Lund University

Department of Sociology

The Ideal Society Workshop: an experiment in creating a new method that contributes to reclaiming Participatory Action Research for emancipation, critical consciousness and citizen power.

Author: Emily Harle

Master's thesis WPMM42

30 credits

Spring semester 2019

Supervisor: Charalambos Demetriou

ABSTRACT

Author: Emily Harle
Title: The Ideal Society Workshop: an experiment in creating a new method that contributes to reclaiming Participatory Action Research for emancipation, critical consciousness and citizen power.
Master's thesis WPMM42, 30 credits
Supervisor: Charalambos Demetriou
Department of Sociology, spring semester 2019

Action Research, Participatory Action Research and participatory methods have faced a number of criticisms, including that they do not actually involve citizens or create social change, and that they are tokenistic. This thesis develops and tests a new participatory method that contributes to a democratic and emancipatory PAR that responds to these criticisms and the shortcomings of current methods. The Ideal Society Workshop, a 3- hour, small group workshop with a focus on creativity, asks participants, 'What would your ideal society look like?'. It combines deliberative discussion from the Northern PAR tradition, a focus on emancipation and conscientization (critical consciousness) from the Southern PAR tradition, and the creation of knowledge in the form of utopian future possibilities from Critical Utopian Action Research. Data in the form of the content and the interaction within these sessions was analysed. The findings include that utopian futures were created and everyday knowledge brought up, valuable deliberation took place on both the individual and group level, and that some level of conscientization (critical consciousness) was displayed, although in a limited form. The Ideal Society Workshop was experienced as enjoyable and valuable by participants but also has some limitations and areas in which it can be developed.

Keywords: action research, participatory action research, critical utopian action research, participatory methods, deliberative democracy, critical consciousness

Popular science summary

A new workshop to increase citizen participation

The Ideal Society Workshop helps people to come together to create and discuss ideas about what an ideal future society could look like, with the aim of making it a reality. It is a new type of participatory method to create real participation in decision making and social change in society.

This project looked at the ways in which citizens and residents are currently included in methods of participation, such as empowerment projects and government or local consultations. It looked at how much our knowledge and ideas are utilised and how much power we have to create change. It found that the current approaches and methods create dependency instead of empowerment and uphold the status quo, keeping the power in the hands of the experts and the elite.

So this project has argued that there is a need to recognise how valuable ordinary people's knowledge and ideas are. It is also necessary to help them create an understanding of the inequalities and oppression in society so that they are empowered to take power back and create the changes society needs. This requires understanding each other's experiences and being able to debate important topics and issues.

The Ideal Society Workshop is a fun, creative, 3-hour workshop that aims to start achieving these things with the aim of creating a form of participation that is more about emancipation and re-distribution of power. It's suggested uses include in educational settings, organisations, action groups, communities, by local government and policy makers, or anyone that wants to create shared understanding, ideas for the future and an increased awareness of the power structures in society. The Ideal Society Workshop can also be adapted to different topics and contexts and is also still being further improved and developed by the author after this project.

With a looming climate crisis requiring action, distrust in politicians and experts at high and increasing polarisation it is more necessary than ever to come together to discuss new ideas for the future and feel more empowered to make the changes necessary.

List of contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

Action Research (AR) and Participatory Action Research (PAR) are two areas of academic research that began in the 1940's and 1970's respectively. There are also two different but connected traditions: The Northern PAR tradition (referring to the global North) and the Southern PAR tradition (referring to the global South). These have crossed paths many times so whilst they have different histories and aims there are also many similarities.

Action Research is defined by a key thinker in AR, Hilary Bradbury (2015), as:

> 'A democratic and participative orientation to knowledge creation. It brings together action and reflection, theory and practice, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern. Action research is a pragmatic co-creation of knowing *with*, not on *about*, people.'
> (Bradbury, 2015: 1)

Participatory Action Research (PAR), has been defined by the widely used website SAGE research methods as:

> 'An approach to action research which aims to transcend the boundaries between research and activism in order to produce knowledge and action which is directly useful to people, and to empower people through the process of constructing and using their own knowledge.'
> (SAGE Publishing, n.d.)

One of the originators of the Southern PAR tradition, Orlando Fals-Borda (1987; 1991) defined, PAR more specifically, however, as combining theory, action and participation committed to *further the interests of exploited groups and classes*. This highlights the different emphases of empowerment and emancipation within the two traditions of PAR.

AR and PAR have also evolved from being academic disciplines to also having a large presence in other parts of society, due to their practical, change-focused and participatory approaches (which in many ways speak to their success). This includes within public administration and politics, international development, community, voluntary and grass roots organisations, and design fields. In these areas they are often referred to as 'participatory methods'[1] and there is less focus on social research and more on creating change or

---

[1] The terms Action Research, Participatory Action Research and participatory methods are similar but have different definitions depending on who is asked. For this reason I will often refer to AR/PAR to mean those two disciplines, participatory methods when referring specifically to the methods and AR or PAR when referring specifically to those disciplines.

generating knowledge. Examples of this include: local government bodies, architects or companies delivering workshops to discover what individuals need and would like, e.g. in a recycling system, a house or an electric toothbrush; or a workshop within an organisation for staff to look at the work environment, design new products, or consider how they deal with issues of discrimination and how this could be improved.

Action Research and Participatory Action Research have, however, faced a lot of criticism about their initially more radical roots being co-opted, including the co-opting of Southern PAR's focus on emancipation. Whilst AR, PAR and participatory methods exist on a spectrum with a great variety between them, this co-optation has led to participatory methods being mostly used for mere consultation of citizens instead of real social change, democratization and redistribution of power. Instead there is a focus on smaller changes within workplaces, consultation by policy makers, organisational efficiency, management techniques, product testing, and international development in the global South by organisations from the global North. It has also been found that when methods of AR/PAR *are* used with an aim to give citizens more power they rarely achieve social change, instead upholding the existing power relations and the status quo. The methods that currently exist within AR and PAR reflect these co-opted uses and criticism.

There is a need to react to these criticisms and refocus on an AR/PAR that is used for the emancipatory, knowledge production and deliberation possibilities that it could be. The tokenistic use of participation approaches and methods is leading to frustration amongst citizens about their lack of power and society misses out on the energy, ideas and knowledge of ordinary people. Elites, experts, expert knowledge and even democratic systems are increasingly being criticised and rejected in society at large, and populist movements based on this rejection are gaining traction (on both sides of the political spectrum), resulting in a polarisation between different views in society and a growing turmoil. At a time like this, real involvement of citizens in deliberating the issues in society, creating shared understanding and new ideas, and spaces and forums for this, is incredibly important.

Ordinary people imagining different future possibilities and discussing these with each other with the aim to create them is also essential in light of the climate crisis we are facing. The experts and politicians that decide policy have not listened to the expert scientists on this issue

resulting in protests around the world. Citizens are demanding to be listened to and for power to be shared so that this crisis can be fought. We need to change our systems and lifestyles, and this requires conversation and imagination as well as the power to demand and make the changes necessary. This also requires citizens and residents believing that they are entitled to do this, which necessarily involves a belief in one's own everyday knowledge, an understanding of the power relations in society and one's place within these.

In this thesis I[2] consider the history, approaches and methods of Action Research and Participatory Action Research, from both the Northern and the Southern tradition, and the benefits of these, as well as the criticisms that have been levied against them. I also look at the alternatives that have been suggested, for example that there should be a re-focus on an emancipatory AR/PAR, the REFLECT method that brings a more emancipatory method to the international development sector, and the discipline of Critical Utopian Action Research where future possibilities and utopias are imagined to create social change.

Seeing the shortcomings in some of the methods and approaches that exist and a clear need based on the issues we face in society, I have created a new participatory method, which aims to play a part in moving towards an emancipatory-focused Participatory Action Research. The Ideal Society Workshop method is a small group, short session workshop combining creativity, individual work, group work and discussion. It works from the question: 'What would your ideal society look like?' and it aims to: create deliberative discussion and shared understanding between participants, bring out and recognise the everyday knowledge of participants and create new knowledge in the form of ideas for utopian futures, and contribute to a process of conscientization (otherwise known as critical consciousness) for the

---

[2] I will be using the word 'I' more often than is possibly common in academic texts. Participatory Action Research as an area of study hopes to bridge the gap between academia and 'real life' and place everyday and expert knowledge alongside each other. Making academic texts more accessible and transparent is an important contribution to this. One way this can be done is by not using unnecessarily complex words, long complicated sentences or latin words or phrases. I have also tried to avoid this. Academic texts are often written as if the text itself is speaking, with phrases like 'this thesis looks at' or 'the data was then coded', which can also be experienced as exclusionary. It can also make the author invisible which results in the research and views coming across as facts. This can help protect academic and expert views from questioning and scrutiny, especially from those outside academia. For this reason, I have tried to write in an accessible and transparent way, including using the word I. This is also particularly relevant in this thesis because I developed the method that I am describing, and knowing the difference between what I did, what others have done, what the participants did, etc. is important.

participants. Based on an analysis of the data from the testing of this method this thesis will evaluate whether the Ideal Society Workshop method meets these aims.

The aim of this thesis is:

To consider and assess the current methods, approaches and problems within Action Research and Participatory Action Research, and in response to this develop, test and analyse/evaluate a new participatory method (the Ideal Society Workshop) which aims to contribute to creating a more democratic and emancipatory Action Research and Participatory Action Research

The research questions are:

1. What are the potentials, shortcomings and criticism of Action Research and Partcipatory Action Research approaches and methods?
2. What would a method look like that addresses this assessment of AR/PAR approaches and methods and aims to play a role in a more democratic and emancipatory AR/PAR?
3. In what ways does the Ideal Society Workshop create deliberative discussion, recognise and create knowledge in the form of ideas for utopian futures, and create a level of conscientization and in doing so contribute to a more democratic and emancipatory AR/PAR?

In this thesis I found that knowledge was brought up, discussed and created in the form of possible utopian futures, including many ideas currently outside of public and political discussion. Deliberation also took place on both the individual and group level and was civil and respectful, balanced, and discussed different arguments and views; the participants also altered their views and developed ideas together. Some level of conscientization was displayed, whereby participants expressed an understanding of social issues and some of the power structures behind this as well as possible solutions, but this rarely involved looking at their own personal situations or roles within these power relations. The Ideal Society Workshop was experienced as fun, challenging and valuable by participants but also has a possible limitation of working better with participants with similar levels of power in society.

Chapter 2 focuses on the current theories, approaches and methods that exist within Action Research and Participatory Action Research. This includes the histories, definitions and differences between these terms, as well as those between the Southern and Northern PAR traditions. The theoretical concepts behind these disciplines, such as deliberative democracy

and everyday knowledge is also looked at, along with the critiques the disciplines have faced, and what alternative approaches exist that can resolve this criticism. Finally, Chapter 2 looks at the methods within AR and PAR and describes and analyses in more detail those methods most similar to the Ideal Society Workshop.

In Chapter 3 I look at the methodological elements of this thesis beginning with the development process of the Ideal Society Workshop and the similarities and differences with existing methods. Then I explain the format of the workshop before covering information about the participants and sampling. A consideration of ethical issues is made, how I analysed the data is explained, and then the measures that the method was analysed against are discussed.

Chapter 4 covers an analysis of the data from the Ideal Society Workshop sessions and through this an evaluation of the method itself. First, the topics and utopian possibilities brought up are looked at, following a focused analysis of dialogue around housing, and then around community. The responses to the question, 'what would a day look like for you in your ideal society?' are then analysed and lastly a final, wider analysis is covered.

Finally, in Chapter 5, conclusions from the analysis are presented, the Ideal Society Workshop's benefits and issues are summarised, and applications as well as possibilities for developments are discussed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will focus on previous literature and ideas, beginning with unpacking the terms Action Research (AR), Participatory Action Research (PAR) and participatory methods, including the history of these disciplines and the differences between the Northern and Southern PAR traditions. Then the ideas and concepts behind AR and PAR will be looked at, followed by a consideration of the criticisms that AR and PAR have faced. Following that some approaches and methods that respond to this criticism will be considered. Finally, some of the participatory methods that currently exist in these areas will be covered, paying particular attention to those most similar to the Ideal Society Workshop.

2.2 What are Action Research (AR), Participatory Action Research (PAR) and participatory methods?

Action Research and Participatory Action Research are overlapping disciplines of academic study. The names can be used interchangeably due to the similarities between them and the different understandings of what they mean. The terms 'Northern PAR' and 'Southern PAR' will be used throughout this paper to refer to the two different traditions within Action Research and Participatory Action Research. These refer loosely to the global north and global south but also importantly to their different approaches and aims. My decision to use these terms is also because they are used by originators and key figures themselves in both schools. It is important, however, to recognise the huge differences within these regions and that systems of power exist on a global, regional, national and local level as well as being class, gender, race, sexuality, ability, etc. based.

The creator of the Southern PAR tradition, Orlando Fals-Borda (1987; 1991) defined PAR from this perspective as a research methodology that:

- Combines the internal agents of change from within an oppressed group and the external agents of change from outside the group
- Combines academic knowledge with popular knowledge
- Combines theory, action and participation committed to further the interests of exploited groups and classes
  (Fals-Borda, 1991; Fals-Borda 1987)

Fals-Borda exclusively uses the term Participatory Action Research, even when engaging in debates within the area of Action Research, which highlights the overlaps and different understandings of these two terms. This definition of PAR from the Southern school is similar to that from SAGE Publishing (in the Introduction) but there are differences in the meaning of the term knowledge and different emphases on power and oppression. This will be discussed more shortly when looking at the history of PAR from the Northern and Southern schools.

The methods within AR and PAR are important parts of these disciplines and are utilised to carry out research, produce/reveal knowledge, and create change processes. These methods exist in both PAR and AR, within academia and outside it (as well as straddling both). Outside of academia they are often referred to as participatory methods rather than AR/PAR. Some methods originate from when AR and PAR began, others are newer, and new methods or adaptations are also sometimes developed. These methods, and specifically those similar to the Ideal Society Workshop, are discussed further in the last section of this chapter and the first section of the next chapter.

