What do you think?

A board game that invites children to participate in decision-making
What do you think?
Foreword

“The most important challenge today and in the future concerns sustainability – to create a world that is good for both people and the environment, locally and globally”.

-Linnaeus University

This thesis is written at Linnaeus University, Sweden, the bachelor programme of Design + Change, with focus on sustainability. The subject of this thesis tackles one big category within the field of sustainability, social sustainability. As I will explain later I have chosen to apply a human rights perspective to the concept in line with co-/and participatory design.

During this semester I have conducted research on the topic “Children’s right to hold and express their opinion” and have found the experience interesting. In the beginning I had little knowledge based on many assumptions and some collected information from my own life experience and previous projects. However, I have been able to achieve a better understanding and I can proudly say that I am on the way to a result I want to present. The subject was selected as an inspiration and support to all the hard work Rädda Barnen is doing today and ever since I myself was a child I have been very impressed of their work and can now say that I am on my way to make changes too.

There are many people I wish to thank, many who have supported me in my process but I probably will not fit them all in this paper. Thank you to the examiners and tutors, your guidance and valuable comments helped me improve my work. A very big thank you to Rädda Barnen for their interest in collaboration and support- this made me extra focused on doing a good job and really trying to make a difference. Many thanks to Söraby school in Rottne who opened up their arms for my workshop and who willingly let me use one of their class to work with and let me use the crafts and work that was conducted during the workshop. Also a very big thank you to all of my friends who encouraged me in different ways. All the late night studying and tireless checking on the progress, you have all been generous with both support and proof-reading.

And lastly a big thanks to my parents who unconditionally believed in my work and project.
Abstract

Ever since 1919 has “Rädda Barnen” aka, “Save the Children” fought for the rights of the child. The UN convention tackles many important fights today concerning social sustainability which goals are pointing towards the improvement of children’s life conditions. Today we live in an adults world with an adults mind. How are we supposed to change this world to a world fit for children and youth if we do not invite them into the decisions and change-makings? Are we starting to understand the importance of child participation and are we finally inviting them to start shape their world together with the help of adults?

This thesis contributes to a discussion around the work of Save the Children and the practice of co-designing with children by addressing article 12 in the UN convention; “ Every child’s right to hold and express their views”. It supports a complex activity with workshops and thoughtful discussions in how to change for a world fit for children and where research towards an understanding of co-design practice with children has played part.

The framework in this study presents a practical solution and an initial structure of co-design with children with a low-tech prototyping, all as a prop for discussion amongst parents and adults in position of decision-making.

Keywords: Children, Humans Rights, Co- Design, Participatory Design, Low-tech prototyping, Sketching and writing as communication tool
# Table of Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreword</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION</strong></td>
<td>9-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Introduction</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Research Context</td>
<td>9-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Thesis Structure</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Research Motivation</td>
<td>10-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Methodology</td>
<td>11-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 Collaborators</td>
<td>15-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH</strong></td>
<td>16-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Co-design</td>
<td>16-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 The Importance of Listening to Children</td>
<td>17-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Involving Children in Decision-Making</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Designing with Children</td>
<td>20-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Legal Right’s</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Consent Form</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Save the Children and Their Work</td>
<td>25-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. CHAPTER THREE: PARTICIPATORY DESIGN</strong></td>
<td>26-36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Workshop</td>
<td>26-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Children’s Feedback</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Unexpected Situations</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Schools</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Methods of the Workshop</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Child Participation is about adults, too</td>
<td>32-33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Ongoing discussion</td>
<td>33-36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. CHAPTER FOUR: FRAMEWORK</strong></td>
<td>36-38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Framework</td>
<td>36-37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Contribution</td>
<td>37-38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Limitations</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY</strong></td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Summary of research</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Collection of Methods</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appendices</strong></td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop Photographs</td>
<td>i, ii, iii, iv, v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Framework Result</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Framework Växjö Konsthall</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bibliography</strong></td>
<td>vi-vii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Definitions

Children
In this thesis children and youth is often referred to. Children and youth in this research means all humans under the age of 18, according to The Convention of the Rights of the Child. The participants in this particular research are 11-12 years in age.

UNCRC /CRC
This is short for The Convention of the Rights of the Child. CRC consists of 54 articles and three additional protocol that withstands the rights of the child and what it should protects from. It is a international law, which means that every country who has adopted it is obliged to make sure it is enforced.

Workshop
A workshop could be used to find or solve problems. A workshop should have a purpose and a goals that aims to attain the result one is striving for. In this thesis my workshop was meant to map out where the problem existed and find ideas on how to change it.

Co-design/ Participatory design
Influence and participation are words that often are being used, and are about involving adults or children in decision-making processes. None of these notions are mentioned in the UNCRC, but these approaches are used to describe what should be achieved or how things should be done.

Influence often indicates that someone has had the opportunity to affect a decision or a situation. Participation is therefore a very important precondition, but participation do not always mean that the person has had any influence.

Social Sustainability
Social sustainability is a process in which relationships, systems or structures actively supports a capacity and future generations to promote wellbeing and a healthy liveable community. It combines design of the physical ream and the social world. An infrastructure that supports social and cultural life. In this thesis the social sustainability promotes children to have a bigger part and space in our democratic society as well as trying to build a world fit for them.
List of Figures

Figure 1. Illustration, Elias, 11
Figure 2. Illustration, Erica Axman
Figure 3. Illustration, Erica Axman
Figure 4. Google Image, Altamira Paintings
Figure 5. Save The Children Logo
Figure 6. Participatory Researchers, Erica Axman
Figure 7. Illustration, Co-Design Process, Erica Axman
Figure 7. Consent, Legal Rights, Erica Axman
Figure 8. Consent Form, Signature Erica Axman
Figure 9. Young Voice Survey, P. 18
Figure 10. Text, Måns 11
Figure 11. Text, Emilia 11
Figure 12. Illustration, Noah 12
Figure 13. Groupwork, Saga, Malak, Hilma & Tilda
Figure 14. Groupwork, Noah, Adam & Emil
Figure 15. Illustration, Instagram App, Erica Axman
Figure 16. Illustration, Free Range Kids, Erica Axman
Figure 17. Illustration, Helicopter Parents, Erica Axman
Figure 18. Framework vision, Erica Axman
1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The framework of this research aims towards an understanding behind the concept of the UN Conventions Right of the Child, article 12, “Every child’s right to express and hold their opinion”.

