Image 1: the tower in Tønsberg as seen from the Rådhus
Abstract

*Future Fest is a collaborative, open-platform festival bringing together members of the public with cultural, institutional and municipal partners to reconceptualise the culture of participation around the built environment and municipal planning process. Using 3 conceptual models (the three horizons, the pace layers, and a model of deliberative democracy) a research agenda was set focused on the democracy and the urban planning process. Based on site visits, literature reviews and semi-structured interviews, 5 key priorities for a design intervention were developed: communication, trust, knowledge, capacity and accountability/efficiency. Using these priorities as design goals, a series of interventions were ideated and analysed for their systemic implications, feasibility and scope. Future Fest emerged as a concept with high levels of systemic impact and low barriers to implementation.*
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Introduction

Our local built environment is the socio-spatial system in which we live our lives. It is central to our individual and collective well-beings. It is a field of intersections; of overlapping transit systems, economic and social networks. It is where the government and the individual meet most directly.

In Norway, as in other liberal democracies, citizens have a role to play in how their built environment is formed, chiefly through municipal urban planning processes. While the ballot box can be widely seen as the primary democratic tool of the liberal democracy, the consultative processes around urban planning have an important democratic role to play, and, it could be argued, a more direct impact on our daily lives. Clearly, our cities and towns are part of larger interconnected systems, and are influenced by a complex tapestry of forces. That being said, those elements that we can effect should be capitalized on in order to improve our individual and collective quality of life. (Pacione, 2003, 2003).

With the built environment and our planning process as a focus, this project started by asking several questions, namely: how can we create a more responsive built environment?; how can our existing behaviours and collective patterns be read and used?; and finally, how can alternative conceptions of participation and engagement contribute to better outcomes and a more democratic process?

This intersection between democracy and the built environment is central to the proposed design intervention - Future Fest. Future Fest seeks to address core issues raised in the research pertaining to the effectiveness of the planning process, while also seeking to integrate the concept of deliberative democracy to create a fairer, more just, and more representative system.
Image 3: Modified Three Horizons Model

Image 4: Modified Pace Layer Model
Process and methods

Three conceptual models formed the basis for research in this project and provided lenses with which to analyze new information: the three horizons model (International Futures Forum, 2016); the pace layer model (Brand, 1994) and my own model of democracy.

The Three Horizons Model

The three horizons model positions ‘the system’ in three time frames: the present; the transition; and the future. The curves represent the strategic fit of the given system over time. As the context, environment or priorities surrounding a given system change, its strategic fit either rises or falls. The current or dominant system is horizon 1. Our desired or idealized future is represented by horizon 3 (only receive weak signals of this future are visible now). Between the now and the desired future rises horizon 2, a transitionary system that balances the need to preserve critical aspects of the current system while laying the groundwork for the desired future to be built. (Curry and Hodgson, 2008)

This simple foresight model was used to analyze ideas and proposed design interventions, and to strategically place them in a proposed timeline. The idea of a deliberative, open and more directly participatory planning system was positioned as my 3rd horizon. Working back from this idea I ideated new concepts that would either be functioning as the status quo in this new system (these could be called radical interventions), or that would be transitional tools that would nudge our current system towards the ideal future (these could be called incremental interventions).

The Pace Layers Model

This model was initially developed as ‘shearing layers’ by Stewart Brand in his book How Building Learn: What happens after they’re built, based on work by Frank Duffy, as a way of understanding how different aspects of buildings change at different speeds, and how to design buildings for adaptability (Brand, 1994). Brand refined this concept with Paul Saffo at The Long Now Foundation into a design principle called Pace Layering, which identifies six paces of...
Image 5: Annotated draft of my democracy model
change and describes their interrelationships. (Brand, Saffo, 2015)

Brand and Saffo argue that different parts of a holistic system change at different speeds. Slow layers, such as nature and culture, take a long time to change and have considerable power over the faster layers. They are integrative, continuous and resilient and quietly powerful. Faster layers, such as fashion, and commerce are quick to change. They are adaptive, discontinuous and highly visible, but take along time to influence the slower layers. Changes move up and down between these layers, and the different rates of change can create areas turbulence - Saffo likens Silicone Valley as one such area of turbulence between commerce and infrastructure.