2.3 The history of Northern Action Research and Southern Participatory Action Research

Action Research is a concept first coined by the German social psychologist Kurt Lewin in the US in the 1940's (Greenwood & Levin, 2007). He argued that social sciences should reject the long-held positivist approach that claims research can and should be objective (Bradbury & Reason, 2001). Instead, he argued for an 'action research' with a problem-solving approach in which researchers work with groups, organisations and communities that are affected by the issue being studied (Pant, 2014). His work did not, however, challenge existing power relationships or involve very much active participation of communities (Pant, 2014).

One of the main influences on Participatory Action Research was the Brazilian educationist Paulo Freire and his work in the 1970's emphasising the power of education as a political tool, as described in his book 'The Pedagogy of the Oppressed' (Freire, 1970/2000; Greenwood and Levin, 2007). His concept of 'conscientization' evolved from his work on adult literacy in Brazil and is based on the idea that oppressed people, through education, can learn to critically analyze their situations and organize to change them (Freire, 1982 in Fals-

Borda, 1991). He also explained that educators need to reflect on their power and roles, and that education should not be a transfer of information and ideas from teacher to student, but an exchange (Fals-Borda, 1991). This work inspired academics and activists to work with community residents to create social action based on the ideas of political literacy and learning together through investigation (Pant, 2014).

A Participatory Research Network that had 5 geographic nodes on different continents was formed in the 1970's and united many participatory researchers (Pant, 2014). Colombian Sociologist Orlando Fals-Borda was an important part of this network and coined the specific term Participatory Action Research a little later in the 1970's to describe a mix of social investigation, education and action (Pant, 2014). The popularity of PAR in the global South, as well as the social movements of the 1960's and 1970's resulted in PAR spreading to the global North and influencing AR.

Action Research and Participatory Action Research in the global North developed mainly from Lewin's work, and during the 1960's and 70's spread from the United States to other countries, particularly to begin with the UK at the Tavistock Institute for Human Relations and in Norway in the Norwegian Industrial Democracy Project (Greenwood & Levin, 2007). These projects built on Lewin's idea of social change as being a three-stage process: 'dismantling former structures (unfreezing), changing the structures (changing), and finally locking them back to a permanent structure (freezing)' (Greenwood & Levin, 2007: 16). They also took and implemented Lewin's work on group dynamics, which involves identifying and investigating the important aspects for cooperation and development in groups (Greenwood and Levin, 2007).

These early experiments focused mostly on organizational development and improving efficiency, through increasing democracy within workplaces. This idea of change: with limited participation and as a short term intervention rather than as an ongoing process, has left a large mark and continues to have an impact on modern AR and PAR in the North, which has been described by Greenwood and Levin (2007), amongst others, as co-optation. This can also be seen in the widespread use of Action Research aims and methods as management strategies within corporations, beginning in the 1980's and 1990's initially in the UK, Japan and the US and still continuing today. Words like participation, empowerment and bottom-up

planning have become incredibly common and almost taken for granted within public focused projects but do not necessarily translate into a transformational practice (Henkel & Stirrat, 2001). Whilst Greenwood and Levin (2007: 135) see this as problematic they describe this cooptation as common when there are attempts to democratize society as well as unfortunately natural with all new ideas. They claim that the focus should be on discovering how to strategically open up new ground to reassert the democratizing aspect of Action Research (ibid).

Whilst Northern AR/PAR emerged from attempts to apply social science to real world problems, specifically improving workplaces through greater democracy, Southern PAR has far more emancipatory origins in attempts to equalize power relations and create critical consciousness. These two schools have also influenced each other, with Southern PAR bringing an equalizing emphasis to Northern PAR, especially during the 1960's and 1970's, and Northern PAR bringing and adapting methods used within international development in the global south. This will be discussed further in the section below about the criticism of Action Research and Participatory Action Research.

2.4 The theoretical ideas and concepts behind AR and PAR

There are several theoretical ideas and concepts behind Action Research and Participatory Action Research. Some of these are specific to either the Southern or Northern traditions whereas others are common to both.

The general idea of political democracy and 'having a say', which became more historically relevant at the same time as the growth of Action Research in the North, directly informs the creation and growth of Northern PAR, including the early experiments in industrial or workplace democracy that took place (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). The idea was, and still is, that innovation could be created in organisations through hearing the views, experiences and ideas of the workers and allowing their experiences to help form future development, including in some cases experiments about employee-run and governed workplaces (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). Another theory of democracy that forms part of the backbone to AR and PAR in the Northern tradition is deliberative democracy, which is based on the idea that people are autonomous individuals who can take part in the governance of their own

society (Gutmann & Thompson, 2004). According to Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson (2004), deliberative democracy is:

> 'A form of government in which free and equal citizens (and their representatives), justify decisions (*such as policy decisions, rules and laws)* in a process in which they give one another reasons that are mutually acceptable and generally accessible (*i.e. conducted in public in a way that is understandable for ordinary people)*, with the aim of reaching conclusions that are binding in the present on all citizens but open to challenge in the future.' (Gutmann & Thompson, 2004: 7) (*italicized words not part of original quote*)

A number of other authors have also argued for the need and merits of a deliberative democracy. They believe that the current methods of democratic participation: voting and lobbying, are not enough to create a fair society in which representatives can legitimately and competently lead, and be held to account (Cooke, 2000; Fung & Wright, 2003). Based on this the aim has been (within the global North), to develop methods and approaches that can create the situations where deliberative democracy can take place and grow.

In the Southern PAR tradition the much more radical and emancipatory democracy is the focus, with the aim of changing the class system within which people find themselves (Pant, 2014). There is a similar role for deliberation, but as a tool for people and communities to use to grow what Paulo Freire terms conscientization, or critical consciousness: of their situation, position, oppression and the structural conditions that exist, and thereafter to begin changing these (Freire, 1982 in Fals-Borda, 1991).

Both traditions focus highly on knowledge: altering the ways in which different forms of knowledge are seen and valued, and aiming to bring out ordinary individuals' knowledge to solve problems or improve situations. Since the 1990's there has been a recognition of, and intentional shift towards, a 'Mode 2' production of knowledge within academia and general society (Coghlan, 2014). In a 'Mode 1' production of knowledge research is conducted in universities, government departments and private companies; is about building and testing theories within one discipline; and producing universal knowledge (Coghlan, 2014). Whereas, Mode 2 knowledge is transdisciplinary, has a problem-solving focus, and accountability to and application for a diverse range of stakeholders (Gibbons, 1994). In some ways, Northern Action Research was ahead of the trend in this area, but the discipline has also been pushed forward and developed by the increasing acceptance and uptake of Mode 2 knowledge.

The concept of everyday knowledge has been an important element within the Northern AR/PAR tradition. Expert or explicit knowledge from academics, policy experts and those in power has long held dominance in determining what is true and false, the understanding of social problems, and the way forward (Hiles, 2014). But everyday, practical and tacit knowledge has been emphasised as incredibly useful in order to understand social issues and change real life problems (Gunnarsson, 2006; Nonaka & Konno, 1998). One of the key aims of PAR is to uncover and promote these forms of participants knowledge during its work with people.

For many within the Southern PAR tradition (and some within Northern PAR) this still skirts around the *value* and *use* of different forms of knowledge. In this regard, Southern PAR goes further, claiming that only a combination of expert knowledge and popular (everyday) knowledge can result in real, significant societal change that is meaningful for those in the least powerful positions (Pant, 2014). Paulo Freire (1982 in Fals-Borda, 1991) states that this requires experts not just to accept the usefulness of popular knowledge, *but also* reconsider their own points of references and beliefs, and set popular knowledge alongside expert knowledge as an equal.

2.5 Criticism of AR and PAR

Sherry Arnstein (1969), who was based in the US, was one of the leading figures in bringing forward criticism of AR and PAR within academia (there were plenty of ordinary people criticising participatory approaches after experiencing them whose points were not published but from which various academics' articles and points draw). She reflected on the use of participatory approaches in a number of US cities, and based on this created a 'ladder of citizen participation' (seen in figure 1 below), aiming to create transparency and dialogue about the use and aims of these approaches. The ladder sets out a typology of the forms of citizen participation that various participatory attempts can be placed along, depending on their aims and outcomes (Arnstein, 1969). Arnstein commented on the troubling use of participation she saw where citizens rarely gained control except when they took it: 'Participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless. It allows the power holders to claim that all sides were considered...it maintains the status quo' (Arnstein, 1969: 216). Only at the levels of partnership, delegated power and citizen control is power actually distributed, claims Arnstein (1969).
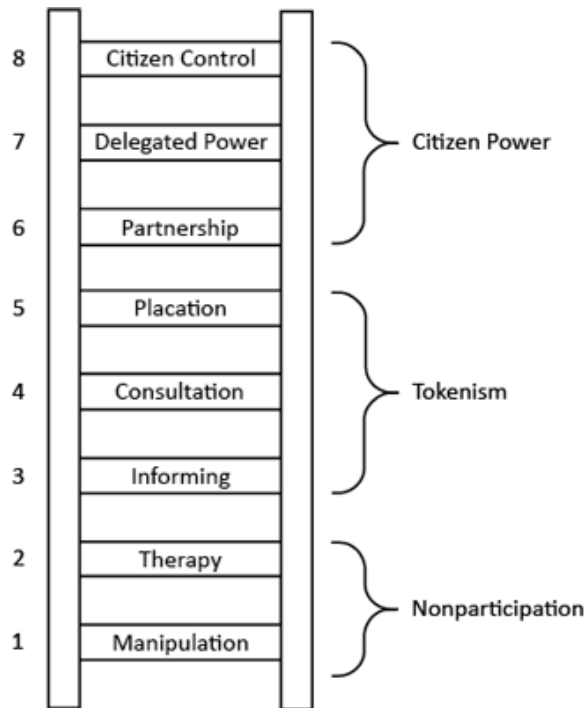
Figure 1: 'Ladder of citizen participation' (Arnstein, 1969)

Since Arnstein's work the majority of high-profile criticism of PAR has come from the international development sector where participatory approaches and methods are very common (international development involves donors, often from the global North, funding and delivering projects in the global South to address a range of issues such as poverty, lack of food or water, gender inequality, etc.).

Frances Cleaver (2001), amongst others, has claimed that there is little proof that participation can create social change or long-term material improvements for the most vulnerable people. This point is echoed by Arnstein's research on attempts at participatory approaches in various US cities. Another of the main criticisms of participatory approaches in development is that they result in dependency (on the political power of the NGOs) rather than emancipation (with control and power at the local level). Extreme power imbalances between stakeholders taking part in participatory projects (e.g. politicians, experts and ordinary people, including many with a variety of oppressions based on class, ethnicity, gender, education, etc.) also result in these processes always favoring those with more power (Hildeyard et al., 2001). There is a need, claim Hildeyard et al. (2001), for participatory approaches to take account of the relative bargaining powers of stakeholders based on different positions of power, as this issue is not currently addressed (Waddington & Mohan, 2004). Having a seat at the table is

not the same as having a voice, partly due to internalized dialogues of discrimination that those with the least power face which can prevent them from valuing and therefore communicating their views and experiences, at least in a way that will be heard (Cornwall, 2004). This is also clearly something that applies to PAR methods and approaches in the global North and in other areas than international development, as there is always some form of power imbalance when groups of people meet, e.g. employers and workers; teachers and students; programme deliverers and participants; politicians and 'ordinary' citizens; experts/policy makers and oppressed groups.

The use of PAR as token exercises without real intention to share power has been noted by both Sherry Arnstein (1969) and John Hailey (2004), amongst others. Hailey (2004), argues that the widespread use of PAR methods in international development is expected as 'just something you do', but also can be intentionally used for foreign policy aims, at which point it enters the realm of what Arnstein (1969) described as 'manipulation'. Bill Cooke (2001) highlights the critique that lays arguably at the root of all of this- the co-opting of radical participation by the orthodoxy where it is reduced to technique and applied for non-emancipatory aims, resulting in the current focus on empowerment over emancipation. The emphasis on methods and techniques over aims can be seen in the way in which the Northern PAR tradition has far more focus on the development of methods to be used in a variety of situations than in the Southern PAR tradition, which focuses more on the aims and adapting work to different local settings. As Cooke (2001) acknowledges, Paulo Freire (1970) had already observed and pointed this out, and as a result emphasised the need for a form of PAR that aims to create a sharing of power and social change, and a critical consciousness amongst both the oppressed and those with power.

2.6 Methods and approaches that address this criticism: REFLECT and REFLECT adaptations

Several methods have been developed in the hope of addressing the issues with current participatory approaches within the development sector. One, called REFLECT stands for: Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques, and aims to use Freire's approach of conscientization in combination with a popular and widely accepted method called participatory rural appraisal (Hickey & Mohan, 2004). In this way it acknowledges the misuse of Freire's ideas in other methods (Waddington & Mohand, 2004).

It was developed in the 1990's by the organisation ActionAid and involves participants being engaged in discussions about their socio-economic problems and encouraged to come up with solutions, including 'action points' to be tackled by the group or higher level organisations (Hickey & Mohan, 2004). From these discussions keywords also emerge that become the focus of political literacy work in the group (ibid.).

Similar methods have also been developed that are adaptations of REFLECT by an organisation called Village AiD (Waddington & Mohan, 2004). Importantly, these are developed/adapted based on local contexts and are developed continually over time and in response to feedback and criticism by those who take part in the methods (ibid.). This is a clear response to those criticisms about technique over aim as well as the use of local people and knowledge to develop the methods they are part of. The successes of the application of these approaches is described as including: greater involvement of women at local decision making levels, increased freedoms for female traders and, increased ability of participants to express their needs, understand and act on their rights, identify and solve problems and mobilize funds for solutions (ibid.).