In this study I have chosen to conduct a workshop, with a class in Rottne- Söraby School, in order to gain information about how children themselves perceive their roles and positions as decision makers in a home environment. This structure follows a me-we-world concept, where me as a designer reaches out to parents to help them understand children’s ideas and voices. All as an aid for a possible future change where children are being prepared for a world that listens to their voices and takes their opinions into consideration.

This framework serves as a platform in which adults and children can gather and discuss important matters where decision-makings takes part. The framework I am proposing also serves as a board game that supports a fun and easy-going communication between children and adults. The aim is to exchange knowledge and break the language barrier that often occurs in situations where adults and children are together. It will allow children to teach adults about what they think and how they would like things to be. It will also give the adults and parents time to explain some of the choices that cannot be made together all as an aid to prepare children for a world fit for them too.

1.2 Research Context

“Sometimes an idea can be our worst enemy, especially if it blocks our thinking of alternatives” ¹

In this project I began with a vision and problem area that after some work turned out not to be as critical as I imagined. I was too strong opinionated and had a clear vision of how things would be before I could let myself explore the other options and that left me with a small mindset. After conducting the workshop my realisation shifted focus from the children’s point of view to the parents and adults surrounding the children.

At first, my purpose was to make children understand their roles and rights to a voice and opinion in a home environment through design. However, after some time I noticed that the problem was not in the children, it was the part of understanding them and knowing of what to with their ideas.

---

¹ Dan Koberg and Jim Bagnall, Graphic design thinking
The children’s ideas are there, but it is all a matter of understanding them. As a seed of change I have chosen to create a board game with the purpose of making children and adults discuss about different decisions that can be made together.

1.3 Thesis Structure

In this following thesis, this text will present an interaction between Past-Present and Future structure. The reader is provided an overview of the research of my thesis and presentation of an exploratory approach of the design practice with children in relation to sustainability. Lastly is a discussion of the understanding of my framework.

- Chapter one is an introduction to my project, the design approach, a presentation of my chosen methods and the collaborators. It is the base of the following chapters and body of work. This is where my first ideas was shaped.
- Chapter two will serve as a background, informatorily and pedagogic. This is a space for the studies behind my process and theories to back up my thesis.
- Chapter three is the body of work, this is the start of my practical work, the co-designing workshops and a space for the children's work together with my expectations and some unexpected results. This is where the discussions will take place and shape the framework.
- Chapter four is the framework, the project statement and my contribution as a designer to my topic and social sustainability. This chapter will serve as the change agent in relation to the information I gained from chapter three.
- Chapter five is the conclusion and summary of my thesis and project.

1.4 Research Motivation

With the design education I have studied here at the Linnaeus University, the interest for human relations and human vs design has developed and become my most valuable battle. My interest focuses on the environments of human relations and the creative solutions for “small” problems.

I have learned to appreciate the small acts in the larger challenges and have therefore in this project focused on one small part in a bigger problem. Social sustainability has served me a great deal of passion and is something I try to conduct in every work I do.

When starting on this project, I was hugely influenced by a previous project I worked on with a group of colleagues. That project was also centred in children's welfare and were facing the battle of a child’s voice.
My thesis questions in the beginning of this process were:

- How can I as a designer help children understand their rights to an opinion?
- How can I with participatory design help children feel more involved in decision-makings?
- How can I prepare children to take place and share their voices in the world we live in now?

My attention shifted during this process from children’s voices in a society to children’s roles as decision makers at home because I wanted to get closer to the core.

My thesis question developed to:

- How can I create moments in which parents and children exchange knowledge?
- How can a board game bridge the gap between languages?
- Can I help adults listen and really understand children and their thoughts?

In this research there were more sensitive variables to consider and more assumptions needed to be avoided than in the previous project and I had to carefully think of all my decisions. With that in mind, involving children in my design process as a participatory method seemed like the best approach.

1.5 Methodology

To gather information from the children I had to conduct a workshop and interviews with the class from Söraby School. Ideally, I would have preferred more schools to participate, but there was only this one school interested in participating at such a short notice so I went along with that.

There are many methods in how to reach out to children through co-design, and I wanted to create an environment where the participant only spoke from within themselves in an easy-going way. I did not want to pressure the children to perform or feel that there were any right or wrong answers so I used the introductory chapter to John Wood “Designing for Micro-utopias; Thinking beyond the possible” where Wood talks about “Micro-Utopias” and how there is “No reason why we should not be able to design miracles”.

To successfully map out the boundaries between what they were allowed to decide at home and not, also called the “Thinkable” and the “Unthinkable”, I implemented Designing Miracles in the

---

2 Schuler, D & Namioka, A. 1993
process. This is a meta design tool from metadesigners.org⁴ that encourages the users to challenge the rationalist tendencies to overlook intangibles.

This involves three steps:

- Find something impossible
- Ask; “Is it really impossible”, “what makes it impossible?”
- Develop a strategy of changing the impossible to possible

To suit my orientation and target group I had to re-formulate these questions. Instead of asking the participants to find something impossible I asked them to write about what they felt was the biggest difference of children’s and adults voices, in terms of importance and rank. I wanted them, the children, to individually start to express their opinions and their point of views in a written language and I wanted my participants to start with themselves.

Figure 2

In the next step I asked the group to draw out what they wrote about. To get out of their write-bubbles and set colour and shapes to their words instead. Instead of asking what makes it impossible, I wanted them to see that it is not necessarily a difficult situation to try to work for.