This model was used as the basis for a giga-map, allowing different aspects and influences in the planning system to be located according to their pace of change. The direction of their influence was also mapped, along with 4 kinds of interrelationships. This giga map (see Sevaldson, 2011) identified key areas for further investigation, and allowed the direction and speeds of change within the system to be identified.

A Model of Democracy

Early in the project I developed a draft of a model for understanding democracy as a layered concept. I mapped out common ideas or concepts related to democracy into four categories: democracy as government; democracy as institution; democracy as situation; and democracy as ideals. In doing so I was able to understand democracy as diffusely defined concept, one that means different things to different people in different contexts.

Importantly, the model shows that formal governmental structures such as legislatures, executive branches and constitutions are not necessarily democratic simply because of their form. For a government to be truly democratic, I argue that it must be built on democratic institutions, which are themselves supported by democratic contextual situations which can ebb and flow. These situations, as I call them, are directly informed by a collection of democratic ideals located in the socio-cultural environment. An erosion at any one level of this model can have effects up and down the chain.
Future Fest
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Mapping on the Built Environment

Image 6: giga-map produced for second milestone presentation
Returning to this model later in the design process freed me from a focus on the formal mechanisms of democracy and allowed me to identify the ideals and situations that make democracy work as a key target for a design intervention. Future Fest focuses on the social and cultural situations that make a system democratic - these align with the 5 key focus areas identified in my interviews (communication, trust, capacity, knowledge, accountability/efficiency).

My model aligns well with the concept of deliberative democracy largely developed by Joseph Bessette (Bessette, 1997). Deliberative democracy can be seen as a model for understanding and working with complex networks of priorities among diverse stakeholders. It suggests that complex decisions and issues can be tackled by trying to move beyond aggregate self-interest as the only political decision making tool (Ozanne et al., 2009).

Deliberative democracy as a concept holds that an engaged public actively discussing issues with themselves and with members of governmental structures can lead to better (more democratic) outcomes. It seeks to extend the democratic act from the ballot box to include the entire public or civic discourse on a topic or decision (Ozanne et al., 2009).

In this sense, deliberative democracy is much more about a lived, experienced or practiced democracy than is the traditional notion of liberal democracy (with rights, property and self-interested voting as foundational elements). This aligns well not only with my own model of democracy, outlined above, but also with my proposed design intervention, which sees the civic atmosphere around formal decision making processes as a target for intervention.

**Research Process**

With these models as a conceptual foundation, research was undertaken in 3 forms: first-hand site visits, observations and semi-structured interviews in Tønsberg; an ongoing literature/media review; and a series of semistructured stakeholder interviews. Some of these final semi-structured interviews were undertaken collaboratively with my classmate Marie Løken. Findings from the site visit and literature/media review were used as at the basis for a series of
Image 7: The evaluation matrix used to assess potential design interventions
maps, diagrams and visual investigations, published as an addendum to this report.

These maps informed both early concept ideation and the structure and content of the interview series. Notes from the interviews were taken in a highly visual style, allowing individual insights to be cut up and grouped together around themes. Through this process 5 key stakeholder priorities were identified (communication, trust, capacity, knowledge and accountability/efficiency), which collectively formed the basis for continued concept ideation and refinement.

A shortlist of 36 concepts was drafted and analyzed by assessing 30 separate variables derived from a Systems Oriented Design assessment tool addressing systemic impact, synergies and thresholds (Systems Oriented Design, 2015), the 5 stakeholder priorities, systemic level, time frame and systemic fit with the three horizons. Points were assigned from 1-10 for variables that could be assessed along a spectrum. A score of 0 or 1 was assigned for either/or variables. This allowed concepts to be ranked in order of overall score (Future Fest scored highest), or by individual variables.

Several concepts were sketched out further, but the Future Fest concept was by far the most broadly successful concept according to this analysis. Importantly, Future Fest as a concept can act as an umbrella intervention; many of the other concepts generated could easily be included as individual experiments or events within an implemented Future Fest program.
Image 8: the interview subjects and other research influences
Research and inquiries

The current planning process in Norway is largely mandated by law, although it is implemented on a more individual basis by municipal governments. It is based on a linear process with specific windows allocated for citizen feedback in the form of formal hearings, with slightly different requirements and processes for different levels of plans.

Each level of government, from National to county to municipal, develops their own priorities and guidelines for issues relating to urban planning. At the municipal level, area plans and city plans are drafted, outlining land-use policy and other higher-level planning priorities, such as transportation, environmental issues and public health, in relation to the guideline priorities provided by all levels of government.

