Place branding and the case of social inclusion:

a place made of people for the people

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Cities and places have adapted place branding strategies from marketing such as promotional tactics to attract new residents, tourists and corporations. However, these strategies neglect that a place is governed by political organizations such as municipalities, with existing residents in their roles as citizens participating in the political framework of the place.

Place branding is a multi-faceted process with other premises than traditional marketing. The most significant premise is that a place is governed by political organizations. Another significance is that branding is not only about promotional tactics; branding process is about associations. For example, these associations are created by people when they relate to a place through how they feel and think about the place. Scholars argue that the existing residents have been taken for granted in theory and practice, and address them as the most important stakeholder group in a place branding process. This is because residents form the social milieu since of the place, and they can make or break place branding efforts in their roles as citizens. Due to these significances, the residents' associations of the place are important in the legitimization of the place branding efforts.

  Recent place branding studies show that socially disadvantaged groups of residents are not always included in place branding processes. This master thesis is a case study of the municipality of Borås in Sweden. It is a municipality with citizen dialogues between citizens, civil servants and politicians in a long-term perspective of social inclusion of the socially disadvantaged groups of disabled citizens. The dialogues are results of integrating the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This is interesting because human rights are part of the political framework of a place. Since certain groups of residents have stake in a place that are in fact human rights, it is important to understand the individual and collective processes of social inclusion of these groups of residents, such as disabled citizens. To gain an understanding, I have applied symbolic interactionism, a perspective about how people interpret each other, situations and surroundings, to study the communicative interaction process of resident participation, and residents' association to the place. This knowledge from the study is applied in a place branding context. The learning outcome is about how to build a legitimized place brand in a place branding process as a democratic community-building exercise anchored among residents within the political framework of a place.

Abstract · Sammanfattning

Place branding: a place for the people made of people

This master thesis examines disabled residents' roles as citizens in a place branding process within the political framework of a place. This is in line with the resident approach in a political context within the research field of place branding. My contribution to the resident approach is a case study in the municipality of Borås, where I study the organized work of accessibility between citizens, politicians and civil servants through the perspective of symbolic interactionism, and connect these insights to who can build place brands. I have interviewed 10 participants; observed 3 meetings with totally 55 participants; and studied 17 documents. The results show how place branding processes can be anchored among residents in a democratic context of the political framework of a place through participatory tools such as citizen dialogues. This is also a time- and cost-saving place branding strategy. The results also show how disabled residents perceive the place design and the political framework of a place in relation to being able or disabled. The context-bound aspects of residents' perception of the place are important because the residents participate and influence the place through their roles as citizens. Therefore, the perspective of symbolic interactionism is beneficial for the resident approach within the research field of place branding.

Platsvarumärkeskommunikation: en plats för folk skapad av folk

Denna masteruppsats undersöker funktionshindrades invånares roller som medborgare i en platsvarumärkesprocess inom det politiska ramverket av en plats. Detta är i linje med forskningsfältet för platsvarumärkeskommunikation, där det finns intresse för medborgares roll i platsvarumärkesprocesser i en politisk kontext. Mitt bidrag till forskningsfältet är en fallstudie av Borås kommun, där jag studerar det organiserade arbetet med tillgänglighet mellan medborgare, politiker och tjänstemän genom det teoretiska perspektivet symbolisk interaktion, och för ihop dessa insikter till vem som kan bygga platsvarumärken. Jag har intervjuat 10 personer, observerat 3 möten med sammanlagt 55 deltagare och studerat 17 dokument. Ett av resultaten visar hur en platsvarumärkeskommunikativ process kan förankras bland invånare i en demokratisk kontext av en plats via exempelvis medborgardialoger. Detta är också en tids- och kostnadsbesparande strategi. Ett annat resultat visar hur funktionshindrade invånare uppfattar platsens utformning och det politiska ramverket av en plats i relation till att vara framkomlig eller funktionshindrad. Kontextbundna aspekter av invånares upplevelser av platsen är viktiga då invånare deltar och påverkar platsen genom rollen som medborgare. Därför är symbolisk interaktion en tillgång för invånarperspektivet inom forskningsfältet för platsvarumärkeskommunikation.

Keywords: place branding, residents, symbolic interactionism, political framework of a place, communication, democracy

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Preface

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Introduction

The challenges presented to a municipality in the 21st century are multifaceted. The municipality must be an attractive place, a democratic institution and also develop and maintain relationships with different stakeholders. To be an attractive place is about attracting stakeholders such as tourists, business, and new residents (Therkelsen, 2015). However, current place branding scholars address the existing residents as more important compared to new residents and tourists when it comes to building a place brand (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2008; Braun, Kavaratzis & Zenker, 2013). One reason is the political aspect of residents, since they are citizens in relation to local authorities within the political framework of the place (Braun, et al, 2013). Places are governed by nations, regions, towns and cities (Go & Govers, 2012; Ashworth, Kavaratzis & Warnaby, 2015; Lucarelli & Giovanardi, 2016). This political framework of places is also influenced by trans-national agendas, as human rights.

In the trans-national agenda of human rights, social inclusion of the marginalized group with disabilities is ratified in the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN Convention, 2016). This social inclusion involves citizenship, participation and involvement of disabled people in the society (UN Convention, 2016).

Recent studies point to the fact that socially disadvantaged groups of residents are not always socially included in place branding processes. Social exclusion is problematized in relation to a democratic context of place branding processes. A previous study has shown the importance of questioning which participants are allowed to participate in negotiating a place brand (Sevin, 2011). Other scholars (Merrilees, Miller, Shao & Herington, 2014) have shown how a city is perceived from a socioeconomic disadvantaged group of citizens, where a city's brand is connected to material aspects, with public transport as an example. A study about disadvantaged groups of citizens such as disabled people explains the importance of rhetoric messages in texts and pictures on municipal city websites that aligns with a municipal policy to socially include disabled people (Paganoni, 2012). An example is that the rhetoric message in the headline "apply for it" is more user-friendly than "information for the disabled", because the latter risk to frame groups of residents as preconceived stereotypes (Gnoli, Marino & Rosati, 2006). Another previous study has shown the importance of spatial consciousness to the process of place branding, to support a structural change in regions that

have been socioeconomically underdeveloped due to a lack of strategic spatial planning and a lack of social and spatial realignment through civic participation (Oliveira, 2016).

While these studies are valuable for grasping different aspects of social inclusion, they overlook the long-term strategic organized work and communication between socially disadvantaged groups of citizens, politicians and civil servants, based on municipal policies of social inclusion. These previous studies also overlook the function of strategic human rights policy of the disadvantaged group of disabled citizens that municipalities may contextualized into citizen dialogues, where these disabled citizens can voice their needs as well as their relation to the place. The organized work and communication through citizen dialogues can be a resource in a place branding process anchored among the citizens, where some citizens' concerns of the place are in fact human rights issues. Therefore, it is of interest to study how socially disadvantaged groups of residents such as disabled citizens can participate in a place branding process. This is seen against the backdrop of a democratic context within a political framework of a place, where disabled residents' needs and concerns in their everyday life in the place are manifested by a human rights policy.

The resident approach is in line with scholars challenging the idea that place branding can adapt traditional branding strategies and promotional tactics (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2008; Ashworth, Kavaratzis & Warnaby, 2015). In relation to who builds place brands, where residents are addressed as the most important stakeholder group (Ashworth, et al, 2015), there is a discussion about what builds place brands (Ashworth, et al, 2015). One issue in this discussion is place brands as "associations with place-making elements" (Ashworth, et al, 2015, p. 5). It acknowledges place branding as a wide and complex set of processes, where place brands are seen as interactive formations, by a "collective construction of the meaning of place as this is undertaken in social actuality and through social interactions" (Ashworth, et al, 2015, p. 5). This is of interest when it comes to the organized work between citizens, politicians and civil servants in the municipal context of the political framework of the place.

In addition, there is an academic view about place brands being constructed by groups of individuals, with an acceptation of different groups of individuals from different brands as they experience and appropriate the place and its brand in their own, particular ways (Ashworth, et al, 2015). This is of interest considering how disabled residents relate to the place based on their perceptions of being able or disabled in relation to the place design.

Purpose and research questions

The purpose of this master thesis is to contribute to the resident approach within the research field of place branding. In my case study, I focus on citizen participation within the political framework of a place, by exploring the interaction process of social inclusion of disabled citizens in a municipality. Then I apply the interaction process of participation in a place branding context. This is carried out in two steps.

First, I study the interaction process of communication and participation in an organized work of accessibility between non-profit organizations, politicians and civil servants, through the lens of symbolic interactionism.

Second, I explore how disabled residents relate to the place based on their perception of being able or disabled in relation to the place design - through the lens of place branding theories of landscape and place brands as a network of associations in the mind, which will be synthesized with the perspective of symbolic interactionism.

The interpretative tradition of symbolic interactionism focuses on interactions between people, their joint actions, the self and the society, mediated by symbolic communication. The perspective contributes to the resident approach with a theoretical framework of the human being's perceptions and actions, and the premises of citizen participation in interaction processes within the political framework of a place.

a) How do joint actions between different stakeholders within the political framework of a place and human rights shape the communication and organized work of accessibility?

b) How do disabled residents relate to a place based on being able or disabled in the place, and how do they take into account the organized work of accessibility in a municipality?

I will answer the research questions through a case study in Borås City. It is relevant to understand the communication and organizing of work between different stakeholders in a social interaction process such as disability organizations, civil servants and politicians. Also, there is information in the case about disabled residents' relation of the place connected to their disabilities and the organized work of accessibility.

Definitions

Social inclusion can be defined from its opposite, social exclusion and discrimination (Gatrell & Swan, 2008). Social inclusion is a process of limiting discrimination of disadvantaged groups (Gatrell & Swan, 2008).

Within *disabilities* there is a range of disabilities from impairments in the body that make a person sit in a wheelchair to impairments of cognitive functions (World Health Organization, 2011). In this master thesis, the disabilities in focus are on sight impairment and problems of walking.

In this master thesis, *citizenship*, exemplified with disabled citizens in a place branding process, relates to a western contemporary citizenship where people have the right to vote and participate in the political framework of a place (Braun, et al, 2013) with their socioeconomic rights in terms of social equality as well as their freedom to organize themselves in the civil society in the context of public-political sphere (Van Gunsteren, 1998).

In defining *strategic*, this master thesis adapts the inclusive perspective, where the word strategic is not focused on a management practice in power over stakeholders, but on a strategy with stakeholder communication (Hallahan, Holtzhausen, van Ruler, Verčič, & Sriramesh, 2007).

Towards accessible cities

Making public spaces accessible for disabled people has been on the agenda in European countries such as Sweden and United Kingdom since the 1950s (Prop. 1999/2000:79; Farrington & Farrington, 2005). It is a result of how the society conceived disabled people, which turned from a medical model to a social model of disability (Wolf-Branigin, 2013). The core of the social model is to see the person as an able person with the need of some adjustments to participate in the society (Wolf-Branigin, 2013). In European countries, disabled people were put in institutions and excluded from the society since the 1800s (Schur, Kruse & Blanck, 2013). From the 1950-60s, the Disability Movement in western and northern Europe influenced political decision-making processes toward social inclusion in society (Olson, Penna & Veith, 2004.) In Sweden in the mid 1960s, the first steps were to make cities and rural areas more accessible in the place design (Prop. 1999/2000:79). Particular needs of

disabled people were considered in building regulations of access in built environment in the mid-1960s (Andersson & Skehan, 2016). Accessibility became a part of the Swedish planning and building act (in Swedish, "Plan- och bygglagen") from 1967 (Andersson & Skehan 2016). Followed by Sweden's ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities in 2008, accessibility was combined with user-oriented concept of usability (Andersson & Skehan, 2016).

