

Taurage - From Baltic forests to the greenest municipality in Lithuania?

Revealing the emergence of the local sustainability concept in a small municipality setting through a relational and integral approach

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Abstract

Active calls are made for sustainability science to step up and provide guidance to address the global challenges of climate change, land degradation, and unsustainable urbanisation. Some scientists claim that an “integral sustainability science” can provide some answers. Relationality and integral theory are combined in an experimental research design to reveal and capture the emerging concept of sustainability in the municipality of Taurage in Lithuania. A rich conceptualisation was revealed and it was found that the concept of sustainability in 2021 Taurage is very specialised and overly focused on renovation, modernisation, mobility, and energy. It is also found that the concept of sustainability in Taurage is not set in stone and is still malleable. Broadening of this concept is even desirable, indicating a possibility for the holistic understanding to emerge in the future. Finally, a number of gaps within the current concept are identified that the municipality should address immediately.

Keywords: appreciative inquiry, carbon neutrality, governance, knowledge integration, liberating structures, mixed-method approach

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When we are not in conversation, we convince ourselves that the assumptions we have about the world are actual facts. I write this sentence here in black on white to remind myself and whoever is going to encounter this piece of work to stay in conversations, because conversations matter, words matter and the way we ask questions shapes what we look for and therefore what we find.

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1 Introduction

Urban expansion and infrastructural developments, together with high consumption lifestyles in the global north, are among the main drivers of global land degradation (IPBES, 2018). While city territories take up only 2% of total land, they are responsible for most of the greenhouse gas emissions, pollution, and waste associated with economic growth and consumption that urban areas rely on (UN, 2016). The “incontrovertible evidence” (National Research Council, 1979, p.vii) is piling up (IPBES, 2018; IPCC, 2018), year by year, pointing out that human “use of fossil fuels and exploitation of the land” (National Research Council, 1979, p.vii) is changing the fundamental planetary processes.

The urbanisation trend has received a lot of scrutiny through the past century. In the words of Gordon Childe (1950) urbanisation could be described as a “progressive change in the economic structure and social organisation of communities” (p.3), which tends to create and concentrate the “social surplus” (p.8) in certain geographic locations. This concentration is thought to enable specialisation, resource availability and management, and creative expression that then manifests itself in the form of a city (Childe, 1950, pp.11-16). The provided description of urbanisation could also be understood as the visible materialisation of the economic and social relations throughout the history.

As climate change accelerates the conversation on what to do next is intensifying (European Commission, 2019; UN, 2015). In the first attempts to define the vision of sustainability, it was acknowledged that sustainable development is not a “state of harmony” (UN, 1987, pp.15, chapter I, section 3). According to the United Nations (UN) (1987), sustainable development is a process that rests on the political will: “a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development, and institutional change are made consistent with future as well as present needs” (p.15, chapter I, section 3).

Cities are often framed as being “both the source of and solution to” (EU, 2020, p.14) challenges of the 21st century. On the one hand, there is all the science and data that gives grim predictions highlighting the enormous environmental footprint of cities. On the other hand, the world is full of proposals on how cities can mitigate and adapt to climate change. Multiple city-led initiatives (Reckien, et al., 2019) are spreading the idea that “ending climate change begins in the city” (C40, 2012). This rhetoric is spreading far and wide.

This global picture represents only one of many stories of our time. In 2019 the European Union (EU) announced a commitment to be at the forefront of the green transition. The European Green Deal (2019) aims to: “transform the EU into a fair and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy where there are no net emissions of greenhouse gases in 2050 and where economic growth is decoupled from resource use” (p.2). The EU is trying to facilitate sustainable urban development through the creation of visions and strategies, like: The Urban Agenda (EU Ministers, 2016), The Green Deal (European Commission, 2019), and The New European Bauhaus initiative (European Commission, 2020).

It is still largely up to each member state, city, and town to navigate the multiple, diverse, nuanced, and abstract visions for sustainability, and figure out what is their role and how they can contribute. The fact that a city is always in the making has its own complexity. The city can grow and shrink in terms of population, territory, and based on reclassification (UN, 2019). Furthermore, cities currently cannot rely on scientific research to know what works and what does not in relation to human induced climate change mitigation and adaptation (CCMA) planning, as such debate is only emerging within the scientific community (Reckien, et al., 2019). Therefore, in the 21st century policymaking has to be understood as a polycentric and relational process (Peck & Theodore, 2015). This requires looking closer at “the process of policy change itself” and considering it as “socially, geographically and historically embedded” (Peck & Theodore, 2015, p. 20).

All of this makes it extremely difficult to suggest a universal approach to CCMA that would suit every place (Shrivastava et al., 2020), therefore, in sustainability discussions, “place matters” (Wilbanks, 2015). While more and more policies, visions, and strategies to address climate change and institutionalise sustainability are emerging (Grafakos, et al., 2020), research that looks at these processes from relational and integral perspectives is still missing. Through this work I aim to reveal and capture the emerging concept of sustainability in a small municipality of Taurage within a Lithuanian context. Relational thinking and integral theory will be used to capture this emerging concept of sustainability and enable a more holistic view of how and why this concept is emerging in this context in this particular way. Next, I will position myself within the sustainability science field and introduce the relationality and integral theory which will guide the objectives of this thesis and help answer research questions.

2 Theoretical entry point, research objectives and questions

In order to pursue the normative agenda to guide nature-society towards “more sustainable trajectories” (Kates, et al., 2001, p.641) sustainability science has to continue to evolve as it has been doing for the past 30 years (Clark & Dickson, 2003; Clark & Harley, 2020; Jerneck, et al., 2011; Spangenberg, 2011; West et al., 2020). Relationality and integral theory are chosen to guide this research. In essence relationality can be understood as an attempt to move humanity’s collective thinking away from dichotomies and dualisms, while integral theory aims to advocate for integration of different ways of knowing. Both of these theoretical positions will be explained in subsequent sections. The **first objective** of this research is to increase the understanding of the concept of sustainability in Lithuania from the institutional perspective of the municipality of Taurage. In order to do this in a holistic way the **second objective** to develop experimental research design, based on relationality and integral theory, is essential. The second objective is important because “relational approaches are marginalized within sustainability scholarship” (Walsh et al., 2020, p.7) and currently there is no clear framework on how to use these perspectives in sustainability research.

2.1 Ontological position - Relationality

One way to describe relationality in scientific terms is naming it as postdualist (Escobar, 2018). Arturo Escobar (2018) also says that relationality can be witnessed “in the Earth itself, in the endless and ceaselessly changing weave of life on which all life depends” (p.xi). Walsh et al., (2020) state that there are three “fundamental aspects of relationality” (p.2): being (ontology), thinking (epistemology), and acting (ethics). These three aspects should always be considered together to embrace relationality (Walsh et al., 2020). This is why in this section I explicitly state my ontological and epistemological position while ethics aspects will be presented in the research design section. Arturo Escobar (2018) describes a relational understanding of the world as pluriversal, where multiple worlds exist at the same time and even in the same space. He aims to lift the illusion of pervasive binarisms and dualisms that are, often, taken for granted and are left unquestioned in the Euro-American academic scholarship and hinders the ability to study relations by presenting ideas, concepts, and actors as separate interacting objects that can be understood on their own (Escobar, 2018).

This dualist perception of reality in science is perpetuated through the research designs and methods scientists choose. Arturo Escobar (2018) uses a quote which says that “in designing tools we are designing ways of being” (p.110). Taking relationality seriously in this research will naturally bring my focus to research design more often and this will ensure that research is done with extra

responsibility and attention. Understanding and accepting the reality that chosen methods and theoretical assumptions define how researchers show up in the research process will help to stay reflexive about the experimental nature of this design and stay open throughout the process to ensure exploration. Embracing the view that “reality is not a fixed object that can be known once [and] for all” (Given, 2008, p.580) allows for flexibility, deep listening and keeps the focus on the continuously unfolding research process.

2.2 Epistemological position – Integral theory

It is common to understand the sustainability science pursuit as an integrative research approach (Clark & Dickson, 2003). Ever since sustainability science emerged it was emphasised that it has to deal with high uncertainties and decision stakes, acknowledging that facts and values can no longer be “realistically separated” (Funtowicz & Ravetz, 1993, p.751). Even though values, motivations and ability to transcend our own mental models, or paradigms (Meadows, 2008), about the world is considered as “the most powerful tool for transformative change” (Ives et al., 2020, p.212), unfortunately researchers “seem to have neglected the importance of individual inner lives, including their own” (Ives et al., 2020, p.209), where this transformative power rests. Integral theory sets the foundation to capture not only systemic understandings of processes and structures but also carves out a space for individual and collective inner worlds to be integrated in building the understanding of the studied phenomenon.

According to integral theory, in order to understand any social phenomenon, it is essential to consider 4 fundamental perspectives: interior, exterior, individual, and collective (Esbjörn-Hargens, 2009; Rentschler, 2006; Wilber, 2005). This combination of 4 fundamental dimensions informs the data to be collected and the choice of methods to enable the collection of this data. Integral theory is a metatheory (Rentschler, 2006) which does not prioritise any of these different dimensions. It suggests that by looking through all 4 lenses and exploring their relational nature, a phenomenon can be observed and understood in an integral way (Wilber, 2005).

Developing an integral understanding of sustainability is thought to be needed to find ways to mitigate and adapt to climate change (O’Brien & Hochachka, 2010) – the main goal of all sustainability pursuits. Shrivastava et al., (2020) write that current “sustainability science is not able to contribute sufficiently to the global transition to sustainability” (p.329) and call for “integral sustainability science” (p.333) that rebalances the single-minded focus on systems perspective (exterior-collective) to include the other three lenses. Figure 1 presents an overview of the integral sustainability science.

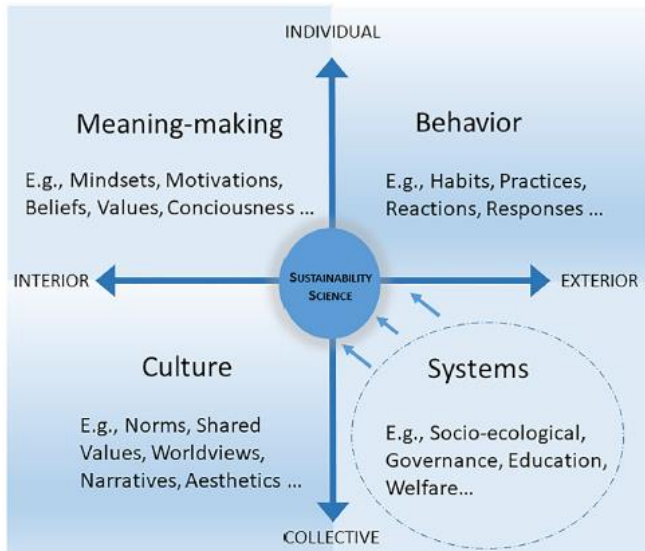


Figure 1. “Towards integral sustainability science”. This figure presents a call for integral sustainability science and a perspective that sustainability science has focused too much on systems perspective, neglecting the other dimensions that are considered equally important in understanding any social phenomenon. It is argued that this big focus on systems and neglecting the other perspectives has compromised the extent sustainability science could have had in addressing sustainability challenges (Shrivastava et al., 2020, p. 333).