Based on these area and city plans, individual developers, be they private or municipal land owners, draft individual project plans that are submitted to the municipality for review by the political building committee and the planning department staff. This part of the process includes two mandated participation windows.

Based on the series of semi-structured interviews and reading documents and publications about the planning process, it became clear that active and engaged participation was desired, though sometimes with reservations, by all actors in the system. The consensus among interviewees is that participation as currently implemented comes too late in the process; does not always address pertinent issues; includes only a very limited demographic of the public; and is often a lot of work for little payoff.

A key finding from the giga-mapping process was that the relationships between actors in the system are a key point for intervention. These relationships are complicated by a diverse range of influences in the fashion, commerce, infrastructure, governance culture and nature layers.

The understanding provided by these maps formed the basis for a series of semi-structured interviews with actors in the planning process. The interviews
Social Responsibility

N.A. As usual in THE BACKGROUND

"Making THE SYSTEM PRE-ENGAGED FOR SUCCESS"

"Tools, Standards"

Constructive Cooperation

Stage 2: New project creating standards for how to communicate project details in the first part of the project.

More info much earlier to politicians to municipal staff

"Sounding"

Trust

How can we build it in our process?

2. Ask why?

Why do you want more floors?

Why do you not communicate evenly?

N.A.

N.A. focused membership in big cities.

Variation between municipalities

Image 9: sample of interview notes
included conversations with a municipal planner, an architect and senior advisor to a national design and architecture association, a public health worker, an economic policy advisor for a property development association and the marketing director for a major housing development company. The visual notes from these interviews are available from the author.

Each interview subject highlighted the importance of participation and citizen engagement in the planning process, and highlighted the unique challenges they face in facilitating that participation. Each interviewee, however, put forward the idea that participation was central to planning in order to gather accurate information, to increase project buy-in and increase legitimacy, and to improve the overall quality of the project and its lasting effects.

Each interviewee also noted that conflicts relating to citizen opinion and feedback develop far too late in the process to be properly addressed, often leading to a sense of bitterness and mistrust in the system. These interviews highlighted the importance of engaging with participation in the planning process as early as possible, and this is why Future Fest is primarily designed as an intervention dealing with the area and city planning processes.

5 Core Insights

Through a process of directing and grouping statements from the interviews, five interrelated core priorities emerged as central to any improvement in the planning process.

**Trust** - there is often a lack of trust between actors in the system (developers, architects, planners, politicians, the public), and a lack of trust between the public and the system itself. Multiple interview subjects said they didn’t know what other actor’s true priorities were, even though they all shared similar concerns with how the system is working. One used the metaphor of war time trenches to describe different actors as opposing sides, and multiple actors used the metaphor of not wanting to show their cards.

**Communication** - clear, timely and detailed communication between actors is essential to the effectiveness of the planning process. Many interview subjects
Image 10: the proposed design interventions aligned along the three horizons.
expressed frustration that other actors in the system, particularly the public, did not seem to be informed as to how the process works or when certain actions were happening.

**Capacity** - each actor expressed a desire for increased capacity when it comes to participation in the system. They each identified participation as a priority, but many also acknowledged that it is not a part of their job that they are adequately trained for. Similarly, each actor wanted the public to be better informed about their role and power in the process. There was an interesting tension here: one actor described the public as a sleeping bear they hoped not to wake, while another described the public as a student asleep in the classroom before a big test.

**Knowledge** - the fourth insight is a common desire for more and different types of knowledge and information. Architects, planners and developers are experts in a given field, but they require actionable information in order to make informed decisions in their roles.

**Accountability & Efficiency** - finally, a desire to make the system easier to navigate, to make participation easier to incorporate, and to make the process faster and less costly was a common finding in the interviews. Some interview subjects wanted the system to be more transparent, such that other actors, including the public, could better see what was going on and what effect their participation was having.

Finally, it should be noted that each interview subject was interested in participation and improving the planning process for slightly different reasons, yet none of them were mutually exclusive. Some are primarily motivated by a desire to create better projects, some a desire for a better quality of life for residents, others by a desire to speed up the process and reduce inefficiencies - all of these priorities could be satisfied without detracting from the others.
Image 11: the built environment as an election
The Intervention - Future Fest

Future Fest is conceived as an open and participatory festival comprised of a network of events, interventions and activities organized by citizens, municipal offices, cultural centres and community groups all focused on active engagement in the built environment. It’s goal is to build an atmosphere of engagement around the planning process, and in so doing reconceptualize what participation means in relationship to that process.