2.7 Methods and approaches that address this criticism: Critical Utopian Action Research

Another approach that attempts to address the criticism directed towards PAR is the discipline of Critical Utopian Action Research (CUAR), which suggests a different focus within the Northern AR tradition. Proponents of CUAR point out that AR/PAR has involved cooperation around *organisational* change but has had issues maintaining the 'participatory' element because employers do not want to give workers real, long-term power (Tofteng & Husted, 2004).

CUAR is a discipline within the Scandinavian Action Research tradition, combining:
- *Action Research*
- *Critical Theory*, which focuses not on observing what is but on creating what should be (from Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno within the sociological tradition), and the idea of social imagination, which is about using imagination to open up to possibilities of actions and change (from Sigmund Freud within the psychoanalytic tradition) (Nielsen & Nielsen, 2006). CUAR argues that in our everyday life we do not

often have the possibility to develop social imagination, so arenas, referred to as 'free spaces' need to be created for this. Social imagination and critical theory, as combined into social learning by Oskar Negt, Alfred Lorenzer and Regina Becker- Schmidt, then also emphasises learning through mediated experience from a life context (often referred to as an experiment). This can be seen in various experiments, for example around employee-run or led workplaces.

- *Futures research* (by the philosopher Robert Jungk), who developed methods to strengthen the social imagination in social movements, including the Future Workshop and social experiments, which aimed to allow people to try things out and reduce the fear of social change. His ideas have roots in the theories of Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch who theorized that a 'history of utopian culture, as flows of dreams', is necessary to understand conditions and methods for social change and open up possibilities for this change.

The importance of the future and utopias was expressed by Jungk as a fear that, 'without a democratic utopian future horizon, the future will be dominated by technocratic planning' (Nielsen & Nielsen, 2006: 82) which will be formed by expert culture and defined by experts. He believed that we should not 'go blindly into this future' (Jungk, n.d. In Nielsen & Nielsen, 2006).

2.8 What AR and PAR methods currently exist and what are the benefits and drawbacks of these?

Action Research (AR) and Participatory Action Research (PAR) are generally seen as approaches, but they also contain numerous methods that have been adapted to carry out these forms of research and organisational change. Methods that vary in nature, use, aim and theoretical background have been created by people in different sectors and disciplines. They also reflect what the creator of the methods believes that AR and PAR should be used to achieve.

Whilst there exist handbooks on action research, the spread out nature of the AR and PAR disciplines within different subjects and sectors means that it is difficult to see the true number of different methods that exist as well as what should and shouldn't be included as AR/PAR methods. They are used within: organisational and business development in private

companies, design and architecture, local and national government, healthcare, the third sector (non-governmental organisations and voluntary/community organisations), activist organisations, etc. They are also used within academia to research different phenomena.

In 'The Change Handbook', Peggy Holman, Tom Devane and Steven Cady (Holman et al., 2007) compiled a list, with descriptions and instructions, of around sixty different methods that fit into the categories: adaptive, planning, structuring, improving, and supportive methods. The Public Participation handbook by James L. Creighton (2005) covers a range of methods used within the public sector to inform and involve citizens. Hilary Bradbury and Peter Reasons' 'The SAGE Handbook of Action Research' (Bradbury and Reason, 2001; Bradbury, 2015) includes descriptions, discussions and case details of a variety of methods used in a broad range of settings and at different levels. Orlando Fals-Borda and Muhammad Anisur Rahman's book 'Action and Knowledge' (1991) outlines a range of approaches and methods by looking at numerous cases.

The approaches and practice in the cases described by Fals-Borda and Rahman (1991) are not often turned into methods that are named and described in detail. This highlights a difference between Southern and Northern PAR. Methods that are named, detailed, promoted and also often turned into businesses or products is very common in Northern PAR but generally missing from Southern PAR (as far as I can see within English language literature) (Holman et al., 2007). This reflects the clear difference in the aims of these two schools. In Southern PAR the emphasis seems to remain on the aim and approaches of PAR itself (exchange and equalising of knowledge, critical consciousness, emancipation, etc.), with case studies providing useful inspiration and guidance. Methods seem to be developed in each case at the local level in reaction to what is required. It is possible to assume that having a set method with a rigid purpose would distract from Southern PAR's aim to emphasise local theory and knowledge. However, the founder of Southern PAR, Orlando Fals-Borda, has also since praised the Handbook for Action Research by Hilary Bradbury and Peter Reason (2001; 2015) that strikes a balance between these approaches: specific methods are named but in a case and discussion format instead of a prescriptive, instruction manual structure.

PAR methods that are used in international development, such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (Hickey & Mohan, 2004) have also been used increasingly by NGOs in the global

south, which can be argued to be a continuation of the colonisation that Southern PAR was fighting against (Hickey & Mohan, 2004). There are, however, methods that try to move away from this and bring back the emancipatory approach of Southern PAR within a method that is highly adaptable, as seen in the example of REFLECT and the REFLECT adaptations (Hickey & Mohan, 2004).

The changes over time within the two traditions as well as the influences and convergences/co-optations between them makes it difficult to draw a line and say, 'this is Northern PAR, and this is Southern PAR'. Not least, because of the diversity that also exists *within* both Northern and Southern PAR in their aims, practitioners and methods. There is still, however, a reasonably clear difference in the emancipatory aim of each of the schools. Perhaps Southern PAR could benefit from a clear description of adaptable and possible methods and Northern PAR from returning to the emancipatory aim that existed at the birth of PAR.

The table below describes the methods that are most similar to the Ideal Society Workshop. Some of these I had come across before the development of the method and acted as unconscious inspiration (World Cafe, Open Space, Future workshops), others I realised similarities with after creating the method (Future Search, Conversation cafes, Deliberative polling). As mentioned above, Southern PAR does not have specific, described methods that come specifically from the Southern PAR tradition. The methods described below are found mostly within the Northern PAR tradition, although Southern PAR has of course influenced methods/been co-opted in the Northern PAR tradition, including in some of the methods described below, including Open Space, World Cafe and Conversation Cafe.

Figure 2: Table with description of PAR methods most similar to the Ideal Society Workshop.

Name of method	Creator; place and date of creation	Aims	How it works	Relevant benefits and disadvantages of method
Future Workshop (Nielsen & Svensson 2006; Jungk-bibliothek.org	Robert Jungk & Norbet Mullert Germany, 1987	To shed light on a particular situation, to generate ideas, and discuss how they can be realized	-3 hours-2 days -Suitable for small and larger numbers of participants (but min. of approx. 10) -3 phases: criticism, utopia, realization.	+Focus on future and utopias which can create new ideas +Focus on empowering individuals and bringing out their

| 2019) | | Because 'knowledge of the future's possibilities means power' (Jungk-bibliothek.org)

Increase average citizens ability to develop and voice their own ideas. Increase self-confidence and participation in citizen's initiatives, actions, and changing society. | -Criticism phase: Brainstorming- writing short negative/critical statements on posters, no discussion. Voting- most important statements. Groups- focus on one of the prioritised themes and then present back to the whole group.
-Utopia phase: Brainstorming and voting repeated with focus on 'anything is possible'. Groups formed based on prioritised themes and develop the idea and then present back to the whole group.
-Realization phase: Focus in the same groups on moving the utopias closer to reality. Groups are asked to make agreements to continue this work after the workshop.
-Use of posters to document group work and summary sessions. Distributed afterwards in typed form so that work can continue. | knowledge
+ Creates action
+ Can involve small and larger numbers of participants
+ Voting creates a form of equality

-Based on a specific question, context or organisation (narrow).
-Mostly been used with a focus on working life
-Action orientated- 'binding' for participants (immediate action as outcome)
- Solely a group focus (no time for individual exploration)
- Changing utopia to reality can limit utopian thinking
- Covering criticism can create divisions between people about how they see this- can reduce ability to look at utopias together
- Based on participants feeling bold enough to vote for/suggest statements and ideas in front of many others |
| ***The World Cafe***

(Brown et al, 2007) | Juanita Brown & Meg Wheatley

Berkana Institute- USA, 1995 | - Accessing collective intelligence
- Sharing knowledge
- Increase possibility for collective action
- Emphasise that conversation is essential and natural | -The sponsor of the event decides the question and sends out the invites.

- An informal web of conversations is created
- A hospitable space is created (calm, refreshments, welcoming space) | + Connects people with different views and experiences
+ Can create shared understanding
+ Opportunity for each person to speak to many others
+Conducted in small groups which makes is accessible for many |

		- Establish trust and nurture relationships - Works from the assumption that 'people already have within them the wisdom and creativity to effectively address even their most difficult challenges' (Brown et al, 2007: 181).	- Many tables with 4 people at each table - People circulate from one table to the next after a period of 20/30 minutes so that conversations 'cross-pollinate'. - 12-1000 people - 2 hours- 2 days in length. Can be repeated many times to create a process. - The topic is a key question or issue that is important to the group's life, work or community.	+Focus on empowering individuals and bringing out their knowledge + Doesn't require expert facilitators -Question is normally quite specific, and just concerns one organisation/ community/ geographical area (But doesn't need to be) - Solely a group focus (no time for individual exploration)
Future Search (Weisbord & Janoff, 2007)	Marvin Weisbord & Sandra Janoff USA, 1995	To enable 'diverse groups to find common ground, develop action plans, build commitment, and plan implementation' (Weisbord & Janoff, 2007: 319)	- A 'whole system' meeting - 60-80 people - 3 days with follow ups. - Focus on past, present and future. - Tasks completed in a combination of mixed groups and stakeholder groups (where participants have the same perspective). And in a combination of small and whole group. -Format: Task 1—Focus on the Past Task 2—Focus on the Present: External trends; Stakeholder response to external trends; Owning our actions. Task 3—Ideal future scenarios Task 4—Identify common ground; Confirm common	+Focus on future and utopias which can create new ideas + Connects people with different views and experiences + Can create shared understanding +Aims to balance shared understanding with ensuring that all stakeholders views are put forward -Organisation- based -Narrow focus on specific question or context -Focus and participants decided by the sponsor of the event, often the leader of an organisation (top-down structures) -Assumes a hierarchical leadership that will continue after the event (does not redistribute power)

			ground Task 5—Action Planning Principles: -A cross-section of the whole in the room, including those with authority, resources, information, expertise, and need -Create conditions where participants experience the whole "elephant" before acting on any part of it -Focus on the future and seek common ground -Enable people to take responsibility for their own learning and action plans.	- Solely a group focus (no time for individual exploration)
Open Space technology (Owen, 2007)	Harrison Owen (from indigenous populations) USA, 1997	To turn the use of A market-place where ideas are brought and discussed into a method that can be planned and carried out. To bring the usefulness of discussions during coffee breaks into the main space of conference. 'Every issue of concern to anybody in the group will be on the table. All issues will have been discussed to the extent that the interested parties choose to do so' (Owen, 2007: 139)	- 1-3 days - No maximum number of participants. Principles: -Whoever comes are the right people, - Whatever happens is the only thing that could have, - Whenever it starts is the right time, - When it's over, it's over. -The law of two feet/mobility- if you are not getting value from the discussion you are taking part in, move to a new one. Format: -Whole group gathers. Participants post topics that are of interest to them on a board.	+ Topics can be decided by participants (at least within the session) + Emphasises popular knowledge over/alongside expert knowledge + Often low cost + Can be used for a variety of situations, topics, etc. -Sponsors are responsible for creating the topic, advertising, inviting, etc. - Solely a group focus (no time for individual exploration) -Does not challenge the leadership structure within the organisation -Does not question

		To recognise priorities, combine concerns and identify action steps. For those involved to experience a different and self-empowering way of working.	-Times and rooms are assigned to each topic with the person posting the topic responsible for that session, e.g. beginning the facilitation of the session -Notes from the sessions are combined and distributed to all participants (and also to the public if desired) -For sessions that are more than one day issues discussed are then prioritized and project postings are created, and new groups are formed, that end in action plans.	power within society -Solution- oriented (but doesn't need to be for shorter events) -Risk of those with less power being crowded out if the number of those with more power is too high.
Conversati-on cafes (Robin, 2007)	Vicki Robin USA, 2001	Conversation between strangers to increase understanding (especially in times of social/political 'stress'). Originally started at cafes but has also been used at conferences or in organisations to enable conversation between people and shared understanding.	30 mins-2 hours or longer. -Small group of 3-8 people. -Can be several small groups of people Format: -Selection of topics (decided by the host in the case of a conference or by the participants by writing down suggested topics). - Round 1: introductions (name, etc.) and speak on the topic for 1-2 mins - Round 2: 1-2 minutes on the topic - Open dialogue - Final round: Each person makes a final comment. A talking stick or similar object is/can	+ Open to all + Combines people of different views and experiences + Easy to arrange, requires no expertise to facilitate + Topics can be decided by participants -Very general/open topics - Very little structure - Solely a group focus (no time for individual exploration/deliberation) -No emphasis on action

			be used to emphasise turn taking and deep listening. Agreements: -Open-mindedness listen to and respect all points of view -Acceptance: suspend judgment as best you can -Curiosity: seek to understand rather than persuade -Discovery: question old assumptions, look to for new insights -Sincerity- speak for yourself about what has meaning for you -Brevity: go for honesty and depth but don't go on and on.	
Deliberative polling (Fishkin & Luskin, 2005)	James Fishkin & Robert Luskin USA, 2005	-To attain both political equality (achieved most often through voting and referendum) and deliberation (often achieved through conversation and debates). -To encourage collective or individual deliberation (or both)- weighing options, thinking, discussion -Exposing random samples to balanced information, encouraging them to weigh opposing arguments in discussions with heterogeneous interlocutors, and then harvesting their more	- Random selection of a cross-section of the population to take part in the session. - Session lasts 2 days and are public and often televised - Participants are sent carefully balanced briefing materials beforehand setting out the major arguments for and against a specific policy to provide a starting point for discussions. - The briefing documents and selection of panelists is overseen by an advisory body on which with all stakeholders are represented - During the sessions they discuss the issues in randomly	+ Time for individual exploration/ deliberation + Creates space for discussion anchored in facts + Brings together diverse groups of people + Encourages deliberation +/- Little emphasis on action -Focus on public vs. experts -Narrow idea of knowledge and educating the public according to this knowledge -Used to further current system rather than change it -No intention to empower participants to create change - Very expensive and requires a lot of

		considered opinions' (Fishkin & Luskin, 2005: 287)	assigned small groups and put questions from these to a panel of policy experts and policy-makers in the plenary sessions. -Led by trained moderators, who maintain a respectful atmosphere and ensure that all the major proposals and arguments are discussed.	planning - Invitation only

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction to Methodology chapter

This chapter begins with an explanation of the Ideal Society Workshop, how it came to be, how it is different and similar to existing methods and what issues and criticisms of other methods were in mind when it was created. Then, it covers a more detailed description of the Ideal Society Workshop as well as information about participants, sampling, etc. Following on from this is a discussion about relevant ethics questions and information about how I analysed my data. Finally, the measures that I will analyse the method against in the Analysis section are spoken about.