2.3 Research objectives and questions

In order to achieve the two research objectives mentioned at the beginning of this section two research questions are asked. The **Main Research Question (MRQ)**: How and why is the concept of sustainability emerging in Taurage? – enables the fulfilment of the **first objective** which aims to increase the understanding of the emerging concept of sustainability in Lithuania from the institutional perspective of the municipality of Taurage. The **second objective** to develop experimental research design that is based on relationality and integral theory will be achieved through the research process preparation and development of research design based on the described theoretical entry point. With this positioning within the sustainability science field made explicit, I can introduce the context that this exploration will unfold in (Section: 3) and lay out the research design (Section: 4). This will be followed by results (Section: 5), discussion (Section: 6), and reflection (Section: 7), wrapping up with concluding remarks (Section: 8).

3 Taurage – From Baltic forests to the greenest municipality in Lithuania?

This section gives succinct glimpse into the deep historical change process in which the municipality of Taurage is the focus place. This is presented in order to make the contextual knowledge available to the reader, so the results presented later are understood as a moment in a continuously unfolding emergence. The following subsections will touch on many historical processes from which the sustainability concept in Taurage is emerging.

3.1 The emergence of the town of Taurage

One of the stories told by locals, historians, and linguists about the name of the town is related to an extinct ancestor of the domesticated cattle - Aurochs, or in Lithuanian '*Taurus*'. It is thought that these majestic animals were roaming along the meandering river (Kiniulis, 2020; Vanagas, 2004) next to which Baltic people lived and gradually settled (Gimbutas, 1963). Lithuanian language is "the most archaic of all living Indo-European languages" (Gimbutas, 1963, p.37), therefore every word holds indigenous wisdom. According to Marija Gimbutas (1963), for many ages Baltic people lived in a relational way with nature, "completely absorbed (...) by the life-bringing natural forces" and "the rotation of the year's seasons" (p.14). According to Dyšienė (2006), once the Lithuanian nation started to take shape and developed into the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (1253-1795), its rulers already tried to protect sacred forests and wildlife by including such concerns within the texts of politically important treaties. Baltic paganism persisted into the 16th century (Čičiūnas, 2010), when the unfolding transformation of worldviews and landscapes accelerated. According to the sources used by Kavaliauskas (1994) prior to the 1557 land management reform the territory of Lithuania was dominated by forests, rivers, lakes, and bogs (80%) and the rest of the land (20%) was actively used by humans for settlement and food. The reform resulted in the formation of long one street villages that started to dominate the landscape (Kavaliauskas, 1994), while farmsteads continued to be sources of cultural inspiration (Figure 2). The town of Taurage was already on the Carta marina map in 1539, which was the first map showing place names of Nordic countries (Kiniulis, 2020).



Figure 2. A painting by Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis titled "Fairy Tale of Kings" created in 1909. The painting depicts two kings. One of them is holding a small rural homestead in Lithuania which is the only bright source of light in the painting. Many researchers and artists refer to this painting as one of many examples in Lithuanian culture of exaltation of Lithuanian spiritual heritage that rises from the rural, folk culture and inhabitants (Mykolaitytė, 2020).

3.2 Urbanisation under the centuries of Russian occupation

The region of Taurage and the country of Lithuania lived through a 123-year occupation by the Russian Empire (1795-1918), then was a battleground for the two World Wars and went under the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (SSR) influence (1939-1990). The Russian Empire ruled through forced labour and cultural suppression, during which the town experienced 4 major fires, from which the one in 1836 destroyed 75% of the town (Čižiūnas, 2010). After the fire, the town grew even bigger than before, embracing industrialisation. Taurage town was burnt again to the ground during the 1st World War (WW1), while forest cover reached its ever-lowest 19% (Kavaliauskas, 1994). In the brief interwar Lithuanian independence period (1918–1940) the regeneration focus was not only on the towns and villages but forests and nature as well. There were yearly tree planting days organised all over the country (VLE, 2021). During this period Taurage became one of the fastest growing towns, but during the 2nd World War (WW2) it was destroyed again (Čižiūnas, 2010). During the war period many people fled the region, many of the educated and wealthy inhabitants were deported by SSR, while Germans killed thousands (Kiniulis, 2020). The remaining inhabitants lived mainly in slums or were trying to recover from the destruction of wars. Two photographs from the period are presented in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Photographs showing the a) town destroyed by war in 1941 and b) slums that developed in the interwar period as the consequence of the WW1. Photo a) retrieved from a Lithuanian public forum called miestai.net and photo b) retrieved from the website of the Architecture and Urbanism Research Centre at the Institute of Architecture and Construction of Kaunas University of Technology article about a cheap apartment colony project in Taurage that was never implemented.

After the global turmoil of the world wars, SSR exploited the destroyed town as one of the sites for its 'city of socialist man' (French, 1995) experiments. According to French (1995) this period produced the urbanisation of the largest scale throughout the SSR. That was also the case for Taurage, as visible in Figure 4. The rise of population in the town throughout the years of SSR occupation is clearly visible and stops in the year 1989. While forcing the region into collectivization, urbanisation, and industrialisation the principles of concentration, specialisation, and intensification were followed (French, 1995; Kavaliauskas, 1994). The town centre was separated from the residence and employment areas, and by trying to handle the widespread housing crisis the 'Khrushchev period' multi-storey housing blocks were massively built, and the aesthetics of the town changed dramatically as presented by Figure 5. The goal of these developments was to create the industrialised socialist society, where the family unit is taken apart and communal living is enforced (French, 1995; Čižiūnas, 2010; Thomas, 1978).

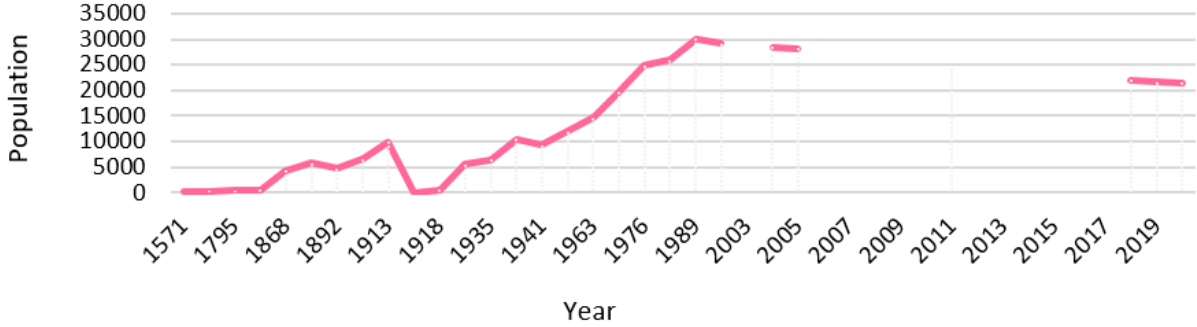


Figure 4. Population changes through time in Taurage town.



Figure 5. Buildings constructed by SSR after the WW2. All images retrieved from a Lithuanian public forum called miestai.net

3.3 Environmental freedom movement and restoration of independence

Jancar-Webster (1993) describes the ecologically bad living conditions that SSR created, the Chernobyl disaster in 1986 and attempted cover up, and persisting pollution problems were all the consequences of SSR single minded focus on “maintaining economic momentum” (p.204). For the purposes of agricultural productivity an unprecedented draining of wetlands took place (Kelmelytė & Taparauskienė, 2011) and the overall ecological conditions were increasingly worsening (Dyšienė, 2006), negatively affecting the economy itself (Kavaliauskas, 1994). Emerging environmental protests were also a form of protests against the totalitarian regime that in the end “played a decisive role in bringing” it down (Jancar-Webster, 1993, p.199). Even under occupation, Lithuanians managed to develop and in 1959 got approved the first Nature Conservation Act not only in Lithuania but the whole SSR (Dyšienė, 2006). According to Kavaliauskas (1994), Lithuania also was one of the first European countries to develop and, in 1984, approve an Integrated Nature Protection Scheme.

Interestingly, some argue that the concept of ‘Lithuanianhood’ that inspired environmental freedom movements rose from extensive work of the Prussian-Lithuanian humanist and member of the Lithuanian Hinduism movement Wilhelm Storost – Vydūnas (1868-1953) and the ground-breaking work by Marija Gimbutas (1921-1994) on the proto-Balts and their mythology (Rudling, 2017). According to Rudling (2017), SSR itself played an instrumental role in formulating the concept of ‘Lithuanianhood’ by encouraging the identification with Lithuania’s medieval past and atheistic propaganda against the Christian church. These developments inspired a number of ethnographer groups like ‘Vilniaus kraštotyrininkų ramuva’ established in 1969, that later were closed but continued to spread ‘under the radar’ of SSR (Rudling, 2017). It surfaced again in 1980’s after a number of pollution incidents, debates on atomic electricity plant expansion, and scientific research concerned with health of the environment (Raudonytė, 2011). Ethnography, environmental and heritage protection merged with political freedom ideas that led to large scale peaceful demonstrations, like the Baltic way (Figure 6) and culminated in the restoration of Lithuanian independence in 1990-1991.



Figure 6. The photograph shows people gathering up for what is known as the Baltic Way or the Baltic Chain of Freedom. This was a peaceful political demonstration in 1989 August during which Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians joined their hands and formed a 600km long human chain. It is estimated that there were approximately two million people (Eglitis & Ardava, 2012).

3.4 The pursuit for the title of the greenest municipality in Lithuania

After the restoration of independence, a chaotic '180 degree' turn took place in all aspects of life. Spontaneous and uncoordinated land privatisation, the rush towards free market economy and capitalism took over everyone's minds, stopping the artificially SSR imposed urban growth in Taurage (Kiniulis, 2020) and transformed into more intensified urban sprawl through single-family houses (Cirtautas, 2013). Using Cirtautas (2013) categorisation, Taurage can be described as experiencing a pattern of "urban erosion with suburban sprawl" (p.76) where the urban fabric keeps expanding but the overall population is declining. Figure 7 shows the dominant expansion of the town and formation of urban sprawl. In 1993 the Statute of Territorial Planning was adopted which institutionalised the main principle of sustainable development (Kavaliauskas, 1994). In 1998 the Lithuanian Environmental Ministry was established and the first Comprehensive Plan of the Territory of the Republic of Lithuania (CPTL) 2002-2020 was prepared (Ministry of Environment, 2002). Lithuania joined the EU in 2004 and since then the European values and political agendas started merging with local governance, through projects and funding.