The last task remained the same: In a group, develop a strategy for making a change, what they as children and youth can do to make themselves heard, come up with a strategy for me as a

---

⁴ Metadesigners.org
designer and other people in positions of change makings to reach out to a bigger crowd and lastly think of where it would be the best and most effective place to reach out to parents.

The interview was only collecting ideas or thoughts about the workshop. It was a small discussion of their answers and what they thought of it. More about that in section 3.2 Children’s feedback.

As I see it, communication has two categories, verbal and non-verbal communication.\(^5\)\(^6\) The verbal communication is often referred to as spoken verbal communication whilst non-verbal can be everything from body language, eye contact, body and facial expressions to attitude.\(^7\) It can also be used as a tool when painting, drawing and writing and visual language.

Painting is believed to have been a powerful communication tool for a long time. The oldest known was created in caves, a time not too long ago if you compare to modern drawings today.

---

6 Jones, S. E. & LeBaron C. D, “Research on the relationship between verbal and non-verbal Communication”
7 Setara, E. Drawing and Painting as a tool for communication
Through generations, humans have mastered the drawing-techniques long before any other form of communication had been fully developed. This builds a reliability when words and sentences are not an option. We, and especially children, tend to go to symbols and signs to express opinions and information.

A health related research was conducted in the UK, recognizing the need for “Developmentally appropriate methods such as drawing to help children communicate their experiences”. The study explored and compared the nature of stressors of everyday life that children experience.

Drawing a situation where the child have felt unheard or not taken seriously could be a good beginning for communication. Children have the tendency to view drawing as an enjoyable and non-threatening task and young children who still may lack the cognitive ability to express their views in words, usually find their ways more naturally and spontaneous through drawing. Can children start communicating with parents and adults easier by drawings and visual communication? This has also been an opportunity for me to use the children as designers as well. Their voices and visual language can be found in my design project.

There is an instant connection between drawing and writing. It is a storytelling-technique where you can read a drawing and draw a story with text. The drawing and writing is a way of working and thinking together.

---

8 Google Image, Altamira Painting
9 Malchiodi, C. A. Medical art therapy with children
10 George, D. From Analysis to Design: Visual Communication in the Teaching of Writing
The written process supports the drawings and gives the participants an idea and sense of space of how they are connected. It is never about pressuring the children to introduce any new skills, but to practice writing and the capacity to evolve their own thoughts.

Many of the drawings in this thesis represents my own participation and communication. This type of communication tool is my way of also telling a story. It is meant to describe some situations where words fail.

There is another method called C2C, also called child to child- participatory design. This method is for co-designing with children and it is a three dimensional interactive method. The C2C method serves 2 steps. The first step is to involve young children, all with interest in design, and give them experience in participating in design activities with adults as co-designers.

The second step is where the design team lets a user group, which includes a group of young children, participate in design mainly by testing the prototypes developed by the design team. Both groups of children would serve an iterative cycle of design and participate in different parts of the analysis-design-evaluation in order to get to the final design.

I did not conduct this method for my workshop due to lack of participants but it would have been an interesting method if I had both adults and children involved in the research. I would have liked to see how the communication between child to adult versus adult to child would have turned out. Would the adults have listened to the children, would they have consider other things in terms of “realism” or would the children take control with help from the adults? This is something I would conduct for future workshops

1.6 Collaborators

In the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 12 states that;  

1. “Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.”

2. “For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through

---

11 The Child-To-Child Method, (C2C)
12 Convention on the Rights of the Child
a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law 1.”

This means that children have the right to say what they think should happen when decision-making is relevant in their lives regarding family, school or the community. However, the convention also recognises that the level of the child or children’s participation must be appropriate of their age and level of maturity.

Since 1919, "Save the Children" 13 has worked for children's rights, globally fought for a world fit for children and youth and yet we still have a long way to go. The UN Convention tackles many major issues, many of which aim to improve the living conditions of children, especially in developing countries. According to the Child’s Convention UN, there are two fundamental privileges in a democratic society that are intimately connected; The child’s best interest and the child’s right to speak. But to be able to evaluate the child’s best interest, the child must first be given the opportunity to talk and express opinions. They are in fact the ones living in the problems or situations and therefore are most likely the ones to also know some parts of the solutions.

2. Research

2.1 Co-Design

Co-design is a well-established design approach to a creative practice. The technique has its roots from participatory design that was developed in Scandinavia in the 70’s. Co design is often used in the same category as co-creation and participatory process. This method reflect on a change in a traditional designer-client relationship and serves as a creative contribution to the solution of a problem. 15

Some benefits of working together with either your target group or audience; 16

---

13 Räddabarnen.se
14 Google Image, Rädda Barnen Logga
15 Sanders, E. 2000
16 Designforeurope.eu
• It generates more ideas of originality and user value.
• Improves knowledge of specific needs.
• Immediate evaluation of concepts.
• Better relation between design and user or target group.

The co-design in this thesis is using a language whose both components are verbal and visual. They are both combined in a purposive way, pretty similar to the lingual components we are speaking and apprehending. I combined visual, verbal and written language together in my workshop in order to find a “solution” to the questions I had prepared for the children. The result of the drawings, texts and discussions were a form of stories, memories or imaginable pictures in their heads that they painted out in a visual language. Together, we discovered what they thought their roles as decision-makers at home were.

Figure 6.

2.2 The Importance of listening to children

Article 12 in UNCRC expresses the child’s right to express their opinions in all matters. But this also latches on to the right to seek and receive information that involves the child. Since UNCRC started it brought a change to the world. Children were staring to be seen as participants rather than objects and research “with” children. Active researchers became to some extent seen as “Adults in waiting”. A realisation of children as social agents in their own right, gradually accepting them to be participants in researches as co-researchers started slowly.  

