture the participants' initial impressions and opinions about public spaces. They spoke out freely about what they thought when we went through the pictures.

Figure 21: Workshop Outcome

The second activity of the workshop was about the children being encouraged to envision their ideal public spaces. Some of the pictures here were also shown in the first activity. The children were also given the opportunity to add drawings or to write ideas to further personalize their vision and add things that we did not have pictures of. With this activity we aimed to inspire creativity and explore how different urban spaces and activities resonate with children. During the slideshow there were some kids with louder voices who tended to dominate in the discussion that was held. Some children who did not express their opinion still agreed even if they might have some different opinions. However, when we looked at the collages, it was revealed that the group of children had a much broader diversity of opinions, with individual preferences and ideas on their collages (figure 21-25).

Figure 22: Workshop Outcome

One interesting outcome from the slideshow was that the kids preferred pictures where there were less cars, room for spontaneous activities, or spaces where activities do not have to be set up for specific things. Some kids also wrote on their collages, writing words like places for teenagers, and fun places. Some kids also drew roads, connecting the different pictures, and flowers, lights and trees. After the workshop, we gathered the collages, and created a ranking of the most popular photos (see appendix 11.4). This visit worked as a foundation for our vision, which

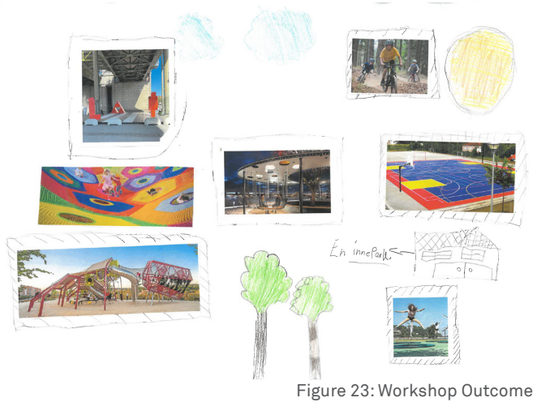


Figure 23: Workshop Outcome

aims to give a utopian space that reflects the target group's needs. It is also a part of the project concept, where it serves as an example of a way to engage kids and youth in the planning process through participation.

Figure 24: Workshop Outcome

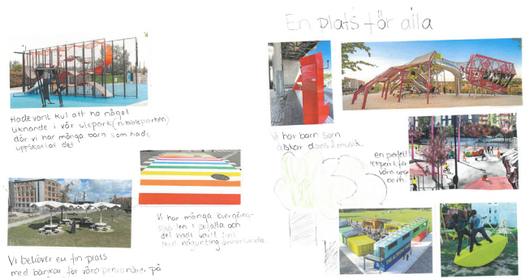


Figure 25: Workshop Outcome

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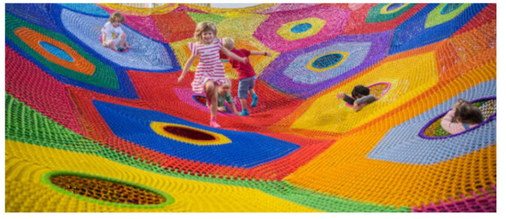
3		06	5		04

Figure 26: Ranking Workshop Photos

Figure 27: Ranking Workshop Photos

Figure 28: Vision

6
Place-Making

In the following chapter, the concept of place-making is introduced by covering its origins, its potential for community engagement and design of physical space, as well as how place-making processes could be structured to include children and youth in the process.

6.1 Early Theories & Origins

The approach of place-making has evolved noticeably over time, emerging from broader fields like social theory and urban planning. Its development reflects changing views over time on how spaces are planned, used, and experienced by communities. Understanding the historical evolution of place-making is essential for grasping its current applications and the diverse strategies used to create meaningful environments (Keidar et al., 2024). Understanding the historical evolution of place-making is important to understand how planning has shifted from top-down approaches to more inclusive, participatory methods. This highlights the need to design spaces that reflect how children interact with their environment, to be able to foster play, safety, and creativity. For our project, this supports the goal of creating inclusive public spaces by emphasizing the importance of children's perspectives.

The researcher Keidar (et al. 2024) argues that the starting point of place-making can be found in urban theorists who criticized the strict, top-down urban planning methods of the mid-20th century. Jane Jacobs (1961) was one of the most important researchers in this area, with the book The Death and Life of Great American Cities, which emphasized the value of mixed-use development, a lively street life, and the social fabric of neighborhoods. Jacobs argued against modernist urban planning's tendency to put massive infrastructure projects ahead of local communities' needs. To create a feeling of place and allow for natural social connections, she emphasized that cities should be planned with the people living there in mind. Jacobs' advocacy for mixed-use developments and vibrant street life also laid the groundwork for considering diverse groups, including children, as essential participants in urban planning.

Similarly, urban sociologist Whyte (1980) made a meaningful contribution to the early understanding of place-making through his research on the use of public space. Whyte noted in his book The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces how individuals engage with many aspects of urban settings, including open areas, flora, and seating designs. His work helped shape the idea that places should be designed to emphasize human needs and behaviors by laying the groundwork for understanding how physical design might affect social behavior in public areas, a principle that applies directly to creating child-friendly spaces. This approach also aligns with more modern researchers like Fields (2015) who argue against the top-down methods, highlighting how financialization creates new challenges for place-making.