Images

Two images have been central to my conception of what Future Fest is and what it tries to accomplish. First is the idea of an election not simply as a formalized decision making process, but as a high-point in civic discourse within a society. This year we have seen elections at their worst, but at their best elections create a palpable buzz of engagement with political and societal issues. Debates and discussions happen in all forms of media, around dinner tables and in schools. Proposals are made and visions shared.

At their best, elections are times of ideas, of living collectively and dreaming collectively. Future Fest asks: what if we dreamt collectively about our built environment? What if we could spark city-wide discussions and engagement with the future of our shared urban lives? That’s what Future Fest aims to do. It aims to build a culture of civic discourse and celebration around our built environment and how we create it.

The second image is that of the desire path - often a muddy track worn in a place not intended for traffic yet facilitating connects the designers or architects did not plan for. These desire paths, or desire lines as others call them, can be seen as a form of direct participation and feedback in planning the built environment. They are marks left by people’s behaviour, unfiltered by analysis or complex processes.
Image 12: early sketches of the Future Fest concept
As Don Norman notes in his book Living With Complexity, this concept has been adopted by thinkers in other fields. He writes:

Although the term “desire lines” originally applied to the trails of people seeking the most efficient path across fields, the term can be broadened to include any indicator of people’s natural behaviour. One researcher, Carl Myhill, has shown how people’s attempts to use badly designed systems leave trails behind that are the equivalent of desire lines. Skid marks on the road, wear marks on benches and stairs, even forms filled out with the proper information but not in the squares intended by the designers. Myhill shows that if one simply watches people’s behaviour, the discrepancies between the designer’s intentions and observed behaviour provides valuable design information. (Norman, 2010)

In this fashion, Future Fest is designed to capitalize on already existing behaviours and knowledge. Traditional participatory tools are functioning as they are designed, and bear the results they can. If we broaden our conception of what participation in the planning process can include, we may will start to allow new forms of information and wisdom to inform our collective decision making.

This is why Future Fest is envisioned as an open, crowd-sourced festival of diverse events. Just because citizens are not engaged in the planning process does not mean they are not engaged in something. There is a wealth of information, activity and interest already out in the world that can be brought forward and used.

**Form and Structure**

Modelled on events such as design festivals, film festivals and crowd-sourced festivals like 100in1day, Future Fest itself is deliberately free in form and can easily be adjusted by the individual community organizing it to meet their needs and capabilities.

That being said, I envision Future Fest as annual event that adjusts it’s scale and focus depending on the collective priorities of the organizers. In years
gets help from her parents on her art project - after talking they decide to go on a walking tour led by a neighbour. Comments on a new park project on FolkeTråkk and Instagram. School trip to the planning office for an urban art project. Enters a photo scavenger hunt with some friends from school. Discusses possibilities for new parks with friends in the square - leaves some quick notes on a planning display. Goes to a film screening in the square. Attends høringsmøte (for the first time). Hosts a dialogue dinner. Sees a Future Fest poster in a coffee shop. Sees a Future Fest poster in the grocery store. Attends høringsmøte (again). Writes a letter to the editor of Tønsberg Blad. Tells friends at the community centre about the new art project. Reads about new student art project in a Tønsberg Blad feature on Future Fest activities. Hosts a dialogue dinner. Attends area plan dialogue workshop. Helps daughter with her art homework. Sees an urbanism themed display at the library. Takes a walking tour led by a neighbour with their daughter. Discussion of possible cycling routes in the area. Sees a Future Fest poster at the library. Sees a Future Fest poster at the library with her art friends. Image 13: user journeys.
when municipal planners, as they are now in Tønsberg, are in the process of creating new area plans, Future Fest would incorporate and centre around the participatory processes already underway, building a network of activity and engagement around these tools.

This intervention would require ownership and stewardship. Ideally, municipal and regional grants, along with in-kind donations from business and media partners, could support a volunteer network and paid coordination staff. The main tasks undertaken by these coordinators would be the recruitment and support of event partners, building and maintaining a network of institutional partners, the solicitation of in-kind donations (printing, media services, location rentals, etc.), and the promotion of the events locally and regionally.