Figure 7. Urban sprawl in Taurage in 2006. Image retrieved from a Lithuanian public forum called miestai.net

In 2015 the political group governing the municipality changed. In 2017 the new Mayor declared that Taurage municipality is the first that decided to pursue a green, ecological, and nature-friendly path in Lithuania (Paulikaitė, 2017; Tauragės kurjeris, 2017). In 2019 the same political group won the election and continues their pursuit, now stating that they already can be considered the greenest municipality in Lithuania (ESO, 2019; Satkūnaitė, 2020; TheMayor.eu, 2020). The new CPTL 2020-2030 is in its final stages now and territorial development vision till 2050 has been approved, further

reinforcing the pursuit of sustainable development (Ministry of Environment, 2019). The Taurage municipality council recently approved a new Strategic development plan (SDP) of Tauragė district municipality for 2021-2030, prioritising becoming the greenest municipality in Lithuania (TRS, 2021).

This research will look closer at the SDP and integrate insights from this systemic document with other types of knowledge. Before proceeding to research design, it is important to not take for granted the assumptions (Creswell, 2013) that were made while choosing to focus on Taurage municipality. First, based on my previous knowledge about the town and observed recent processes, I assumed that the 2015 election played a significant role in the current understanding of sustainability concept in the municipality. Second, I assumed there is a certain particularity to the concept of sustainability that is rising from the specific environmental, social, and economic history and situation of the town. Third, I assume this case to be of national importance at least, therefore, worth studying. The municipality received national recognition for good governance (TRS, 2020), sustainable mobility efforts, and green ambitions (LSA, 2020). As a consequence, it has the agency to shape how other municipalities will approach sustainability and influence the overarching national and EU processes and structures.

4 Research design

In this section I present the methodological decisions made to create an experimental research design that is based on relationality and integral theory. Research design covers data collection and analysis. The qualitative and quantitative data was collected from secondary and primary sources. Data was analysed through a four-step data integration process that emerged continuously in an iterative manner throughout the whole research period.

4.1 Data collection

The starting point here are the 4 fundamental perspectives of the Integral theory: interior, exterior, individual, and collective (Esbjörn-Hargens, 2009; Rentschler, 2006; Wilber, 2005). In order to capture these perspectives a mixed-method approach was considered necessary as mixing, combining, and linking qualitative and quantitative data “provide[s] a more complete understanding of the research problem than either approach alone” (Given, 2008, p.527). In order to ensure this mixing, combination, and linking of secondary and primary data was deemed necessary because of the limited time resources available for this research.

Two **secondary data** sources provided the basis for quantitative insights: (1) Strategic development plan (SDP) of Tauragė district municipality for 2021-2030, more precisely its Section IV that describes the vision and lists 3 priorities, 7 goals, 26 tasks, and 160 measures (TRS, 2021); (2) Works listed as 'planned' or under the category of 'ecology' on municipal website (WEB): <https://darbai.taurage.lt/>. The **primary data** provided the foundation for qualitative insights through three methods: (1) Repeated Focus Group (FG); (2) Semi-structured interviews (IN); (3) Observation (OB).

In order to operationalise the MRQ, a total of **seven Activated Research Questions (7-ARQ)** are raised. These questions inform the primary data collection process and analysis of the whole data set. The 7-ARQ's are formulated where 'it' refers to the concept of sustainability and the process of shaping this concept: (1) WHO is shaping it? (2) WHY is it pursued? (3) WHAT does it mean? (4) WHICH choices shape what it is? (5) WHERE is / might it materialise? (6) WHEN is it thought to materialise? (7) HOW is it emerging? Each of these questions holds within an underlying theme of interest: (1) Agency; (2) Intentionality; (3) Meaning; (4) Priorities; (5) Spatiality; (6) Temporality; (7) Processes. The visual overview of Research design is presented in Figure 8.

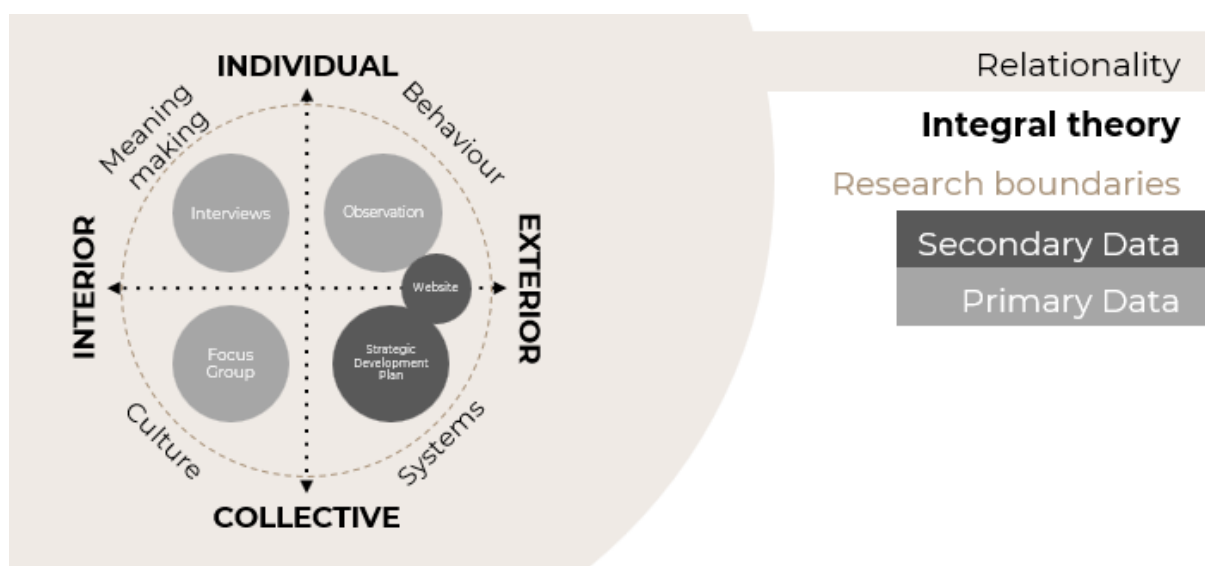


Figure 8. Research design consists of theoretical, methodological and analytical approach. Two theoretical perspectives are chosen to guide this research. While relationality reflects the fundamental assumptions about the nature of reality, integral theory is more instrumental and informs the combination of methods to be chosen and data required for integral view. Source: own creation.

4.1.1 Primary data collection

To collect primary data for this research and ensure sufficient representation of all Integral theory perspectives a combination of three methods was chosen. The **Focus Group** method was chosen to see how the concept is understood from within the institution of municipality and its employees

(Interior-Collective). **Interviews** were conducted to better understand the motivations, beliefs, and values that exist within the municipality (Interior-Individual). **Observation** was chosen to see the decision-making process in a real-world setting and understand how the governance process might influence the emerging concept. Further sub-sections describe each method in more detail.

Primary data collection involved 'direct contact' with people, therefore ethical considerations were of particular importance. The first of these was related to the form of interaction with research participants. Taurage municipality embraced virtual communication prior to conducting this research as a measure to address the global Covid-19 pandemic. To ensure the safety of participants and myself all interactions were adapted to be accomplished online. This was not only safer, but also preferred by the municipality. The second major methodological decision related to primary data collection was the manner in which, I as a researcher, will show up in these interactions. Exploratory research aims to "maximize discovery" (Given, 2008, p.327) and the two approaches described further will allow to stay open-minded in the process.

William R. Torbert (1978) argued that "human rationality is limited to linear, dichotomous logic, not by nature, but rather because we do not educate our attention" (p.112). He laid out a Liberating structure approach that emphasised the importance of structures through which humans interact. According to this view not all power corrupts and not all structure constraints, making the purpose of chosen methods to put in place a structure that frees the participants (Singhal et al., 2020) during focus group and interviews. Therefore, interactions and questions asked are carefully crafted to stimulate the curiosity of participants and prevent dead ends or getting stuck and overwhelmed by the broadness and challenges of the sustainability topic.

Embracing the normative agenda of sustainability science requires looking not only at the challenges and problems but also finding the strengths from which communities can develop responses to climate change. The Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach helps to craft questions that help to reveal strengths and positive potentials within the studied phenomenon. AI assumes that "human systems grow in the direction of what they persistently ask questions about" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001, p.3) and places important agency to the research questions themselves and their formulation. Because sustainability science is criticised for not living up to normative agenda of guiding human-nature towards sustainability (Shrivastava et al., 2020, p.329), there is an urgent need to embrace the "co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001, p.3). Further I present each primary data collection method in more detail.

Method 1 - Repeated Focus Group

The goal of this method was to provide time and space for participants to engage in a conversation about the concept of sustainability. A focus group approach is thought to be well suited for understanding previously unexplored topics (Given, 2008). Online conversations were done through the use of Zoom and Miro virtual collaboration platforms. Zoom was used for video and audio transmission and Miro, was used to collaboratively record data of the conversations. In total there were 5 focus group sessions, from which the first and last were to provide ‘entrance to’ and ‘exit from’ the research process, during which no data was collected. The 3 sessions in between were designed in an iterative way, each session informing the following one. Overview of the data collection sessions is summarised in Table 1. For a more detailed description of each data collection session please refer to Appendix 1.

Table 1. This table gives an overview of focus group data collection sessions.

	<i>Reference code</i>	<i>ARQ's addressed</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Date</i>
<i>Focus Group Session 1</i>	FGS-1	(1) WHO; (2) WHY; (7) HOW	6	2021-02-12
<i>Focus Group Session 1</i>	FGS-2	(3) WHAT; (4) WHICH; (7) HOW	5	2021-03-02
<i>Focus Group Session 1</i>	FGS-3	(5) WHERE; (6) WHEN; (7) HOW	5	2021-03-16

Each session was designed as a 3-hour experience adapting the liberating structure ‘1-2-4-All’ (Liberating Structures, n.d.) according to the number of participants. This liberating structure ensures there is time and space provided for individual contemplation, dialogue, or a small group and the whole group interaction and processing of the questions and information unfolding through conversation. Six municipality employees and the internal contact person, assigned by the Mayor, expressed interest in these sessions. While the contact person was looking for participants on my behalf I requested for diversity among the participants. This was done to ensure gender balance, representation of various departments, and positions within departments. I took the role of the facilitator, which meant providing structure, raising questions, asking for clarifications, and writing things down on the Miro platform during the intensified periods of the whole group discussions. All sessions were conducted in Lithuanian. Overview of the participants and their presence through the process is summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. This table gives an overview of focus group participants and their presence during the sessions.