6.2 Community Engagement

From these early theories and origins, the focus of the approach has evolved to prioritize various key components within place-making. Community engagement, which emphasizes local inhabitants' involvement in the planning and development of their public places, is an important aspect of place-making. According to Toolis (2017), place-making can give priority to the opinions of people who use and live in a space, in contrast to traditional urban planning techniques that frequently depend on top-down decision-making. This aligns with what Ghavampour & Vale (2019) bring up in their article, that a community's needs, goals, and cultural identities are reflected in the spaces that are created thanks to community engagement. However, Toolis (2017) discusses how even though place-making emphasizes community engagement, there is often a challenge in ensuring that the process is genuinely inclusive. Even with efforts to include certain groups such as kids and youth might not participate.

6.3 Physical Design of Public Spaces

The physical design of public spaces is an important part of place-making, by shaping how people interact with and experience their surroundings. For children and youth, these interactions are not only functional but also developmental, influencing their social growth. Toolis (2017) discusses the physical layout of public areas, and how the built environment can promote social interaction and create inclusive settings. A community's character and the welfare of its citizens are influenced by, for example, parks and town squares. To create spaces that are not just attractive but also easily accessible, place-making design aims to balance between aesthetic appeal and utility. However, Madanipour (2019) and Toolis (2017) discuss the challenges of enhancing the physical layout of public areas through place-making, which can unintentionally contribute to gentrification. This aligns with Shaw's (2015) arguments about how shops and meeting places that used to cater to the needs of low-income people are being replaced by upmarket shops, cafes, and restaurants. This leads to a reduction in access to affordable services, but also to a loss of places for social interaction and community.

While the physical design of public spaces shapes social interactions, the cultural and social dimensions of place-making are, based on Madanipour (2019), equally essential. He argues that place-making includes social and cultural factors that influence how places are viewed and appreciated in addition to physical design. Ghavampour & Vale (2019) contribute to this discussion with the thought of place-making as something that not only sees places as just sites but as places that are infused with memories that shape a community's identity, making them particularly effective for children who thrive in environments that are both stimulating and familiar. While place-making can be seen as an approach that values local culture and heritage, Madanipour (2019) brings up that there is a risk of romanticizing or oversimplifying cultural identities. In attempting to capture the essence of a community through for example public art or historical markers, place-making projects can sometimes reduce complex cultural narratives into simplified symbols or events.

6.4 Tactical Urbanism

What is tactical Urbanism? According to the dictionary, the word “tactical” can be defined as small-scale actions that serve a bigger purpose (Lydon & Garcia, 2015). This is also relevant to what tactical urbanism does for a city. Although tactical urbanism in general often operates on a smaller scale; depending on what actor that initiated, it can still vary in size. It can be everything from a temporary park, buildings, seatings to art installation or gardens. Acts of tactical urbanism can be just as well initiated by public as well as private, NGOs, local resident groups or just driven individuals. It can be seen as a natural reaction towards the slow-moving urban building process that often takes years to finish. The reasoning behind doing these initiatives depends, but according to Lydon and Garcia there were three common reasons (Lydon & Garcia, 2015). The first would be for citizens to exercise their “right to the city” through challenging municipal bureaucracy and traditional processes while also showing how change is possible. The second would be as a way for public, private and non-profits stakeholders to engage the general public in their planning processes, from beginning to end. Finally, it could be a way for developers to test a project before implementing long-term and therefore prevent failure. These points can all be interconnected, such as the first leading to the second and finally the third.

Tactical urbanism, when used correctly, can more effectively address issues and needs in an area (Neméth & Langhorst, 2013). Since it’s more flexible, it also opens up the possibility of trying different solutions until something works. It can also be beneficial in times of political and/or economic uncertainty, in which there is a hesitance to enter larger scale projects and investments. In general, with a more bottom-up approach, the local community can benefit from acts of tactical urbanism (Neméth & Langhorst, 2013). One example of this is play streets. This is when a street is temporarily closed off for traffic during the day so children can use it for playing safely (Mitra & Abbasi, 2020). This directly addresses issues in areas lacking parks for safe outdoor activities for children. One example of this was in Toronto in 2017 where they had a total of 155 street play events during June, September and October that year (Mitra & Abbasi, 2020). Engaged community members help supervise the event safely, such as parents and local residents, and the kids get to engage in a variety of activities, everything from ball sport to drawing to skating. Surveys conducted confirmed the positive response, with some minor complaints about the mobility issues for cars in the area during the events. Notably, 91.4% of the neighborhood thought that the event offered a safe space for kids to play during the events.

6.5 Approaches for Place-Making incl. Kids and Youth

As presented in earlier parts, place-making has a great potential of including children and youth in processes that engage them in their local spaces. Bringing the youngest of the population into place-making processes, it has the opportunity to facilitate the validation of their views, as well as letting them into and introducing them to the complexity of urban planning (Derr et al., 2018). Place-making is a facilitator for everyone‘s views to be shared, where everyone affected should be invited and thus should be listened to in the process (Respondent 2, 2024). Bringing children and youth into these processes is however controversial, due to the underestimation of children’s knowledge and capabilities and the determination of professionals that they are experts in how planning should be conducted, and that children should take no part in designing spaces. These dialogue processes, which are integral to the place-making concept, are also often cut when budgets need readjustment, which risks losing an important aspect of connecting the local communities and the children and youth in them to the physical intervention that is taking place.