3.2 The Ideal Society Workshop- process of development and similarities and differences to similar methods

The Ideal Society Workshop began as a desire I had to create a space where people could explore and develop their ideas around how they would like society to be, like their own lives within this to be, and to discuss this with others and use it as a base for people to understand each other more. It also came out of a frustration that I felt about the narrow nature of existing participatory projects and the limited possibilities that citizens have to engage in policy questions, as well as what I see as a limited dialogue around futures and possibilities. Having studied a course in participatory methods, worked on evaluation projects, worked in various pedagogical settings and within voluntary organisations (both grass-roots and more top-down) I decided to combine my knowledge and experience to address these issues that I noticed.

When designing the Ideal Society Workshop, I used this knowledge and experience but only realised the connection to participatory methods after I had conducted the workshops. It was at this point I drew various comparisons and realised that it takes inspiration from a number of different existing methods. These are the methods described in table 1 in the literature review section above as those most similar to the Ideal Society Workshop.

The aspects that I decided were most important in the workshop were time for individual reflection, creativity, dialogue and thinking outside the box. I used my experience from creating workshops in educational and organisational settings to develop a workshop that I thought would provide people the opportunity to do these things. In this way the Ideal Society

Workshop aims to combine time for individual reflection and group dialogue, poses a big question and uses creativity to help participants think outside the box and has a small group format to allow depth of conversation and connection between participants. It also takes place within approx. 3 hours and is not overly complicated. It went through a number of versions (including testing of the questions) until I was satisfied with the balance of different aspects. The first workshop session acted as a test for the method, but I was happy with the results and received positive feedback from the participants, so I did not make many changes for the second workshop session. If this method development had taken place in a longer project, I would have tried different workshop lengths and experimented with other forms of creativity, as well as conducted more workshops. If I continue developing the method (which I plan to) this will be part of the process.

In its short length and small group format the ISW method is most similar to World Cafe, Conversation cafes and to some extent Open Space. Another similarity between these three methods and the ISW method is the space for unstructured dialogue after the initial setting of the topic or question. World Cafe and Conversation cafe (as well as shorter format Open Space sessions) also share another similarity with the Ideal Society Workshop in that they do not contain a phase aimed at action: dialogue is the goal whilst future action is an aim but not included in the method. Both World Cafe and Conversation cafe, as well as Deliberative Polling, point, however, to dialogue in itself being a form of action, in the way it expands horizons and creates shared understanding for example as well as paving the way for changes in the future. With its focus on future possibilities, the Ideal Society Workshop method does also have an inbuilt action element that makes it action-oriented in some sense- in that thinking and talking about how the future could or should also be seen as a form of action and can perhaps lead to changes and more realised action.

In their exploration of future and utopian possibilities there are clear connections between Future Workshops, Future Search and the Ideal Society Workshop. However, both Future Workshops and Future Search look at the past/critical aspects, and then the present as specific phases before a future or utopia phase takes place, whereas in the Ideal Society Workshop this takes place all at the same time, and there is a larger focus on the future and utopian possibilities. This is done in order to not make comparisons between now and the future and to increase the possibility of out of the box thinking that doesn't need to be grounded in how

things currently are. Similarly, in Future Workshops and Future Search both methods end with a coming back down to earth phase where the utopias or ideal futures are brought closer to reality in order to focus on action. In comparison, the Ideal Society Workshop does not have this phase, which in some ways could reduce its possibilities to create action, unlike Future Workshops and Future Search, but this is intentional so as not to water down the utopias that are created in the workshop.

Whilst there is time for individual exploration and deliberation of issues in Deliberative Polling, this is a practice that is assumed to take place before the sessions begin and is not a part of the actual method. In this way, the Ideal Society Workshop is different from the methods outlined above in that there is time for both individual deliberation and group dialogue, which is I believe important in order for the participants to have time to explore their own thoughts, feelings and beliefs, especially about a topic that many do not often think about. Similarly, the use of creativity, in this case drawing, is not an explicit part of the other methods, whereas its use in the Ideal Society Workshop was seen as helpful in breaking the ice and stimulating out of the box thinking as well as making the workshop accessible to those who have difficulty writing. Finally, the scope of the topic and context dealt with in the Ideal Society Workshop (How would your ideal society look?) is much broader than those generally used in the other PAR methods described. Whilst Open Space is often broad in that anything can be discussed, this is often within a certain arena, e.g. one's workplace. The other methods are also designed to only or mostly be used within one organisation, community or topic. Some of the methods' focus is very specific, with deliberative polling often focusing on one policy issue. The starting question in the Ideal Society Workshop is intentionally broad in order to address the narrow limits of citizens participation as discussed above, create a whole system/society perspective and place these big questions back in front of ordinary people.

In this way the Ideal Society Workshop hopes to retain the focus on future and utopias that is used in Future Search and Future Workshops; the dialogue and deliberation evident in all of the methods but especially Deliberative Polling; and the short format, ease of facilitation and focus on conversation shown in World Cafe, Conversation cafes and Open Space Technology. This is then combined with aspects that are not evident in these methods: space for individual deliberation, a very broad topic/question, a lack of anchoring futures/utopias in reality and use of creative methods.

3.3 Format of the Ideal Society Workshop

Introductions and name stickers (5 minutes)

Icebreaker (10 minutes)

To energise, spark creativity and helps the participants get comfortable with talking to each other.

In this case I used a drawing exercise where two objects are chosen by the participants, e.g. shark and vacuum cleaner, and the participants draw the hybrid object and then show their creations to each other.

Introduction of session by facilitator (5 minutes)

What it is for (Master's thesis), What the topic is: 'what would your ideal society look like?/ how would it function?', explanation of the plan for the workshop. Description of my role as facilitator.

Section 1: Individual visioning (20 minutes)

Large sheets of plain paper are distributed to the participants, with extra in the middle. Writing pens, and colouring pencils and pens, are laid out on the desk. The facilitator asks the participants to think about the question, 'how would your ideal society function?' and gives some suggested categories that this can be thought about within (housing, education, employment, food, other). This question and the categories are written on a board so that the participants can refer back to them. Participants are told they should individually think about and record their thoughts and ideas, by writing or drawing on their sheet of paper and that they will share their ideas with each other after.

Section 2: Group deliberation (45 minutes- 1 hour).

The facilitator explains that it is now time to share their ideas with each other and encourages them to talk through the different things they have written/drawn about, ask each other questions The participants can do this in the way that they choose, with the facilitator confirming that there is not set way for this to be done.

Section 3: Could I live in your society? (10 minutes)

The facilitator ask the participants how they would feel living in the society that the

other participants described (this was covered to some extent in the previous part but allows the participants to go back to their original ideas and go into more in-depth about the similarities and differences).

Section 4: A day in the life (15-20 minutes)

The participants are asked to think about and write down what a day in the society they described would be like for them: what would they do, what would they not do, how would it be different from an average day in their life now?

3.4 Participants and sampling

I conducted two workshops: the first with 3 people, the second with 4 people (7 participants in total). Both were conducted in the same way, with the same format (explained below). I used purposive sampling to choose my participants, as I realised that it would not be possible, or desirable in this case, to achieve a representative sample, nor generalisable data based on demographics from such a small group. The participants were recruited through asking if they would be interested in taking part and describing that the workshop, 'would be an opportunity to consider how they want society to be and to discuss this with others'. Whilst this clearly creates a self-selection bias (where the participants choose to take part or not based on their interest), this is the case generally for these kinds of methods (and research in general). Despite this, I hoped to achieve diversity within the groups by asking people of different class and educational backgrounds and with different levels of political and community engagement. This was with the aim of the participants having different experiences and viewpoints that they could share with each other and meant that I could see how these aspects played out in the workshops.

A profile of the groups and participants

Group 1 (three people)
- One woman, two men.
- Two Swedish, One German. All white.
- All living in Malmö.
- Ages between 24-31.
- Two educated to university level, one educated to high school level.
- One teaching assistant, one nurse, one student.

Group 2 (four people)
- Three women, one man.
- All Swedish. All white.
- Three living in Malmö, one living in Värnamo.
- Ages between 22-35.
- Two educated to university level, two to high school level.
- One nurse, three students.

In the first workshop- Group 1, the participants had met each other previously, in the second workshop- Group 2, they did not know each other. All of the participants were known to the researcher (I attempted to find people who would be willing to take part who I did not know, but this proved difficult). This is not necessarily an issue within Action Research as change together with participants and from within communities, where participants are likely to know each other and/or the researcher, is an important aspect (Bradbury, 2015). This can still have implications, which I consider more below in the section about ethics and my role as researcher.

3.5 Ethics

The standard expectations in terms of ethics were adhered to and the participants were informed: what the research was about, what the workshops would cover, that they were entitled to stop taking part in the workshop at any point if they wished, that their data would be anonymised and confidential.

When discussing how they would like society to be there is the risk that some participants have views or make statements that are harmful or discriminatory to other participants. It is, however, likely that the participants themselves are aware of this risk and it is a difficult risk to remove, especially when it is important that spaces for conversation exist and that research into people's views and their interaction is vital. My solution to this was to be aware of the risk and to be ready to manage this risk if it came up within the workshops.

This leads on to the role of the researcher/facilitator within the workshops. Within this kind of method, the role of the researcher/facilitator is important and can help the participants to feel free to generate ideas and discuss or it can prevent this. The role of the facilitator in this method was balanced (Bradbury, 2015). For example, I scheduled the workshops, invited the participants, decided the overall structure and the main question as well as possible categories and said when it was time to move onto the next section but otherwise allowed the participants themselves to decide how they would present and discuss. How this looked within the workshops and how participants reacted to this will be covered in the beginning of the analysis chapter. I judged it as necessary to facilitate to some extent in order to create the opportunity for participants to take power, as the workshops took place in a society where specific power structures exist, and residents do not often deliberate with each other. In this

way there was an aim to challenge the power dynamics of these encounters and reduce the power of the researcher and increase the power of the participants, which is in line with the aims of action research (Bradbury, 2015). Because the aim is to create change and increase the power of the participants, rather than just design and deliver the research in a 'value-free' manner, this renders the researcher as part of the research, rather than as a 'neutral' observer and facilitator as in the positivist school of sociology (Lather, 1986 in Hammersley, 2000:2; Rahman, 1991). There was, however, an importance to value each of the participants views and contributions equally during the workshops, in order to create a willingness to contribute and a shared understanding.

The participants in the research knew me outside of my role as the researcher/facilitator which in one way can help create trust that enables them to share their views (which would otherwise need to be built up), but it could also create or increase a tendency to not argue or disagree. Having an environment where participants feel safe and even similar to the others in the workshop can also make it easier for them to generate new and creative ideas, whereas a certain amount of differences between participants is also necessary to increase shared experiences and understanding.

3.6 How I analysed the data

The workshops were voice recorded, and I also took additional notes during the workshops when I noticed something I thought was interesting. These voice recordings were transcribed and analysed along with my additional notes and the drawings/writings that the participants created during the workshops.

From the initial coding two general areas emerged that I decided to analyse and focus on: the views that the participants expressed (content), and how they 'deliberated'- how they reacted to each other, questioned each other, shared ideas, adapted their views based on what each other said and came to conclusions together, or not (interaction). From an analysis of these aspects it is possible to evaluate the method of the Ideal Society Workshop.

Within the process of initial coding I used descriptive and then pattern coding (Saldaña, 2013). This enabled me to begin with an open view of the data and what it would say, thereby emphasising the participants voices from the workshops, which is important within participatory and action research (Saldaña, 2013; Bradbury, 2015). From that starting point I

then coded into basic patterns and groupings, followed by grouping the topics that came up. This led to the two areas, content and interaction (mentioned above), as well as to the different topics within the content.

In order to analyse within the category of the interaction between the participants, a further round of coding was used, combining value coding and verbal exchange coding. Value coding enabled a consideration of the participants beliefs, including the way they present and change these (Saldaña, 2013). Verbal exchange coding provided a structure to look at how this takes place, including, for example, sense-making episodes, where the participants increase their understanding of other people's experiences (Saldaña, 2013: 137).

3.7 How to tell if the method works- what it will be measured against

This section will outline the measures that will be used to consider the use of the Ideal Society Workshop and if it is a promising and beneficial action research method, i.e. what the method will be measured against. This also acts as an operationalisation of the terms that have been used so far, including, 'emancipatory possibilities', 'shared understanding', 'new knowledge' and 'utopian futures/out of the box thinking'. In the next Chapter, covering the analysis, the data that was produced during the Ideal Society Workshops, and therefore the method itself, will be analysed based on these measures.

The following measures all come from the disciplines of Action Research, Participatory Action Research or Critical Utopian Action Research, or from researchers that contributed in some way to theories upon which these disciplines are built. In this way, the method is analysed on the basis of what is considered to be a good measure within these disciplines, and from respectable sources. I have chosen a combination of measures from approaches/methods that are similar to mine, as well as putting focus on measures that I believe address the shortcomings of current methods within these disciplines, as mentioned previously.