17 Chomsky, 1965
18 Kellett M. “Children as active researchers”
Even if we live in a new era, criticism still serves some unequal power relations in which adults are still framing the questions and methods for the children and therefore controls the analysis. Since adults many times assume things or just think they know, the methods and questions might not always match the reality of the children. Proven in my thesis is how the results and analysis get incorrect due to my premature assumptions.

Listening to children is also important for their development. It can be really frustrating not feeling that you are being heard, useful or have interesting ideas. Being ignored comes in layers. Being ignored can be minor things that has a large impact on the child. It can damage the sense of self. It makes everyone feel small and insignificant. Children who are listened to are generally more balanced and confident. Again, this is a generalisation, but a child is less likely to be shy if they have had the support from early ages to raise your opinion and learn what it is. 19

This brings me to my consideration of having children as participating researchers, or active researchers in their own rights. Affording children and youth a voice where adults are listening. They are after all the experts of their own lives. They live the problems, raise the questions and serves the roles as a future change, even if they might not know it now, therefore it is crucial to

19 CDC, child development
engage children in their own research. Adults can surely create good things for children and are sometimes better at knowing what children needs, but adults cannot understand a child’s mind fully simply because they cannot get rid of all the adult baggage they have collected throughout the years.

In my workshop I tried to engage all the student in a conversation, listening to what they talked about, what plans they had and how they can help. I was also really searching for the problems I already had in mind, but realized soon after that, that was not necessary. I understood that I was just one of those adults, believing things would be a certain way, and almost went with it all the way like many do, and then forget the most vital part. The children. Their reality and their change. After conducting the workshop I decided to go back a few steps and start with me just like every other adult. The understanding of listening to children and youth.

2.3 Involving Children in Decision-Making

Participation is more than just asking children for their ideas and views. It’s about listening to them, taking them seriously and turning their ideas and suggestions into reality. Involving children in decision-making and encouraging children to participate means involving them in all aspects of society. It includes the children in things that will affect them, their influence can contribute to change. It includes a recognising of their knowledge and possibility to contribute in our society. A participation happens when adults share the decision-making with the children and it is a UNCRC right.

By involving children more it brings new perspectives and knowledge to a work that helps it to move forward. It offers an opportunity to understand children’s issues and needs better and promotes a positive attitude towards children and their ideas. Keeping children involved deals with the task of keeping them interested, it is important to let them know that they are making a real and positive difference. One can keep children interested in a continued participation by for example, sending updates on their work and what it is contributing to.

For my framework I want to embrace a knowledge sharing ground. I wish to be able to tell or at least nudge parents and other decision-makers such as; designers, developers, municipalities, communes and others to engage children in the existing discussion and plans and start to involve children more. I want to open a sharing ground where children teach adults of what they like things to be and what they feel about things. It will hopefully create an exchange of knowledge since involving children will increase their knowledge of their surroundings in our democratic society, as well as adults learning from them.

---

20 Ministry of social development, A guide to engaging children in decision-making.
2.4 Designing with children

Designing with children is not as easy as it sounds. Regardless of how lovely and rewarding it really is, it can also be a challenge to try to design something new for children in today’s society. It might be hard to understand as a designer how this generation of children perceives the current times, since the world looks different from when we were children ourselves.

Children observes differently than adults do, they see different problems and talk about different questions, many of which adults rarely would even think of which is also why we should start design with children. 21

Including children in design processes is challenging for many people and many reasons, to only mention a few:

1. The ethical process of researching and working with children is something that takes time. In order to build teams that will function well and have innovative ideas a cooperation that extends over time is a necessity. Children and adults are simply different. One must not forget that children are very different from adults

21 Tinson, J. “Conducting Research with Children and Adolescents”
both as users and designers. Many design methods do not account for the differences of thinking and capacity to realistic solution thinking.

2. Gaining access can also be a slow process, especially when trying to include a larger group of children. When reaching out to school children, the different principles for the different schools must give the first approval, only to then see if there are any classes available and hours to spare. Sometimes researchers can contact the teachers directly but that kind of social networking is harder and can take longer time. Even if you know the teacher that you are trying to approach it is important to be professional and make sure that they are provided with all of the information regarding the research and workshop you wish to conduct. You want to present the research topic, the aims of the workshop/research and the objectives. It could also be good to present how much time you think you will need and not to forget that it is important to remember that not everyone will think that the topic of your research is appropriate only because you do. The same goes for when you need to interview children in or outside of schools.

3. If the children are under age of 15 you will need not only the schools approval, but the parents approval/consent too if you need to document or use the material conducted in the research or workshop. The importance of consent is necessary in legal aspects. It is important to be honest and inform the children and parents of what the data will be used for and who will be able to access it. For example, a consent form needs to inform the participants and legal guardian what your aim for the research is, but the person or persons involved should also be aware of their legal rights to say no or yes. There should always be a right to say no or yes in the process if the participant change the opinion. It is most essential that the consent forms are signed by parents or legal guardians before the study starts.

There is also another way to receive the consent from parents and that is if the school, teacher or group leader sends home letter to the parents explaining what is expected to happen and will give the parents a chance to ask their children if they want to participate. 22 This process will as expected take longer but both children and parents will be informed.

The figures on the next two pages shows the legal rights I presented to the children and parents. It also explains that the participants have a right to withdraw their consent if they change their

22 Gans, J & Brindid, C.D, 1995
mind about something. The second document is the Consent Form, where I needed the parents to fill in yes or no whether I could use the material conducted in the workshops and use the photos taken during the day.

Never before have I been in the position of having to create a Consent Form. My projects have been very small and there has never really been any ethical issues to consider. This time I knew that working with children would require some finesse and I had to be very delicate when handling it, especially when it comes to photographs. So I did what many do when they are in the blue, I googled. I researched and took inspirations from different components. I felt that the legal right should be presented and put that into account when creating my form. There were never any troubles getting the Consent form the parents. I sent it all to the class teacher and she forwarded the information to the parents on my account. Every consent was filled in and accepted, except for one. This student was treated the same and still got to work on the tasks provided. The only thing to remember is not to use the work or any photos of her. Otherwise this was one of the most easy part of my projects, and I am glad I got a good experience from it.
Samtycke till publicering av bilder och ev film

Kort information om personuppgiftslagen:

Den registrerade:
Är den person som personuppgifterna handlar om.