A place-making process that includes children and youth in the process can be successful through following some general steps and using important characteristics that have been proven in other cases to be effective. The process should be inclusive by including diverse methods for participation, where children and youth are appreciating art-based methods, such as drawing and designing, compared to adults (Derr et al., 2018). Younger participants are also appreciative of surveys and interviews to share their thoughts, as well as learning and sharing their thoughts on-site of the proposed location of the intervention. It is important to let children and youth disengage from the processes as they like, as it is important to let them into the process again if and when they want to, to facilitate trust and highlight the voluntariness of engaging in processes of urban interventions. Other important aspects are explaining when and where the input from them will be included in the process, while being honest of the impact that it will have (Respondent 2, 2024). To be able to reach and include children and youth in these processes, schools and youth centres are important places as a starting point to invite them and build relationships with these groups.

When successful, place-making can achieve more than mere participation from children and youth. Benefits include educational aspects for all parties that are involved in the process, adults and children alike (Derr et al., 2018). Adults can learn from children how they could be more creative and playful in the planning process, while children and youth can get the opportunity to think for future generations and their use of the space. This insight into the future also fosters a sense of responsibility for the space and its relation to sustainability, while at the same time grounding it into the current need for space activation to serve the community, children and adults alike.

7
Equal Spaces Equal Voices

This chapter presents the concept "Equal Spaces, Equal Voices" with its three pillars consisting of representation, accessibility and participation as a framework on how to involve children and youth in the planning process and for them to be represented equally in public space.

7.1 Representation

We argue that children and youth should be allocated 25% of public space, as they represent one quarter of the total population of Järfälla. Based on our analysis and the principle of dedicating 25% of public space for kids, we identified that currently around 7% of the public space designated for children is missing in the focus area of Jakobsberg and Söderhöjden, which equates to 39.000 square meters — roughly 3.5 football fields.

Public spaces designed for and with children help foster a deeper connection to the neighborhood, creating places where children feel represented and seen. When children are actively involved in shaping these spaces, they are more likely to develop a sense of ownership and attachment to their surroundings. Achieving 25% of public space for children and youth is not just a matter of quantity but of quality, ensuring that these spaces are diverse, inclusive, and designed to meet the varied needs of children and youth. Place-making strategies initiatives offer solutions for this. These approaches focus on creating dynamic, flexible spaces that can evolve with time, starting with small, temporary interventions like outdoor music and dance areas, pop-up seating, or interactive game installations. Such measures, while temporary, can evolve into long-term solutions if they prove successful in engaging (young) people.

One of the key strategies in attracting youth to public spaces is what can be called 'quick attraction' (Make Space for Girls, n.d.a) This approach involves designing elements that can capture the attention of passersby, encouraging them to stop, interact, and spend time in the space. Examples can range from seating areas, platforms, interactive games, and hammocks placed along popular pathways (Make Space for Girls, n.d.a). These features not only attract older children and teenagers but also create spaces for socialisation and community-building. Moreover, these spaces can be designed to cater to specific groups, such as creating areas specifically for young girls, thus ensuring that diverse groups feel included and represented. Additionally, public spaces can and should be divided into smaller zones that cater to different age groups and activities to prevent one dominant group from taking over. For instance, some areas might be dedicated to quiet spaces for reflection or socialising, while others could be designed for more active based features. Subdivision of public spaces into smaller zones can also ensure that spaces cater to a wide range of interests and abilities.

Play is a powerful tool for children's well-being, health, and development. According to Gill (2021), play is not just an enjoyable activity—it is an expression for children and an essential part of their emotional, social, and physical growth. Gill (2021) also argues to go further than traditional playgrounds and rather integrate features and activities in the urban landscape. By integrating play spaces into the broader urban environment, such as natural play areas, more diverse and stimulating experiences for children can be provided. Such spaces promote free play, allowing children to explore their environment, learn through play, and interact with peers. Furthermore, this includes kids and youth in the urban space and community, rather than having separated areas for them. The presence of children in the public realm can be an indicator of the quality of an urban environment (Gill, 2021).

To ensure that public space in Järfälla meets the needs of children and youth, several strategies can be implemented. Policies and zoning laws can be introduced that prioritise children and youth's spaces within urban development, based on the 25% representation principle. By rethinking public spaces and prioritising the needs of children and youth, vibrant and inclusive communities can be created in which kids and youth are not only represented but also actively engaged in shaping their environment.

7.2 Accessibility

We argue that kids and youths should have equal access to places in the neighborhood, to be able to independently move between their own spaces safely.

The guidelines on how to plan and design the public spaces should not only specify the amount of space required, but also how these spaces should be distributed equitably throughout neighborhoods. Doing this, the municipality can ensure that every child, regardless of their location, has access to safe and engaging spaces. By giving access to this group, we can address inequalities in urban environments.

To ensure that children and youth are able to move freely and independently within their neighbourhoods, experts like Gill (2021) suggest removing physical barriers such as fences and gates, allowing children to engage more directly with the public realm. This would enable them to have richer, more meaningful experiences as they interact with the people and places around them. Independent mobility, in this context, refers to children's ability to navigate their neighbourhoods on their own. To ensure this can be done safely, a good walking and cycling network, as well as a public transport network needs to be provided (Gill, 2021). Especially the public transport network should be free for all kids and youth. Further guidelines to support children's mobility are visible footpaths, good lighting, wide entrances, and clear exit to make public spaces safer and more accessible. Parks and play and activity features should be seamlessly integrated into the wider urban landscape, rather than isolated in designated areas. Play should be an experience available everywhere, easily accessible. By redefining neighbourhoods with clear boundaries and better connectivity, cities can foster an environment where children can play and explore freely, enhancing their sense of independence within their community.