1. *Was shared understanding created through deliberative discussion?*

     This is understood to mean: did the method enable the participants to share their views and experiences, understand each other, and reconsider their opinions?

     Fishkin and Luskin (2005) are the creators of the deliberative polling method, described previously, in which they found that 'ordinary people can deliberate, and they benefit from

doing so' (Fishkin and Luskin, 2005: 284). Their method emphasises the importance of 'deliberation' as integral to democracy, as discussed previously as one of the grounding ideas within PAR. Responding to measures developed by others within the area including by Gustavsen (2001) and Gutman and Thompson (2004), Fishkin and Luskin developed a simple measure by which to judge if deliberation is taking place. This measure was chosen as it represents some widely held, but more simplified, expectations of what a participatory method within modern, western democracy and Northern PAR should help create.

> Measures- deliberative discussion should be:
>
> *-Informed* (and thus informative). Arguments should be supported by appropriate and reasonably accurate factual claims.
>
> *-Balanced*. Arguments should be met by contrary arguments.
>
> *-Conscientious*. The participants should be willing to talk and listen, with civility and respect.
>
> *-Substantive*. Arguments should be considered sincerely on their merits, not on how they are made or by who is making them.
>
> *-Comprehensive*. All points of view held by significant portions of the population should receive attention.
>
> (Fishkin and Luskin, 2005: 285)

2.   *Was new knowledge produced or made visible?*

This is understood to mean: Was the participants everyday/tacit knowledge made visible? Did the participants create new knowledge? Did envisioning utopian futures help with this?

These measures are based on the research described in the literature review about knowledge: Mode 2 knowledge (Gibbons, 1994), tacit/everyday knowledge vs. expert knowledge, and the role of tacit/everyday knowledge in increasing power for oppressed groups, and the role of PAR methods in creating this (Fals-Borda, 1991). And about utopian futures: from the discipline critical utopian action research (CUAR) about the importance of knowledge created from envisioning utopian futures and the role this can play in PAR methods.

> Measures:
>
> -Was the participants' everyday/tacit knowledge brought up and discussed?
>
> -What topics were brought up?

-What futures were envisaged?

-How utopian/out of the box were these?

3.   *Was a level of conscientization created?*

This is understood to mean: Did the participants reflect on their experiences and as a result become more aware of their situations and positions within society?

As discussed in the literature review, 'conscientization' is an emancipatory pedagogical process created by Paulo Freire, which has also been used as a grounding principle within Southern PAR (Freire, 1982 in Fals-Borda, 1991). Freire's concept of conscientization, as described by Donaldo Macedo, who wrote the introduction of Freire's newest edition of his well-read book 'The Pedagogy of the Oppressed' (Freire, 2000) is: the developing of a critical consciousness that gives people a 'clarity and confidence' in their interpretation of reality that enables them to 'recognize, navigate and resist the forces that subjugate them' (Macedo, 2014: 181). I chose this measure due to its strong connection and previous use within Southern PAR methods. By combining the first measure from the Northern school of PAR with this measure from the Southern school I hope to create a balance of the aims and legitimacy from both schools whilst also bringing in more of the emphasis on emancipation from within the Southern school, which is currently lacking in many PAR methods.

Measures:

-Did collective critical reflection, creativity and self-inquiry take place?

-Did the participants show awareness of the power relations that currently exist in our society and their role within these?

-Did the participants exhibit clarity and confidence in their interpretation of reality?

-Did this create action to resist oppression?

   (Freire, 1982 in Fals-Borda, 1991; Macedo, 2014)

These three measures clearly call for subjective evaluation. The measure of deliberative discussion was chosen over two other measures because it drew on both of those measures and is also linked to a method (deliberative polling) in which it has been applied and tested. In this way there is a reasonable level of confidence in this measure. The measure of new

knowledge and utopian futures combined several emphases about what a good approach and method involves within the discipline of Critical Utopian Action Research. This is therefore a hybrid measure that I created from other measures with CUAR research, but which is drawn from research where methods involving these measures are used. The measure of conscientization was also compiled from explanations of what conscientization involves and how it can be created, including from within research where this approach is applied and tested.

Even though these measures were sourced from well-respected authors and research, and have been used and tested in a number of methods, the way in which I apply and evaluate according to these measures is still a subjective judgement. Some measures, such as 'were the participants discussing different sides of an argument?' were easier to judge, whereas others, around awareness of power relations in society, for example, were more difficult. In these cases, I have aimed to create transparency and confidence in the analysis by mentioning in the analysis where there is an element of uncertainty or doubt in the analysis of parts of data.

Chapter 4: Analysis

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I take a look at the ideas that the participants came up with in the Ideal Society Workshop as well as look more in-depth at a number of these topics. *First,* I look at the different ideas and possibilities that the participants brought up and analyse these according to the measure concerning new knowledge being produced or made visible. I also considered what the workshop looked like in terms of how participants organised themselves. *Then* I focus specifically on the issues and possibilities brought up by the participants around housing and community. The choice has been made to focus on these topics based on an assessment that these topics provide a good general insight to the ways the participants interacted, what they brought up and how. Through analysing this I hope to provide a good overall idea and sense of these workshops as well as to analyse according to all three measures (new knowledge, shared understanding and conscientization) simultaneously.

Following this I analyse the participants responses to the question within the workshop 'what would an average day in your ideal society look like for you?'. I analyse the use of this question within the Ideal Society Workshop, including in comparison to the first and main question, continuing to consider the three measures discussed at the end of the previous chapter on methodology. *Finally*, I conduct a more general analysis where I compare the Ideal Society Workshop method to other methods that were discussed in Chapter 2 (Literature review) as well as how the criticisms of Action Research and Participatory Action Research relate to what I found. I also consider the measures of analysis themselves that I have used, providing a critical reflection of these.

4.2 What topics did the participants bring up? And how did they organise themselves?

INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT
-Basic income
-Basic housing for all (affordable or free/paid for by basic income)
-Workers' cooperatives
-Easier ways to find jobs
-6 hour working day (or less)
-Choosing your own work hours

HOUSING
-Less segregated housing
-Various forms of housing to meet everyone's needs and preferences
-Group housing, collectives, intentional communities
-Better services in rural areas

FOOD
-Food grown locally, sustainably and organically
-Less or no meat production
-Free food

COMMUNITY/CONNECTION
-Dealing with racism through more conversations and solutions at community level about needs, emotions and fears.
-Increased levels of connection at the community level and less loneliness.
-A kinder atmosphere within society
-Peace, no war
-Not an 'us and them' attitude but an 'all of us together' attitude

GOVERNANCE AND DEMOCRACY
-More community level organising, including services and activities to bring people together, including eating together.
-Democratic structure of local governance with different local areas being how the residents want them to be.
-Politics and decision making as part of everyday life.
-Direct democracy involving discussion with others
-Much more involvement of ordinary people in deciding how their community and society works.

EDUCATION
-Same educational opportunities for all
-More student led education, more autonomy for students to decide what they learn
-Less focus on grades, more focus on knowledge
-More focus on creativity and learning practical things, less on performance (including within higher education)
-Ongoing education with opportunities to learn throughout life
-Education in how to be a good person (focus on sharing, listening, empathy and tolerance) and how to function as an adult in society (paying rent and taxes);
-Higher wages for teachers
-No standardized testing
-Interviews to get into university courses that involve a large amount of interaction with people, e.g. teacher, psychologist, doctor
-More focus on pedagogical training and capability for university lecturers
-Easier to convert grades from countries outside of Sweden

OTHER
-No owning of land
-Cap on profits/no role for profit within society.
-Electric transportation.
-Focus on need rather than want.

As can be seen from the list above, a large number of ideas were brought up in the space of two 3-hour workshops. These ideas were spread across a large number of topics, and ranged from ideas that are commonly brought up as political aims within political parties in Sweden, such as equal educational opportunities, more services in rural areas, etc. to much more utopian ideas that are rarely discussed on a public level[3], such as a democratic structure of local governance, free food, a practical, student led focus to education, etc. Some of these topics fit within the four suggested areas that I as the facilitator suggested: Education,

---

[3] It is important to note that these workshops were held in 2017 and therefore can only reflect public discussion during that year. Particularly the topic of climate change is one that I would expect to come up more now, but which was only covered slightly via other issues in these workshop sessions.

Housing, Food, Employment and Other, whereas others did not or overlapped. This highlights that the participants did bring up ideas which incorporated and discussed their everyday knowledge and discussed them as well as created new knowledge and shared this with others. It is interesting in this way to wonder whether if when people are gathered in groups in these sorts of workshops, they tend to come up with more radical ideas than those currently receiving most attention within politics, the media, academia, etc. In order to test this, it would of course require a larger number of workshops and some sort of testing of the participants political views before and after.

This highlights that there is a need for these sorts of forum where ordinary citizens' priorities, ideas and views can be brought up and discussed and that society as a whole can benefit from this. This is a view that is at the core of Participatory Action Research and one that is echoed by Robert Jungk (Jungk, n.d. In Nielsen & Nielsen, 2006) when he comments that if ordinary people's ideas are not included in a democratic future horizon then experts and expert knowledge will dominate ideas we have of the future and determine which directions we go in. However, as Sherry Arnstein (1969) and Bill Cooke (2001) express, much current participatory work has been co-opted into being about empowerment and consultation as opposed to power sharing or consideration of knowledge on an equal basis which prevents this knowledge from coming up and being utilised.

As mentioned in the previous chapter on methodology the participants were given quite a lot of freedom to discuss the question in the way that they wished. They were given instructions to first think, draw and write by themselves and then to discuss as a group. As the facilitator I told the groups that this group discussion could be done in whatever way they wanted. I observed that in both groups a short discussion between the participants took place at the beginning where they decided that they would take it in turns to talk about what they wrote, tackling one section or topic at a time. The first group divided their thoughts up into sections themselves and when one person decided to talk about a specific topic the others looked to see what they had also written about the same topic. The second group followed the topics that were outlined at the beginning of the session as suggestions by me, the facilitator (education, food, housing, employment and other), but as mentioned above, many of the participants brought up other ideas so their discussion did not strictly follow this structure. The participants were observed to be highly self-regulating when it came to turn-taking,

ensuring that they didn't talk too much, leaving time for others, and in a few situations asking another participant who hadn't said as much what they thought. In this way it was observed that the participants took a reasonable amount of control of the workshop when allowed to, and self-organised to create a structure of turn-taking that enabled all of the topics they had thought of to be discussed and everyone to be involved. This signals that the form and structure of the workshop allows a taking of power by the participants, the practicing of which is important when it comes to conscientization, realising the value of their knowledge and ideas, and their power in society, and creating change.

4.3 A focused analysis: Housing

Basic housing for all

All of the participants in Group 1, and two of the four participants in Group 2 said that all the people in their ideal society would have basic housing, with the basic argument being that it is just what everyone should be able to have:

> 'The way it is now it's kinda a thing that some people can afford, and some people can't. And I think that doesn't make so much sense, so I think everyone should have housing.' -Person 1, Group 1.

> 'I took all of the basics like ideally everyone should have running water, hot water, cold water, electricity, windows, stuff like that. I don't think I have anything extraordinary.' -Person 2, Group 2.

> 'I'm just simply saying that basic housing for everyone, like at least basic, like without any demands, or, pre-requisites or anything.' -Person 2, Group 1.

> 'Everyone should have a nice home, like how you want to live.' -Person 1, Group 2.

This section of the discussion did not last very long for either groups, seemingly because the groups agreed on this topic, taking the right to housing as almost obvious and moving on to discuss other issues around housing (the two other people in group 2 did not disagree with affordable/free housing but either did not write/bring up anything about housing in their ideal society or did not mention it, dealing with other aspects of housing instead, like communal living, or the rural vs. urban issues).

Although both group's arguments stemmed from a simple 'it's just what people should have', a difference between Group 1 and Group 2 was that in Group 2 the accepted suggestion was that housing should be affordable and accessible to all, whereas, Group 1 had the more

radical suggestion that housing could also possibly be free for everyone (either directly free or free through provision of a basic income). In this way Group 1's future possibilities were more utopian, although Group 2's way of going back to the basics of what is seen as needed in a society, rather than focusing on the more complicated political questions of how, also highlights an element of utopian thinking which brings in shared everyday knowledge. When all the participants realised that the others also felt this way, it perhaps acted to emphasise the power of this view and therefore create confidence in their interpretation of reality, which is an important element of conscientization. Similarly, the awareness that accessible and affordable housing for everyone has not yet been achieved showed awareness by the participants of a level of inequality within society and particularly the position that those with the least power in society face in terms of housing.

The participants did not, however, talk about their own experiences of having access to housing, rather keeping it at a more general level, which could highlight that they did not see their own position in these power structures in society, especially their positions of relative power. They did engage more personally in other issues, but these can be seen as involving less stigma, e.g. how are my choices affected by a lack of rural services, rather than do I have a lack of secure housing. This calls into question whether participants would feel comfortable about revealing the difficulties they face, especially if the others in the group did not face these. This is an important part of conscientization, but when current society is so based around seeing difficulties rather than oppressions it makes it difficult in a 3 hour workshop to reverse this, but it is possible that in becoming vulnerable with the other participants about some of their experiences then this could begin to change.

Loneliness

In Group 2 three of the participants mentioned in the discussion that they believed that many people in the society they live in are lonely or disconnected from others and that this was something they wished to be better in their ideal society.

> *Person 4: I want to live with a bunch, with a lot of people, but i want to live closer, because now in this society we are very separate from one another and we're so, i could like die in my home and no one would notice and that should not be possible in a society, there should always be someone that's close to everyone, like where we take care of each other, where we take responsibility for each other.*
>
> *Person 2: You mean like both mentally and geographically, perhaps?*

Person 4- Yeah.

Person 2- Yeah.

Person 1- Maybe that was the original reason for society and then everything just developed until

Person 4- Yeah, now there's just a lot of systems, like we go to the doctor, we go to school, there's a whole like system that is taking care of us. So, we don't need to take care of each other anymore, and that creates a huge separation between us.