From the year 2010, the European Commission has contextualized the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities in a disability strategy (2010-2020 Disability Strategy). In Europe, 80 million residents have a disability ranging from mild to severe, 63 percent of Europeans older than 45 have disabilities and over 20 percent of people over the age of 75 are severely disabled (2010-2020 Disability Strategy). The physical barrier for different disabilities shall be prevented by more accessibility (2010-2020 Disability Strategy). To encourage accessibility, the European Commission provides an 'Access City Award', available for European cities with more than 50 000 inhabitants (Access City Award, 2015).

Accessibility in Borås City

Borås is a city in the south-west of Sweden with 110 000 inhabitants (Besseling, 2017), and was awarded the Access City Award in 2015 (Borås is the winner, 2015). Borås City is a part of the Västra Götaland region. This region has an accessibility building strategy with regulations stipulating more generous measures compared to the Swedish planning and building act to gain more accessibility (Västra Götalandsregionen, 2012). The regulations are implemented in the municipalities of the region (Västra Götalandsregionen, 2012).

Gothenburg city, next to Borås City has also been awarded with Access City Award (European Commission, 2014). However, Borås City not only involves town planners in accessibility processes but has a strategic work of accessibility through long-term perspective on resident participation within the political framework of the place. The citizen representatives from disability organizations hold seats on a Central Disability Advisory Board in the municipality of Borås. Part of the award focuses on the municipal work with a citizen dialogue where politicians and civil servants discuss accessibility with disabled residents. This citizen dialogue is also represented in a best practice document for inspiring other cities (European Commission, 2015). The case of Borås is especially interesting because of its long-term perspective on social inclusion by resident participation.

Theory

Place branding as a research field

The research field of place branding has multiple roots. The early academic articles are dated back to the 1970s. These articles focused on place promotion rather than place branding, and were published in the research fields of urban policy and tourism (Hankinson, 2010). This means that the place promotion literature was separated from the research fields of marketing and branding for approximately 30 years (Hankinson, 2010; Kavaratzis, 2005; Pike, 2009).

During this period, branding as a research field rapidly developed. However, it is worth mentioning that in the mid 1950s, academic articles of branding moved the concept of brands from a name on a product to brands as symbolic images related to the customers' feelings connected to the symbolic images (Hankinson, 2010; Boulding 1956; Gardner & Levy, 1955).

In the 1990s, two seminal books on place marketing set the scene of place marketing in the 1990s (Ashworth, Kavaratzis & Warnaby, 2015). 'Selling the city' by Ashworth and Voogd (1990) combined the disciplinary fields of city marketing, commercial marketing and urban planning. These scholars addressed the importance of city renewal and partnerships of public and private sector. 'Marketing Places' by Kotler, Haider and Rein (1993) was based on a financial view of marketing planning. The concept was about how to attract investment, industry and tourism to cities, states and nations by an adaption of a corporate strategy of competition, by developing products, markets and customers. These. Since the year 2000, the academic place promotion and branding literature became intertwined, and emerged the next-coming years into a research field of place branding (Hankinson, 2010).

From the year 2000, the place branding activities among practitioners, and the interest among scholars from different disciplines have increased (Ashworth, et al, 2015). In 2004, the *Journal of Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* was established. In 2008 the *Journal of Place Management and Development* was launched (Ashworth, et al, 2015). There have been an increased number of academic articles of place branding, which has led to a fragmentation of the field (Lucarelli & Berg, 2011).

The research field of place branding of today is a multidisciplinary research field, but lacks a clear and commonly accepted theoretical framework (Ashworth, et al, 2015). In 'Rethinking Place Branding', by the editors Kavaratzis, Warnaby and Ashworth (2015), different scholars claim that there are areas of consideration for further inquiry. To further study how co-

creation of a place can be created among residents, and how residents create their meaning of the place are examples of areas with a gap to fill (Ashworth, et al, 2015), which is in the scope of this master thesis.

In my case study, I focus on citizen participation within the political framework of a place. The case study is in two parts and is to be found in the analysis chapter. In the first part, I examine the macro-meso level of the communicative premises of a joint action in a municipal context. In the second part, I study a micro-level of premises of participation among disabled individuals by their relation to the place design and their network of association of the place in their minds. The aim is to gain knowledge of these premises of participation in order to contribute to the resident approach within the research field of place branding.

Participation within the political framework of a place

Place branding scholars state a gap of knowledge of the residents' roles in a place branding process (Insch & Florek, 2010; Merrilees, Miller & Herington, 2009). In the article "My city – my brand: the different roles of residents in place branding" (2013), the scholars Braun, Zenker and Kavaratzis criticize that place branding has been determined in a top-down manner by local authorities (Bennett & Savani, 2003), because this manner neglects existing residents compared to new residents. Braun, et al (2013) discuss three roles of the residents with insights drawn from Merrilees who states that social bonding (Merrilees, 2009) is one of the most important community attributes in the resident's place brand attitudes.

The three roles of the residents according to Braun, et al (2013) are as ambassadors who share their meaning and sense of the place to new residents and tourists; as citizens in the political framework of a place; and residents as an integrated part of a place brand since they form the social milieu of the place. Therefore, Braun, et al (2013) remark that the existing residents are more important in a place branding process, than new residents and tourists.

In this master thesis, I firstly address residents as participating citizens within the political framework of a place. Braun, et al (2013) discuss social bonding in a political context between residents and local authorities when they address residents as citizens as the most neglected role in place branding theory. Because of the political power of the citizens – since they can vote and choose their local government officials and to participate in political decisions, their conclusion is that the residents also have a prominent role in the legitimacy of a place branding process. This is because residents, in their role of citizens, actively contribute to the decision making of a place.

Secondly, I address the residents as people who form the social milieu of the place. Braun, et al (2013) argue that the residents are the "bread and butter" of places (p. 20) and create the social milieu of the place through social interactions with each other and with people who come to the place, such as new residents and tourists.

Another aspect in the role of the citizens that address is a coherency of the place brand and its communicated values and propositions require the support of the residents. This means that the residents should be a part of the place branding process, since they can "make or break" the place branding effort (Braun, et al, 2013, p. 22, 23). As citizens "residents legitimize the place brand efforts and 'finance' most of the efforts and expenses involved in place branding" (Braun et al, 2013, p. 23).

In the scope of this master thesis, the definition of participation such as civic participation among citizens is partly coined by Ashworth, Kavaratzis and Warnaby (2015, p. 6): "a community-building exercise" in a democratic context of a place.

Residents as differentiated groups of citizens

When residents are mentioned in the research field of place branding, they tend to be treated as a homogenous group (Braun, et al, 2013; Stubbs & Warnaby, 2015; Kerr & Oliver, 2015). There are a few examples of distinctions of different groups of residents. Kavaratzis & Hatch (2013) make a distinction between new and old residents. Merrilees, Miller, Shao and Herington (2014) make a distinction between residents in different income brackets. However, these are very rough distinctions, and it illuminates the need for differentiating diverse disadvantaged groups of residents. It illuminates the need to understand these residents as citizens with different needs and opinions. A lack of deeper knowledge of how different citizens create their meaning of a place is problematic in relation to understanding how different citizens can participate in the creation of the meaning of the place.

A consequence of residents being not all the same, but rather, groups with different needs, interests and opinions is that place branding should be seen as a process of conflict management, "with the aim of integrating as many residents as possible (Braun, et al, 2013, p. 23). This is of interest when studying the case of Borås, since Borås City is governed by the local municipality, which have participatory tools of citizen dialogues.

Therefore, it is of interest to conduct a case study on the communicative interaction processes in citizen dialogues and the work of accessibility between non-profit organizations, politicians and civil servants in the municipality of Borås.

Politicians and civil servants as stakeholders of the place

Kavaratzis and Hatch's (2013) emphasize that stakeholders should not be informants in a decision-making process for place branding managers. The stakeholders should be seen as groups that collectively create the place brand "under the facilitation by place brand managers" (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013, p. 82). They stress this approach to the point of view that place brand managers are even stakeholders themselves in a place branding process (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013). Therefore, their view of place branding leadership is about engagement "into negotiating the meaning of the place brand" (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013, p. 82). In relation to the case of Borås, I will consider not only residents, but also politicians and civil servants as stakeholders of the place.

Place brands as network of associations in the mind

In part two of the case study, I examine how disabled residents relate to a place based on being able or disabled in the place. Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013) remark that the branding process needs to be open to allow different interpretations and meanings that will be created, evaluated, and either reinforced or rejected during the process. Zenker and Braun (2010) define the place brand as 'a network of associations in the consumers' mind based on the visual, verbal and behavioral expression of the place, which is embodied through the aims, communication, values and the general culture of the place's stakeholders and the overall place design' (p. 5). The interpretation and perception of a place is formed in the mind, based on the experience of the place. In the analysis, the place brand as a network of associations is synthesized with insights of *landscape* as a theoretical concept of a connection and mediation of relations between people and physical environments (Campelo, 2015).

These place branding theories are valuable because they are on a micro level and can be applied among disabled residents, and address context-dependent aspects such as the fluidity between tangible aspects of the place design and the intangible aspects of experience and the association of the place in the mind. The place aspect is relevant to explore in relation to a differentiated group of disabled residents who depend on accessibility and the place design, in their ability to live their life and to participate in a municipality.

Co-creation: engagement system of trust

The theory of co-creation by Ramaswamy and Ozcan (2014) aims to better understand the stakeholders as individuals and as communities by grasping what is meaningful to them, and

what generate meaningful experiences for them, as well as how to better manage stakeholder risk-award relationships. The key points of Ramaswamy and Ozcan's (2014) co-creation theory is in their DART model (dialogue, access, reflexivity and transparency). Transparency is about a collective transparency and visibility of information based on events underlying interactions in the engagement system to build trust. This key point is in part one and two of the case study. This aim is to add insights of what is needed to be considered when it comes to an engagement system of trust in a place branding process anchored among citizens within the political framework of a place.

Methodology, perspective and method

The epistemological foundation of this master thesis lies in phenomenology. The focal point of phenomenology is the idea of "experience of any reality is possible only through interpretation" (Prasad, 2005, p. 13). Departing from this interpretative tradition, the ontology of this master thesis is based on symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934).

I synthesize the perspective of symbolic interactionism with place branding theories about participation in the political framework of a place in part one of the analysis, and with place brands as a network of associations in part two, to explore residents as a vital stakeholder group in co-creating a place brand (Braun, et al, 2013). The aim is to gain a polyphonic approach (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008) with voices from the micro, meso and macro levels. This strategy opens into the ability to grasp different social interaction processes, which is significant in understanding the premises of social inclusion of disabled residents within a political framework of the place, and how this knowledge can be applied in a democratic context of a place branding process where the residents can participate and legitimize the place branding efforts.

Symbolic interactionism: three premises

Symbolic interactionism is based on three premises (Blumer, 1969). First, human beings act toward things based on the meanings that the things have for them. Second, the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's peers. Third, these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he or she encounters.

The ontological point of symbolic interactionism is synthesized with place branding theories from the resident approach within the research field of place branding, in part one and two of the analyzed case study in this master thesis.

Symbolic interactionism: perspective of participation

In part one of the analysis, I apply the perspective of collective communication processes through the interpretative aspects of social interaction to answer the research question: "How do joint actions between different stakeholders within the political framework of a place and human rights shape the communication and organized work of accessibility?".

More concretely, I have applied the perspective of three premises in symbolic interactionism, developed by Blumer (1969) with tenets from Mead (1934), because these premises are about people as interpretative human beings who create meanings in social settings. I have then applied the symbolic interactionist (SI) theory *joint action* (Blumer, 1969), which opens into the possibility to study the collective premises of the organized work of accessibility between non-profit organizations, politicians and civil servants within a political framework of a municipality, when residents act in their roles as organized citizens. *Joint action* also opens into the possibility to study how citizens, politicians and civil servants share meanings of the place they live in.

Part one of the analysis is the in macro-meso level, where the meso level is about the interaction and communication in the organized work between the non-profit organizations, politicians and civil servants. The macro level is about the context of the meso level, the political framework of a place.