Children and youth growing up in densely populated areas tend to find traffic to be a challenging aspect of their lives. Therefore planning for kids and youth should include reclaiming streets for other uses, for example, through pedestrianizing spaces and/or introducing child-friendly streetscapes. One idea on how to do this is th-

rough the use of tactical urbanism in the form of play streets, as discussed earlier in this report (Mitra & Abbasi, 2020). These play street events could then be created through participation in Järfälla to ensure the youths' needs are being met properly. Depending on the season and area there might be different requests. For example, depending on what playgrounds and public spaces are already available in the area would determine what the play street would include. Because these are temporary, it creates a chance for variation and multi use.

Figure 29: Urban Play Street

7.3 Participation

We argue for actual participation of kids and youth in the planning process. The 25% of public spaces for kids and youth proposed should also be planned together with this group, otherwise no structural change will happen in the planning process for children-specific places. This process should include placemaking strategies through a process of engagement to incorporate the preferences of kids and youth into urban public spaces. Kids and youth over the age of ten should be especially considered in the process since they are the most underrepresented in public spaces currently.

These processes should also incorporate local knowledge, with NGOs and youth centers being part of consultation with public officials. These organisations form an important part of strengthening the voice of children and youth in planning processes, as many of them engage with children and youth on a daily basis and know their needs and wishes. They can thus act as a safeguard for children and youth's interests in the case of non-participation of children and youth. When children and youth are present in the processes, it should be based around the needs and methods proven effective. This includes different, creative and arts-based approaches to consultation meetings and giving children and youth an honest chance of input into the process, on their own terms. Several examples of well executed participatory processes exist where children and youth have made their voices heard, such as Trissans hjärta in Bredäng, Frizon in Umeå and Rosens Röda Matta in Malmö, which all can serve as inspiration and insight into that engaging children and youth in the planning process can activates spaces to a great extent by seriously listening to what they think is missing in public space.

To further establish kids and youth as competent actors in public processes and spaces, steering away from the notion of the group as "future" citizens, a kids and youth parliament should be instituted to engage the group in questions of political activity. This would give them opportunities to influence their local areas and propose their needs and wants in an arena where they are seriously heard. This has been implemented in Vienna, which separates the parliaments into two different age-based ones, one for children and one for the youth and teenagers. This creates the opportunity for the two separate parliaments to

engage with different questions which are suitable to the competencies of different ages, and not cluster the heterogeneous group of non-adults into one, currently seen, homogenous group of "future" citizens. The parliaments would further democratise institutions and the municipality as a whole, where every citizen has the opportunity of engaging in questions of democracy and their local surroundings. Letting children and youth into the arena of democratic influence could help to strengthen the trust in democratic institutions as a whole, and provide stepping stones for younger citizens to engage in political activity in the future.

By actively listening to children and youth and making them visible in the public domain, children and youth could gain a deeper sense of their influence on their local surroundings and the feeling of responsibility for public spaces that they have helped to create. It would further help to educate children and youth about the planning process and incentivise them to take part in democratic process, currently and in the future. It would also help to create actual equality by letting children and youth into the planning process, with the opportunity of being seen and heard as they are, with their thoughts and input on how to form and manage public space being as important as an adult's perspective.

Figure 30: Kids Protesting

8 Discussion / Reflections

PROJECT DIRECTION
The first interview that was conducted was initially intended to provide more knowledge about the local community in Järfälla to be used in and about how to make public spaces more lively and fitting to the local inhabitants wishes and needs. Other than this, the interview also provided a wide range of experiences of how children and youth's opinions and organisation often are ignored and that spaces for them are lacking in Järfälla. This guided us and provided a starting point towards the subject of children and youth in public space and planning processes, and this interview became crucial for the further development of the project, which might have taken another angle if it had not happened.

SURVEY
Our starting point for the project was to investigate how Järfällas inhabitants perceived their public spaces. To find this out, we conducted a survey and did site visits, where we came across signs that are exclusionary to kids and youth. From this, we could see that public space can be exclusionary and differently experienced based on age. The survey, as mentioned before, provided valuable insights for us into residents' preferences and usage of public spaces, highlighting areas of satisfaction, for example, natural areas and dissatisfaction, for example, urban centers like Kallhälls Centrum. These findings offered a strong starting point for identifying the focus area in this project. The varied levels of interest and engagement among respondents underlined the need for other approaches to children's involvement in urban planning. A reflection from the survey is that it could have been more beneficial to conduct the survey later in the process, to be able to adapt the questions more towards our project goals. It could then have led to a foundation that suited our discussion better. On the other hand, having the survey early in the project process contributed to the focus on kids and youth.

WORKSHOP
The workshop was an important part of our project. They also expressed a sense of belonging when they recognized some of the places in the slideshow, however they still wanted new things in that space. One reflection about this can be that kids might associate more to things they already know, before they can elaborate on it. It can therefore be interesting to compare the survey and the workshop. In the survey, the adults often criticized centers like Jakobsberg centrum, while the kids during the workshop expressed more positive thoughts about these places. It might be because the children feel this sense of belonging since a lot of them are brought up here. It can therefore be important in planning for these places that you take into account that even if the places are "ugly" in some people's eyes, they serve as a place of comfort for others.