Personuppgifter:
Till personuppgifter räknas all slags information som direkt eller indirekt kan knytas till en fysisk person som är i livet. Det innebär att namn, adress och personnummer är personuppgifter. Foton, bild- och ljudfiler som kan kopplas till fysiska personer är fler exempel på personuppgifter. Anmälningsnummer eller bilnummer är personuppgifter eftersom de indirekt kan knytas till en person.

Behandling av personuppgifter:

Samtycke enligt personuppgiftslagen:

Återkallat samtycke:
Ett återkallat samtycke, för behandling av personuppgifter, innebär att ytterligare uppgifter inte får behandlas, men behandlingen av uppgifter som redan samlats in får fortsätta.
1. Samtycke till fotografering och filmning
   □ Ja, jag ger mitt tillstånd till att student/projektledare får fotografera och filma nedan namngiven person till skolprojekt, undervisning eller för annan dokumentation som avser projektet.

   □ Nej, jag ger inte mitt tillstånd till att student/projektledare får fotografera och filma nedan namngiven

2. Samtycke till publicering av foto- och filmmaterial i trycksaker och på Webb
   Ett godkännande innebär att foto- och filmmaterial på barn och elev kan ses på Internet och i trycksaker.

   □ Ja, jag ger mitt tillstånd till att student/projektledare får använda fotografier/filmer av nedan namngiven person i informationsmaterial, i trycksaker och på Webb som avser projektet.

   □ Nej, jag ger inte mitt tillstånd till att student/projektledare får använda fotografier/filmer av nedan namngiven person i informationsmaterial, i trycksaker och på Webb som avser projektet. □

3. Samtycke till publicering av barn och elever arbeten
   Ett godkännande innebär att namngivet barn eller elevens arbeten kan ses på Internet och i trycksaker. Arbeten kan publiceras tillsammans med personens nama.

   □ Ja, jag ger mitt tillstånd att student/projektledare får publicera arbeten, i trycksaker och på Webb, av nedan namngiven person i informationsmaterial som avser projektet.

   □ Nej, jag ger inte mitt tillstånd att student/projektledare får publicera arbeten, i trycksaker och på Webb, av nedan namngiven person i informationsmaterial som avser projektet.

Jag kan när som helst ta tillbaka mitt samtycke genom att kontakta ansvarig person

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barnets namn</th>
<th>Skola</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Underskrift Vårdnadshavare Namnförtillgående Vårdnadshavare

1. 1.

2. 2.

Underskrift Barn som fyllt 15 år Namnförtillgående Barn som fyllt 15 år

Figure 10.
2.5 Save the Children and Their Work

Save the children have created many surveys and printed work around the welfare of children. They created one survey called the Young Voice, 23 which is a nation-wide survey of what children think. There are interviews, questionnaires and focus groups carried out and it also covers areas where Save the Children would like to work more with how children perceive their situation. Young Voice reached out to 25,000 children in Sweden and 90% of them felt that it is vital that decision-makers listen to children. The data collected was carried out by Save the Children’s local branches. The survey consisted of 31 questions that had been carefully produced by Save the Children together with experts. The children and focus group was primarily in the ages 12 to 16. A total of 24,777 questionnaire was collected from 500 schools in 75 municipalities.

This survey also serves as a tool for people making decisions related to children’s lives in or outside of school. The goal of Young Voice wishes to be a help and inspiration to all who works with topics related to children such as politicians and other stakeholders concerning the conditions of the child and youth. The children were given the opportunity to conduct the survey in their schools so that they would not need to worry about their answers being seen. The schools were assessed as being the place where the most children would be reached and have a guaranteed anonymity. 91% feel that it is vital that decision-makers listen to children and 60% of all the participants said that they wanted more influence and adults to take them more seriously.

"We are important too and you forget us too often"- Anonymous

Figure 11.

---

23 Young Voice Survey, Save the children
The image above tells us that children feel that they have some influence and mostly when it comes to school and their home, but there are still a high rate of 28% that feels that they are not being a part of this. In this thesis I want to include as many children as possible as well and give them a saying in matters.

The students I visited seem to come from “average income-families” and this fact is something I need to consider when carrying on with my project. If I would have a wider range of schools from different environments I know for a fact that my result would have looked different. In some cases many of the students in Rottne had the opportunity and lifestyles to afford being a part of the decision making, choosing what to eat and what clothing they wanted to have, but not everyone has that freedom and this is something to consider in future steps.

3. Participatory Design

3.1 Workshop

One thing I had forgotten about but quickly got reminded of when holding my workshop was that children pick up everything you say. The first question I had prepared for the children was; “What do you think is the biggest difference when it comes to children's and adults voices (in terms of importance)?”

This question was a little hard for them to understand, so I tried to explain it as; “Sometimes adults choose to listen to other adults before children because they think they have much more knowledge and because of that, it might sometimes be hard for children to get things their way or even just have a say in a matter”, and this was something almost every child wrote about in their text.

They picked up my example like a sponge and when I walked around the classroom asking them individually what they were writing about I realised that everyone had written the same answer on that very first question; “I think the difference is that grown-ups have more knowledge than children and they can be more serious than what a child is”.

I understand now that I should have asked the question differently or at least remembered that what me or the teacher says will most likely be influenced in their work.
Question 1: “I believe that the difference is that grown-ups have a bit more knowledge than what children have. They can also be a bit more serious than what a child is.”

My aim for the other questions was to give the children a chance to think about themselves and only themselves and I wanted them to think freely on what roles they think they have as a decision maker at home. When I walked around the class for a second time and asked them to elaborate and explain their thoughts to me it was difficult. It was like they were not prepared to explain any of their thoughts. It felt like the school or their parents had not asked them enough elaborating questions and that they just did not know how to. It always ended up with “I do not know”.