	<i>Reference code</i>	<i>Department in the municipality</i>	<i>Sessions attended</i>		
<i>Participant 1</i>	FGP-1	Culture	S-1	S-2	S-3
<i>Participant 2</i>	FGP-2	Architecture and Geodesy	S-1	S-2	S-3
<i>Participant 3</i>	FGP-3	Construction	S-1	S-2	S-3
<i>Participant 4</i>	FGP-4	Social support	S-1	S-2	S-3 (half)
<i>Participant 5</i>	FGP-5	Development, Investment and Asset management	S-1	-	S-3
<i>Participant 6</i>	FGP-6	Architecture and Geodesy	-	S-2	-
<i>Participant 7</i>	FGP-7	Finance	S-1	-	-

Method 2 - Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interview method is chosen in order to ask a number of “predetermined but open-ended questions” (Given, 2008, p.810) that will help understand the concept of sustainability from the individual perspectives of the Taurage town council members. The current council has 25 members from 5 different political organisations. Targeted sampling was done based on council meeting observations and spotting people who actively bring up the topics of ‘sustainability’ and ‘climate change’. Next to this criterion, the second goal was to interview at least 1 person from each political party targeting the head of the political group or their alternate. In total 7 invitations for interviews were sent out and 4 interviews were conducted. Interviews were conducted using Zoom and they were audio recorded with the permission of the interviewees. Audio recordings were then fully transcribed to ease the analysis. Each interview was conducted in 3 steps, first asking short definition and association questions, then a series of questions to reveal personal connection and engagement with the topic, and finally, wrap up questions related to future perspectives. All interviews were conducted in Lithuanian language. The overview of the interviews is presented in Table 3. Interview guide with the full list of questions can be found in Appendix 2.

Table 3. This table gives an overview of interviews conducted. Interviewee 2 is marked in **bold** as this was the only council member who raised the topic of climate change during one of the council meetings.

	<i>Reference code</i>	<i>Political group</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Length</i>
<i>Interviewee 1</i>	IN-1	The Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats	2021-02-11	35 min
<i>Interviewee 2</i>	IN-2	The Liberal Movement of the Republic of Lithuania	2021-03-04	50 min
<i>Interviewee 3</i>	IN-3	The Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union	2021-03-08	25 min
<i>Interviewee 4</i>	IN-4	The Social Democratic Party of Lithuania	2021-03-18	35 min

Method 3 – Observation

Observation method was chosen in order to build understanding of the behavioural and cultural aspects of municipal governance. The municipality council is elected democratically, therefore assumption can be made that the views expressed during the council meetings partially reflect the views and culture of the society that elected these members. Observation was accomplished virtually as all three meetings took place online and were livestreamed by the municipality. Extensive notes were taken during these observations that were guided by the activated research questions that will be presented in the next section. The overview of the observed council meetings is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. This table gives an overview of the observed council meetings.

	<i>Reference code</i>	<i>Members present</i>	<i>Points on agenda</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Length</i>
<i>Council Meeting 1</i>	OBCM-1	23 out of 25	34	2021-01-27	9,5 hours
<i>Council Meeting 2</i>	OBCM-2	24 out of 25	33	2021-02-17	5 hours
<i>Council Meeting 3</i>	OBCM-3	24 out of 25	48	2021-03-17	4,5 hours

4.2 Data analysis

In this section I give an overview of the ways in which this diverse set of data was analysed to reveal the integral understanding of the emerging concept of sustainability. According to Yin (2018), in order to deal with such a variety of data, it is essential to “play” (p.215) with it. A common approach to analysis is chosen here, which is based on layering the information (Creswell, 2013). The MRG and 7-ARQ’s played a significant role in this analysis which can be described as consisting of four main steps: (1) analysis within a data source; (2) analysis within each of the 7-ARQ’s across the whole data set; (3) analysis across the 7-ARQ’s through MRQ; (4) identifying concept strengths and gaps. A visual overview of the data collection and analysis is presented in Figure 9. In between these four steps a number of techniques are used to reveal insights. Further I explain the four analysis steps and related analysis techniques.

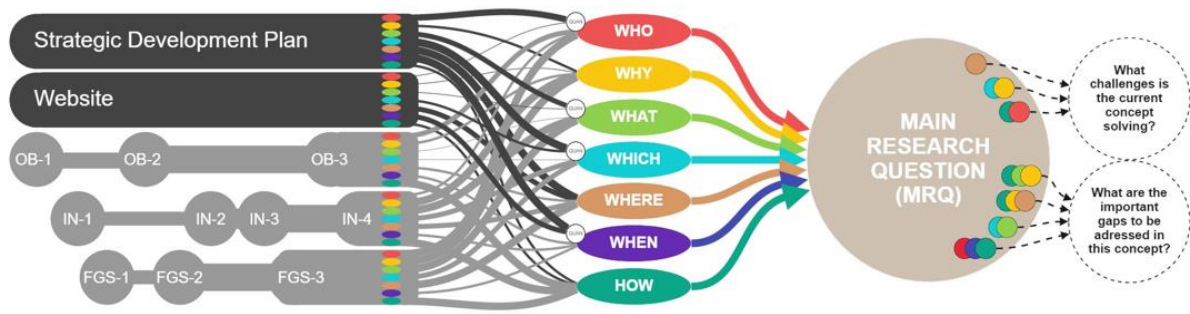


Figure 9. The figure visualises the four analysis steps and shows the data integration process. Reading image from left to right starts with (1) data collection stage where secondary (dark grey) and primary (lighter grey) data is collected and analysed along the data collection process. Once all data is collected it is analysed within each data source through the 7-ARQ's. The next step is to (2) analyse all collected data through the 7-ARQ's to integrate different data sources. The final data integration step is to (3) integrate all 7-ARQ's by answering the MRQ. Once the integration is complete, the fourth step to (4) identify strengths and gaps within the revealed conceptualisation of sustainability. Source: own creation.

4.2.1 The four analysis steps

The further described steps are focused on data integration. This process started with the collection of data. Data was being analysed while it was collected. This was done within each data source only until the whole primary data collection process was complete. Once all data was collected each data source was analysed individually using the 7-ARQ's to formulate main insights from each data source (Step:1). Next, the whole data set and insights were again analysed through the 7-ARQ's now collectively to uncover relations and patterns across the whole data set (Step:2). Once these patterns and relations became visible the last integration took place: answering the main research question (Step:3). This helped to see the overview of the current sustainability concept in Taurage. The final step was to look at everything that was revealed and identify the strengths and gaps within the current conceptualisation of sustainability (Step:4). In the next section I explain a number of techniques that were used to analyse data.

4.2.2 Analysis techniques

The techniques used for analysis involved **thematization** and **visualisation**, somatic, ethical, and affective (**SEA**) ways of knowing. This combination was chosen deliberately to enable the intentional movement between “focused attention” or “thinking” and “open attention” or “reflection and contemplation” (Eaton et al., 2017). Thematization and visualisation enabled focused attention, while intentional walks, meditation, and speaking out loud about the emerging insights from data helped to enter the SEA. The following programs helped to perform thematization and visualisation: Excel, Google slides, QGIS, NVivo, and Miro. Each of these digital tools provide different visualisation

and data processing possibilities. Some examples of visualisations that helped develop insights can be seen in Appendix 3. These techniques were used in all analysis steps going from thematization and visualisation domination in the first and seconds analysis steps to SEA dominating the third and fourth steps.

Thematizing was performed mainly through condensation, coding, and categorising (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017), which meant mainly looking for repetitions, similarities, and differences (Ryan & Bernard, 2003) in textual data. Visualisation was included as part of the analytical approach because it is a different kind of questioning and sense-making activity (Knigge & Cope, 2006, p.2026) that, fundamentally, is also an act of cognition that helps to see patterns (Crampton, 2001) that are invisible or harder to spot while only looking at the textual data. Visualisations were created by making tables, charts, graphs, maps, trees, and networks through sizing, shaping, colouring, saturating, texturizing, blurring, and identifying motion (Börner et al., 2019). The SEA helped to identify what Ryan & Bernard (2003) call the ‘missing data’. The open attention was essential for the third and fourth analysis steps and especially important for the last one as it rests significantly on the researcher’s ability to interpret gathered data and identify what is missing or overlooked.

5 Results - Integral look at the concept of sustainability in Taurage

The results of this thesis present an integral look at the concept of sustainability in the Taurage municipality. This is organised around the 7-ARQ’s where each question is answered individually. An overview from each data source and their contributions to answering the 7-ARQ’s in more detail than presented in the following text can be found in Appendix 4. The following sections give an integral overview of each of the 7-ARQ’s where insights are drawn from all 5 data sources in order to understand the concept of sustainability in a relational and integral way. A referencing system is presented in Table 5 which is used to indicate which data source the insight came from.

Table 5. This table gives an overview of the abbreviation referencing system to indicate sources of insights.

<i>Data source</i>	<i>Reference within the data source</i>	<i>Referencing example</i>
<i>Strategic Development Plan (SDP)</i>	Page (p.)	SDP, p. Page Number
	Priority (P)	SDP-P-Number in the document
	Goal (G)	SDP-G-Number in the document
	Task (T)	SDP-T-Number in the document
	Measure (M)	SDP-M-Number in the document
<i>Observation Notes (OB)</i>	Council Meeting (OBCM)	OBCM-Meeting Numbers
<i>Focus Groups (FG)</i>	Session (FGS)	FGS-Session Numbers
	Participant (FGP)	FGP-Participant Numbers
<i>Interviews (IN)</i>	Interviewee (IN)	IN-Interviewee Numbers
<i>Municipal website (WEB)</i>		WEB

5.1 WHO is shaping it? (Agency)

Insights from all data sources suggest that the institution of municipality is the main actor in shaping the concept of sustainability. This involves the Tauragė District Municipality Administration, Tauragė District Municipal Council and all the Enterprises and Institutions under the leadership of the municipality. The newly developed and council approved (OBCM-1) SDP text mentions more than 40 different organisations, institutions, and actors who are identified to be responsible for specific measures (SDP, p.52-75). Within this long list, two structural divisions of the municipal administration are listed as responsible for over 1/3 of all measures (SDP). The department of Development, Investment and Asset management and the Construction department are the most referred to departments (FGS-1; IN-1,2; SDP), while in total there are over 20 structural divisions within municipal administration.