Joint action

The theory of *joint action* (Blumer, 1969) is the central part of the perspective of symbolic interactionism in part one of the analysis. This term is coined by Blumer, however, the core of this approach is from a theory of "the social act" from Mead, which is about "the larger collective form of action that is constituted by the fitting together of the lines of behavior of the separate participants" (Blumer, 1969, p. 70). The focal point *of joint action* lies in paying attention to "that the essence of society lies in an ongoing process of action – not in a posited structure of relations. Without action, any structure of relations between people is meaningless" (Blumer, 1969, p. 71). The acts of individuals can be crisscrossed, and people can adapt to each other by their acts. Examples of joint actions are "a trading transaction, a family dinner, a marriage ceremony, a shopping expedition, a game, a convivial party, a debate, a court trial, or a war" (Blumer, 1969, p. 70). I also perceive citizen dialogues as a joint action, because I see a citizen dialogue as an ongoing process of action within the political and democratic framework of a place.

Blumer (1969) stresses the point that joint actions can also include uncertainty. A joint action needs to be started – and might not be started at all. A joint action can be "interrupted, abandoned, or transformed" (Blumer, 1969, p. 71). There is also a risk that the participants do not create a common definition of the joint action, therefore their acts can be done with different premises (Blumer, 1969).

I synthesize *joint action* with place branding theories about resident participation (Braun, et al, 2013) and co-creation of a place brand (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2014), to see what communicative aspects that can be applied to advance the resident approach in the research field of place branding.

In my discussion of joint actions in a place branding context within the political framework of a place, I also consider the type of organization. A municipality is a public sector organization, and I synthesize *joint action* with a theory of strategic communication in public sector organizations. The scholars Fredriksson and Pallas (2016) argue that public sector organizations, such as municipalities, cannot choose to prioritize as corporations can do. Instead, citizens are to be given the same attention and handled equal, which is a significance of the public sector organization structure (Fredriksson & Pallas, 2016) of a municipality. Fredriksson and Pallas (2016) argue that this leads to consequences of when, how and under what circumstances different communication activities are set to be performed, which will be considered in my analysis of place branding in a municipality.

Since I study collective interaction processes in the case on a macro-meso level of non-profit organizations, politicians and civil servants - whom may act based on their different roles and different interests, I have considered *joint action* in the analysis as well as in the methods of participant observation and group interviews.

Symbolic interactionism: perspective of the self and the place

In part two of the analysis, I examine how disabled residents relate to a place based on being able or disabled in the place. I apply the perspective from Mead (1934), which strives for an understanding of the self and its relation to a meaningful action (Prasad, 2005). This perspective has been further developed by Blumer (1969) about the *making of indications*, and the *definition of the situation* – applied as the *definition of the city* in this master thesis.

Definition of the city

To answer the research question "how do disabled residents relate to a place based on being able or disabled in the place?", I depart from the theory of *definition of the situation*. 'The symbolic interactionist approach rests upon the premise that human action takes place always in a situation that confronts the actor and that the actor acts on the basis of *defining this situation* that confronts him' (Blumer, 1997: 4; emphasis in original, as cited in Rock, 2001).

The *definition of the situation* is about to develop acts to "meet the situations in which they are placed" (Blumer, 1969, p. 85). To define a situation is to interpret the situation (Blumer, 1969). The person, "has to identify the things which it has to take into account – tasks, opportunities, obstacles, means, demands, discomforts, dangers and the like" (Blumer, 1969, p. 85). Then, the person has to assess these things in some fashion and "has to make decisions on the basis of the assessment" (Blumer, 1969, p. 85). Blumer (1969) remarks that this interpretative behavior "may take place in the individual guiding his own actions, in a collectivity of individuals acting in a concert, or in 'agents' acting on the behalf of a group or organization" (p. 85). When I apply the *definition of the city* in my analysis, I focus on how disabled individuals define the city of Borås based upon the place design, and how they identify the place design as accessible or a danger, which guide these individuals in their actions and decisions related to the city.

Place brands: the self and the place

In the analysis, I have synthesized the *definition of the city* with Mead's (1934) discussion of the *self and reflection*, where the reflections of the self take place in the experience. The experiences of people also mirror how interpretation, perception and meaning of a place are processes in the mind. According to Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013), the branding process need to be open to allow different interpretations and meanings that will be created, evaluated, and either reinforced or rejected during the process. I have therefore synthesized the *definition of the city*, and the *self and reflection* with place branding theories where Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013) remark that a place brand is a dynamic process, and Zenker and Braun (2010) define a place brand as a network of associations in the mind of the human being.

Symbolic interactionism is relevant to combine with place branding theories of place brands as network of associations (Zenker & Braun, 2010) and *landscape* as a theoretical concept of a connection and mediation of relations between people and physical environments (Campelo, 2015), when I explore disabled residents' relation to the place design and their network of associations to the place.

Making of indications

To answer the research question of how disabled residents "take into account the organized work of accessibility in a municipality?", I examine a process of social inclusion in a micro level among a disabled resident and a civil servant.

Blumer (1969) addresses the contribution of Mead's (1934) analysis of the self in relation to the interaction between human beings. A person can act towards herself as she might act toward others, such as argue with herself or plan what she is going to do. According to Blumer (1969), Mead regards this mechanism as enabling "the human being to make indications to himself of things in his surroundings and thus to guide his actions by what he notes" (p. 80). Therefore, *the making of indications* is in line with the third premise of symbolic interactionism: meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters (Blumer, 1969).

To make an indication is a mechanism in confronting the world and interpreting the actions of others (Blumer, 1969) instead of "merely reacting to each other's action" (Blumer, 1969, p. 79). A person's response in the interaction is based on the meaning she or he attach to the actions. "Thus, human interaction is mediated by the use of symbols, by interpretations, or by ascertaining the meaning of one another's actions" (Blumer, 1969, p. 79).

Related to the *definition of the situation*, Blumer (1969) remarks that interpretations of new situations are "not predetermined by conditions antecedent to the situations but depend on what is taken into account and assessed in the actual situation in which behavior is formed" (p. 89). Therefore, I examine how the disabled resident and the civil servant take into account and assess the organized work of accessibility within the political framework of a place, and how this influence their behavior. This perspective is synthesized with the theory of place brands as a network of associations (Zenker & Braun, 2010) and the theory of co-creation of a place brand with an engagement system of trust (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2014).

Method

Case study

This case study of Borås aligns with the idea of the case as a way of gaining knowledge by *learning* rather than *proving* (Eysenck, 1976 as cited in Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 224). The first step is to describe the case for an understanding of what the case is about (Merriam, 1994). The second step is an interpretation of the case (Merriam, 1994) by analyzing the material collected about the case of Borås.

I have chosen Borås as a case because it is an extreme case (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Flyvbjerg's (2006) definition of an extreme case is that the case often reveals more information because it activates more actors, and more basic mechanisms in the situation studied. The municipality of Borås knows how to implement insights from the stakeholders involved in a larger societal context, which the municipality has been awarded for (European Commission, 2015). The social interaction process in the organized work of accessibility in Borås municipality is an extreme case of a well-developed strategy of dialogue. Therefore, it is of interest to study the organized work of accessibility between politicians, civil servants and residents, and to connect these insights to the resident approach of who can build place brands. How disabled residents perceive the organizing of the place design is of interest to study related to how this interlinks with their creation and negotiation of their meaning of the place.

Collecting empirical material

I have used multiple methods to collect empirical material from the case. To grasp the context of organized work and participatory in the municipality of Borås, I started with document studies. When I was in Borås City, I applied the methods of participant observation, group interviews and individual interviews. By this strategy I gained knowledge from different sources (Yin, 2009) which provided a greater understanding of the case. By listen to different voices in macro-meso level and in micro level, I used a polyphonic approach (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008) in studying different aspects of the case. This strategy provided me an opportunity to aim for a crystallization of the empirical material (Eksell & Magnusson, 2014).

Access to the field

To gain access to the field, I called and e-mailed disability organizations and civil servants in Borås City for interviews. I was invited by one civil servant to a couple of meetings. By

another civil servant I was invited to a third meeting. The observation method was possible when I had access to the field by interviews. This is in line with snowball sampling, which opens for more information by people sharing insights useful to the research purpose (Patton, 2002).

Document studies

The information from published protocols and news articles was the start of the case study. I looked for information about the organized work and participatory tools within the political framework of the municipality of Borås. Since the case of Borås is an extreme case, I knew I would find relevant information by the method of document studies. The scope of the documents are 17 documents such as protocols and news articles (appendix 1). My document study became the foundation to my interview guides, see 'Group interviews' and 'Individual interview' in this chapter for examples.

Participant observation

I observed three meetings at the municipality (appendix 1 & 5). The first meeting was in the scope of two and a half hours with 15 people speaking about a planning process of building a new pre-school. The two other meetings were each two-hours long. The meeting at the Central Disability Advisory Board had 16 participants. The meeting at the Central Senior Advisory Board had 23 participants.

  The participant observation method provided an understanding of the roles the participants were using in the meetings. My knowledge gained from the observation also included the significance of interpersonal communication in the social interaction processes in the meetings (Eksell & Magnusson, 2014; Blumer, 1969). One advantage of the observation method compared to the interview method, is that I had the possibility to gain access to a source of information outside the participants' perspective, and a first source of knowledge for me as a researcher (Fangen, 2005). In my role as observer as participant at the meetings, which means that the participants were informed about my role as an observer (Eksell & Magnusson, 2014), I could grasp the mechanisms and notions in their context, and by this way gain an understanding (Geertz, 1973 as cited in Fangen, 2005). Another advantage was the possibility for me to interact with the participants in my role as an observer (Eksell & Magnusson, 2014).

Preparation of participant observation

Fangen (2005) suggests formulating general questions based on theoretical assumptions to guide the observation. I developed a semi-structured observation guide (Merriam, 1994) guided by the SI theory *joint action* (Blumer, 1969), and the residents' roles as citizens within the political framework of a place (Braun, et al, 2013). The first general question is: "what is the social interaction in this meeting?" contextualized into questions such as "what is the tonality of conversations?". The second general question is: "how can sense-making be made between the participants?" contextualized into questions such as "what themes of discussions seem to be important?" (appendix 5). The contextualized questions were inspired by a check list created by Merriam (1994) with advices from researchers.

Field notes

Since the participants were taking notes, I could be open with my notes. After the meetings, I wrote more detailed field notes on a PDF document on my laptop with the aim of thick description (Fangen, 2005). My strategy of thick description was to describe the meetings in two aspects. One aspect was to describe the social settings such as what happened at the meetings, as well as interaction processes based on how they talked, their body language and what values that were reflected at the meetings (appendix 5). I also described their verbal communication by writing short notes and citations during the meetings. Next to these notes I wrote "key points" and time notes. This was a strategy to identify interesting parts. I could later listen to the recordings in a more organized manner. In the meetings, I could focus on the non-verbal actions and later add the citations from the recordings, to understand the interaction between the participants in their social context (Fangen, 2005). Another aspect was my experiences and interpretations of the situations in the meetings. Thick descriptions are in line with working in a qualitative case study method in order to transfer knowledge to other situations (Heide & Simonsson, 2014, p. 218; Geertz, 1973 as cited in Heide & Simonsson, p. 221).

Group interviews

I conducted two group interviews, which were an hour long each. One interview included five members from a disability organization in Borås for sight-impaired people. The other interview included three members from a disability organization in Borås for survivors of accidents and injuries (see appendix 1 & 3).

The advantage of a group interview is to grasp the individuals' views and experiences on different topics through group interaction (Litosseliti, 2003). The gained information from my document study was the foundation to the interview guide with questions aimed at obtaining different perspectives on the same topic in participant's own words, but also to examine and understand the use of language and culture of the disability organizations (Litosseliti, 2003).