I am not trying to blame anyone, and the problem can just as well be me. It felt like they had a lot to think of and good ideas, but it was hard to get a longer answer or reflection of it.

Maybe my presence in the class stopped them from feeling free-spoken? If given more opportunities to meet this class and get to know them better, maybe that would have unlocked a secret door into their wild imaginations and endless dreaming.

The answers I got in the end were all pretty similar to each other and most of the children seemed to have a limited influence at home. By limited I mean they all had a selection of topics they were
allowed to be a part of. Most of them, if not everyone, were able to decide on what food they bought home and would have for dinner, also things like shopping were including, all in moderate of course.

There were all these little things that they could decide at home, but not as much the “serious” things as they called it. That could be everything from where to go for the next vacation, when to do the homework, how many hours in front of a screen they were allowed, when it was time to go to bed or where they could play.

Many of them wanted to have more freedom when it came to some of those decisions, feeling that they were sometimes treated like they were younger than they really are.

In the group work, the children brainstormed diligently on how to reach out to adults around them. They both discussed on how they as children and youth can try to talk about these topics and rights more frequently with their parents.

Also things on how to try to make it clear that they should be able to participate in more decision-makings and how me as a designer can try to reach out as well. The children can only do so much, at some point must more people must be involved.
How me as a designer can reach out to parents and adults: “Designers can go to more schools and talk to the students. They can create an account on for example Instagram, Facebook and Snapchat. On this account you can upload images and write texts about how we children can get our voices heard.”

One other group talked a lot about social media and how their parents are often on their phones and that some sites and apps such as Instagram, snapchat, twitter and Facebook could be a good platform reaching out to a bigger crowd. I think this could be a good start in communicating things that is going on. I

t can be informatorily about different events where children are being spokes persons or just simple illustrations reminding parents and adults to really sit down and take in what they say. It can be one of those small acts that could have a large impact in the end.
I agree with the children on the fact that social media is probably the fastest way to reach out to the general public. If I would continue with this project I would be interested in seeing how far and how big of a percentage of parents I could reach out through images, campaigns or commercials of children and their rights on various social medias. It could also be very interesting to have a group Instagram with children who are sending the message themselves. Me as a designer could just function as a organizer of the group and Instagram page, but the children themselves would do the speaking, the writing about their ideas and thoughts about their rights.

3.2 Children’s Feedback

After the workshop was done I sat down with some of the children and asked them about how they think the workshop went. We had a one on one conversation and everyone said they have had a really good time and was very pleased with the day in general. Many of them liked the writing part the most because it started some questions amongst themselves that they had not thought of before and some liked the drawing-session more because it was different.

The school that I conducted my workshop at valued the creative stimuli the children got from being active participants. As they have participated in young students researches before they very welcoming.
3.3 Unexpected Situations

1. Schools

During my process I thought I knew the basics of working with children, but doing the work alone was a completely different task then in a group project. When first trying to contact schools I thought that, by sending the workshop-request together with my proposal to as many schools as possible, more schools would answer. Unfortunately, that did not go as planned.

Only one school answered me back saying that they had no time to invite me in such a short notice and apologized for the late reply. The remaining 13 schools did not answer me back. I tried to contact some after-school-programs as well, but with the same result. No replies. One school out of 14 was interested in participating in my research and this became probably my biggest limitation.

To have more participants and more environmental differences would have given me much more general knowledge on my topic and would have played a huge role in my result. If I would have send them the request back in December or beginning of our previous module, I believe the chance of receiving more positive replies from more schools would have been bigger.

2. Methods of the workshop

The methods I chose for this workshop was methods I was already familiar with from a previous workshop. I automatically assumed it would be successful this time too. However, I am not sure I picked the right methods for this particular class. If I would have met the class before and researched on what tools and environments they are the most comfortable in working in, maybe then I would have gotten different answers? Just because I am experienced with drawing as a communication tool, does not mean the children are.

There is a technique developed by a paediatrician called the “squiggle game” 24 in which a child and an adult creates a scribble with drawings as a way to tell a story. A similar method called “draw-andwrite” 25 also involves the child to draw pictures and then write about it after. Maybe the children needed more concrete guidelines in how to draw or what to draw to get comfortable in the tool or maybe I just was not clear enough in my language, communicating my ideas. Does it all comes back to language? Our most primitive knowledge, and yet it still stops us from really communicating.

---

24 Winnicott, 1971
25 Pridmore & Lansdown, 1997
3.4 Child participation is about adults, too

Many times when we, and when I say we I mean a generalisation of all adults and I, have asked the children what they think is the biggest obstacle for their participation in either familial, local or governmental-level decisions, they often say adults. That their attitudes and beliefs that children cannot nor do not have the capacity and knowledge to participate in the decision-making.

Figure 18.

After my explanation of why I think children should be considered more in decision-makings I had suddenly opened up the idea that they can and should be given the opportunity to participate in more decisions. I had opened up to a discussion they did not know they were left out from.

“The right to speak is the right to be listened to; in practice there is a gap between speaking and being listened to.” - Young people at Shaking the Movers conference, ‘Speaking Truth to Power: Civil and Political Rights of Children’, Carleton University, Canada, 2007

I think that having a voice and being heard are two completely different things. Unfortunately, one problem is that we tend to think that they are one common denominator. Once you speak out you are magically being heard by someone at least? Not always true. There can be moments in

26 Unicef.org
which we speak out, talking about our rights, but nobody does anything about it. In those moments, do we really feel heard?

I think our voices have not been heard until actions are taking place and change is ahead. That is when we have truly been heard. It is easy to say what we think and what we want. No one else can control it, not until the ideas, thoughts or visions leave our bodies and someone decides to hear us or not.

In this project I have heard that the communication barrier between children and adults are struggling, so I have chosen to do something about it. The children’s voices have left their bodies into the open possibility to become actions and that is something I want to do. To change their ideas into actions.