Person 1- I think this is very typical for the Swedish society, it's very isolated, it sounds super Swedish.

Person 4- Yeah, but it's Japanese as well, I think it's spread out quite a lot in the western world, but then it's maybe more Swedish than English, or British.

Person 2- But some would say that Swedes are quite individual or isolated from each other because we don't have to take care of each other because we have healthcare, we have a system that takes care of us so we don't have to, we don't have to provide perhaps for our parents because they've been saving up their own pension fund for an entire life, so they don't have to stay with us. So maybe, you know, the typical image that comes into my mind is perhaps an Italian family with perhaps an entire family living under the same roof, and I can see positive things about that and negative things about that, because on the one hand it does separate us from each other because we don't need each other anymore, we don't have the need for other people to take care of ourselves. But on the other hand, we don't need people to take care of us, we have a basic security that no matter, or at least, I think the idea is that if it's like that or not, that we shouldn't have people, we shouldn't need people to take care of us, there should always be a basic security in society.

Person 3- I have to say, in defence of like the current society, I think as an individual you have the option, either to be more individualistic, as in living by yourself, living off, well not off, the system, but feeling safe with the system, or, living in communes, or with a large family and the strength of the current system that it gives the individual that freedom to choose. There might be you know, norms, that there are different norms, that tell us different or how it should be, or what is normal to act, that is not a problem with the system in itself, I believe it allows us to make that choice.

Person 4- I don't agree.

*Person 2- No, me neither. Or, it sounds nice that you have the opportunity to choose but I think a lot of people in this society are alone ofrivillig (*un-voluntarily*) but they don't have the opportunity to choose to be with their family because they don't have family.*

Person 4- Yeah, I think like this system in some way makes us very lonely and separated and it's something that is built in within us and it's quite hard to, to move away from that feeling because it's so strong within us, because I'm separated from you, and I'm separated from you and it's not the easiest thing to break away from.

A future where people are not lonely was envisaged, showing the importance of the participants everyday knowledge from their own experiences in reflecting on perceived issues within today's society. The feasibility of this utopia was discussed using elements of deliberative discussion, where the participants brought in their views and experiences, and

attempted to cover the experiences of a number of different people whilst balancing the different sides of the argument. They also discussed and disagreed with each other in a civil, respectful way that resulted in a sharing of views. It is possible that this form of deliberative discussion, where what is spoken about is based on facts and balancing different issues becomes harder when the issue at hand affects themselves personally. Similar to the point above about housing, none of the participants mentioned that they feel lonely, but made it about 'people' in general. This can be a way in which people feel able to discuss issues without making themselves too vulnerable, and possibly something that needs to be built up. Developing this question, or creating a sub-question, that is more specific to what problems the participants personally face in the current society, what problems they think others face and what potential futures there are, could be also a solution to this. This could increase the amount of conscientization taking place, where participants consider not only the issues that exist in society and the structural issues behind them within Sweden's welfare state, as they did here but also how it affects them personally and what their personal role in this is. Despite these observations about how the Ideal Society Workshop could be better, it did bring out amongst participants what they think is important- so far, affordable and accessible housing for all and a lack of loneliness, which whilst discussed in society are also idealistic in various ways in terms of how much systematic change would be needed to achieve this. They also spoke about the structural issues that can create loneliness, for example, the type of welfare state in Sweden. Similarly, and although the participants did not speak personally about these issues, they did have a clear and confident interpretation of reality in which they recognised issues that exist in society, and expressed a desire for them to be different, which can be an important beginning to create action to change these.

Collectives and co-housing

As can be seen above, three of the four people in Group 2 seemed to find it difficult, however, to think of a solution to the issue of loneliness outside of the current system and one that would not compromise their independence or many of the benefits that they feel they get from how they currently live. The 4th person, however, said that in her ideal society there would be larger co-housing communities.

> *'But what I'm thinking is it should be more commune based, like people living more together and like different generations because now we are all so separated like everyone living in their own little flat and like everyone is so separated, like we don't know each other at all, especially not different generations so I really believe in living in big communes with all kinds of people and*

with different generations with rearing their children, growing food, cleaning, everything'-
Person 4, Group 2.

The participants in Group 1 had a similar idea for community and housing in their utopian
society and went one step further and spoke of local self-governance.

> *Person 1: ...and then, yeah, housing, I see, I think it should be different sorts of collectives but I*
> *think people want to live in different ways, some people want to live on their own, some people*
> *want to live with other people...*

> *Person 2: ...so more or less, I see that there's lots of different societies and local governances*
> *and someone can go like, here, oh let's see if this suits me. And if they feel like, yeah, this kinda*
> *suits me, I like the ideas here and I like how they do it, then yeah, okay, go ahead, you can have a*
> *house here, for free and be a part of this however you want to.*

> *Person 2: Errr, like local governance and that would very different depending on people and*
> *where you are and stuff like that, but there would be like a global or like a bigger cooperation*
> *and communication between these different like cells of governance.*

Whilst ideas about co-housing, free housing, intentional communities and self-governance are
not new knowledge, they are quite far outside current political discussion (even amongst
more radical parties is local self-governance outside of the box). In this way the participants
had an opportunity to explore by themselves and then discuss, hear about and consider more
utopian futures and solutions to issues in society. Although, in hindsight I would have done a
questionnaire with participants before the workshops to ascertain where their views were
politically on various issues and perhaps how used to exploring future possibilities they are,
in order to ascertain if the ideas they are coming up with are new for them. However, even
the possibility to develop already existing ideas as well as discuss them with others is
beneficial and can result in the beginning of conscientization and possibly future action. A
number of the participants mentioned afterwards that they appreciated the opportunity either
to think about these issues and go into more depth- to have time to explore and discuss them
and hear others' views. In this way their understanding of society and possibilities seemed to
be strengthened.

The format that this was conducted in also seemed to encourage a re-thinking or re-
assessment of ideas, illustrating that participants were also being balanced in their own
individual deliberation. This is reflected in Fishkin and Luskin's (2005) findings that
deliberative polling resulted in changed views. A good example of this is in Person 4's
contributions to Group 2. She had the most radical views of the group, and she influenced the

group with these, but she was also encouraged to re-think and adapt her own views when she received other's input.

It is possible, however, to see a strengthening and loosening of views occurring at the same time. In this way the participants were able to simultaneously display clarity and confidence in their interpretation of the world, as well as engage in deliberative discussion on their views and ideas, listening to others in the group with civility and respect and taking in others' factual claims and experiences and considering the merits of these. It is necessary, however, to consider the meanings of these different terms, of 'civility' and 'respect' for example, which are subjective, including culturally subjective vs. what could be considered fair and reasonable from an analysis of structural power. For example, hypothetically, if a participant from an oppressed group and without university education was to shout or leave a participatory session because the other participants were using their academic knowledge to invalidate the person's experiences, this might not be considered respectful or civil. But from an analysis of structural power relations and understanding one's place within this which is important within conscientization this would be quite understandable and would say more about the power relations in the group and the other participants behaviour or the participatory method itself rather than the behaviour of the participant that left. It is important, therefore, to consider how the Ideal Society Workshop would play out if used within groups where the relative power of the different participants is greater. This points, perhaps, to the Ideal Society Workshop being more useful within groups that have some differences but are not too different. This would require further workshops to be conducted as well as an analysis of these to ascertain if this is the case.

The levels of discussions between Group 1 and Group 2 also varied- arguably because in Group 1 the participants had more similar views that enabled them to go into greater depth and develop their ideas together. Their disagreements were on more detailed aspects of what was brought up, meaning that their discussions were also more detailed, e.g. on more specifics about how such a society that they imagined would look. For example, Group 1 all agreed on the idea of co-housing (e.g. collectives) so they spoke more about how this would work, which is considered further in the section below about community. When they disagreed, I observed that they re-evaluated their views and opinions, but that this sometimes still resulted in them having different views. This did not, however, seem to be an issue to the

participants, perhaps because they agreed on the major points, the discussion never became heated or that they were being polite to each other.

There was also a tendency in the sessions to hold different ideas quite lightly: participants brought up suggestions, and ideas, that they then played with during the sessions. There were some views and issues that they were set on, for example, that housing shortages and loneliness are issues, but beyond this many other views and suggestions for their ideal society were up for debate or discussion and crucially were deliberated within the group to find possibilities. This is shown quite well in the extract below where one of the participants talks about how a solution could be that it is possible to do things in different ways and her comments also include phrases such as 'think' and 'some sort of' which highlights the ways that the participants was not set on specific solutions and open to others' views.

> *The main idea I have is that what I think we've learnt from history so far is possibly is that there is not one way to do things right, I think there's many different way depending on the persons and everyone is individuals and everyone feels different bout how they want their life to be. So I think the clue to having people being happy is that it needs to be possible to do things in many different ways and you have them in different ways and them you can find something that suits you and that it's possible to do that ... I think it should be different sorts of collectives but I think people want to live in different ways, some people want to live on their own, some people want to live with other people. But I think still, even if people live alone there should be some sort of neighbourhood community organising in a way, I think it errrr, I think everyone belongs to an area where they live. -Person 1, Group 1.*

In this way future possibilities were kept as possibilities, therefore perhaps making it easier to have deliberative discussion around these. The participants were signalling that they were open for other views and ideas. This makes the Ideal Society Workshop different from other methods within Critical Utopian Action Research which have a final phase where future or utopian possibilities are turned into realities or action. In this way it perhaps allows these ideas to remain possibilities, which also makes it easier to have deliberative discussion around them and be willing to adapt and change one's views. As well as making it possible to retain the utopian nature of these possibilities. In this way it could be argued that this will not result in action, in the ways that for example, Future Workshops and Future Search aim to achieve. But this is also in keeping with seeing action as a process, which is a view encouraged by many in Action Research. It does not exclude action occurring in the future, but instead aims towards a conscientization and learning to think outside the box and have deliberative discussions that can lead to action later on.

4.4 A focused analysis: Community

This part of the chapter looks at what the participants said about where and how they wanted to live, something that I have loosely grouped together as 'community'. These were elements that were important to the participants as adding quality of life and contributed to having the kind of life they hoped for. In this section we move on from a basic right to housing and questions about who to live with to what the participants said about the contexts in which they want to live, and what their lives would look like in these places. I have separated this out into looking at a geographical element, where the rural vs urban question and access to services is considered, and a more human aspect of community, which looks at the connections that the participants wished to have with others who lived near them.

Geographical community: The rural vs urban question

For Group 2 an area that they disagreed on when talking about their ideal society was whether it was better to live in a rural or urban setting. Person 4 began by talking about how she felt that in cities people live too close to each other without really knowing each other and that urban life leads us to be disconnected from nature. She expressed dreams to live in the countryside with others and have a certain amount of self-sufficiency.

Two of the other members of the group, person 1 and person 2, disagreed that this would be the ideal for them, remembering childhoods spent growing up in rural areas where it was difficult to access services such as shops, healthcare and cultural activities. Person 2 also expressed that the fast-paced and 'always awake' nature of the of the city was part of the allure of the city for her.

> *'I mean, I really like the city, like, I like that it's moving and always awake so you can do stuff all the time, but perhaps that says something about my insecurities, but I feel that I want to be able to go to movies when I want to, to buy food when I want to, I don't have this idea, I don't think the idea of living in this organic community would fit me well, but then again I have never done it, so I don't know, perhaps I'm too brainwashed from today's society that I think I don't want to, when actually I'd be so much happier about it and I mean mental health and stuff would be so much better, but as of now when I think about it, it would be quiet and so much.. but that's just my personal opinion, I still think there should be opportunities, for that, of course.'-Person 2, Group2*

> *'I was living on the countryside when I was younger, when I was a kid and the reason I moved into the city is because everything is so close and I think if it was easier to live on the countryside, with busses and stores and everything that would be my ideal society. Because the healthcare and everything is so far away on the countryside.' -Person 1, Group 2*

But interestingly, although Person 2 pointed out that the city and it's amenities was what she wanted she also said that there was a possibility that living in a rural area could be better for her and that she wants the opportunities to be open for other people to do that. Person 1 in Group 2 also said that she would like to live in a rural area but that it was the lack of services that meant she chose to live in an urban area; if she could live in a rural area with good services then she would perhaps choose the countryside over the city. In their disagreement, it was observed that their participants seemed to respect each other's experiences and opinions. This was perhaps not felt to be an issue because one person's views about how they would like to live, e.g. in the city, would not be affected by the others desire to live, e.g. in the countryside. Whereas the participants did express, to a small extent, value judgements about these forms of living, mostly it was focused on what they would individually prefer based on their experiences and desires.

In this, Group 2 were not only expressing how they would like their lives to be within the current context, but also, crucially how they would like them to be if a different society existed, e.g. rural living with good access to services. The participants made visible to each other their everyday knowledge about living in different settings and imagined a future where they could have both community, services and rural living. Whilst this is not new knowledge, it is knowledge that is arguably missing from policy-making and politics currently where decisions are felt to be made in urban areas by people who live in those areas and that prioritise those areas. How to attract young people with qualifications and skills to rural areas is an important topic for many areas in Sweden and one that could benefit from exploring how young people see their ideal lives and their needs for rural living in workshops like this. One solution, suggested by some of the participants in the following section, is having rural co-housing communities where residents share childcare, growing food, etc.

Participants took a number of different issues and arguments and discussed them in a balanced manner, taking in each other's views to also make it comprehensive. The discussion focused mostly on how society is now, however, with only a small part being dedicated to how it could be. This illustrates the difficulty that is involved in thinking of future possibilities and utopias, when we are so used to the current possibilities. They also did not consider the power structures that exist and are experienced by people who live in rural vs. urban areas, also illustrating that in some way they accepted society as it is, with the power

imbalance that exists, rather than looking into it. They did perhaps do this in a more subtle way, by discussing the issues for them of living in rural or urban areas, but this does not go as far as seeing this as a power issue, highlighting perhaps that a process of conscientization can only be begun by different workshops and other methods of education, and that this is a process.