I developed a semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions (Kvale, 2007; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990 as cited in Litosseliti, 2003, p. 63). As a moderator (Litosseliti, 2003), I started with a question about the organization, which was the forming stage of the group discussion (McNamara, 1999 as cited in Litosseliti, 2003, p. 72). Thereafter, I placed a topic to discuss and ask the participants how it was for them, if something was a surprise and if something was hard, guided by the SI theory *joint action* (Blumer, 1969; appendix 3). This was the norming stage, since the participants addressed the issues, and valued other viewpoints. Occasionally they had an intensive discussion that was a debate rather than consensus, which can be described as the performing stage (Tuckman, 1965 as cited in Litosseliti, 2003, p. 77).

I considered Litosseliti's guide (2003, p. 21) of potential limitations of focus groups:

- Bias and manipulation: I was careful to not encourage the participants to respond with what they might think I wanted to hear. I agree with Litosseliti (2003) who says that open-ended and neutral questions is a good method of being open to what the participants will say.
- 'False' consensus: in both group interviews, there was one person who had a strong personality and tended to make other participants silent. To give space to those participants, I moderated questions to them.
- Difficulty in distinguishing between an individual view and a group view: when I transcribed the interviews, I made the effort to write the hmms and other sounds to see what thoughts and opinions gained a reaction from the other participants. Since the organization members had known each other for a long time and were free to participate in a non-profit organization by their own will, I noticed that the participants had the ability to disagree as well as to agree with each other.

I learned more about ethical issues from Litosseliti (2003) and I told the participants that each one can talk freely, but each one decides what and how much to disclose to the group. This was done to avoid any feelings of pressure and to make them more comfortable (Litosseliti, 2003).

Individual interviews

I conducted two semi-structured interviews (Kvale, 2007) that were each an hour long with a politician and a civil servant respectively (appendix 1; 2; 4). The politician had ten years of experience in maintaining the citizen dialogue with the Central Disability Advisory Board. She was therefore an important source for an oral history of the case. Listening to an oral history means that I focused on a narrative interview to lay the puzzle of events that has led to this actual situation today (Kvale, 2007). A descriptive (Merriam, 1994) summary is in 'Introduction to the case of Borås' in the analysis chapter.

The interview was also an opportunity to understand the political interest of social inclusion of disabled people, and the interest to create a place where these residents participate in political decisions about the place.

The civil servant had seven years of experience of being a disability consultant. This interview was also a part of laying the puzzle to the situation of today, based on my document study. But the interview was also about understanding the role of civil servants related to a municipality's political goal of maintaining a dialogue and a relationship with disabled residents.

Informed consent and confidentiality

At the observations and the interviews, I introduced myself and briefly explained the purpose of the thesis (Fangen, 2005; Kvale &Brinkmann, 2014). I asked if I could record the observed meetings and the interviews, and in that case the recordings would only be handled by me (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014).

When I considered the confidentiality (Fangen, 2005) at the meetings I observed, I told the participants that I may refer to their roles but not the full names of all participants. Also, if I would use a specific name I would contact the person. The participants accepted and allowed me to record the meetings.

When it came to the confidentiality of the interviewees, I considered if there would be a consequence of risking harm to the interviewees by mentioning their names (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014). Depending on the issue and the interview questions, my judgment was that it would not harm them. I asked all interviewees if it was okay to mention their role and name (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014) in the thesis. The interviewees accepted this. The informed consent is also in the recordings. This means that this master thesis is valid by reducing any risk of harm or damage (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014).

Assuring quality in a qualitative case study

In the discussion of generalizability, Flyvbjerg (2006, see also Heide & Simonsson, 2014) argues that an extreme case is suitable to study to achieve the greatest possible amount of information on a given phenomenon. I agree, because an information-rich case provides the opportunity for me as a researcher to study and learn from the case, in order to answer my research questions. Halkier (2011) further discusses how to do an analytical generalization. It is a method applied in this master thesis, see' Ideal typology' and 'Category zooming' later in this chapter.

In the backdrop of a discussion of *reliability* and *validity* in qualitative studies among researchers in social science (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014) and the research field of strategic communication (Heide & Simonsson, 2014), I will in general use the terms *reliability* and *validity*, as suggested by Kvale and Brinkmann (2014). I agree with their argument that the terms can be interpreted in a context of qualitative methods as interviews, because the validity is about how the method inquires what the method claims to be inquiring (2014). I have learnt how to assure the quality throughout my case study, by applying Kvale and Brinkmann's (2014) method of a continual assurance of quality in each step of the study. However, Lincoln and Guba (1985, see also Heide & Simonsson, 2014) present interesting terms about trustworthiness of a research study: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. I will discuss *dependability* in relation to case studies later in this section, and *transferability* is discussed in the conclusion chapter in the end of this master thesis.

To do a reliable case study with inner validity my case study is based on validation through all steps in the research process, (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2014). I have considered the validity between theory and research questions (thematizing). I have also considered the ethical aspect of doing research with the aim to do good and limit any harms (planning).

To use follow-up questions in the interviews, I aimed to grasp the meaning of what the interviewees were saying. This strategy aimed to a validation during the interviews by controlling the information in situ (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014; Litosseliti, 2003). By using this interview technique, I could also follow up and gain a deeper knowledge of what the interviewees were thinking and reasoning about examples of situations I found in my document study, and from the observed meetings (Eksell & Magnusson, 2014).

I offered the participants the chance to see the transcriptions. This is in line with the validation of the translation process of the spoken to the written language (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014). All interviewees chose to only see the result of the analysis.

To make the analysis valid, I used the lens of the theories in this master thesis in my questions to the text. I grounded the logic of my interpretations in these theories. I made the decision to bring a participant validation in this master thesis. This means that the participants will see and comment on the analysis and the results. I made this decision because I agree with Kvale and Brinkmann (2014), and Alvesson and Sköldberg (2008) that this strategy creates a sound qualitative validation and report when doing qualitative inquiry.

When I considered the balance of my independence as a researcher and the participant validation, I told the interviewees in the beginning of the interviews that after the interview, we might not share the same view –but my interpretations and the results shall be plausible in relation of what have been said at the interviews, which they agreed with. This approach is based on the qualitative criteria of *dependability* in case studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 as cited in Heide & Simonsson, 2014, p. 221). I also told the participants that my contact with them in a later phase of this master thesis is an opportunity for me to see their reactions; and the reactions are important to me in my work of understanding the case. This is inspired by Silverman (2013, as cited in Heide & Simonsson, p. 221).

Through this assurance of quality in my case study, I studied different aspects of the phenomena, which aims to be a crystallization of the empirical material (Eksell & Magnusson, 2014). This assurance of quality is also valid to the method of case studies, by using more than one source, as suggested by Yin (2009).

Analysis

The analytical coding process was done in five steps. I started to code during and after the interview- and observation situations by highlighting interesting parts as "key points" from my more detailed field notes in the PDF document. These key points related to my preliminary research questions. This is a deductive method with a priori-categories (Eksell & Thelander, 2014). Some key points were interesting in relation to the case, which is an inductive method of in vivo-coding (Eksell & Thelander, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The key points were the first potential material to the analysis. I also described what created a feeling or thoughts for me in the interviews and observations, and I could sort out my own interpretations later in the analysis phase (Fangen, 2005).

Ideal typology

In the second step, I applied the method of ideal typology (Halkier, 2011) on my key points from the observation field notes and the interview transcriptions. Through the ideal typology I

started the process of conceptual reflection of the material (Halkier, 2011). This strategy aimed to code patterns in the material into a limited number of descriptions that one-sidedly underlined characteristics at the expense of others (Halkier, 2011). I labeled the descriptions. These labels represented two types in the ideal typology I created: firstly, 'Building and maintaining relationships between politicians, civil servants and disability organizations'. Secondly, 'Accessibility in the place and its meaning for the stakeholders'. In this phase, the analysis process was in line with an abductive method (Eksell & Thelander, 2014; Alvesson & Sköldberg, 1994) where I worked with both the theories and the empirics to develop the ideal types.

Category zooming

In the third step, I was category zooming (Halkier, 2011) the descriptions in each of the two ideal types. This led to more detailed and organized code categories. I was then analyzing particular themes in these code categories. One code category was relationships, and I found organization as the theme. Another code category was accessibility, which I divided into two themes: spatial accessibility and other kinds of accessibility.

   I was coding by marking parts of the material in the PDF documents with different colors, and summed up by a control of which themes had the most amount of their color. Organization and spatial accessibility respectively were the most frequently discussed themes. This corresponds to my interview and observation guides. The themes were therefore the most relevant in relation to the purpose of this master thesis as well as my choice to use an extreme case because these themes were rich with information (Flyvbjerg, 2006). By reviewing the empirical material this way, I decided to exclude the rest of the material since the lack of relevance in relation to the purpose of this master thesis. This is the phase of refutation in the categorization analysis method (Spiggle, 1994).

   In the fourth step, I category zoomed into aspects of the organization theme. These aspects were politics, disability advisory board, civil servants, and other stakeholders. In the fifth step, I category zoomed into themes of the aspects. I found the themes of responsibility, roles of the participants, influence, expectations, needs, cooperation. At this point, I noticed I could start an analytical interpretation of the aspects and their themes through the lens of the SI theory *joint action* (Blumer, 1969), and citizens in their participation within the political framework of the place (Braun, et al, 2013).

   This procedure was similar when it came to spatial accessibility. In the fourth step, the aspects of spatial accessibility were public transport, the physical place, driving a car, and a

water rill. In the fifth step of category zooming, I found two themes. Firstly, the construction of being disabled or able. Secondly, the creation of the meaning of the place. In the fourth and the fifth step, I started the analytical interpretation of the material by applying the theory of place brands as a network of associations (Zenker & Braun, 2010).

However, I re-read the quotes in the interview material and asked: "what are they really saying by these quotes?" in order to read between the lines. I found a connection between the place design and how the residents perceived themselves of being able or disabled in the place. This connection is relevant for place branding because it shows how people have different experiences when it comes to the place design. It affects their meaning of living in the place, which is relevant for the resident approach in the research field of place branding. This finding turned to an update of the second research question and the theory. I added the SI theory *Definition of the situation* (Blumer 1969; Mead, 1934) and the place branding theory *landscape* (Campelo, 2015) to analyze the relations between people and physical environments (Campelo, 2015). Because of the interpretative perspective of symbolic interactionism; the applied place branding theories; the work of qualitative case method; and the category zooming analysis method I was not only guided by the preliminary research questions, but also guided of what is found in the empirical material. This aimed to better answer relevant questions in relation to the purpose of the master thesis: to contribute to the resident approach within the research field place branding.

Translations

Swedish was the spoken language in the interviews and in the observed meetings. Since this master thesis is written in English, I have translated the quotes and the observation texts in the analysis chapter into English. A translation can be a risk in losing the original message (Cassinger, 2014). This master thesis departs from phenomenology in its epistemology, and the interviews are results of a translation between the interviewees and the interviewer (Cassinger, 2014). This means that my interpretative translation process of the empirical material had already started before the translation into English. Since there is a participant validation criteria (Kvale & Brinkman, 2014; Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008) in this master thesis, my interpretations of the original quotes and observation texts and their translated versions have been validated by the interviewees, and relevant observation participants.

Analysis

Disposition of the analysis

After the introduction, this analysis chapter is approached in two parts. Part one is in two sections related to the first research question: *how do joint actions between different stakeholders within the political framework of a place and human rights shape the communication and organized work of accessibility?* To answer this research question, I apply the SI theory *joint action* to analyze the premises of the communication and collective work within a political framework of a place. I will also argue why *joint action* is a valuable SI perspective in relation to the place branding theories of residents in their role of citizens.

Part two relates to the second research question: *How do disabled residents relate to a place based on being able or disabled in the place, and how do they take into account the organized work of accessibility in a municipality?* To answer this research question, I depart from the SI perspective *definition of the situation* and synthesize it with place branding with place branding theories of the introspective associations of the place. This opens up into an understanding of the premises among individual residents in their perceptions and their meaning of the place. This SI perspective is important to consider in order to gain a deeper understanding of the individual residents than what has been achieved so far in the resident approach within the research field of place branding.