Overall, within the administration, specialists and administration leaders are identified as the driving force behind the pursuit of sustainability (FGS-1). In addition to them, a specific person within the council is mentioned quite often (FGS-1). This matches with the observation of the council meetings themselves. Only once, one council member mentioned the words climate change explicitly (OBCM-1). Enterprises managed by Tauragė district municipality are also often mentioned (FGS-All; IN-1,2; OBCM-All; SDP). One of them, Tauragė Region Waste Management Centre, and their work was an object of an extensive council debate (OBCM-3). Next to everything mentioned previously, the Department of Architecture and Geodesy also appears to be an important force in the formation and implementation of sustainability (FGS-1; SDP).

Even though inhabitants (FGS-1; IN-All; WEB), communities (FGS-1; IN-All), businesses and farmers (IN-1), NGO's and news outlets (IN-4) are mentioned throughout the whole data set they do not seem to hold much direct decision power and influence over the concept of sustainability or actively debate this in the public sphere. European Union values (IN-1), programmes and funding (IN-1,2; OBCM-3; WEB), Swedish government (IN-2), and National level institutions (FGS-1; IN-1,2; SDP) seem to have an influential role in the formation of the sustainability concept in Taurage. This affects the daily activities and choices of the Mayor, director, and specialists who formulate what is understood as sustainable and who chooses priorities while pursuing this idea. National level institutions indirectly play a significant role in formulating the concept of sustainability as they define the boundaries within which specialists have to work (FGS-1).

5.2 WHY is it pursued? (Intentionality)

The pursuit of high quality of the living environment (SDP, p.53) and ensuring equal opportunities for all (SDP, p.54) is driving the reasoning behind the ambition to become the greenest municipality in Lithuania (SDP, p.53). The ambition is to be recognised even beyond national borders and pursue a leadership position in the field of environmental protection (SDP, p.53). The new CPTPL, prepared by the Ministry of Environment, is mentioned a number of times and is framed as a reason for some of the choices made in SDP. Council members repeatedly highlight that they have to defend the public interest and ensure high quality municipal services (OBCM-All). Through implementation of some projects the municipality hopes to change inhabitant commuting behaviour and prevent creation of waste (WEB). They also want to increase the quality and accessibility of sports facilities for all (WEB).

Personal motivation, wish to motivate others, creation of wellbeing, and the fact that it is the goal of organisation are also among the reasons why sustainability is pursued (FGS-1). Having a vision is identified as helpful and embedding this vision in municipal programmes, strategies, and plans is purposeful and necessary (FGS-1). Participants also highlighted that the pursuit of a common goal to improve the health of the planet could unite people (FGP-1; IN-1,3). Others are attracted to the concept because of its broadness (FGP-2), its rising political relevance (FGP-4,5; IN-4) and the possibilities it creates to contribute to change (FGP-3).

In order to describe their interest in this concept participants shared memories from their childhood and reflected on their lives. A view was shared reflecting the change in consumption levels and the big observable difference between Soviet times and now (IN-1). Only now they are able to understand how little they had 20-30 years ago, and this makes them question if current level of consumption is actually what they want and need (IN-1). Memories related to witnessing the effects on animals that pollution had during the Soviet times are still strong and vivid (IN-2). All four people interviewed expressed a wish to slow down or stop pollution (IN-All). They all wish to live on a clean and healthy planet (IN-All). Those who mentioned climate change explicitly talked about fear (IN-1) and preparing for widespread climate change related effects (IN-2). Pursuing sustainability is perceived as a good and worthwhile goal because it brings multiple benefits for everyone, it gives a common direction without which it would be impossible to make plans for the future (IN-3).

5.3 WHAT does it mean? (Meaning)

There is no exact match in Lithuanian language for the word sustainable. Two words are often used interchangeably: '*darnus*' meaning harmonious, united, or tuneful and '*tvarus*' meaning stable,

lasting, or enduring. The word *'darnus'* in SDP is only used in relation to the expansion and development of sustainable transport (SDP-G-1.2). Sustainable transport here means encouraging sustainable mobility through public transport use (SDP-T-1.2.1), cycling, and walking (SDP-T-1.2.2), hoping to reduce the use of private cars or, at least, promote electric vehicle use (SDP-M-1.1.4.1). The word *'tvarus'* in SDP is used only in relation to the use of natural resources (SDP-G-1.1) and expansion and development of farming (SDP-T-2.1.4). The limited use of these words in SDP makes it impossible to claim that the SDP section describing the vision for the next decade is a vision of sustainability. Another word that could be associated with sustainability is *'žaliausia'* meaning the greenest. Becoming the greenest municipality in Lithuania is priority number one (SDP-P-1). Nowhere in the document are the words *'darnus'*, *'tvarus'* or *'žaliausia'* defined. During council meetings these words were never discussed (OBCM-All).

While describing the word *'darnus'* people mainly referred to themes such as human relation to nature, balancing different interests and economy (FGS-2), as well as balanced, even and equal development, feelings of safety and calm (IN-All). While describing the greenest municipality in Lithuania (FGS-2) and communicating current projects (WEB) themes of energy, mobility, pollution reduction, collaboration, and social equality are dominant. Two strong themes that run through the whole dataset are resource use and *'plėtra'*, meaning expansion, development, or broadening (FGS-2). When asked if the vision of the greenest town in Lithuania is the same as the concept of sustainability or something different, all focus group participants, unanimously stated, that they are very similar (FGS-2) and all interviewees agreed that *'darna'* is the ultimate objective of every human being (IN-All).

It seems that the concept of sustainability currently is strongly defined by the sustainable urban mobility plan that was approved in 2017 and is mentioned in multiple data sources (FGS-All; IN-All; SDP). Even though most of the specific concepts and ideas mentioned are always related to this plan an understanding also exists that sustainability is more than sustainable mobility (IN-2,4). An acknowledgment was made that they are *'užsिकline'* on the mobility topic (IN-4). The word *'užsिकline'* means concentrating intensely on something without being able to step away from it or being stuck on something, in this case, the topic of mobility. In the broadest view, sustainability was described as the basis of human existence (IN-3) and that it has to show up in everything, from immediate family relationships, to municipal development and overall sustainable existence with nature (IN-1,2).

5.4 WHICH choices shape what it is? (Priorities)

There is a very big focus on renovation and modernisation of the built environment. The municipality aims to almost double the number of renovated, soviet built, multistorey residential buildings by 2030 (SDP-M-1.1.2.3), modernise district heating (SDP-M-1.1.2.5...7), modernise and expand water delivery, residential sewage and surface drainage networks (SDP-T-1.1.3), and asphalt many, currently unpaved streets and roads (WEB). Measures to address the current transport system are mainly related to making public transport more attractive (SDP-T-1.2.1). Pollution reduction, social equality, energy, economy, tourism, and recreation measures dominate the concept of sustainability in Taurage (FGS-All; IN-All; SDP). The SDP associates measures with UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), but this is only done to each SDG overall without explaining the connection or naming more precise targets and indicators within an SDG. The overall view can be seen in Figure 10, where SDG11 is associated with 64 measures in total and is the most dominant, while there is not a single measure associated with SDG14. SDG8 is the second most represented goal associated with 34 measures while the rest are associated with 25 or less measures (SDP).

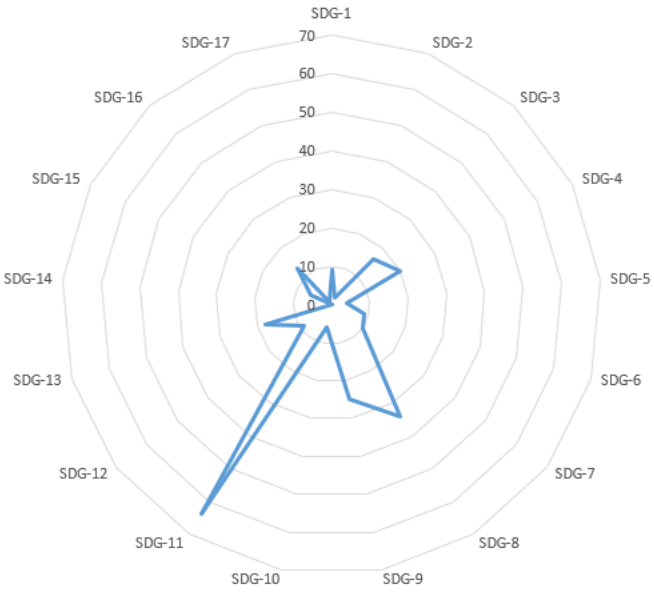


Figure 10. The figure visualises the number of measures associated with each Sustainable Development Goal (SDG-Number). SDGs fall in the following order according the number of measures associated:

- SDG-11: 64;
- SDG-8: 34;
- SDG-9: 25;
- SDG-4: 20;
- SDG-13: 18;
- SDG-3: 16;
- SDG-16: 13;
- SDG-7: 10;
- SDG-1: 9;
- SDG-6: 9;
- SDG-12: 9;
- SDG-10: 6;
- SDG-15: 6;
- SDG-5: 4;
- SDG-2: 2;
- SDG-17: 1;
- SDG-14: 0;

Source: own creation.

Sustainable mobility and all its aspects (public transport, electric vehicles, cycling, and walking) are the main priority of the municipality at the moment (IN-All). The other two dominant topics are energy and waste management (FGS-2; IN-All). A few people were very concerned with the infrastructure and the challenge of adapting it to everyone’s needs (FGP-3; IN-4). During the third focus group session mapping exercise, a discussion developed about whose interests are important where (FGS-3). An opinion was shared among participants that sustainability should go beyond the focus on only human interests (FGS-3). Even though explicit discussions about sustainability did not

naturally develop during council meetings, some remarks can also be viewed as relevant to the development of the concept of sustainability.

Questions were raised about where the line between the issues that council should take responsibility for is and what should be addressed by all separate organisations themselves (OBCM-1). Some council members raised concerns that it is unclear how the administration chooses which public private partnerships it will join and the issue of citizen participation in decision-making was raised (OBCM-2). There also was a debate about quantitative and qualitative indicators and why there are so little insights in yearly reports based on qualitative data (OBCM-1). Many questions were raised about the waste collection system in Taurage and surrounding towns (OBCM-3). All acknowledged that there have to be changes in the waste management system, but which choices should be made no one knew. The general lack of data and information in relation to waste management made discussion very difficult (OBCM-3).

5.5 WHERE is / might it materialise? (Spatiality)

Most of the materialisation of SDP measures will take place in urbanised territories: the towns of Taurage and Skaudvile, the village of Pagramantis, and other small settlements (IN-All; OBCM-All; WEB). The SDP also aims to establish partnerships and collaboration within Western Lithuania (SDP, p.53) and ensure a functioning railway connection for cargo and passengers to the third biggest city in Lithuania – Klaipeda (SDP-M-2.1.1.6). All other goals and measures are territorially bound within the Taurage district. It is unclear at the moment where exactly the renewable energy parks will be developed (SDP-M-1.1.1.2) or sustainable farming will be practiced (SDP-T-2.1.4).