Human community: services and caring

Whereas Group 2 spoke more about whether services existed, and these aspects more as separate to themselves and as decided and created by others, Group 1 had suggestions about how communities' services such as provision of food would operate in their ideal society. Person 2 in Group 1 spoke about his ideal society having farming cooperatives that would supply the community with food, and that members of self-governing communities would contribute and have a say. This suggestion was initially made by one person but was taken on by the others in the group in a similar way to the suggestion of having self-governing communities, as discussed in the section above. The suggestion began as a food cooperative for each self-governing community but was built on by another person to include that the communities could also trade food with each other to ensure a diversity of food, have transportation using electrical trucks and that large parties could be held after harvest. The suggestion also seemed to travel with the group, into other discussions, for example about education, where ideas about the importance of growing food were brought up and linked back to the idea of a community food cooperative.

This illustrates a similarity to the thought experiments described as being part of Critical Utopian Action Research in the previous section, and the importance of these in imaging social change. In this way critical reflection took place with the clear and confident analysis by the participants that there are various things in current society that they do not feel work well. They then drew on their everyday knowledge and experiences, from having allotments, for example, and created future alternatives that are markedly different to the ones that exist now. In terms of considering the power relations that have created this current situation this was not so evident. Perhaps a focus on utopias in an imaginary way, rather than a way focused on action prevented the participants from considering the barriers in the way of realising these dreams, which would be connected to where power is in society and an assessment of their positions and how much change then can create.

Another aspect that was seen in Group 1's discussion was the way in which, alongside agreement and disagreement, and adapting one's beliefs to the other people's, there was also a form of taking different people's ideas and combining them into one group idea. The ideas were built on collectively and played with in order to see where they would go and how they would mutate and transform. In this way the group contributed ideas, attempting to build something between them that they were all happy with. This took place to a greater extent in Group 1 than in Group 2, possibly because the participants in Group 1 had more similar views or because Group 1 seemed more used to thinking about possible future societies. This illustrated a combination of deliberative discussion at the individual level and the group level which involved bringing in their own and others' knowledge, recognising this as valuable and building on this together to influence their ideas about what is possible. In this way the power of a group and the energy that can build can be seen, which is arguably very important when developing utopian ideas and adapting to and understanding each other.

Group 1 also spoke together about how these self-governing communities would include and perhaps also sometimes necessarily exclude. They agreed that in their ideal society the communities would enable individuals to listen carefully and willingly to each other so that the community could take care of and balance everyone's needs.

> *'But, I mean one value I have is that a deep want to hear and listen to people even people I disagree with, even people that are labelled as having sick beliefs, and I could be naive but I don't think people are sociopaths just because they are racists, or, I think its programming mostly, and I don't want them to just go away and not be a part, like, why, they're also human beings and it's not like 'boohoo', it's not like I want to be like it's okay to be racist but it's also that a just society takes care of everyone.' -Person 2, Group 2*

This became a debate within the group about how different people's views could be balanced and about how a community like this, that would be suitable for everyone, could work. The main focal point of this debate was racism, and how to deal with it.

> *Person 1: Yeah racism is a little bit harder, I don't know, but I think many of these problems come from people either not knowing enough or feeling insecure of what they have in their life that someone will come and take it away from them, or something like this. So I think, hopefully with better education and maybe a more secure system, I mean if you have a completely fine life where you have everything you need and it will not be taken away from you and there's an apartment free next to you, why would you say, 'no I don't want this person here'?*

> *Person 2: mmmmmm*

> *Person 3: No.*

Person 1: What would be the reason for that.

Person 2: So let's say the reason for that then, 'I don't feel safe because the person from there he went through war and he's probably traumatised', let's say and 'I, I have three children and what if he just… in the middle of night', like you know. Taking care of people who are worried and become kind of a bit, errrrr.

Person 1: Yeah, okay, but I think.

Person 2: Like without being racist even, just being afraid.

Person 1: But then I mean, maybe there's too much to ask from people but making the analysis that actually your problem is that you're afraid of certain situations that can be solved in different ways, like getting the person a psychologist, some mental health help, having someone living with them so that they're not alone, or something. Getting them to work on their trauma, maybe that would be a solution to the getting the person here with their 3 kids to feeling a bit more safe. And then also having another like, 5 neighbours that you can knock on the door and say something's happening would also make them feel more secure. So possibly I think because racism is just so stupid in itself. (Laughing)

Three interesting points can be seen in an analysis of these discussions. Firstly, it points to the participants being aware of structural issues of power that exist in society and their role within these. Their role, according to the participants, is to understand people on a deeper level of needs and fears and try and create solutions so that everyone is able to live alongside each other in their ideal society. The participants did not, however, discuss their specific role as white people, in addressing the issue of racism and saw it on a level of 'there are people who are racist, and people who face racism' rather than of racism as a power structure. They did, however, recognise their role in creating a solution to this, and had ideas about how this could be done, which is heading towards the element of creating action as part of conscientization. But it is important to consider whether action that is missing an understanding of one's own role in power relations in society can be action arising from conscientization or is instead another form of action.

It also a good illustration of the desire that the participants have to engage in deliberative discussion outside of the workshop and the importance that they see this has in an ideal society- where people can discuss and understand each other's needs and feelings and solutions can be created between groups of people.

Finally, it also shows an element of the participants everyday knowledge, for example, about how people interact, ways to find solutions in diverse groups of people and how to have

conversations with people about their fears and needs as well as that there is a need for this. Their points also illustrate that they recognise and value their own and each other's everyday knowledge. Their suggestion was that in their ideal society there would be a lot of listening and sharing of views in local areas as well as making decisions together that tried to solve these issues to meet everyone's needs. In this way they were taking control of the society they live in and saw it as their responsibility, rather than expecting politicians or experts to solve things. This shows a level of empowerment that has been seen as an aim of participatory methods. It would be interesting to take this further and see what the participants thought are the barriers to creating these conversations on a community level and what they could do to surmount these barriers.

4.5 Analysis of 'Day in the Life' question

The final part of the Ideal Society Workshop involved the participants describing what a day in their ideal society would look like for them.

One participant in Group 1 described that she would still live in a collective and would use her skills in accounting wherever she was needed within her community. She would work for 3-4 hours and then be able to focus on other activities, like a book circle or learning something new.

Many of the participants in Group 2 had a similar idea of an average day in their ideal society. This included waking up well rested; eating a long, healthy breakfast; doing yoga, meditation, dancing, kite surfing or going running; doing a job they enjoyed and found meaning in or being engaged with tasks within a community for the number of hours they wished to, and an evening spent with friends, or their community, and good food.

Another participant in Group 1 was initially stuck on an answer to the question and could only say that he wanted to do something that felt meaningful and contributed to society. He realised that he didn't actually know what his ideal day would look like, which he described as 'kinda frightening actually'. After thinking a bit more he described how having basic income would mean that he could continue working in a school which he enjoys but didn't specifically choose so would also spend time trying to figure out what he wants and what makes him happy as well as spending more time growing food.

This section of the workshop aimed to make the ideas and possibilities the participants brought up more real and for them to see how these ideas would affect their lives, which in some ways takes the imagination closer to reality. This also involved going further into creating social imagination which is an important part of Critical Utopian Action Research. In this way there was a similarity with the Future Workshop and Future Search methods where imagining the future was important but where the last phase is focused more on action or bringing the ideas more down to reality. Although in the Ideal Society Workshop this section aims to create a more concrete understanding of the same future and utopian possibilities already suggested. The participants expressed that they enjoyed this phase and there was a lot of excitement and happiness about sharing how their day would look, including joy when some of them realised similarities between their days. And when describing this part of the workshop participants said that talking about what the day would look like made the workshop more practical. They really got into imagining their day and this in itself seemed to create joy.

It is of course important generally for people to be able to spend some time thinking about what they want and need in their lives. As the participant who didn't know what he wanted to do, illustrates, however, this is generally not discussed on such a utopian or society wide level. In some ways the participants responses to this question took further possibilities they had already suggested, but in other ways brought up other things. This question could, however, be a difficult one with participants who do not have a very good situation in life at the time of the workshop- it could create a clear idea of a future and help to begin a path towards that, but it could also highlight the difficulties that the participant faces and how far away they are from having the life they want. This has the possibility to create conscientization in terms of self-inquiry, critical reflection and seeing their position in society, but it is possible that conscientization attempted too quickly could also lead to disengagement, and a feeling that everything is too much and too unattainable.

4.6 A final, wider analysis

In this final section I will consider the feedback that I received from the participants at the end of the Ideal Society Workshops in order to further evaluate the method. I will also consider the measures of analysis themselves in order to create a short evaluation of the validity of the analysis itself.

In the hope of developing the Ideal Society workshop with feedback from the participants and as an attempt at transparency and inclusion, the participants were asked at the end of the session what they thought of the workshop. In terms of points to improve on, one of them wanted more clarity around the role of the facilitator. This is something that I took on board for the second workshop where I explained what my role was. However, this issue is clearly larger than just explaining, and the role of the facilitator is also a big issue within AR and PAR and something that needs to be considered further in terms of the different outcomes within the Ideal Society Workshop that can occur with: a) a more present guiding facilitator that ensures everyone is involved or b) a silent facilitator that explains only the questions and then leaves the discussion completely to the group.

Considering the benefits of the workshop and the experiences the participants had is also very important to its use, especially in perhaps filling a gap that exists within society and participatory methods. The following are reflections from the participants about their experiences of the workshop:

- 'This was really fun'
- 'It's really nice. Everyone should have the opportunity to do this.'
- 'I love this!'
- 'Everyone should do this, think about it all'
- 'It made me really happy'
- 'I felt that the questions really evoked a drive for me to, yeah, let's talk about this, let's discuss this, I really liked the questions, they were on point, and really stimulated something in me, which was awesome. And I really like this form of hanging out, it's felt really meaningful, it's like time spent socialising is always really nice but this just felt like a nice, plus meaningful, plus wow, we did something, we envisioned something, and I would really like to do this more often.'
- 'I think that I also really liked the questions, it was very motivating, very good to get some time on these areas and start picturing it, and I liked also what would the day look like, it makes it more practical.'
- 'It challenges my mind, because I realise I'm so confined into the borders that we live in today, it's difficult to reach for the stars to really wish, we could wish anything, it's a really good exercise'
- 'It's so easy to complain, like this is negative and this is bad and then changing from that instead being totally free, it's really nice.'
- 'It's good to put words on, like, on it.'
- 'I think it was a really good format of writing, and drawing and easing up the mood, ice breakers, etc.'

This highlights a clear desire that the participants had, and possibly people in general have, to: think about and play with ideas, discuss the future, how they would like their society to be

and be challenged to 'really wish', and to talk to others about the issues that exist within society as well as being involved through the workshop with addressing these issues.

In the previous chapter covering methodology a number of measures were outlined that would be used to analyse the Ideal Society Workshop method. These included:

- A measure of shared understanding based on whether deliberative discussion meets the indicators of being: informed, balanced, conscientious, substantive and comprehensive as defined by Fishkin and Luskin (2005: 285)

- A measure of whether new knowledge was made visible, discussed and/or produced and what topics this included, what futures and how utopian these were based on AR and PAR's emphasis on everyday/tacit knowledge and Critical Action Research's focus on creating utopian future possibilities.

- A measure of conscientization based on Paulo Freire's research (1982 in Fals-Borda, 1991) comprised of considering: whether collective self-reflection, creativity and self-inquiry took place; whether the participants showed awareness of the power relations in society and their role within these; whether the participants exhibited clarity and confidence in their interpretation of reality; and whether this created action to resist oppression.

I have attempted throughout the analysis to draw on each of these measures when necessary in order to conduct an analysis from a number of perspectives that I believe together create a form of participatory method that can involve deliberative discussion, help create conscientization and reveal and create new knowledge of utopian future possibilities (and that each of these make the other one possible). As mentioned a number of times throughout the analysis, it is not possible to have an objective judgement of certain aspects of these measures, for example, 'civil and respectful', 'awareness of power relations and their role within them' and 'action'. My interpretation also might not be the same as someone else's interpretation. This of course makes this analysis problematic in one sense, because these terms, (for example, conscientization) are also subjective, and can be defined in different ways. I have attempted to make this analysis as valid as possible by choosing measures of analysis that are provided and explained by respected academic sources as well as generally accepted in their fields. I have also made analyses of the data that I feel are reasonable and made *suggestions* that the data *could* infer an element of conscientization, or new knowledge,

or deliberative discussion, rather than that they definitely do. At the same time, this problem is common in qualitative research where a small amount of data is analysed using measures that are subjective. It is not necessarily a positive thing to try and create more certainty or objectivity, as then other observations and understandings can be lost, especially in a discipline which discusses, for example, the value of different forms of knowledge.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

From analysing the data from sessions of the Ideal Society Workshop it is possible to draw a number of conclusions in relation to the three measures of: new knowledge from utopian futures, deliberative discussion and conscientization. It is also possible to draw conclusions about the Ideal Society Workshop method in comparison to the other participatory methods discussed and in response to criticism levied at Action Research, Participatory Action Research and participatory methods.

The participants came up with many ideas for their utopian futures, including some suggestions that were quite radical or 'outside of the box' and these seemed to be based on their everyday knowledge and experiences. The creation of one idea often seemed to stimulate an idea from someone else and participants also developed their ideas together. A certain amount of keeping different ideas in the air where they were kept as possibilities without specifically deciding on them was observed. The Ideal Society Workshop seemed to act as a form of thought experiment similar to that used within Critical Utopian Action Research, but a number of participants also seemed to find it difficult to break out of what currently exists to imagine what could be, or to go very far outside this. The question concerning what their ideal day would look like helped created more possibilities and brought up new ideas and allowed a development of those already brought up.