In the end of the sections in part one and in the end of part two, I synthesize the SI perspective with place branding theories within the resident approach in an analytical discussion applied on a place branding context. I also apply the learning outcomes from my research findings to the place branding context within the political framework of a place.

Introduction to the case of Borås

Since the year 2000 there has been a development of organizing the work of accessibility between politicians, civil servants and disability organizations in Borås municipality, according to Lena Palmén, who was a politician in the municipality of Borås from 2006 to 2016 (interview, 2017-02-27). She was a city councilor with the responsibility in the political areas of elderly, disabilities and similar social issues. Before she started as a city councilor, Borås municipality had a Central Disability Advisory Board and a Central Senior Advisory Board, where the members in these citizen dialogues had been advising the Municipal

Executive Board on disability and senior issues. During the period of Lena Palmén's political leadership, two civil servant positions were developed. An accessibility consultant has been working full time since 2007 (personal communication, Lena Mellblad, 2017-05-12). The position of a disability consultant started as part-time employment and became a full-time position in 2013, to work more with disability organizations (Centrala funktionshinderrådet, protocol 2013-02-26/1).

A political action plan with accessibility strategies was updated in 2008 by a couple of civil servants and three members from disability organizations, and they invited disabled residents to planning meetings (Fullmäktige, 2009-11-16/KS0427). According to Lena Palmén, they were asked "what does not work in Borås?" (interview, 2017-02-27). Based on the answers, a strategy was then set up to make changes towards more accessibility in public space and in the buildings in Borås City. The accessibility consultant, the disability consultant, and the Central Disability Advisory Board have had the opportunity to look through these changes with an accessibility point of view. This is in line with an integration in the municipality of Borås with that of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. One example is an accessibility database with pictures of places and accessibility information. Another example is that the accessibility consultant has the position to form small work groups of selected members from the disability organizations. This is with the aim of their participation of overlooking accessibility-related changes in projects, such as new buildings. An example is the meeting point Simonsland, a 3000-square meter building with six floors for 49 disability- and senior organizations.

The organized work of accessibility between politicians, civil servants and disability organizations has been combined with accessibility regulations from the region Västra Götaland. The regional accessibility regulations provide better accessibility (e.g. more spacious door openings) compared to the national law, according to the disability consultant Petri Pitkänen (interview, 2017-03-02). As mentioned earlier in 'Towards accessible cities', the organized work of accessibility municipality of Borås was awarded the Access City Award from the European Commission, for the municipal integration of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities by the citizen dialogue with disabled residents, and changes in the public space towards a more accessible city.

Desired attractiveness of a city

One large town planning project in Borås City is a water rill on one side of a popular shopping street in the city center. In June 2012, all the politicians from different parties in the

Municipal Executive Board went on a trip throughout Europe with the purpose of studying urban environment for inspiration in developing the public space of Borås, according to Lena Palmén (interview, 2017-02-27; 2017-05-05). They were inspired by a decorative water rill in the German city Freiburg (see appendix 1 for a picture). "From that moment, a thought was growing", Lena Palmén says (interview, 2017-02-2017).

The political process in Borås municipality begun as an inspiration, became an idea applied to the city center of Borås, and led to a political decision in the city council to build a water rill on a street of Borås**.** Why did the politicians who were so inspired by this water rill decide to build one in order to secure the desired attractiveness of Borås? This shall be seen in the backdrop of cities being in a competition with attracting residents and business (Therkelsen, 2015; Ashworth, et al, 2015).

Part one: The case of accessibility work and the decorative water rill

The water rill is a relevant case with aspects of place branding processes related to residents. I analyze a joint action about the water rill with complications within the political framework in the context of human rights of residents with disabilities. The premises of this joint action shape the communication and the organized work of accessibility**.** This case is analyzed in two steps: how they got into a complicated situation of the joint action and how they tried to solve it.

In this part of the analysis, there are the following stakeholders from the municipality of Borås: Lena Palmén, the city councilor in 2006-2016; Petri Pitkänen, the disability consultant; Lena Mellblad, the accessibility consultant; and politicians from the Technical Services Committee and civil servants from the Technical Services Department - which oversee the town planning in the municipality of Borås. The stakeholders from the local disability organizations are three members of *Synskadades Riksförbund i Borås (SRF Borås)* - the Swedish Association of the Visually Impaired's local committee in Borås; and one member from *Personskadeförbundet RTP i Borås (RTP Borås)* – The Swedish Association for Survivors of Accident and Injury's local committee in Borås.

Entering a situation of faux pas in the planning of the water rill

The organized work of accessibility in the municipality of Borås includes involving the accessibility consultant in an early phase of town planning projects. In larger projects, members of disability organizations are selected to participate in a dialogue and to look through the planning from the accessibility perspective.

After the political decision to build the water rill, the Technical Services Committee and the Technical Services Department in the municipality of Borås were in charge in planning the project. However, SRF Borås describes the early project phase as a faux pas.

> The Technical Services Committee in Borås municipality started to plan a water rill in Borås. But they forgot to get the opinion of the accessibility consultant Lena Mellblad, according to Lena Palmén. Because of it, the access consultant was not involved in the planning process. "It is very, very strange that one did not use such competence", says Lena Palmén (interview, 02-27-2017).

> When a decision to build a water rill was announced, "the disability organizations was mad as hornets", says Petri Pitkänen (interview, 2017-03-02). The Technical Services Committee had by that time "not even consulted the accessibility consultant, had not contacted disability organizations, just decided 'this is what it should look like'", says Petri Pitkänen.

When the Technical Services Committee and Technical Services Department started the project, my interpretation is that their goal and premise were to execute the political decision of building a water rill. However, based on the quotes of the politician and the disability consultant – the Technical Services Committee and Technical Services Department should follow an accessibility plan of Borås municipality. They should also follow accessibility regulations from the region Västra Götaland, which was implemented in the municipality of Borås. This reflects a *collaboration* aspect in how politicians at the Technical Services Committee and the civil servants at the Technical Services Department can act. In this early phase of planning, they would *collaborate* with the accessibility consultant and inform the Central Disability Advisory Board. But their act was to present a plan of a water rill without the perspective of accessibility. Rather, they only executed the political decision to build the water rill, and there was a lack of integrating the municipal accessibility plan and the regional regulations of accessibility.

According to Herbert Blumer (1969) the focal point of *joint action* lies in paying attention to "that the essence of society lies in an ongoing process of action – not in a posited structure of relations. Without action, any structure of relations between people is meaningless" (p. 71). However, Blumer (1969) stresses the point that joint actions also include the possibilities of uncertainty. When the participants do not make a common definition of the joint action the

consequence is that their acts can be done with different premises. Joint actions can be "interrupted, abandoned, or transformed" (Blumer, 1969, p. 71).

The act of the politicians at the Technical Services Committee and the civil servants at the Technical Services Department show a clear interruption of a joint action in the early planning phase of the water rill. It is an interruption because they do not follow the routine of town planning projects in Borås municipality, when they are *not collaborating* with relevant civil servants such as the accessibility consultant, and there is *no participation* of members from the disability organizations. This interruption of the joint action was based on different premises (Blumer, 1969). The interruption of this joint action caused a complicated situation with several reactions.

"Many may fall into it and feel unsafe" – protests of sight-impaired residents

Three members from SRF Borås describe the situation (interview, 2017-02-27). Niklas Strömberg says that many complained and the Technical Services Committee and Technical Services Department knew that "such a canal, or what to call it, across the city, there is no disability organization, regardless of whether you are sight impaired or so, who thinks this [the water rill] is a good idea".

Jasminka Sivac follows up and states that there were not only sight-impaired people but also many other residents "who protested or thought it [the water rill] was unnecessary". She continues: "but the municipality made the decision, and they can make such decisions. They [the municipality] say they do what they can...but that is not enough, we do not know the function of that water rill. Well, perhaps something beautiful, so you can say it is nice in the city center".

Another member, Urban Efraimsson, tells that SRF Borås tried to object to the building the water rill, with the argument that "many may fall into it and feel unsafe".

SRF Borås, the organization for sight-impaired people, protests the lack of accessibility in the plan of the water rill. They even stress their act to protest the project. This goal is based on a premise (Blumer, 1969) that if something new is being built in the public space of Borås City, then the decorative aspect is not a function for SRF Borås, as it is for the politicians. This reflects the very different premises in their perceptions of what is attractive in the public space of Borås (Blumer, 1969).

When SRF Borås acts on the premise that accessibility is the only adequate function; when there is no accessibility aspect of the water rill combined with a lack of invitation to participate in the project, then the members of SRF Borås try to *influence* instead by protests.

One member also voices that the Technical Services Committee and Technical Services Department knew that the disability organizations would not like the idea of the water rill. Blumer (1969) remarks that "to interpret the action of another is to point out to oneself that the action has this or that meaning or character" (p. 80). The member points out to himself why the disability organizations were not invited to participate in the plan of the water rill and why the plan lacked the accessibility aspect. The logic of his point of view is by *not* consulting the accessibility consultant or disability organizations, the meaning of this action is that the Technical Services Committee and Technical Services Department could keep planning. This shows an uncertainty (Blumer, 1969), based on a feeling that the act of the planning is done with other premises than following the municipal accessibility plan and regional accessibility regulations. This uncertainty explains why SRF Borås tried to *influence* by protests, because the lack of participation is a consequence of the interrupted joint action (Blumer, 1969). It is also a consequence of SRF Borås being *abandoned* due to this interruption (Blumer, 1969) because of the different premises (Blumer, 1969). The consequence of the interrupted joint action is that the communication and the desired work of accessibility take place outside the early planning phase of the water rill, by the protests from members of the SRF Borås in their roles as disabled residents. An interrupted joint action causes a complication for disabled residents, civil servants and politicians when relevant stakeholders are abandoned. This complication can also interrupt the joint action in the municipal work with the UN Conventions on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

The SI theory *joint action* (Blumer, 1969) opens into an understanding of how the communication and organized work of accessibility in a municipal context within a political framework of a place is shaped by joint actions, regardless if a joint action is based on similar or different premises. With this perspective, we can also see that an interrupted joint action will lead to consequences within the political framework of a place, where the stakeholders in a municipality are politicians, civil servants, and residents as organized citizens. These stakeholders can use the possibility to act inside or outside a joint action, and can with different strategies, such as protests, influence a joint action in one way or another.

The case of accessibility work: a decorative water rill – the turn

In this part, I analyze a re-start of the interrupted joint action, and how this re-start is carried out through communication and organized work of accessibility in the context of the political framework of a place and human rights. At the end of this section, I will discuss the case of accessibility work in a place branding context, where I also provide my conclusions in relation to the resident approach in the research field of place branding.

> The construction plan of the water rill was on its way to a political decision (Lena Palmén, city councilor, interview, 2017-02-27). "Our disability advisory board realized that they had not received the question" [about the water rill and the accessibility aspect]. Lena Palmén tells that: "I said 'now we have to take a step back, and Lena Mellblad [the accessibility consultant] shall be involved'. Then we did it. She [the accessibility consultant] asked the sight-impaired for support. Then it was a good dialogue. For example, changing the height of the edges. There were changes afterwards".

Lars-Erik Hake from RTP Borås, the organization for survivors of accidents and injuries states that it was the sight-impaired people that reacted on the lack of participation in the early planning phase of the water rill. Lars-Erik Hake describes the turn after the action of the politician Lena Palmén (interview, 2017-03-02):

> Then a group was formed [to work with the accessibility aspect of the water rill] with the Central Disability Advisory Board, sight-impaired and civil servants from the municipality, and Lena [Mellblad] as the accessibility consultant. At this point, they worked towards the same end result. There were many actions and arrangements taken along the street, such ramps into the stores. [...] I looked through the [accessibility] sketches [for the street], and there was a meeting about building transitions [over the water rill], with possibilities for disability parking [on the street], and a little of each.