Some colorful pictures that we picked for the slideshow that we thought they would like, were not always pictures that they expressed that much positive thoughts about. Another result from the workshop was whether kids and youth picked their pictures for the collage because they liked them or because they had been affected by what other kids had chosen. This offered us some comparative perspective on whether early group dynamics affected choices. Some of the kids might be less influenced by the other kids' decisions because they arrived after this activity had begun. Places that the kids liked and used in their collages were activity-based spaces, including an outdoor dancing facility, spaces with light, seating areas and sports facilities.

STRATEGIES TO WORK WITH CHILDREN IN PLACEMAKING
To get an effective and inclusive participation process for children and youth, there are several aspects that need to be considered and that requires knowledge about how to make the processes clear. These processes might seem quite unconventional at first, since it requires different approaches than when dealing with adults in participation processes. The way the workshop in this project was structured is an example of how workshops with children and youth can be effective, showing local spaces that they feel attached to and using arts-based methods for them to express themselves. To better facilitate children and youth's involvement in these processes, planners and experts first need to acknowledge that they often lack the understanding of what children and youth know about their surroundings. To facilitate a process which includes children and youth in planning public spaces aimed for them, the goals need to be clearly stated. Furthermore, where and when their input will be included in the process needs to be clearly addressed, and workshops and consultations need to be in the right, short time frame with several instead of a single longer one in order to build relationships and trust.

Children's abilities are underestimated by planners and experts, mainly due to the thought that children and youth do not know what they want or need in their local environments. This is proven false and needs to be addressed before a series of workshops can begin to be planned. Children and youth have shown to have a substantial understanding and connection to their local environments by several researchers. The underestimation of children and youth's capabilities has had the effect that planners are not including children and youth enough in the processes, since their input is not viewed as valuable due to a lack of knowledge about capabilities and in municipalities and other actors in urban planning, such as property owners. This leads to a top-down process in planning when children and youth are considered as the target group, where experts deem themselves experts in what children and youth want and need in their local environments. From the conducted workshop and other research, it is seen that children do have an understanding of their local environments, and often express wishes of how it could be improved to better facilitate activities that they want to engage in. At the same time, it should be stated that children do not have the responsibility to plan and design their surroundings, but the inclusion of children and youth that is lacking in current planning processes, and they should have input on the process to better include them in public spaces, which often are lacking spaces for children and youth that do not want to use playgrounds.

If done correctly, the planning processes can gain new knowledge and take on a more creative process which facilitates for every age group to engage with planning and thus shaping their surroundings. For this to happen, the view of children and youth must first change from seeing them as "future" citizens to citizens of today. Without a change in perspective on the capabilities of children and youth, a structural change to the planning process cannot and will not happen. When considered, it might pose a greater trust and understanding of planning processes for everyone in the municipality, which could strengthen communities and its engagement with others in the public.

One risk is that since the planning process takes time to realise, what the kids want initially might change as they grow older. With this, it is possible that the youths are not able to enjoy the place they have created. This is where tactical urbanism could be beneficial, since it is short term and quicker to implement.

THE ROLE OF THE MUNICIPALITY
Action at the municipal level and within the administrative boundaries is key to shaping urban environments that meet the needs of children and youth, due to the local authorities being responsible for the most relevant policy and planning tools (Gill, 2021). Furthermore, local authorities are responsible for the main local services, such as parks, schools, housing, and transport, and therefore have the greatest influence for making changes that directly impact young people (Gill, 2021). While national policies and local politicians influence municipal decisions, it is at this

level that the most immediate and effective action can take place.
In this context, it should be pointed out that despite the municipality's comprehensive plan aiming to support such organisations (Järfälla kommun, 2014). This highlights the need for stronger local investment in youth services.

THE ANALYSIS OF HOW MUCH SPACE IS PLANNED FOR KIDS
When using QGIS to analyse how much public space is planned for children and youth, the result can be very different depending on which categories of public space are included, e.g. if we had included walkways, the result would have been very different and probably even more negative towards places for children and young people. It is important to be transparent here about which categories and spaces are taken into account and to justify these decisions.

THE CONCEPT
No suggestions are made as to what the urban environment of children and young people should look like, as this must first and foremost be decided by the children and youth themselves. In order to challenge current planning practices and the design of our public urban spaces, children and young people should be involved in these processes, instead of repeating the same patterns to make decisions and plan for them.

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Figure 30: Kids protesting (made by author)

11 Appendix

11.1 Interview Notes

Interview notes from the interview with Respondent 1, 09/10/2024

- Idea of solidarity and community
- Child democracy
- Every child has the right to a meaningful free time
- Nowadays that's not the case
- Municipality owned housing: Socially vulnerable backgrounds
- The street where the youth centre is located is very isolated, also in a good way, nice community
- Yes it is segregated
- We don't need better lights and trees, 'we are just poor'

- The youth centre was a mission
- Open meeting place for kids after school
- That is safe
- Enjoyable, meaningful and fun free time
- Free!
- Everyone is welcome
- Very local, very community based
- Kids need positive role models
- Stability, long term, which is very needed here! In this context!
- A long term employee has been working for 34 years

- The park, the playground is very important
- The youth centre is a place that opens up the place for everyone
- Creates a community, everyone know each other, even though it's different ages
- Creates safety

- Municipality cut the funding to some youth organisations in 2020, the youth centre was affected by this
- Due to the efforts of the youth centre: petitions, online protests, protests on the streets they managed to win the fight
- Even used their money, savings to keep it open and pay the rent themselves
- It took until 2023 for them to reopen, get the funding
- Criticised for holding on to "Gamla Sverige" (lit. Old Sweden, meaning ideals of community promoted during the long reign of Social Democrats in the mid 20th century) when times and ideals have changed (individualisation, neoliberalism)