Attempts will be made to plant forests close to existing forested territories (SDP-M-2.1.4.4) to achieve no less than 40% forest cover for the district (SDP, p.53). Water bodies will be more intensely used for tourism and recreation (SDP-M-2.2.1.5, SDP-M-3.2.1.1,3) and natural, cultural, and recreational sites will be made more accessible and attractive for tourism (SDP-G-2.2). Within urbanised territories, especially Taurage, priorities are the following: asphaltting streets (SDP-M-1.2.3.4), establishing new pedestrian and bicycle paths (SDP-M-1.2.2.1,2), building a new pedestrian and bicycle bridge over the river (SDP-M-1.2.2.5), renovating and modernising public and residential buildings (SDP-M-1.1.2.1...4), and developing recreational and green areas (SDP-T-3.2.1).

There are areas within Taurage that are already undergoing significant changes, and more renovation, modernisation, and development is planned there. These are the town centre, two multistorey residential building neighbourhoods and three major projects (FGS-3). One of the

planned projects is an old racecourse adaptation to the needs of the town (FGS-3; SDP-M-3.2.1.2). The racecourse is next to the river and city centre in a floodable area. Another is a multifunctional sports and culture arena to be constructed near the most densely populated town area (FGS-3; SDP-M-3.1.3.2). The third project is a new street, that is also referred to as the small city centre bypass, that will be constructed near the arena and one of the multistorey residential building neighbourhoods (FGS-3; IN-2,4; SDP-M-1.2.3.1).

5.6 WHEN is it thought to materialise? (Temporality)

The vision laid out in SDP is to be achieved by the year 2030 (FG-All; OBCM-All; SDP). There are only a few measures that have a closer accomplishment date or a yearly task: encouraging the transition to circular economy (SDP-T-1.1.5) is meant to encourage reuse of things and products (SDP-M-1.1.5.2), region wide education on the prevention and disposal of waste (SDP-M-1.1.5.5), and financial support for businesses working in circular economy (SDP-M-1.1.5.6). During the 2023-2024 period the municipality will renew the municipal and town territorial planning documents (SDP-M-2.1.1.4). By 2027 the municipality aims to build 60 new public transport stops throughout the region (SDP-M-1.2.1.4) and further develop the newly established park in Taurage (SDP-M-3.2.1.3). A few measures for youth self-expression are planned to be implemented by the year 2025 (SDP-M-3.3.1.2,3).

5.7 HOW is it emerging? (Processes)

The SDP is written because every municipality in Lithuania, by law, has to have a 10-year strategic development plan for its territory (SDP, p.6). From the SDP text it is unclear why CO2 neutrality is included in the vision as climate change is not mentioned anywhere else in the document beyond the title of the SDG13. Even SWOT analysis does not talk about climate change as a risk or a threat (SDP, p.51). Looking only at the SDP gives no insight if sustainability is even pursued. Here primary data sources provide significant insights and help understand how the sustainability concept is emerging. Because SDP is a long-term strategic document there are additional steps to be taken in order to translate it into specific actions. Some of these actions are the three-year action plans, yearly budgets, and yearly specialist tasks (FGS-1).

The emergence of the concept of sustainability is continuous and complex. Sustainability related ideas come from specialists (FGS-1,2; IN-1), heads of departments, and municipal administration leaders (FGS-1; IN-3). They move both ways: top-down and bottom-up (FGS-1). Even though ideas are developed by many people they have to be something that leaders agree with (FGP-2) but even then, bureaucratic processes (FGP-3) and complicated law systems (FGP-1) can place ideas back in

the drawers of separate people where they accumulate over time (FGP-3). Even though, some think that municipal specialists have to evaluate all projects through the lens of sustainability because that is required by the European Union and national laws (IN-1), specialists themselves think that they have limited authority over the choices and decisions they can make, as well as limited knowledge on how to do it (FGS-2).

Because specialists operate in a very hierarchical system it is not purely up to them to decide what to do and how. They have to take into consideration many national, regional, and municipal documents and laws and most often are fulfilling tasks that the department head formulates for them (FGS-2). Specialist's main role is to figure out how to accomplish these tasks and currently there is very little clarity of how to do sustainability (FGS-2). Lack of indicators and conversations within the municipality on how to do sustainability leaves specialists to make interpretations by themselves and through their daily tasks realise this concept (FGS-2). At the moment specialists think that sustainability has to be pursued through: careful investigation of laws and regulations and noticing how these laws and regulations are interpreted in the realisation of projects; limitations, control, and taxation of undesirable and harmful activities; public transport improvements; participatory processes and ensuring equal opportunities; adapting the built environment to the needs of disabled people; rational use of resources; radical and unpopular decisions; initiatives and agreements (FGS-2).

Everyone participating in this research talked about the urban mobility plan (FGP-All; IN-All). Early scepticism and fear about the decisions made in relation to mobility and the public transport system was acknowledged (IN-2,3). It seems that this process, described as brave and unconventional (IN-4), is making the municipality more confident to make further changes in general. As the majority of ideas and projects go through the normal procedures and include approval by Tauragė District Municipal Council (WEB), the way the council makes decisions can be important for the emerging concept of sustainability and it can shape it. This decision-making process is very procedural and structured democratic voting (OBCM-All). Quite a few times comments by council members were made about the way they all interact in these meetings. Some groups feel left out (OBCM-1,2) and sarcastic comments, critique, and defensiveness showed up in all observed meetings (OBCM-All). Sometimes the tension reached a point of anger, blaming, accusations, and insults, leading to council members calling for respect, warmer and more humane communication, tolerance, and leaving personal preconceptions outside of these meetings (OBCM-1).

In addition to the culture and behaviour around the decision-making process, the accessibility and quality of data and information also surfaced as concerns (OBCM-All). Things such as quantitative

over qualitative data preference (OBCM-1), not receiving requested information on time (OBCM-1,2), and lack of methodological accessible data on waste management in particular (OBCM-3) were raised as important matters to be dealt with. In addition to the overall question of information, sustainability related information and knowledge is also in short supply in the Taurage municipality. Only one research participant indicated that there is enough information and places in Taurage to talk about sustainability (IN-1). Others indicated that inhabitants and local media are not actively engaged with sustainability or if they are they do not refer explicitly to the sustainability concept (IN-3,4). All focus group participants and two interviewees (IN-3,4) indicated multiple times that more information and knowledge related to sustainability would help them pursue it (FGS-All).

The concept of sustainability is emerging simultaneously through the lived experiences of people shaping it and municipal processes trying to institutionalise it. One research participant, who also was observed mentioning climate change during a council meeting, shared reflections from their lifelong gradual journey and relationship to sustainability concept (IN-2). They emphasised the importance of their fascination with and time in nature that developed during their childhood. They also talked about taking part in the environmental and freedom movements in late Soviet Russia as well as sharing their first experiences opening a business related to sustainability in the first years of Lithuanian independence. They also mentioned energy efficiency training in Sweden that they attended during the early independence years and used a phrase '*man ten buvo kosmosas ką pamatëm*' which describes the experience and things they saw as cosmical and out of this earth for them at the time. Now they are in the council actively expressing opinions in favour of sustainability.

6 Discussion

This section first presents an **overview** of the sustainability concept as it is now. Then, **strengths** of the current concept are discussed in relation to the local urbanisation challenges they are trying to overcome. Finally, a number of **gaps** are identified that give possible directions which should be explored to attune the current conceptualisation to also reflect the newest scientific knowledge that the municipality lacks access to at the moment. These gaps are formulated as questions that the municipality should be asking to ensure the identified malleability of the concept is intentionally used to transform it from a specialised into a more holistic one.

6.1 The concept of sustainability in 2021 Taurage is specialised yet malleable

The pursuit of sustainability is emerging from the intertwined mesh of individual motivations and the EU-national strategic themes that have been communicated and spread during the past decades. Individual motivations rise from concrete personal experiences related to being in nature, caring about the health of the environment, and curiosity to learn more and spread this topic. In 2015 the presence of these individual motivations was combined with the decision-making power and the topic has been on the rise ever since. Individual motivations, a specifically defined vision and the ability of these individuals to spark various levels of motivations in others, enabled their specific framings of 'the green' and 'the ecological' to become the objective of the whole institution.

The municipality as an institution now believes that they are not only obliged by laws to pursue sustainability, they also believe that in pursuing it they will ensure high quality of life for its inhabitants. The majority of the interviewees and participants identify a lifelong journey to this topic, while only a few can recall some specific experiences that sparked interest. The pursuit of sustainability seems very much merged with the wish to improve human-nature connection and desire to live in balance with nature, without polluting the environment. On the surface this emergence can be seen as an agenda of one political party that got imprinted into all municipal activities with an overwhelming focus on renewable energy and sustainable mobility.

The European values and the green course are an important force that is mainstreaming the sustainability concept to its member states. This is also closely connected to the Minister of transport and communications (2015) recommendation for municipalities to prepare sustainable mobility plans, that was made right after the 2015 municipal elections. Global climate change debate and the Paris Agreement adopted on 12th of December 2015 has been an integral part of the communication around the decision to become a "green, ecological and nature-friendly municipality" (Paulikaitė, 2017). Next to keeping up with the global political agenda there is also an underlying deep historical connection to the green or environmental movement.

Currently, the sustainability concept in Taurage is emerging without high-quality contextual information and science. Some participants are self-motivated to learn about sustainability, but there is no systemic and consistent exposure to knowledge in relation to this concept within the municipality. There are some seminars and conferences for local businesses and some NGOs, with the push from the EU, touch on some aspects of sustainability. Big themes have always been related to pollution prevention, energy use and waste recycling. All participants highlight that most of the

inhabitants could not engage in a conversation about sustainability, therefore it is hard for them to understand the purpose of such plans as the one about sustainable mobility.

Evidence is very clear that the sustainable mobility plan (TRS, 2017) has been significant in shaping how sustainability is understood in Taurage. During both the focus group and interviews, participants acknowledged that they are stuck in the thinking that being green means only renewable energy and electric transport. They continuously raised questions challenging the current focus and brought in themes of gender equality, letting nature be, and using resources wisely which, some acknowledged, goes against economic growth. All this indicates that the concept of sustainability in Taurage is not set in stone and is still malleable. Expansion and broadening of it is even desirable, as all participants recognised that their current understanding is very limited and specialised. There is a desire to learn more, to have more conversations, and they acknowledged their own role and responsibility to question the current framing, as well as taking a more active role in shaping it.