They created a situation where the accessibility consultant and selected disabled residents were able to join the water rill project. This new situation in the work with the water rill was about creating a common definition (Blumer, 1969) of the re-started joint action from the accessibility aspect of the water rill, based on similar premises among the participants. As I

interpret it, the process of creating a common definition of the joint action was done by the following premises of the different participants:

The first is the act of a political decision-making *influence* by the politician Lena Palmén. Through her political influence she could re-start the interrupted joint action of the planning process of the water rill.

The second premise is the act of *collaboration* and decision-making *influence* of Lena Mellblad, the accessibility consultant. In **the re**-started joint action, she could collaborate with civil servants at the Technical Services Department, as well as disability organizations in a work group. By the influence in her role as an accessibility consultant, she could secure that the project followed the municipal accessibility plan and the regional accessibility regulations.

The third premise is the act of *collaboration* of the Technical Services Committee and the Technical Services Department, since the politicians and the involved civil servants had to accept that the accessibility consultant joined the project; accept to follow the municipal accessibility plan and the regional accessibility regulations; to even accept to listen to the work group's perspective of accessibility, since disabled residents also became involved.

The last premise is the act of *participation* and *collaboration* of disability organization members, since they participated through a work group to look through the accessibility aspect of the water rill.

By re-starting the interrupted joint action with these premises, their joint action could follow the same goal: an accessibility perspective on the water rill. One result of this organized work of accessibility was to make the edges of the water rill higher. This means improved accessibility since sight impaired people can notice with their blind walking stick where the water rill is placed on the street.

When studying the *interruption*, *abandoning* and *transformation* of a joint action (Blumer, 1969), the joint action in the work of accessibility started with different premises that caused *uncertainty* based on an *interruption* by *abandoning* relevant stakeholders. The interrupted joint action was then *transformed* by a re-start of the water rill project. The re-started joint action occurred in an existing municipal structure of organized work of accessibility.

The on-going process of action (Blumer, 1969) in this phase created a meaning in the context of human rights of disabled residents, especially for the members of the disability

organizations, since they as stakeholders in accessibility and organized citizens became involved and therefore were socially included in the water rill project. This also resulted in including the sight-impaired residents who were abandoned in the interrupted joint action (Blumer, 1969). The reason as to why they participated in the transformed joint action lies in a history of a well-established connections between politicians, civil servants and citizens organized in disability organizations. In this history, earlier joint actions with similar premises have resulted in a trust in the politicians and civil servants among the disability organizations.

The on-going process of action in this phase (Blumer, 1969) created a meaning for Lena Palmén, the city councilor, because through her act of *political influence* she was ensuring that the accessibility consultant became involved in the re-started joint action, and therefore also ensured the municipal work with the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. Her act also sent the signal to the politicians at the Technical Services Committee and the civil servants at the Technical Services Department that a collaboration would also be meaningful for them, because the municipal accessibility plan and the regional accessibility regulations *made* them to stakeholders in accessibility.

This means that an interrupted joint action can be put back on track in a municipal context within the political framework of a place. The transformation of the joint action is carried out by the premises of political influence of a politician; the premises of trust, participation and collaboration among organized citizens; and the premises of collaboration of relevant civil servants. The transformation is also carried out by the premises of collaboration and decision-making influence of the accessibility consultant certain civil in her civil servant role related to the established municipal structure of how a joint action shall be carried out.

My conclusion is that because of a history in the municipality of starting joint actions where politicians, disability organizations and civil servants have similar premises and goals, this situation of a faux pas could get back on the track by a transformation of the joint action where the premises of the stakeholders opened into re-establishing the professional relations and the organized work of accessibility.

Discussion and conclusion applied on a place branding context
The residents are the most important stakeholders in building a place brand, since they are the bread and butter of the place (Braun, et al, 2013). The residents also exist as citizens. According to Braun, et al (2013), the role of a citizen includes participating and actively contributing to political decisions in a context where place authorities are obliged to guarantee such participation. This implicates a structure of joint action within the political framework of

the place. Through the lens of SI theory *joint action*, we see a joint action in the case based on a municipal structure towards civic participation. We also see that a well-established relation, communication and work between politicians, civil servants and organized citizens is created by a long-term perspective of building and maintaining the professional relations.

It is beneficial to create a structure of joint actions with similar premises in a place branding process with a long-term perspective. This is because Braun, et al (2013) argue that a coherency of the place brand and its communicated values and propositions require the support of the residents, since they can make or break the place branding effort. A joint action based on similar premises can lead to less risks of citizens breaking the place branding effort (Braun, et al, 2013). Rather, it is in line with residents making the place brand. This is because the joint action can work towards a coherency of the place brand.

We can also see that a structure of joint actions (Blumer, 1969) of participation, collaboration and influence based on similar premises is creating trust in an engagement system (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2014) between politicians, civil servants and residents. This is also beneficial for the stakeholders involved in a joint action of a place branding process, since the engagement of trust can contribute to a long-term perspective within the political framework of a place.

These research findings are also relevant in understanding the communication activities that are set to be formed in a municipality (Fredriksson & Pallas, 2016). The communication activity in a joint action (Blumer, 1969) depends on the type of the organization. A municipality is an organization within the democratic and political framework of a place, with the aim to handle residents in an equal way (Fredriksson & Pallas, 2016). Therefore, we can see a re-start which transformed the joint action back on track in the case. We see how politicians, civil servants and disability organizations act by influencing, collaborating and participating with the aim to handle residents in an equal way. This is proceeded by social inclusion of a differentiated group of disabled residents in a town planning-project. Therefore, my first conclusion is that if a process of a joint action in a place brand implementation process with a long-term perspective is at some point interrupted by different premises, the residents may not break the place branding efforts in the first place. This is because there would be a structure to transform the interrupted joint action of a place branding process back on track with similar premises within the political and democratic context of a place.

What we can learn from the SI theory *joint action* (Blumer, 1969) applied to a municipal context is that it is not only the citizens, but also politicians and civil servants that can influence the efforts of the place branding process in one way or another. The politicians and

civil servants make place-related decisions. They are part of shaping the communication and the organized work of ideas, projects and directions for the future of the municipality (Ashworth, et al, 2015). This reflects the relevance in understanding how conflict management in a joint action can be done, because Braun (et al, 2013) discuss the place branding process as a process of conflict management. Their notion is that the conflict management view is relevant because the residents are not all the same but groups with different needs and opinions. However, Braun et al (2013) neglect the roles of politicians and civil servants within the political framework of a place. The case shows that a situation can occur where civil servants act based on opinions that interrupt the joint action. Therefore, the conflict management view should consider not only the opinions of the residents but also other stakeholders within the political framework a place with influence such as politicians and civil servants. Therefore, the SI theory *joint action* (Blumer, 1969) is valuable in the resident approach within the research field of place branding. My second conclusion is that a place branding effort within a political framework of a place is proceeded through a joint action, where the citizens can influence the decision-making process. Although, they are not independent. How the joint action is carried out depends also on the opinions and actions of politicians and the civil servants.

As we can see in the case of Borås, the human rights of disabled people have resulted in an organized work of accessibility and professionalism between politicians, civil servants and disability organizations. This means that the differentiated group of disabled residents have stakes in a place that may be *stronger*, through the work with human rights in the political framework of a place. My third conclusion is that this call for differentiation of groups of residents that are more careful than only dividing them into weak and strong socioeconomic groups (Merrilees, et al, 2014) or new and old residents (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013). My research findings show the relevance to further examine the role of residents as citizens within the political framework of a place in the resident approach of the research field of place branding.

The case of accessibility work: citizens through civic participation

In this section, I study how joint actions between stakeholders within the political framework of a place and human rights shape the communication and organized work of accessibility in a municipal reorganization towards deeper resident participation.

The municipality of Borås reorganized its political organization in 2017 (Stadslednings-kansliet, 2016). The municipality created sectional disability advisory boards and senior

advisory boards connected to the new Recreational and Public Health Service Committee, and the new Social Services Committee. The new sectional disability advisory boards were discussed among politicians, civil servants and disability organizations at the Central Disability Advisory Board meeting, which I observed in the 1st of March 2017.

> Malin Carlsson, the current city councilor, briefly mentions [at the meeting] that the establishing of new sectional disability advisory boards connected to Recreational and Public Health Services Committee, and to the Social Services Committee relates to the general political reorganization of the political organization in the municipality. It is a reorganization from geographically divided committees (e.g. north, west) to committees based on issues and topics (e.g. Recreational and Public Health Services Committees).

As I interpret the observed meeting, this city councilor is aware that a resident participation closer to the sectional political decision-making processes in issues related to the everyday life of the disabled residents is beneficial for the organized work of accessibility. Creating additional disability advisory boards is in line with the municipal implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. This means that the stakes and the rights of the disabled residents within the political framework of a place (Braun, et al, 2013) are manifested by the human rights and can lead to an immersed organized work of accessibility by this reorganization. It is also significant and beneficial for politicians and civil servants at the committees and their departments, since they also have stakes in issues about disabilities and accessibility by the municipal implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

> Ingegerd Eriksson, the secretary, is walking around the table. She provides us with documents about the new disability advisory boards. The organization members at the table discuss about letting other disability organizations into the new disability advisory boards. The members express a strong mission of bringing other organizations into a position where they can represent knowledge of being disabled.

As I perceive it, these organization members comprehend the new sectional disability advisory boards as a democratic function with a democratic value – a collective that can include more participants by social inclusion of different groups of disabled residents in the new disability advisory boards. The discussion at the meeting shows residents in their roles as citizens participating and collaborating in the political decision-making process as Braun,

Kavaratzis and Zenker (2013) discuss, because the Central Disability Advisory Board is a municipal citizen dialogue.

Blumer (1969) argues that a joint action is an ongoing process of action. The new organizational structure brings disabled citizens closer to the issues of their concern, and closer to the political decision-makers. This is a result of the experience of the organized citizens in the disability organizations, politicians and civil servants in joint actions with similar premises (Blumer, 1969), which shape the communication between the politicians, civil servants and the organization members, and moving them towards deeper resident participation and collaboration in political decision-making processes in the organized work of accessibility. The case shows that the civil society with non-governmental organizations (NGO:s) are not separated but interlinked with the municipality and the political sphere through the residents' roles as citizens organized in the NGO:s by their representation in advisory boards. My conclusion is that the residents as citizens and NGO members interlink the civil society, the municipality and the political sphere. This is a way of residents forming the social milieu of a place (Braun, et al, 2013) as well as the political framework of the place.

Discussion and conclusion applied on a place branding context

What we can learn from this case is that a strategic place branding implementation process within the political framework of a place can start in citizen dialogues in a municipality. This is because the citizens may even already contribute to the decision making of a place (Braun, et al, 2013) through the existing civic participation in the municipal context. To examine the stakes of different groups of residents through citizen dialogues creates an understanding of how and when different citizens can participate in the creation of the meaning of the place in a municipal place branding implementation process. When residents discuss the aspects of the place they have the most stakes in, a municipality can find out what the place brand really means for the different groups of residents, and even how different place brands may be created among different groups of residents (Ashworth, et al, 2015). A place branding implementation process that departs from the residents' stakes and meaning of a place is relevant for the residents. This is because in their roles as citizens their effort in the place branding implementation process can be done in a democratic context as community-building exercise (Ashworth, et al, 2015) through civic participation. This is also of interest considering the legitimatization of a place branding effort among residents, since they can make or break a place branding effort (Braun, et al, 2013).

This is also beneficial for the politicians and civil servants, since they, as implementers of a

place brand in a municipality, can learn from the civic participation to understand what the place means for different groups of residents, and especially for the residents with stakes in the place interlinked with the political framework of a place such as human rights.

A place branding process that starts from citizen dialogues is relevant to a municipality, since the municipality is an organization that needs to do a cost- and time-saving place brand implementation process, as Ashworth, Kavaratzis and Warnaby (2015) address.