Interview notes from interview with Respondent 2, 19/12/2024

- Can you tell us about your work / projects, your experiences in working with children and youth regarding the design of public places?
- Different types of projects including kids

- Architecture/urban planning, workshops
- Art installations
- Barnkonsekvensnalys
- Main idea to get their voice and how it can be implemented
- Political, economical, technical
- Everything cannot be implemented, and they get sad

- Can you give examples of successful place-making initiatives for kids & youth or in which children & youth people were actively involved? What made these projects so successful?
- Nacka, art installation
- Worked with an artist, pop-up
- Involved children, went to a school
- Rotating pixels, children started to gather instead of being a construction site
- Sigtuna, Märsta
- Playground
- Talked with children to redo a park, doing construction now

- Placemaking role for children in public space
- Is a method that guarantee that everyone comes to the table to talk
- Core of placemaking that everyone affected/around is invited
- Forced to talk to everyone

- Which key actors or stakeholders (local authorities and/or private sector) should be involved in planning public spaces for/with children & youth? Can you elaborate on their role and contributions?
- Municipality, initiators
- Consultants to the project
- Citizens
- Other parts of the municipality (fritid och kultur, important voice, working with activating places)
- Property owners
- Main: owners & users of the land
- NGOs and other associations can be included

- Older kids in the process
- Very different to work with different age groups
- Cannot stop children in the street
- Schools and frititdsgårdar the entry to children
- They know what they want

- What are the most common misconceptions about designing spaces for kids & youth? How can we address them through better planning processes?
- We underestimate children knowledge, capability
- Professionals think they know everything, as experts
- Thinks people are stupid
- Misconceptions that children do not know what they want or need
- Giving children "what they want", but it is not true
- Not children's business to design, but they can still have input

- Strategies to work with children in placemaking
- Understand the concept, do your homework
- Explain the goals and how they will contribute to the entire process,when and where, be realistic, set the expectations in the right place
- Right timeframe for the workshop, short ones, maybe divide into several workshops,

• builds relationship
• Be direct during the workshop, what can we do
• Package it, is this what you mean? Feedback from the children on the final proposal
• Finish project, send it back to them to make them feel included in the project

• Challenges?
• Not explained to the kids of how their input will influence the entire process
• Municipalities not including children well enough, “not needed”, knowledge in the municipalities and property owners lacking
• Money to do workshops
• Dialogues often cut in budgets
• Consultants have to do it without input from residents/kids...
• Very much a top down process, avoiding contact with people

11.2 Observation Sheets

Field notes

Location	Jakobsberg
Date	8/10-24
Weather	Rainy/Foggy/Cold
Time	3 pm - 4 pm
General info	Site visit, walked around, taking pictures

Observations	**Reflections**
We were sitting on a bench in Jakobsberg centrum facing the town square. There is a police car right in front of us. There are also approximately 10-12 people moving around, these are mostly mothers with strollers and elderly, some school kids. Out of these people in movement, most of them are just passing by. We are passing a big parking lot, and this one is filled with cars. We look to our left, and a police car is stopping a civil car in the parking lot. When we walked to a park west of the station, we noticed a part of the park where someone was “living” on the grass.	The weather is not comfortable, it is cold. We do not feel unsafe. It is interesting to see where the people are heading. We wonder how the feeling of being here changes during weekends and different times of the day. We stopped to see what was happening, but we did not understand why. We feel that there are a lot of parking spots surrounding Jakobsberg. It is weird to see these kinds of living situations, and to have a change of feeling about the place we are visiting.

Field notes

Location	Kallhäll
Date	19/10-2024
Weather	Sunny, little bit windy
Time	14:30 - 15:30
General info	Site visit, walked around, taking pictures

Observations	**Reflections**
We sit on a bench and look around the center. People are walking towards the commuter train. Approx. 10 people are sitting around the square. Walked through a privately owned park in the middle of apartment complexes. Big park with 2 families present. Wide street with garages facing it, not allowing anything else to happen on the sidewalk. Park with many people strolling, sitting down on the grass and children playing.	Differences between different areas of the square. Most people were sitting in the sun or taking the shortest way to the trains. Very different atmosphere by the stores. What kind of activities are present when weather is worse? No dog walking allowed according to a sign? Weird It almost felt a bit uncomfortable walking there. Isn't it enough with the parking spots behind the building? Here it felt like people were actually using the space for recreation.

Field notes

Location	Barkarby Söderhöjden
Date	20/10-2024
Weather	Cloudy
Time	14:30 - 16:30
General info	Site visit, walked around with dog, taking pictures