When it comes to conscientization, participants displayed a clear and confident interpretation of inequalities and issues in society. Whilst these issues are linked to power relations it was difficult to determine whether participants actually saw the power structures and their role within these. They did, however, recognise the role that they could play to change some issues, which shows a level of empowerment and taking control. They also had trouble seeing their own roles in issues when it came to talking about how some things personally affected them, for example, insecure housing and loneliness. It is possible that the stigma around these issues required too much vulnerability from the participants, but this creates a barrier to seeing their level of power within society, which is an important part of conscientization. Conscientization is of course a process, however, and often a long one, so whilst one workshop would not be able to achieve this, it can play a part. In thinking about how they want society to be in relation to the issues they currently see, the participants displayed some

taking back of power and autonomy and therefore could be seen to exhibit some level of conscientization. When it comes to the issue of action, the Ideal Society Workshop does not aim to specifically create action, and in this way does not perhaps fulfil the last element of the measure of conscientization. It is certainly less action orientated than other methods, including REFLECT, Future Workshop and Future Search. However, if action is seen as a process then action was taken because the participants grew awareness, shared and changed their views and thought in new and different ways.

When it comes to the third measure of deliberative discussion the participants could be seen to exhibit most of the component parts of this, which resulted in detailed discussions in which participants shared their opinions, adapted their views and learnt from each other. The participants were respectful and civil (conscientious), their discussions were balanced and informed through considering the knowledge (in the form of facts and everyday knowledge) that the other participants contributed, and they considered various points of view (comprehensive). Some other aspects were difficult to achieve in a small group setting, such as ensuring that all arguments or all points of view are covered, which is only possible with larger scale, longer participatory method sessions. Deliberation could be seen to clash with the other measures, for example being clear and confident in one's views (conscientization) as well as being open to having one's views challenged, but these both actually seemed to exist alongside each other, with a careful balance between them. Having a) a deliberative discussion about b) utopian future possibilities, was also a way in which two measures enabled each other, especially as it allowed an exploration of future utopias and participants were seen to play with different ideas. Two levels of deliberation were also exhibited: on the individual level and on the group level, with the first seeming to influence the depth of the second as well as enabling the participants to get used to the unusual idea of thinking about their ideal society.

The feedback from the participants about the Ideal Society Workshop paint a picture of a valuable, creative, stimulating, and motivating session which they felt they enjoyed, would like to do again and thought was valuable for themselves and others, because they were challenged, were able to talk about change and 'reach for the stars'. This also illustrates that there is a clear interest as well as personal value in these forms of participatory methods in

which regular people can deliberate together about how they want their ideal society to be with the aim that they take more responsibility for and control of society.

When compared with the other similar methods mentioned (World Cafe, Conversation cafes, Open Space, Future Workshop, Future Search and Deliberative polling) and in relation to the criticism against AR and PAR, the following assessment can be made of the Ideal Society Workshop method.

Benefits:

-Can encourage an equal view of knowledge (between expert and everyday knowledge)

-Can combine diverse views and experiences

-Aims towards a system change

-Aim of emancipation

-Is cheap to run, requires minimal planning and funding and no expert facilitators

-Involves individual deliberation

-Encourages group deliberative discussion

-An open, unstructured format allows participants to choose the focus

-The open, general question means that the event's sponsors (those who hold and plan the event) have little influence

-Focus on the future and utopias creates new ideas

-The small group allows all participants to speak and be involved

-Retains the utopian possibilities aspect rather than returning to reality

-Use of creativity

Drawbacks/Possible issues:

-Unlikely to result in bringing in all relevant facts or all sides of an argument

-Possibly works better with participants who have similar levels of power (this needs to be investigated further)

-Does not include distribution of power within the session

-General/open focus can result in breadth rather than depth

-No focus on practical action

-Reaches/includes fewer people due to the small group format.

I believe that the Ideal Society Workshop addresses many of the criticisms levied against AR and PAR which arose due to a co-optation and de-radicalization of participatory approaches, including from the Southern PAR tradition by the Northern PAR tradition. The way in which the Ideal Society Workshops addressed these includes: aiming to disrupt rather than maintain the

status quo, aiming to create social change, working towards critical consciousness and emancipation to create a redistribution of power to citizens, the method being used to create change as an ongoing process rather than as a quick fix or effectivization and, focusing on a societal rather than organisational level (and certainly not using it as a management technique).

Greenwood and Levin (2007:135) state that the solution to this co-optation and these criticisms is 'focusing on strategically opening up new ground to reassert the democratizing aspect of Action Research'. I am not, of course, suggesting that this method is *the* answer, but it shows that a participatory method with a focus on conscientization (from a Southern PAR tradition) and utopian futures (from CUAR) whilst also including deliberative discussion (from Northern PAR) is possible and useful. And furthermore, that it can play a role in a democratic and emancipatory PAR approach that would respond to the co-optation and criticisms of the PAR (and its methods) that exists today.

The applicability of the Ideal Society Workshop method is quite large due to its general and open topic. I believe that it could be used by policy makers who are interested in sharing power to find out what is important to people and how they want to live. As well as within formal educational settings to grow interest in societal issues, inequality and social change and develop student's ability to deliberate, as well as to see how society works, and that they can act to change it as well. It could also be used within organisations, action groups, movements or communities to refocus the groups visions or create energy, new ideas and strategies. The aim of the ISW method is also that it can be used in many settings that are not organisational or institutional- it could be used within a group of friends, or by residents trying to create change in their community. One area in which I believe it could be very useful and relevant to look at future utopias is in relation to the climate crisis. This is an area where conversation between citizens and imagining new ways of living is particularly needed and where I believe this workshop could play a part (it is also something that I would like to test out as an ongoing development of this method).

One of the critiques of many current PAR methods is that there is too much focus on technique rather than on the aim or approach. For this reason, I also believe that this method should be adapted based on different situations and able to develop over time. I intend to continue

developing the Ideal Society Workshop and testing it in different situations. Some of the developments that I am considering are:

- Use of more creativity/different forms of creativity (e.g. just drawing, no writing, or using large sheets of paper on the wall in a group).
- Testing it on specific topics, e.g. How would an ideal feminist society look? How would an ideal anti-racist society look? How would an ideal climate friendly society look?
- Try different lengths of the workshop, e.g. making it longer to create more depth, cover more topics and include a break/s.
- Try out ways of adding an 'action' section at the end, for example an added question, e.g. what things could change or be implemented soon in order to move towards the new society you imagined?
- Adding a question that encourages participants to consider how the current issues in society affect them personally, including their personal role in these.
- Test with more diverse groups of participants.
- Test within different settings, such as a climate justice organisation, a grassroots organisation, a school, a feminist conference, etc.

List of references

Aagaard Nielsen, K. & Svensson, L. (eds) (2006). *Action and interactive research: beyond practice and theory*. Shaker Publishing: Maastricht.

Arnstein, S. (1969) A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*. 35(4), 216-224.

Bradbury, H. (2015) (3rd edition) *The SAGE handbook of action research*. SAGE Publications.

Brown, J., Homer, K. & Isaacs, D. (2007) Chapter 12: The World Cafe. In Holman, P., Devane, T., & Cady, S. *The Change Handbook : Group Methods for Shaping the Future* (2nd ed.) (pp.179-194). Berrett-Koehler Publishers: San Francisco.

Cleaver, F. (2001) Institutions, agency and the limitations of participatory approaches to development. In Cooke, B. & Kothari, U. (Eds.) *Participation: The new tyranny?* (pp. 36-55) Zed Books: London.

Coghlan, D. (2014). Mode 1 and mode 2 knowledge production. In Coghlan, D. & Brydon-Miller, M. (Eds.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of action research* (pp. 541-542). SAGE Publications.

Cooke, M. (2000). Five Arguments for Deliberative Democracy. *Political Studies*, 48(5), 947.

Cooke, B. (2004) Rules of thumb for participatory change agents. In Hickey, S. & Mohan, G. (Eds) *Participation: from tyranny to transformation? Exploring new approaches to participation in development* (pp. 42-55). Zed Books: London.

Cornwall, A. (2004) Spaces for transformation? Reflections on issues of power and difference in participation in development. In Hickey, S. & Mohan, G. (Eds) *Participation: from tyranny to transformation? Exploring new approaches to participation in development* (pp. 75-91). Zed Books: London.

Creighton, J. L. (2005) *The public participation handbook: making better decisions through citizen involvement*. Jossey-Bass.

Fals-Borda, O. (1987) The Application of Participatory Action-Research in Latin America. *International Sociology*, 2(4), pp. 329–347.

Fals-Borda, O. (1991) Some basic ingredients. In Fals-Borda, O. & Rahman, M.A. (1991) *Action and knowledge: Breaking the monopoly with Participatory Action- Research*. The Apex Press: New York.

Fals-Borda, O. & Rahman, M.A. (1991) *Action and knowledge: Breaking the monopoly with Participatory Action- Research*. The Apex Press: New York.

Fishkin, J. S., & Luskin, R. C. (2005). Experimenting with a democratic ideal: Deliberative polling and public opinion. *Acta Politica, 40(3)*, 284-298.

Freire, P. (2000) *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Continuum.

Fung, A. & Wright, E.O. et al./oth. (2003) *Deepening Democracy: Institutional innovations in empowered participatory governance.* Verso: London.

Gibbons, M. et al/oth. (1994). *The new production of knowledge. the dynamics of science and research in contemporary societies*. Sage Publications.

Greenwood, D. J., & Levin, M. (2007) *Introduction to action research*. SAGE Publications: Thousand Oaks, CA.

Gunnarsson, E. (2006) The snake and the apple in the common paradise. In Aagaard Nielsen, K. & Svensson, L. (eds). *Action and interactive research : beyond practice and theory* (pp. 117-142). Shaker Publishing: Maastricht.

Gustavsen, B. (2001) Theory and practice: mediating discourse. In Reason, P. & Bradbury, H. *The SAGE handbook of action research* (pp. 17-26). SAGE Publications: London.

Gutmann, A. & Thompson, D. (2004) *Why Deliberative Democracy?* Princeton University Press: Princeton.

Hailey, J. (2001) Beyond the formulaic: Process and practice in South Asian NGOs. In Cooke, B. & Kothari, U. (Eds.) *Participation: The new tyranny?* (pp. 88-101) Zed Books: London.

Hammersley, M. (2000). *Taking sides in social research: Essays on partisanship and bias.* Routledge: London.

Henkel, H. & Stirrat, R. (2001) Participation a spiritual duty; Empowerment as secular subjection. In Cooke, B. & Kothari, U. (Eds) *Participation: The new tyranny?* (pp. 168-164). Zed Books: London.

Hildyard, N., Hegde, P., Wolvekamp, P. & Reddy, S. (2001) Pluralism, participation and power: Joint forest management in India. In Cooke, B. & Kothari, U. (Eds.) *Participation: The new tyranny?* (pp. 56-71) Zed Books: London.

Hiles, D. (2014). Mode 1 and mode 2 knowledge production. In Coghlan, D. & Brydon-Miller, M. (Eds.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of action research* (pp. 754-757). SAGE Publications.

Holman, P., Devane, T., & Cady, S. (2007). *The Change Handbook : Group Methods for Shaping the Future* (2nd ed.). Berrett-Koehler Publishers: San Francisco.

Macedo, D. (2014) Conscientization. In Coghlan, D. & Brydon-Miller, M. *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Action Research* (pp. 180-182) SAGE Publications: London.

McCoy, M. (2007) Chapter 29: Study circles. In Holman, P., Devane, T., & Cady, S. *The Change Handbook : Group Methods for Shaping the Future* (2nd ed.) (pp. 283-287). Berrett-Koehler Publishers: San Francisco.

Mosse, D. (2001) 'People's knowledge', participation and patronage: Operations and representations in rural development. In Cooke, B. & Kothari, U. (Eds.) *Participation: The new tyranny?* (pp. 16-35) Zed Books: London.

Nonaka, I. & Konno, N. (1998). The Concept of "Ba": Building a Foundation for Knowledge Creation. *California Management Review*, 40(3), 40.

Owen, H. (2007) Chapter 9: Open Space Technology. In Holman, P., Devane, T., & Cady, S. *The Change Handbook : Group Methods for Shaping the Future* (2nd ed.) (pp.135-147). Berrett-Koehler Publishers: San Francisco.

Pant, M. (2014). Participatory action research. In Coghlan, D. & Brydon-Miller, M. (Eds.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of action research* (pp. 583-588). SAGE Publications: Thousand Oaks, CA.

Rahman, M.A. (1991) The theoretical standpoint of PAR. In Fals-Borda, O. & Rahman, M.A. (1991) *Action and knowledge: Breaking the monopoly with Participatory Action- Research*. The Apex Press: New York.

Reason, P. & Bradbury, H. (2001) (1st edition) *The SAGE handbook of action research*. SAGE Publications: London.

Robin, V. (2007) Chapter 17: Conversation cafe. In Holman, P., Devane, T., & Cady, S. *The Change Handbook : Group Methods for Shaping the Future* (2nd ed.) (pp. 218-222). Berrett-Koehler Publishers: San Francisco.

SAGE Publishing (n.d.) 'Participatory Action Research'. *SAGE Research Methods*. Available at: http://methods.sagepub.com/methods-map/participatory-action-research

Saldana, J. (2013) (2nd edition) *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. SAGE Publications: London.

Tofteng, D. & Husted, M. (2004) Critical Utopian Action Research. In [Coghlan, D. & Brydon-Miller, M.] *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Action Research* (pp. 230-222) SAGE Publications: London.

Waddington, M. & Mohan, G. (2001) In Hickey, S. & Mohan, G. (Eds) *Participation: from tyranny to transformation? Exploring new approaches to participation in development* (pp. 219-234). Zed Books: London.

Weisbord, M. & Janoff, S. (2007). Chapter 33: Future Search: Common ground under complex conditions. In Holman, P., Devane, T., & Cady, S. *The Change Handbook : Group Methods for Shaping the Future* (2nd ed.) (pp. 316-330). Berrett-Koehler Publishers: San Francisco.