My conclusion is that when residents are close to the issues that have meanings for them, and interact as citizens with politicians and civil servants in a joint action such as a citizen dialogue, the residents contribute to the decision making of a place (Braun, et al, 2013). The residents can therefore contribute to the shaping of communication and the organized work of a place branding effort. Through a citizen dialogue, the place branding process can be a community-building exercise (Ashworth, et al, 2015) as well as a time- and cost-saving process within the political framework of a place.

Part two: Definition of the city and the making of indications

Part two of this case study is divided into two sections. The first section is, 'Definition of the city: being able or disabled in the place'. I examine how disabled residents relate to the place based on their perceptions of being able or disabled, through the lens of the SI theory of *definition of a situation* applied as *definition of the city*. The participants are two members of SRF Borås and one members of RTP Borås.

The second section is, 'Making indications: the resident and the organized work of accessibility'. I study how a disabled resident take into account the organized work of accessibility in a municipality, through the lens of the SI theory *definition of the situation* where I apply the aspect of *the making of indications*. The participants are one member from SRF Borås and Lena Mellblad, the accessibility consultant.

I synthesize this perspective of symbolic interactionism with place branding theories of introspective associations of the place, to examine the premises among individual residents in their perception and meaning of the place they live in. The place in both sections is Västerlånggatan, the street with the water rill. In the end of part two, I discuss the case in a place branding context, and provide my conclusions to the research field of place branding.

Definition of the city: being able or disabled in the place

> Gun Eksell is a sight-impaired person and uses a blind stick to orient her physical place of Borås, the city she lives in. In January 2017, she walked with her blind stick on Västerlånggatan, the street where the water rill was under construction. She tries to describe an accident: "[…] I did not perceive any edge, and then I laid there in the channel on my back…and was really wounded. Actually, I still have some pain".

> Eva Krantz has problems walking and has had great usage of driving her car to and from the city center. But as a driver she is frustrated about the closed street around the construction site of the water rill at the local shopping street Västerlånggatan. "No, one can barely get into the city center anymore, every street is closed! The whole city center, you cannot drive on Västerlånggatan, at all".

Zenker and Braun (2010) define the place brand as "a network of associations in the consumers' mind based on the visual, verbal and behavioral expression of the place, which is embodied through the aims, communication, values and the general culture of the place's stakeholders and the overall place design" (p. 5). The fundamental premise is that the place brand is formed in mind. In line with this, a network of associations in a person's mind related to a place is termed *landscape* by Campelo (2015). Also, Campelo's (2015) and Sack's (1988) address that the type of the physical environment influences the engagement between people and the *landscape*. Campelo (2015) remarks that the engagement occurs as an open-ended series of social interactions that influence social reproductions. This engagement influences lifestyles and ways of doing things (Campelo, 2015; Hillier and Rooksby, 2002).

In the accident described above in which Gun, a sight impaired person, fell into the water rill, because she could not notice any obstructions by the construction of the water rill at the street – a street she was used to walk on without problems. In this situation, Gun is as disabled as she can get in relation to the visual and behavioral expression of the place design (Zenker & Braun, 2010) of the street. She does not even know how the accident happened. Gun is as disabled as she can get in relation to the communication in the place design (Zenker & Braun, 2010) of the construction site, since she could not use her blind stick to notice any obstructions close to the construction site nor an edge at the water rill.

The tangible aspect of Västerlånggatan changes from a street she was once able to walk on to one where the accident occurred. This tangible aspect affects an adjustment in the

intangible aspect of Gun's association in her mind (Zenker & Braun, 2010) of the street, from a safe to a dangerous street. Gun's changed association influences an adjustment in her definition of Västerlånggatan as a street where sight-impaired people are disabled rather than able.

In the second case described above, Eva notices the place design (Zenker & Braun, 2010) of the construction site by the obstructions. However, Eva is frustrated because in the association in her mind (Zenker & Braun, 2010), the streets in the city center of Borås have been the tools of making her more able in her ability to drive her car to and from the city center. But when the streets are closed, she feels disabled once again. This is because the tangible aspect of the closed streets changes for Eva as car driver, and this changes the intangible aspect of her association of the closed streets. This creates an adjustment in Eva's definition in her mind of the closed streets that is similar to Gun, since Eva perceive herself as a disabled rather than an able person in relation to the closed streets. However, Eva does not interpret these streets as dangerous, because she does not risk an accident.

The changed place design by the construction site and the closed streets are a type of a physical environment (Campelo, 2015; Sack, 1988) that influences the engagement between Gun and Eva and the physical environment through their associations (Zenker & Braun, 2010) of how they can do things (Campelo, 2015; Sack, 1988; Hillier and Rooksby, 2002), such as walking on a familiar street, or driving a car in the city center.

"If it was only flat, then it would get worse": discussion of higher edges of the water rill
Three members of SRF Borås discuss a solution of the problem with the water rill by implementing a better construction of the water rill.

Jasminka: At least they affect the edges to be a bit higher.

Urban and the others: mm

Jasminka: If it was only flat, then it would get worse.

Niklas: Yes, but.

Jasminka: Yes but, when one walk with a blind stick, when the edge is like, one can feel a barrier. But if they only did it flat and with the water, then it would get worse, and one would not feel anything. But when you cross [the street and the water rill], the edges are not as high as they should be on the sides. Maybe they will change, they are not finished yet, so we do not know how it will be.

This conversation is about to make the edges of the decorative water rill higher. They compare it with the original plan – they perceive that the place design (Zenker & Braun. 2010) of flat edges would cause problems for people with sight impairments. As I interpret it, the interaction between Jasminka and her peers in the conversation, and Gun's story about the accident express a united perception of being unsafe. These examples show how a lack of accessibility strengthens the perception of being disabled. In the social interaction between the members in conversation, there is also a negotiation of how to comprehend the threat of the water rill and the meaning of making the edges higher. The solution in the physical environment by building higher edges influences the engagement (Campelo, 2015; Sack, 1988) of these members, because the solution creates a feeling of potential control. The meaning created among the members in the conversation is that the sight-impaired people might be able to orient themselves on the street, and be aware of where the water rill is placed at the street. Making the edges higher may be a small technical change in the organizing of the place design, but it leads to a crucial difference in these disabled residents' perception of being able or disabled in the place. This in turn affects their individual and collective definition of the city.

Another aspect of their definition of the city is related to their reflections of the self. When Mead (1964) discusses the self and the process of reflection, one of his remarks is: "the reorganization of the objective field and of conflicting impulses does take place in experience" (s. 355). Applied to this case, Gun and Jasminka partaking in individual reflections of the self as pedestrians with their blind sticks in their hometown on a street familiar to them. Eva is doing a reflection of the self as a car driver in the same home town. I interpret this as an objective field in their experience.

Gun and Jasminka have a mutual perception of being unsafe in trying to orient on Västerlånggatan. Their perception, and the accident are now part of their experience of walking on this street. Eva's frustration is now part of her experience as a driver related to the closed streets in the city center. The reorganization of the situation of walking and driving respectively is also a process of the reflection about the self (Mead, 1964). Gun, Jasminka and Eva's objective fields of being pedestrians, and a car driver respectively are transformed to selves as being disabled persons in the place.

Making indications of the organized work of accessibility

In this section I analyze how a disabled resident takes into account the organized work of accessibility in a municipality. A member from a SRF Borås and the accessibility consultant are included in this section.

> After the accident in the water rill Gun was in touch with the municipality of Borås. Lena Mellblad, the accessibility consultant "wrote an e-mail and asked how I was doing, and I replied", says Gun.

When a disabled person is injured due to the barriers in the public space, it can be interpreted as a case of discrimination since it causes a situation in the public space for impaired people in being disabled rather than able. As Blumer (1969) discusses, a human-being confronts the world with a mechanism for "making indication to itself" (p. 80), and the same mechanism is involved in interpreting the actions of others. This is in line with the third premise of symbolic interactionism: meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters (Blumer, 1969).

Applied to this case, when obstructions at the water rill are insufficient to protect all pedestrians including the disabled ones, it can cause a situation where the disabled residents make indications to themselves and through social interactions with each other, that the municipality may not think they are important residents. This can lead to an alienation, not only in an exclusion from the public space, but also in an exclusion from the society via the indication that the municipality may not think they are important residents. This is because politicians and civil servants sometimes forget the accessibility aspect.

Blumer (1969) departs from Mead's theory of the *definition of a situation* and develops the theory. Blumer's remark is "interpretations of new situations are not predetermined by conditions antecedent to the situations but depend on what is taken into account and assessed in the actual situation in which behavior is formed" (p. 89). As I interpret it, there are two aspects in how Gun makes the indication to herself that the municipality does think she is an important resident. The first aspect is the accident, because the accident is assessed in Gun's behavior of contacting the municipality to explain that there is an obstruction at the construction site of the water rill that caused the accident. The second aspect of this behavior is Gun's assessment that there is a culture (Zenker & Braun, 2010) of social inclusion within a democratic context of the place. Gun as a citizen takes into account the organized work of accessibility in the municipality. The culture of social inclusion and the organized work of

accessibility are the meanings that the municipality has for her. Therefore, she acts toward this meaning, which is the first premise of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969).

I interpret the behavior (Blumer 1969) of the accessibility consultant, Lena Mellblad, in a culture (Zenker & Braun, 2010) of social inclusion in a democratic context of the place. In her role as a civil servant, Lena takes into account her awareness of Gun assessing an exclusion from the public space. In her behavior as an accessibility consultant, Lena acts based on the organized work of accessibility in the municipality by writing an e-mail showing that Gun's well-being as a citizen matters to her. The organized work of accessibility and social inclusion are meanings that the municipality have for Lena, as well as for Gun – therefore the act of Lena toward this meaning (Blumer, 1969).

The meaning of the contact between Lena and Gun is embedded in an engagement system of trust (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2014). When a disabled resident can voice her experience of being unsafe and excluded in the public space by an accident, it mirrors a possibility of transparency with openness and communication based on trust (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2014) in a democratic context of a municipality. Lena and Gun act on the first premise of symbolic interactionism: human beings act toward things based on the meanings that the things have for them (Blumer, 1969). Their act is seen in the backdrop of joint actions (Blumer, 1969) with similar premises between residents and civil servants in the municipality that result in a trust relationship (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2014), as we have seen earlier in 'Part one: The case of accessibility work and the decorative water rill'.

My conclusion is how disabled residents take into account (Blumer, 1969) the organized work of accessibility in a municipality, based on an engagement system of trust (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2014) is an indication to themselves (Blumer, 1969), and through social interaction with civil servants, that the municipality thinks they are important residents.

Discussion and conclusion applied on a place branding context

Place brands can be seen as interactive formations by a "collective construction of the meaning of place as this is undertaken in social actuality and through social interactions" (Ashworth, et al, 2015, p. 5). What we can learn from the case is that disabled residents' definition of a city is a process through social interactions (Blumer, 1969; Campelo, 2015). Their definition of the city relates to the social actuality (Ashworth, et al, 2015) of how the place is organized, as well as in their negotiation and adjustment of comprehending the new circumstances, such as a reorganization of the place design.

Considering the social interaction aspect (Campelo, 2015; Ashworth, et al, 2015), residents create the social milieu by interactions with each other (Braun, et al, 2010). Therefore, it is relevant to understand how context-depending aspects of a place influence different groups of residents' associations of a place (Zenker & Braun, 2010). The context-depending aspects are part of the things that residents act toward, based on the meanings that the context-depending aspects have for them (Blumer, 1969). These meanings are modified through an interpretive process used by the residents in dealing with the context-depending aspects they encounter (Blumer, 1969). The context-depending aspects are part of the collective construction of the meaning of the place (Ashworth, et al, 2015) and its social milieu (Braun, et al, 2010).