6.2 What challenges is the current conceptualisation of sustainability solving? (Strengths)

The **first challenge** is the old, run-down and in many cases abandoned urban fabric established by Soviet Russia as well as the significant land-use changes they caused. Therefore, it is only natural that the Taurage municipality is focused on renovation and modernisation of this old urban fabric: old public buildings and residential housing blocks, unfinished utility networks, unpaved streets and roads, impersonal and alienating public space, and its accessibility and usability challenges. In doing so the municipality is indirectly addressing the leftovers of imposed soviet culture that this urban fabric holds and will perpetuate if unaddressed. These modernisation and renovation efforts of the urban fabric can, not only, help to mitigate and adapt to climate change, it can also help form strong communities, increase safety, and improve wellbeing for all.

The **second challenge** is the healthy environment and human-nature connectedness. Here transition to renewable energy, reduction of fossil fuel dependent private transport, effective waste management system, encouragement to cycle and walk, and goals to increase forest cover and implement biodiversity measures in urban areas are some of the planned solutions. Carefully and thoughtfully implemented biodiversity measures and pollution reduction can create a healthier and safer environment for all living beings. In doing so the municipality can also prevent the so-called 'extinction of experience' of nature (Miller J. R., 2005) which has numerous benefits in the short and long term. The municipality already has rich nature and fostering human-nature connectedness within urban territories has big potential.

The **third challenge** is inclusion, transparency, and collaboration. The planning for various smart city solutions has the potential to improve the information accessibility for all city actors if this is done through careful and accessible design. Municipality is also planning to distribute some of the service provision to community centres and establish a participatory budget, which can help the municipality move towards network governance models and community empowerment. There is also an active reach beyond the municipality boundaries to form partnerships and engaging inhabitants who have left Taurage, such as me. Even the fact that this thesis is written about this municipality should be partially attributed to this municipality effort.

6.3 What other questions should the municipality ask? (Gaps to be addressed)

There are plenty of good seeds being planted at the moment in the Taurage municipality as they build on their current level of understanding and competences. The fact that the concept of sustainability in Taurage is still malleable is promising. As there is a strong desire to learn and have more conversations the next section might be of great interest to the municipality. Further, I highlight a few gaps which the municipal curiosity could be drawn to in order to make the concept of sustainability itself more integral and relational.

6.3.1 What do the terms 'green' and 'CO2 neutrality' mean?

Current conceptualisation of sustainability in the Taurage municipality fails to explain what is meant by the term 'green' and why and how the goal of 'CO2 neutrality' will be pursued. The term 'green' is never properly defined. This is problematic as it is used not only to give a name to overall priority of the vision (SDP-P-1) but it is also used in describing some actors like 'Green' businesses (SDP, p.53) and even evaluation criteria like number of 'Green' jobs created (SDP-M-2.1.3.3). The 'CO2 neutrality' is named as the number one goal of the first priority, yet there are no tasks or measures set in place to achieve it. The only thing that is planned for while becoming CO2 neutral by 2025 is having a unit of measurement in 2030 (SDP, p.55). Addressing these ambiguities should be of immediate priority. The overall absence of the topic of climate change and no concrete steps to address it is a troubling reality. This creates a very high risk for the 'CO2 neutrality' goal and the overall claims of being the 'greenest' to become a tool of greenwashing (Delmas & Burbano, 2011) rather than actual change. Such municipally established ambiguity can lead to businesses increasingly greenwashing themselves.

The single focus on CO2 has its own risks. Measuring sustainability only in terms of 'CO2 neutrality' is not sufficient to claim that enough measures are taken to address climate change. Establishing a

measure is important but on its own it will not inform the municipality on what to do next, as even a benchmark does not exist and might be set only in 2030. The fact that a sustainable mobility plan was so influential in shaping the understanding of sustainability, could be the reason the municipality chooses to develop a climate change mitigation and adaptation plan. Preparation of such a plan would build the foundational understanding of what it takes to address climate change and in doing so it will quickly become clear that measures should go way beyond achieving 'CO2 neutrality'. If the sustainable mobility plan stays the only direct reference to sustainability, until it expires in 2030, there is a risk this institutionalised sustainability concept will remain overwhelmingly a single-issue concept and fail to live up to its integral nature.

6.3.2 Why are we planning for population growth?

Even though the Taurage municipality is on a clear, decades long, population decline trajectory, strategic plans and visions keep incorporating population growth. Instead of focusing on people who live there now, the municipality seems to be ever more concerned with attracting new people to resettle in Taurage and wishes to retain and attract highly qualified professionals (SDP-T-2.1.2). This underlying, unquestionable, and desirable goal of population growth could backfire if the municipality actually succeeds in attracting more people to change their living location to Taurage. In a population growth scenario that the municipality single sidedly hopes for, land use challenges would become even more significant and the risk of gentrification (Anguelovski et al., 2019) would become very real. Risk of even more intensified urbanisation and increase in greenhouse gas emissions would be enormous as over the last decades the town only expanded through "urban erosion with suburban sprawl" (Cirtautas, 2013, p.76). As the municipality never talks about urban sprawl, this would further postpone the achievement of 'CO2 neutrality', because construction is the second biggest pollutant after industry (Ginevicius et al., 2018). The municipality should immediately explore additional population scenarios in order to properly re-evaluate their options.

6.3.3 Are we chasing an outdated modernist city dream and ignoring our unique context?

Throughout the research I was unable to get one question out of my mind. This question is why the Taurage municipality places such an overwhelming focus on urban areas. The region is neither heavily populated nor heavily urbanised, therefore, the whole focus on sustainable cities and urban fabric might distract from other important challenges and opportunities within the municipality. The fact that there is not a single measure associated with SDG14 (Life below water), when the municipality has multiple rivers, streams, water bodies, and bogs, is puzzling. Within Taurage green spaces are undergoing culturalization and aesthetic fixes, while the same modern cities the

municipality might be looking up to are exploring concepts of rewilding (Pereira & Navarro, 2015), encouraging urban gardening (Anguelovski, 2014) and allowing water into urban fabric through various management options (Brown et al., 2009). While discussing the new town centre bypass construction it was mentioned that 'illegally' gardening seniors in the territory will have to be removed (FGS-3). This might be an indication that the municipality's concern with mobility might be compromising other important contributions towards sustainability. These are complex challenges for a small municipality to address and the lack of scientific research at the municipal and town level (Veteikis & Piškinaitė, 2019) makes it even harder. Urban design and planning, as research directions, are marginalised within Lithuanian university systems and have no clear standing ground (Butkus, 2013; Daunora, 2008). Nationally, urbanisation is understood mainly from architects' point of view, which is problematic, and heavily influences what municipalities perceive as sustainable urban areas.

6.3.4 Are we paying enough attention to who, why and how is pursuing this vision?

The SDP provides very limited insights into how the vision was created in the first place and what are the steps the municipality as an organisation will take in order to prepare itself for the work ahead. This research reveals that there are no concrete measures to ensure mobilisation on the sustainability topic within the institution of the municipality. There is a clear lack of general knowledge about the concept, lack of data and insight on the local challenges related to sustainability, and lack of skills to effectively involve inhabitants in the governance processes. Most of the actions are oriented towards educating the youth and general public while organisation of the municipality itself is overlooked. Involvement of scientists is planned for but knowledge co-creation, transdisciplinarity and measures to develop communicative systems around the concept of sustainability within the municipality are lacking. In pursuing sustainability, means are as important as the ends and the data gathered during this research indicate that there is a wish to contribute and explore this concept further.

7 Reflection on the research process

This research had two objectives. The first objective was achieved through the second objective: the application of experimental and exploratory research design that is based on relationality and integral theory. Ideally such exploration would involve the researcher being in the context, which would allow observation of these relations, practices, and assumptions in a real-world situation. Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and national and international restriction, on physical contact this research was bound to online interactions only. Due to the online setting, it was

unfeasible to try to organise participation of a broader range of actors. I am very well aware that presented conceptualisation is only partial and reflects the concept mainly from the perspective of the institution of municipality. Through careful research design, opportunities were created for focus group participants and interviewees to share their personal views beyond their immediate professional and political careers. This choice made it possible to get a glimpse of what inhabitants might think as well.

The chosen theoretical perspective helped to establish a balance in data that is called for by some academics: systemic institutional understanding of sustainability (exterior-collective), individual perceptions related to it (interior-individual), cultural governance setting in which this concept is emerging (interior-collective), and behaviours shaping it (exterior-individual). Looking at the whole data set in an integral way through the 7-ARQ's helped to move beyond looking at groups and places or comparing individual versus collective, interior versus exterior views. Making sense of the whole data set helped trace back the concept of sustainability and see the relations and processes that are enabling the emergence of this concept. In particular, exterior-collective was mainly revealed through the data from SDP and WEB. These data sources were essential in providing quantitative insights to the who, what, which, and when questions. Interviews, and to a limited extent the focus group, helped to uncover interior-individual dimensions of the sustainability concept by opening the door to people's inner worlds, perception, values, and motivations that drive this pursuit and interest. The focus group was especially useful as it revealed the governance culture within the municipality and gave a glimpse into the dynamics among and within departments around the sustainability concept. Last, but not least, the observation of council meetings provided highly valuable behavioural insights of the overall decision-making culture, dynamics among political groups, and desirable and undesirable behaviours related to communication.

This research design and questions asked also sparked the 're-negotiation of concepts' (West et al., 2021) themselves as described in the result section (Section 5.1.3). It was a pleasant surprise that focus group participants and some interviewees themselves started challenging and questioning their assumptions and the current dominant view. Interestingly, this happened not only in the focus group setting, where different opinions by design were brought together and considered as a possibility. This also happened during two interviews, where I as a researcher only asked predefined open-ended and clarification questions that did not include any questions directly challenging, questioning, or problematizing the current conceptualisation. This leaves me even more curious about the transformative power that the combination of integral theory, liberating structures and appreciative inquiry approaches might hold. The application of liberating structures, and appreciative inquiry

approaches were instrumental in creating the safe space of exploration and allowing participants and interviewees to share not only their dominant views but doubts and worries as well. Further investigations of the effects such approaches hold is definitely something worth studying in the future. A follow up study investigating the effects of the conducted research would be useful in order to build an understanding what this particular type of researchers' presence and such research design means for the further emergence of the sustainability concept.

While preparing for this research I was very sceptical if the observation of council meetings alone will actually be useful. These online meetings were the only way to observe local culture and behaviour around decision-making from a distance. Before adopting a fully online fieldwork setting other approaches were considered that might have brought different observations. In the end, council meeting observations did provide a lot of insights into what is potentially being overlooked by the current conceptualisation of sustainability. Council meeting observations gave very important data points that are essential for understanding the processes through which sustainability is emerging as a worthwhile pursuit. Further research could be improved by conducting observations on site and possibly observing other types of decision-making processes that were inaccessible during this research. Broadening the inclusion of other actors in interviews and additional focus groups could reveal important details and gaps within the concept that are invisible at this point.