A network of active partners, such as municipal offices, libraries, schools, museums, galleries and organizations would need to be maintained in order to provide a backbone to build off of. These partners could use their expertise, resources and ongoing activities as contributions to the festival. Care should be taken, however, to ensure these ‘institutional’ partners do not dominate the event offerings of the festival, pushing community-driven events to the side.

**Experience**

Participating event organizers would register their event with the organizing staff online, making their event visible in calendars, on maps and in the event registry. An orientation package would help guide them through the process of planning and hosting an event, outline what supports are offered by the organizing staff, and would include assessment tools like an event journal, questionnaire and social media toolkit.

For municipal partners and institutional partners Future Fest is intended to add as little as possible to their existing work loads, and in fact is designed to explicitly incorporate and promote activities and initiatives already underway.

The four ‘user journies’ featured here illustrate how Future Fest could be experienced by different individuals attending events. Everyone who engages with Future Fest can tailor their experience based on their interest, capacity, and what events have been organized by others in their community.
Discussion

If realized as it is planned, Future Fest address the 5 core priorities identified in my research - Communication; Trust; Capacity; Knowledge and Accountability/Efficiency. It has the potential to be a broad platform for a diversity of new ideas and new interventions.

Future Fest is not driven by new or expensive technology, nor by complex regulatory changes. It is, comparatively, quite simple in design and in execution. It can engage people from across society and from different parts of the formal planning system.

Additionally, it has very different short term and long term implications, both of which work in tandem and can be seen to satisfy different priorities. While the initial central goal of Future Fest was to improve citizen engagement with the urban planning process, I believe the systemic implications are far more wide ranging.

Future Fest has great potential for diverse and long lasting systemic impact. This all hinges, however, on the kinds of activities that are included in the festival, and how those activities are communicated and shared with other actors. In many ways, Future Fest is playing the long game - lasting changes to infrastructure and governance will come only after a lot of work in the social and cultural realms.

One of the core challenges in a project like this is that it is people driven; that is, it doesn’t work without engagement, and yet engagement is what it is trying to build. To overcome this challenge, Future Fest needs to leverage existing avenues of engagement, following the desire path metaphor.

Actors in the system are already busy, tasked with many responsibilities within a complex system and complex project. Future Fest, as it stands here, is not a change or alteration to an existing system or set of responsibilities. While it is designed to leverage existing behaviours, motivations and patterns of engagement, it is also new structure, a new set of responsibilities and more work for more people. This challenge will need to be thoroughly addressed in order for
an intervention like Future Fest to succeed.

Additionally, Future Fest will only be as experimental, as inclusive and as meaningful as the people and events that constitute Future Fest. Often overlooked issues like racial, ethnic and gender diversity, economic diversity, health issues and mobility issues, drug use, homelessness and others will need to be addressed head on by broadening who is leading the discussions and designing/implementing participatory processes. Lasting, meaningful and positive change will only come if events run by people of diverse backgrounds for people of diverse backgrounds are central to what Future Fest is trying to do.

This, then, is perhaps it’s greatest challenge and it’s greatest strength. Participatory events and methods led and implemented by the official actors in the system will always be necessary, and can be incredibly valuable and effective in and of themselves. That being said, without opening up the creation of those participatory methods to broader groups of people, no attempt to change the participatory nature of a system can be said to be fully realized.
Conclusion and Further Work

The built environment has a profound effect on our individual and collective well beings. It is a space of vibrant community and intersecting systems. It has incredibly potential for democratic tools to improve lives.

Future Fest, as participatory, crowd sourced festival, seeks to build an atmosphere, a culture even, of engagement and inclusiveness around our built environment and it’s planning. The core concept responds to the 5 core priorities outlined in the research - trust, communication, capacity, knowledge and accountability/efficiency. It also addresses the normative prescription of deliberative democracy, that is, that widespread, deliberative processes linking diverse groups of people, institutions and organizations have the power to make society more just, fair and democratic.

As a concept, however, Future Fest is still in it’s infancy. Many questions remain about how an intervention like this would be organized and implemented, and what kinds of interventions, activities and events should and could be included under it's umbrella. Direct experiments, further research and field testing should be implemented in order to refine and develop the concept further. This would need to be done by, or in collaboration with, local groups or offices interested in pursuing the concept further.

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