I conclude that it is important to understand the context-depending aspects of different groups of residents' associations to the place. This understanding can be a helpful tool of a place branding process established among the residents. This tool also opens into residents making rather than breaking a place branding effort (Braun, et al, 2010).

Making indications in a place branding process

Braun, et al (2013) discuss the residents' legitimization of the place branding efforts in their role as citizens, since political and democratic legitimization of brand policies is vital in place branding. What we can learn from the case is that residents can make indications to themselves (Blumer, 1969) based on their associations to the culture (Zenker & Braun, 2010) and their assessments (Blumer, 1969) of the organized work between residents, politicians and civil servants in a municipality. The case shows a resident making the indication to herself that she is an important resident. This is because she experiences a culture of social inclusion in the organized work in the municipal context. This *culture* of social inclusion is based on the municipal implementation of the *policy* of human rights - *the UN Convention on People Rights*. This means that a legitimization process of brand policies in a political framework of a place can be done by the organized work between residents, politicians and civil servants. If joint actions upon brand policies are done in similar premises (Blumer, 1969), the organized work of a place brand may open into a culture (Zenker & Braun, 2010) with common definitions of the brand policies. These stakeholders can then act on potential positive meanings that the brand policies may have for them (Blumer, 1969). This strategy supports a legitimization of a place branding effort among the residents.

Conclusion

In this master thesis, I have studied disabled residents' role of citizens in a place branding process within the political framework of the place, where human rights and social inclusion are addressed. I have studied the information-rich case of Borås through the interpretative perspective of symbolic interactionism. This perspective provides the possibility to study the interactions between people, their joint actions, the self and the society, mediated by symbolic communication. I have applied the learning outcomes from the case into a place branding context, and synthesized the SI perspective with place branding theories within the resident approach in the research field of place branding.

I have studied how residents create their meaning of the place related to the place design and their association of the place. Also, I have studied how co-creation of the place can be created and proceeded by civic participation in citizen dialogues in the municipal context of the political framework of a place.

My research findings are in line with the remark of Braun, et al (2013) that the residents can make or break a place branding effort in their roles as citizens. This is because the residents as citizens and NGO members interlink the civil society, the municipality and the political sphere. My research findings show that the residents in their role as citizens do not only form the social milieu of a place (Braun, et al, 2013) but also, through both individual and collective processes, influence the political framework of the place. Therefore, they are the most important stakeholder group in place branding efforts. Through the perspective of symbolic interactionism, my research findings show two significant aspects in the citizens' role in a place branding process.

First, understanding context-bound aspects of the citizens' individual and collective perception of the place is crucial in a successful place branding process. Certain groups of citizens do have stronger stakes in the place, due to trans-national policies of human rights. This calls for a more careful differentiation of different groups of citizens in a place branding process within the political framework of a place.

Second, a place branding process contextualized into a joint action based on similar premises between citizens, politicians and civil servants in a municipal context offer a place branding strategy as a community-building exercise (Ashworth, et al, 2015). This community-building exercise is a democratic strategy to create common definitions of the place brand. This also provides the opportunity for the citizens to participate, co-create and support the

place branding efforts – they make the place branding effort. Therefore, a place branding process anchored among the residents, rather than a promotional tactic in a top-down manner, will generate a more realistic and legitimized place brand.

This master thesis is a contribution to the resident approach in line with the argument of Ashworth, Kavaratzis and Warnaby (2015): the need to identify ways in which they can be involved in all steps of the process of branding a place. The perspective of symbolic interactionism is therefore beneficial for the resident approach within the research field of place branding.

Transferability

My research findings show the benefit of working with diversity by identifying groups of socially disadvantaged residents, and identify ways in which they can participate in the society. This knowledge, gained by the perspective of symbolic interactionism, can be transferred to communication processes of democracy and social inclusion of other socially disadvantaged groups of residents. Examples are integration of residents from socioeconomically weak areas in the society, integration of immigrants, and supporting pupils with different kinds of disabilities such as cognitive disabilities in schools.

My research findings show how the residents can perceive and relate to the place based on being disabled or able in the place and the political framework of the place. This knowledge can be transferred to the integration processes with an understanding of that immigrants and residents from socioeconomically weak areas perceive and relate to the place they live in based on their circumstances where they may be isolated or integrated in the place and the political framework of a place.

Suggestions for further research

It is necessary to study the type of organizations (Fredriksson & Pallas, 2016) and their conditions that govern the place. In many countries, places are governed by local authorities (Braun, et al, 2013). However, there are places in the world that are governed in other ways such as by a regional development agency, and tourist boards (Hankinson, 2010). To gain more knowledge of the differences in how places are governed is relevant for the resident approach in the political framework of a place within the research field of place branding. This is because the type of the organization also influences the context-bounded

circumstances and the degree of civic participation among residents, which in turn influences how they can co-create a place brand.

In a democratic context of a place branding process, it is beneficial for the resident approach within the research field of place branding to examine the participatory tools and communication activities that exist in public sector organizations such as local authorities and municipalities, to provide ideas and models of democratic place branding processes.

Lastly, it is important to examine a more careful differentiation of groups of residents within the political framework of place. This is because different kind of trans-national policies influence the political framework of the place. There are citizens with stakes in the place that are more important due to the policies, such as human rights.

Practical implications

For residents, civil servants and politicians in a municipality it is beneficial to find a way to participate in a strategic discussion what the place means for them. This opens into finding common definitions of the place brand. A citizen dialogue opens into an active, dynamic and democratic place branding process. This is beneficial for the people and the society for three reasons: first, the residents make rather than break the place branding effort. Second, a strategic discussion in a citizen dialogue is a time- and cost-saving place branding process for municipalities. Third, this strategy contributes to an attractive place because the residents participate in the community and in the place branding process.

Ramps or higher edges in decorative water rill, to name a couple of examples, are beneficial for baby strollers, people who are temporarily in a wheel chair because of a surgery, for bicyclists and for residents and tourists carrying heavy luggage. Therefore, an accessible place is attractive for many residents and stakeholders such as tourists.

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Appendix 1 - Empirical material

Group interviews
SRF Borås (2017-02-27)
Urban Efraimsson, chairperson
Gun Eksell, member
Jasminka Sivac, member and clerk at the local district of SRF in south-west of Sweden
Sune Börjesson, member
Niklas Strömberg, ombudsman at the local district of SRF in south-west of Sweden

RTP Borås (2017-03-02)
Lars-Erik Hake, chairperson
Eva Krantz, member
Kjell Karlsson, member

Individual interviews
Lena Palmén, city councilor in the municipality of Borås 2006-2016 (2017-02-27)

Petri Pitkänen, disability consultant in the municipality of Borås (2017-03-02)

Observed meetings at the municipality of Borås
Planning meeting of a new pre-school (2017-02-28), 15 participants.

The Central Disability Advisory Board (2017-03-01), 16 participants.

The Central Senior Advisory Board in the municipality of Borås (2017-03-01), 23 participants.

Documents

11 protocols of the Central Disability Advisory Board

10 protocols of the Central Senior Advisory Board

1 document about Borås City's application to the City Access Award

2 news articles

1 document from the Central Disability Advisory Board: the reorganization of the political organization within the municipality of Borås.

1 document from European Commission: Access City: Examples of best practice for making EU cities more accessible.

1 picture of a decorative water rill, received from Lena Palmén.

Appendix 2 – Interview guide: politician

Questions are applied to contextual examples

Researcher questions: Why is a politician interested in social inclusion of disabled people when it comes to the psychical place of Borås?

Interviewer questions: How did this dialogue start? What has been interesting for you with this dialogue? When it comes to meet the need of disabled people, what would you say is important? What have you as a politician been able to do outside the dialogue? When it comes to develop a place, what would you say is important? How come that you in Borås has been strategically working with accessibility?

Researcher question: How can a dialogue be managed?

Interviewer questions: How can a politician build trust in a dialogue with disabled and elderly? What kind of feedback have you received from the participants? What have been important when you got information from the participants? How has the role of being politician been in this dialogue? What has been easy in this dialogue? What has been a challenge? What has been a surprise? What have you become more aware of? What have you as a politician been expecting from organizations and civil servants?

Appendix 3 – Interview guide: non-profit organizations

Questions are applied to contextual examples

Researcher questions: How do non-profit organizations express their agenda of social inclusion in psychical place of Borås?

   Interviewer questions: How can one do in creating social inclusion? When it comes to advisory board, what is important for you? What are you hoping for when discussing it with civil servants and politicians? When it comes to the psychical place of Borås, what is important for you? How are you working with these questions? What has been easy in the dialogue about the psychical place? What has been a challenge?

Researcher question: How can a dialogue be managed?

   Interviewer questions: How can trust be built in a dialogue between non-profit organizations, politicians and civil servants? What do you think of the management of the dialogue? Can you also be a part of managing the dialogue? What kind of feedback have you received from the participants? What have been important when you got information from the others in the dialogue? How has the role of being non-profit organization members been in this dialogue? What has been easy in this dialogue? What has been a challenge? What has been a surprise? What have you become more aware of? What are you expecting from politicians and civil servants?

Appendix 4 – Interview guide: civil servant

Questions are applied on contextual examples

Researcher questions: Since there are a political awareness of social inclusion of disabled people and issues about accessibility, the position of a consultant has a specific role. How does this role look like?

   Interviewer questions: What is a typical day for you? What are your main tasks? In which way are you a part of a dialogue? How is it to be between organizations and politicians? Does your role differ when speaking to the organizations and when speaking to the politicians? Are there other stakeholders that you are in touch with when it comes to social inclusion and accessibility? When it comes to communication, what is important for you? How have your role been developing during these years?

Researcher question: How can a dialogue be managed?

   Interviewer questions: What is your part in the dialogue with the Disability Advisory Board and the Senior Advisory Board? How do you handle questions and opinions from the organizations? What expectations do you think that organizations and politicians have on you? How do you listen? Could something be changed or be better? How have you been working toward a better situation during these ten years? If there are something you would like to recommend other municipalities to think about, what would it be? What would other civil attendants and politicians need to think about? What would organizations need to think about?

Appendix 5 - Observation guide: meetings

The ambition of this guide is to capture what cannot be captured in interviews. I will examine meetings where I will be a *participant observe*r. There are two meetings with the organizations, civil servants and politicians, and one planning meeting with one civil servant and a few other stakeholders about a new pre-school in Borås from the view of accessibility. My observation guide is created to study how they make sense of the meetings.

I will look at:

What is social interaction in this meeting?

– How is the setting? (the room, the atmosphere, if there are any assistive devices, the placement of participants)

– What is the tonality of conversations? (themes of tonality can be formal, easy, familiar, irritated, aggressive, speaking loud, normal or quiet).

– What is the character of the conversations? (e.g. consensus, contradictions, sharing thoughts or debate with different points of views).

– How are the role of the participants framed? (e.g. a non-profit organization member is mentioning her or himself as a represent of the organization, wearing a badge with name).

– How is the action of listening framed? (e.g. participants taking notes, humming, or body language such as nodding).

– What words (in Swedish) are used in relation to social inclusion, place and disabilities? (e.g. handikapp, funktionshinder, funktionsnedsättning, tillgänglighet, framkomlighet, blindkäpp).

– How are the questions on the agenda presented? (e.g. verbal, PowerPoint, with documents or video clips).

– How is an agenda question discussed and commented? (e.g. verbally, with documents, video clips, showing a newspaper article, or drawing on a piece of paper).

How can sense-making be made between the participants?

– How are the actions of interpretations and responses framed? (e.g. follow up-comments and questions, body language).

– What values are reflected in the meeting?

– What themes of discussions seems to be important?

– If the atmosphere is changing, then how and on which topic? (tonality, body language)

– Are there decisions to be made?

– If something will be a result after the meeting then what and how? (e.g. documented feedback on an agenda question will be sent to a certain department or politician).

– Are there questions in relation to social inclusion, disabilities, accessibility and place?

– If there are any discussions or explanations in relation to social inclusion, disabilities, accessibility and place – then how is it discussed or explained?