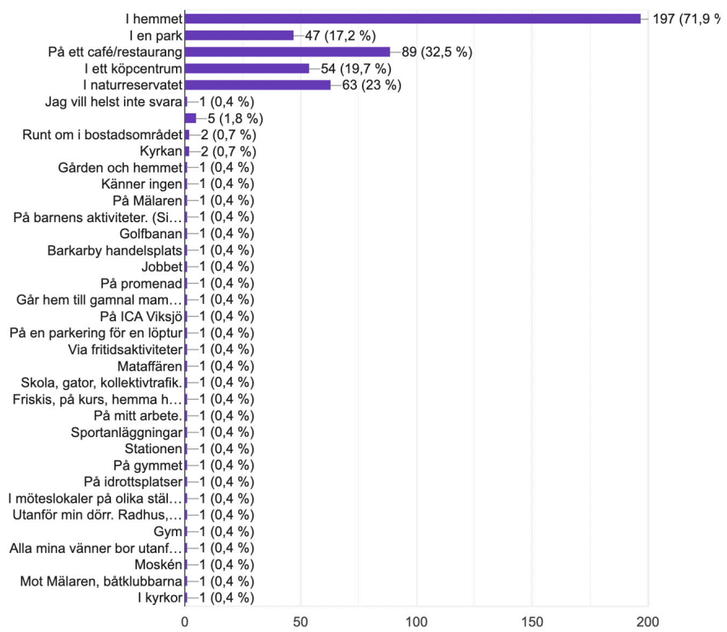
Observations	**Reflections**
A lot of signs forbidding children from playing ball sport. Very empty Park by Söderhöjden was nice and varied. Shopping district in Barkarby is very inaccessible for pedestrians. Some attempts at seating Some urban gardens in söderhöjden, A lot of parking space	Some of the municipal attempts at seating seemed a bit misplaced and not thought through, Contrast between the new housing in söderhöjden and the present ones. I feel like some of the parking space could find better uses for the community.

11.3 Survey

Var träffar du vanligtvis personer du känner i Järfälla?

Kopiera diagram

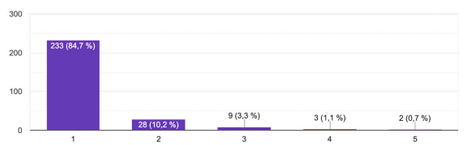
274 svar



Hur troligt är det att du skulle spendera tid här? Ex: träffa vänner, sitta ner en stund, göra en aktivitet osv.

Kopiera diagram

275 svar



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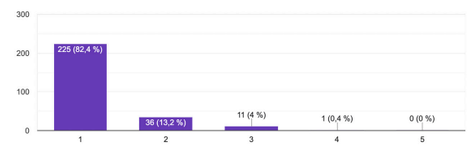
Kopiera diagram

273 svar



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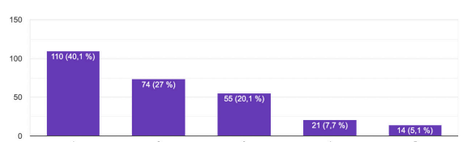
Kopiera diagram

274 svar



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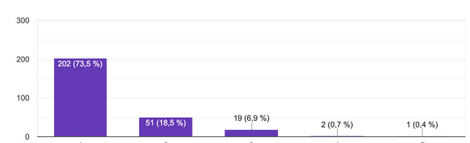
Kopiera diagram

275 svar



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Kopiera diagram

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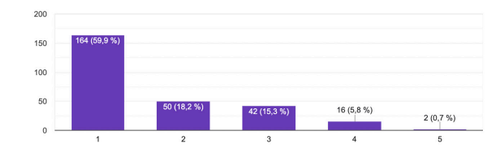

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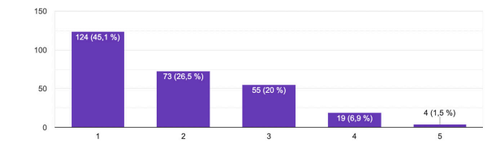
Kopiera diagram

275 svar



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Kopiera diagram

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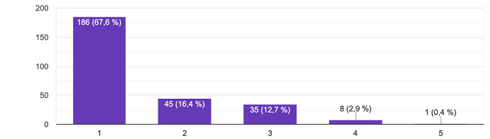

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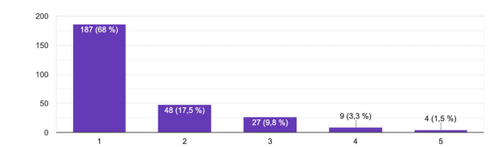
Kopiera diagram

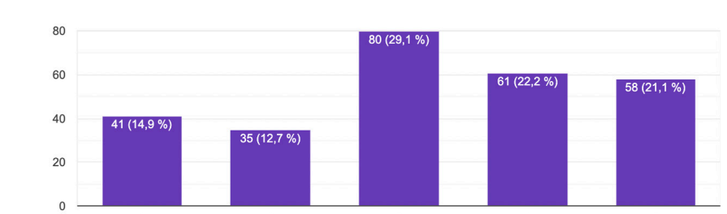
275 svar



Hur intresserad är du av att delta i utvecklingen av offentliga platser/stadsplaneringen?

Kopiera diagram

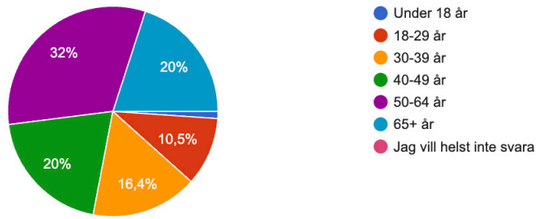
275 svar



Hur gammal är du?

Kopiera diagram

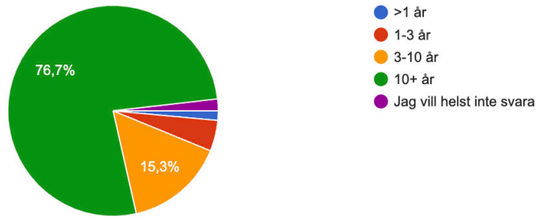
275 svar



Hur länge har du bott i Järfälla?