3.5 Ongoing Discussion

Then there is other factors to bring into the discussion about letting children participate in decision-makings and that is the fact that every individual is different and everyone develops in different speed. We simply cannot let every child decide everything, that would probably end up in chaos. But we as adults and parents can help the children to take part and prepare them in early ages to take more space and to make their voices heard. We can help them engage and prepare them for the democratic society that is awaiting them to grow up as individual thinkers.

There are some ongoing debates about the topics of being too limiting or loose as a parent and how this affect the children’s development both physical and psychological. One examples is the “Free Range Kids”-parenting, 27 which is a common-sense approach to parenting in today’s overprotected times. It is a concept of raising children with the beliefs of encouraging them to learn independently and with little parental supervision. 28 The “Free Range Kids” was a popular concept during the 70’s but it was also pretty common for me and my generation in the 90’s. Children were allowed to be out (almost) for as long they wanted and to go where they wanted without supervision, as long as you told someone where you went.

---

27 Dictionary.com/browse/free-range-parenting
28 Freerangekids.com
I am NOT lost!
I am a Free Range Kid!

I have been taught how to cross the streets safely. I know never to go off with strangers, but I can talk to them. I like being outside and exploring the world. If you are a grown-up, you probably did the same things when you were a kid, so please do not be alarmed. The adults in my life know where I am, but if you want to talk to them, feel free to give them a call.

Figure 19.

I can only speak from my experience, but we had the freedom to partly raise ourselves in a way when our parents dealt with their own things. It was never the fact that our parents did not care about us, but they were not afraid to let us explore the world on our own.

Me and my friends had the opportunity to learn and to play by society’s rules in an early age. We educated ourselves in how to behave towards each other and others and learned how to watch out for danger. This method taught me to think on my own and developed a pretty good sense of consequence-thinking in an early age.

I learned what I appreciated and what I wanted to change. I told my parents after every adventure what we had done and ideas on how to make it different. We got to tell stories for our parents and they listened to our adventures, we got to think out loud and experiment with ideas and our parents helped us to continue to explore that world.
The other parental concept is “Helicopter parenting” \(^{29}\) which is a method where the children are being overly-watched instead, quite in the opposite of “The Free Range Kids”. This is a term for parents who believe their child is extremely vulnerable to the extent that they act like a hover over the child ready to intervene as soon as something “bad” happens. \(^{30}\) They keep an eye on their kids wherever they are and all the time. Some parents make the children’s school projects to “help” with the grades, they can call their teachers to justify their kids schoolwork, they call other parents to check in on how their kids are doing on play-dates and are themselves babysitting their own children when they play in the garden.

I have, at a grown age, had the chance to observe these parents being so afraid that their children will hurt themselves that they limit them their daily life. These children never get the chance to learn by mistakes and get to feel what it is like to fall only to get back up again. There is no space to explore, there is no room to learn who you are as a child and growing human being and this protected space has been argued to limit the child to develop its own understanding of how the world works.

\(^{29}\) Oxforddictionaries.com/definition/helicopter_parent

\(^{30}\) Weber, J. “Helicopter Parenting”
I am no expert on this subject, and I have no children of my own so some might say that I should not have much an opinion in the matter, but my experience of growing up as a semi-“Free Range Kid” is partially what has shaped me to think, imagine and change things.

I got to learn those things by having people around me supporting that, involving me and listening to my ideas. I am not so sure that happens often in our society today. One must not forget that my point of view is limited as well, and I have no big research behind this concept, but the world we live in today is much different than it was perceived generations ago.

It is suddenly much more “dangerous”, children are “more likely” to get abducted and there are terrors everywhere. There were the same problems generations ago, but media and news sites did not communicate this as much before. It all comes back to how much we take it in and interpret it.

4. Framework

4.1 Framework

The framework and outcome of this thesis will propose as a board game for children and adults. This game will represent the article 12: “Every Child’s right to express their opinion and view” and is meant to be a fun activity learning about ones rights.

A wish for future aspects is to develop a game that spreads awareness to a younger crowd as well as starts a discussion between children and adults. The aim is to gather families and friends together and discuss categories such as; rules at home, grocery shopping, vacation destinies, decisions regarding changes or constructions at home, times and more.
It is inspired from Monopoly where each player is choosing a character and plays around a board. To pause some of the more serious discussions and exchange of ideas, there will be squares or other shapes with a different topic such as; three stars and a wish. If the player ends up on one of those shapes, the player needs to express 2 good qualities about (someone) and 1 quality you wish to change. There will also exist a “prison” like in monopoly, but this one will serve as a room instead. If the discussions reaches the point to angry arguments or disagreements, the one player starting it or unable to “meet” the discussion half way is instead “sent to their room”.

The purpose of this game is for families to get the opportunity to discuss family matters in a fun and non-threatening way. A platform where children gets the chance to say what they think about things and adults the chance to explain why some decisions is decided by adults only. It will hopefully open up for new ideas or at least a chance for children to express their views in a fun environment.

4.2 My contribution

My aim has been to go from a me-we-world process where I only plant the first seed. My wish is to bridge the gap between adults and children's language and engage them in fun discussions through a simple game.
I want to spread awareness and at the same time make it easy, understandable and fun for children to get involved in their rights. This could be a small seed that grows into a bigger participation and larger sustainable impact but for now I have tried to help adults prepare children for a world where their ideas and thoughts are taken seriously and into consideration.

4.3 Limitations

Time is unelidable in a project like this and me as a designer can only do so much with the time left. I am still unsure how much of the construction of the actual game I will be able to do for the exhibition, but I will at least present the idea of it.