Kopiera diagram

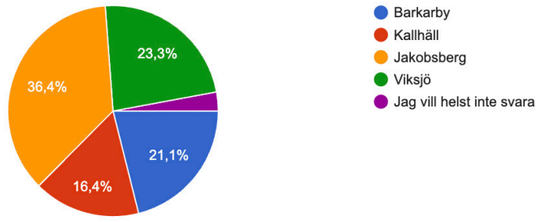
275 svar



I vilket område bor du?

Kopiera diagram

275 svar



Kan du ge exempel på en offentlig plats eller platser du inte tycker om i Järfälla och varför?

213 svar

- Jakobsberg centrum
- Jakobsbergs centrum
- Jakobsbergs centrum
- Jakobsberg centrum
- Jakobsberg Centrum
- Jakobsbergs centrum, bussterminalen. Otrygghet
- Gången mellan bussterminal och pendeltåg i Jakobsberg, så otroligt smutsigt
- Utdelning av Jakobsbergs centrum.
- Jakobsbergs centrum så tråkigt nu och få affärer mm

Kan du ge exempel på en offentlig plats eller platser du verkligen tycker om i Järfälla och varför? (ex en park, en gata, ett torg, ett köpcentrum etc)

243 svar

- Görnväln området. Järvafältet delvis för cykling och promenader. Simhallen.
  Hels Säby området är fint samt caféet. Grönskog för skidåkning. Bruket för cykling o skidor. Bas är fint men behövs mer och informera oss invånare om förhoppningsvis i framtiden om pågående aktiviteter där. Föreläsningar, konserter och mer. Lekplatsen med trampolinen är bra. Saknas tusen mer färgglada växter i hela Barkarbystaden. Stora torget är ganska så väl lyckat. Skridskobanan är bra.
- Görveln, Barkarby outlet
- Området kring Görwelns slott. Grönt och mysigt.
- Oregano, house wee och sushi stället i kallhäll
- Jag tycker om naturreservatet, säby gård och parken vid järfälla kyrkan.
- Kallhälls parken, Bruket, Bonäsbädet, Strandpromenaden Kallhäll. Görvälns slott, Hembyggds gården Kallhäll, Folkets hus Kallhäll., Folkhögskolan, Säbygård, Järfälla kyrka., Sandvik, Hummelmoraäng Kolarängsparken Kallhälls station. Bolinder strand.

11.4 Workshop

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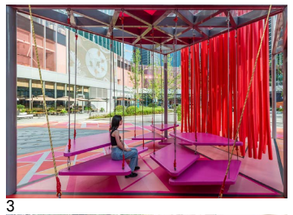
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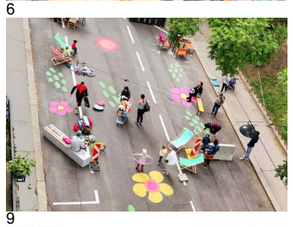
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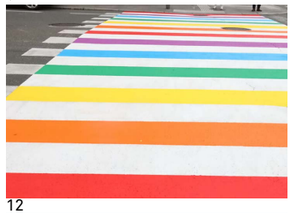
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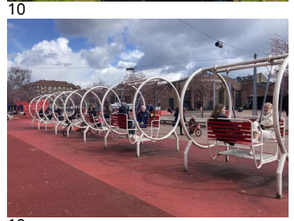
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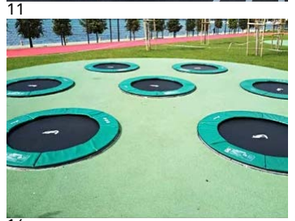
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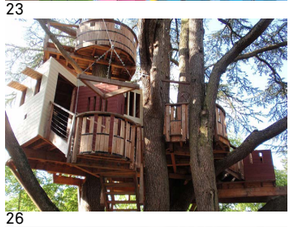
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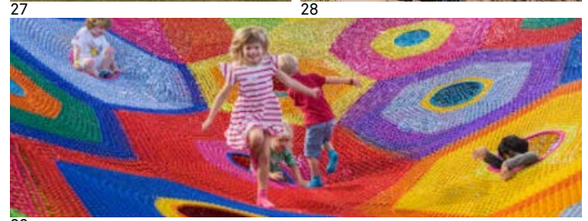
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3		06

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4		05
4		05
5		04

Ranking	Photo	Number of selections
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6		03

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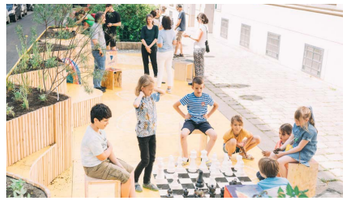
8		01
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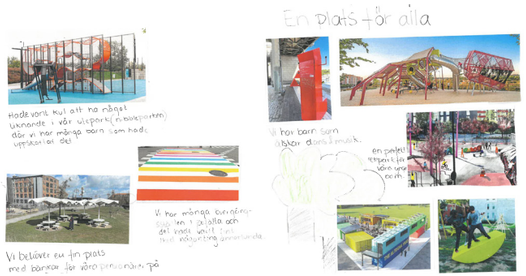
En plats för alla
Hade varit kul att ha något
Uknande i vår ulsporten (nibbleparken)
där vi har många barn som hade
uppskattat det
Vi har många svergång-
sista ten i gatalla och
det hade varit fint
med någunting annorlunda.
Vi behöver en fin plats
med bänkar för våra pensionärer på
Vi har barn som
åkkar dans i musik.
en pakett
respekt för
våra ung
ocrh