The ideal would have been to have time for a mock-up and test it on families to see what works and not. But I would also be happy if I just got the presentation of the game in order and present the vision of it. Something that would be very positive for my project is if I can manage to create the game and test it on the exhibition. That is a goal, and whatever happens until then will be an achievement.
5. Summary

5.1 Summary of Research

In the beginning I had a vision of how things would turn out, how the workshop would go and what results it would give me. After conducting my workshop and collecting my information of research, things did not match. My ignorance, if I can call it that, made me miss the biggest sign, the languaging between adults and children. I turned out to be one of the adults that I had written about for so long. I realized that they was carrying the answers all along and I just did not understand them. I then decided to work with the language gap that occurs between children and adults, in a form of a game. I wanted families, children and adults to be able to sit down together and discuss about matters that is important for them both and hopefully come to agreement.

My research questions shifted focus from a children’s perspective to an adult’s and in the end I oriented myself around:

- How can I create moments in which parents and children exchange knowledge?
- Can a board game bridge the gap between languages?
- Can I help adults listen and really understand children and their thoughts?

In the end I feel that I have created a base for a continuing research and developing of my project. I have open up for discussions around the welfare of children and plant the seed to a social sustainable future. I am no near a result and to be completely true, I am not sure that is something I am striving for. The world will always develop and the generations adapts to the time they live in, the younger generations will take what we created before them and make it fit more to their living situation and develop it accordingly. And that is how It all should be.

I have put myself and my work in relation to my research. I have met my obstacles but also come to realisation. I can only hope that this is only the beginning of a successful idea and develops together with other people interested in my research.

5.2 Collection of Methods

- John Wood, “Designing for Micro-Utopias; Thinking Beyond the Possible”
- Designing Miracles, Metadesigner.org
- C2C, Child to Child participatory design
- Drawing and Writing as a communication tool
- Photographing
- Interviewing
- Analysing
• Social Networking, mail contacting
• Questionnaire for parents
Appendices

Workshop, Söraby School, Rottne Växjö.
Jag får bestämma maten!

Hennes bror

Jag får göra mig och jag vill

Jag lika inte vara en för lång tid

På hösten
Noah Nilsson 12 år

Fantastisk!

Inte gör så!

Jag bestämmer

Hör vi, har du en bil!
The very last reflection
24th of May

This past course has been very interesting, to say the least. It all started very sudden due to the fact that noon was allowed to think about the exhibition before we entered the last course. On the first day of our introduction of the last module we were asked to present an idea of how we would like our own part to be in the collected exhibition. Clearly, no one was prepared for it and we were all rushed into finding our solution before the groupwork started.

My very first idea was to use, since I had a lot of children’s material from previous workshop, I thought it would be nice to place them around town where the drawings and ideas would fit and make an impact. Some drawings were of: children deciding the food at home, and those drawings could easily be printed out big and placed around different food-stores. But personal economy came in the way for that to be fulfilled and the lack of time to contact different stores or locations to collaborate with for my satellite.

Another idea during the brainstorming was to use the children’s drawings and exhibit them in the gallery. It would have shown my process and my result in a very easy and affective way. It could have looked very nice to display them on a wider podium with a glass protection on top, to make their ideas more precious and valuable. Many times, when you are displaying children’s work, it tends to look very “childish” and not as professional as it could.

After handing in my idea I was, like everyone else, advised to make it more interactive. So instead, I thought it could be cute to have my own little children’s corner, where I have a mini-workshop throughout the exhibition period. It would contain a children’s table with two chairs and material for the visiting children to work with if they would have liked to. I kept that plan but the part of finding the right material for my corner was harder. I tried to get a sponsorship from IKEA where I would have borrowed a set from them and exploited their name in my exhibition, but after contacting 20 different people, I gave up the IKEA search. I then tried with my own sibling, which was approved. The only problem of borrowing a set from them was that it would have been a long travel back and forth to pick it up and return it. So as a last resort I turned to Maria Pasqualini who owned a white table in the right size for children, and I bought two pillows form
Emmaus for a very cheap price (and it is something I could return to them again). Then I thought of decorations, if I am going to do a children’s corner, I want it to look appealing for children and interesting enough for adults to read about it. So, I made it colourful, made sure it would stick out amongst the other exhibits and make it fun and easy for children to interact with.

During the vernissage it was a beautiful day, warm and sunny. Plenty of people showed up and supported our work as a graduating exhibition between masters, and bachelors. It was a very appreciated moment for us and the visitors. My little corner had many visitors and it was popular to sit and be creative.

On the wall next to the set, I had a poster with some guidelines, one question plus information of what I wished to be thought of when drawing or writing. But I also encourage the children to just draw what is on their mind only to make it more fun as well as keeping it serious. Since this is only a mini version, I don’t want to lecture anyone but I wished to give a small feeling of how the workshop was, it was playful, creative and very easy going. And what better way to show that process than my own mini-workshop corner?

I am very happy with the result of my own part, but also of my contribution to build this exhibition. I did what was asked of me and I offered to do more because I felt like it. It was fun being in the logistics team. We had a good conversation and flow in our workload. We tried to be everywhere for everyone, it was difficult at time, but also why I wanted to be in that group. We did errands and helped the other groups to coordinate their work. We had a good overview of all projects and we were having a pretty good mood from day one. We also made sure that all groups used the same platform so we could all know what was going on. Like a schedule plan so everyone could create their own plans as well as see when others had things too so it could be coordinated. It worked very well and everyone did a very good job.

I just wish that this would have been something we could have practiced earlier with the Kalmar students (The Kalmarians as we call them), we were all very happy to work together, finally, but it was a little too late. I enjoyed their company very much and we all kept in contact after the vernissage.
Something to bring further for this education is to create this connection between the too different bachelor programs more frequently. It was very appreciated and something that should have been done more.
Bibliography

- Chomsky, N. "Current Issues in Linguistic Theory", 1964
- Justitiepartimentet & Utrikespartimentet (2006) “FN.S Konventioner om Mänskliga Rättigheter”, Publisher; Davidsons Tryckeri
- Winnicott (1971) “Squiggle Game: A vehicle for communicating with the school-aged child”