8 Conclusion

By exploring the concept of sustainability in the Taurage municipality, through an experimental research design based on relationality and integral theory, a rich conceptualisation was revealed. The chosen mix of methods, the variety of data collected, and contextual sensitivity arising from deep historical insights enabled a step beyond concept description providing constructive suggestions based on the gaps identified in data. Urbanisation is a complex, ever-unfolding process and climate change mitigation and adaptation has to be the same. Having a strategic document defining development vision is essential, but that is only the first step in addressing climate change and pursuing sustainability. However, the concept evolves further and however many gaps are identified and crossed, the process is never complete. Continuous investigation, questioning and collaborative knowledge co-creation are essential elements to move forward and find local solutions to global challenges. The presented experimental research design has the potential to stimulate curiosity and continuously provide newly developed integral insights into gaps to be crossed. This is a resource intensive approach, therefore, in order to ensure the necessary wider inclusivity and diverse representation, the sufficient time and human resources for research preparation and data integration are essential.

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10 Appendices

Appendix 1: Focus group design

4-8 Participants: purposeful sampling among municipal specialists who expressed interest in sustainability topic. Preferably specialists from different departments to bring in diverse perspectives on the subject. Aiming as close as possible for 50/50 gender representation.

Common ground: Same organisation and culture, interest to discuss sustainability.

Dynamics and facilitation: Design facilitates sharing and comparing within the group through individual and collective activities: reflecting, writing, sharing, talking, dialogue, discussion, categorisation, prioritization, mapping and storytelling.

Structure: Same 4-8 participants in all sessions. Online setting using Zoom and Miro.

Consent: All participants have to sign Informed Consent Form and send it to the researcher by the 1st data collection session.

Data collection: written and visualised material recorded by participants and the facilitator in Miro.



FOCUS GROUP - SESSION 1 - Who, Why & How

1

Exploring the WHO, WHY and HOW questions through individual reflection, dialogue and collective categorisation and mapping.

- 3 hours
- Online
- Written data collection

- Who talks about sustainability in Taurage?
- Why do you think they talk about it?
- How do you notice this?
- How do these ideas move in the city?

AGENDA:

13:00-13:10 Gathering and checking in. Intro to the session: 1-2-All
13:10-13:30 Individual step by step mapping through 3 questions:

- 5min Who is pursuing sustainability in Taurage?
- 5min Why do you think they are pursuing it?
- 5min How do you notice this?
- 5min Looking at the map. Is there someone else?

13:30-13:40 Dialogue about what has been mapped:

- Discuss in pairs what do you notice, is there something surprising, what insights are rising? Write main things down.

13:40-14:00 Sharing:

- Pairs share and all discuss. Someone to add?

Break 10 min

14:10-14:35 Collective categorisation of the who & who else?

14:35-15:00 How these categories interact and work together?

Break 10 min

15:10-15:30 Sustainability idea flow:

- How sustainability ideas flow? Where and how they emerge, stagnate, concentrate, accelerate, spread?

15:30-15:50 Why do you think this is happening like this?

15:50-16:00 Setting next session dates and times. Check out.

DARBOTVARKĖ:

12:00-12:10 Susirenkame, pasisveikiname ir Rūta pristato pokalbio darbotvarkę.

12:10-12:30 Individualiai atsakydami į 3 klausimus pradame kurti žemėlapi:

- 5min Kas Tauragėje siekia darnumo?
- 5min Kaip manote, kodėl jie to siekia?
- 5min Kaip tai pastebite?
- 5min Peržiūrėkite žemėlapi. Papildykite jei kyla minčių.

12:30-12:40 Dialogas apie tai, kas buvo atvaizduota:

- Aptarkite poromis, ką pastebite, ar kažkas stebina, kokios įvalgos kyla? Užrašykite pagrindinius aptartus dalykus.

12:40-13:00 Dalijimasis:

- Poros pasidalija ir visi diskutuoja. Papildykite jei kyla minčių.

Pertrauka 10 min

13:10-13:35 Kategorijų ir pasikartojimų paieškos

13:35-14:00 Sąveikų ir ryšių vizualizavimas

Pertrauka 10 min

14:10-14:30 Darnumo idėjų srautai:

- Kaip juda darnumo idėjos? Kur ir kaip jos atsiranda, sustingsta, susikaupia, greitėja, plinta?

14:30-14:50 Kaip manote, kodėl tai vyksta būtent taip?

14:50-15:00 Kito pokalbio datos ir laiko nustatymas. Atsisveikiname.

FOCUS GROUP - SESSION 2 - What, Which & How

2

Exploring the WHAT, WHICH and HOW questions through individual reflection, dialogue and collective prioritisation and mapping.

- 3 hours
- Online
- Written data collection

- What is sustainability?
- Which choices are being made?
- How these choices affect what is possible in the future?

AGENDA:

13:00-13:10 Gathering and checking in. Intro to the session: 2 x 1-2-All + All

13:10-13:20 Cycle 1 - DEFINITIONS: Individual answers to the questions:

- 3min What is sustainability?
- 3min What does it mean to be the greenest city in Lithuania?
- 4min Are these concepts the same/different? Explain

13:20-13:30 Dialogue about the 3 questions.

- 10min Discuss in pairs what do you notice, is there something surprising, what insights are rising? Write main things down.

13:30-13:40 10min Pairs share and all discuss.

13:40-13:45 Cycle 2 - CHOICES: Individual answers to the questions:

- 2min 3 things that are most important in relation to these concepts?
- 2min 3 things that are least important in relation to these concepts?

13:45-13:55 Dialogue about the 2 questions.

- 10min Discuss in pairs what do you notice, is there something surprising, what insights are rising? Write main things down.

13:55-14:10 15min Pairs share and all discuss.

Break 10 min

14:20-15:00 Taurage has a vision, now what... Making a decision making map

Break 10 min

15:10-15:50 Group: What does this new vision mean for your work?

15:50-16:00 Setting next session dates and times. Check out.

DARBOTVARKĖ:

13:00-13:10 Susirenkame, pasisveikiname ir Rūta pristato darbotvarkę.

13:10-13:20 Individualiai atsakome 3 klausimus:

- 3min Darna/darnumas, kas tai?
- 3min Žalias, gyvybingas ir atviras Tauragės Raj. kas tai?
- 4min Ar šios idėjos yra tokios pačios ar jos kažkuo skiriasi? Paaiškinkite

13:20-13:30 Dialogas apie atsakytus klausimus:

- 10min Aptarkite poromis, ką pastebite, ar kažkas stebina, kokios įvalgos kyla? Užrašykite pagrindinius aptartus dalykus.

13:30-13:40 Dalijimasis

13:40-13:45 Individualiai atsakome 2 klausimus:

- 2min 3 dalykai, kurie yra svarbiausi atsižvelgiant į šias sąvokas?
- 2min 3 dalykai, kurie yra mažiausiai svarbūs šių sąvokų atžvilgiu?

13:45-13:55 Dialogas apie atsakytus klausimus:

- 10min Aptarkite poromis, ką pastebite, ar kažkas stebina, kokios įvalgos kyla? Užrašykite pagrindinius aptartus dalykus.

14:10-14:15 Dalijimasis

Pertrauka 10 min

14:25-15:00 Tauragė turi viziją... Sprendimų priėmimo žemėlapio kūrimas

Break 10 min

15:10-15:50 Grupinė diskusija: Ką ši nauja vizija reiškia jūsų darbu?

15:50-16:00 Kito pokalbio datos ir laiko nustatymas. Atsisveikiname.

FOCUS GROUP - SESSION 3 - Where, When & How

3

Exploring the WHERE, WHEN and HOW questions through individual reflection, dialogue and collective mapping.

- 3 hours
- Online
- Written data collection

- Where is sustainability happening now?
- Where did recent changes happen?
- Where changes will take place soon?
- How is it decided where and when to do it?

AGENDA:

13:00-13:10 Gathering and checking in. Intro to the session.

13:10-13:20 Your sustainability journey:

- 30s Slowly drawing a spiral in Miro with pen tool to familiariase with the tool, settle down and concentrate
- 2min How sustainability theme came to your life?
- 2min What attracts you or pushes you away from this theme?
- 2min What encourages / motivates / stops you from talking about this topic?
- 2min What would help you to get more involved in this topic?

13:20-13:35 Group discussion about the questions.

- 15min Discuss what do you notice, is there something surprising, what insights are rising? Write main things down.

13:35-13:50 15min Share and all discuss.

Break 10 min

14:00-15:00 Mapping together:

- 30min - What, where has been done recently for sustainability? (Layer 1)
- 30min - Most challenging places, areas? (Layer 2)

Break 10 min

15:10-15:40 Mapping together:

- 30min - What, where will be done in the near future for sust.? (Layer 3)

15:50-16:00 Setting next session dates and times. Check out.

DARBOTVARKĖ:

13:00-13:15 Susirenkame, pasisveikiname ir Rūta pristato darbotvarkę.

13:15-13:30 Jūsų darnumo kelionės:

- 30s Lėtai piešiamo kuo tankesnė spirale (išbandome naują įrankį ir susitelkiame)
- 2min Kaip ši tema atėjo į jūsų gyvenimą?
- 2min Kuo jus traukia/stumia ši tema?
- 2min Kas jus skatina/motyvuoja/stabdo kalbėti šia tema?
- 2min Kas jums asmeniškai padėtų labiau įsitraukti į šią temą?

13:30-13:45 Grupinis pokalbis apie atsakytus klausimus:

- 5min paskaitykite visus atsakymus
- 10min Aptarkite, ką pastebite, ar kažkas stebina, kokios įvalgos kyla? Užrašykite pagrindinius aptartus dalykus.

13:45-13:50 Dalijimasis

Pertrauka 10 min

14:00-15:00 Grupinis žemėlapi braižymas: Padaryti darbai ir iššūkiai

- 30min - Kas ir kur neseniai buvo atlikta siekiant darnumo? (Sluoksnius 1)
- 30min - Daugiausia iššūkių turinčios vietovės, erdvės? (Sluoksnius 2)

Pertrauka 10 min

15:10-15:45 Grupinis žemėlapi braižymas: Sekantys žingsniai

- 35min - Kas/kur planuojama artimoje ateityje darnumui? (Sluoksnius 3)

15:45-16:00 Kito pokalbio datos ir laiko nustatymas. Atsisveikiname.

Appendix 2: Semi-structured interview guide

Participants: Purposeful sampling among city council members according the following criteria:

- People noticed through the observation of council meetings who actively bring to the floor themes such as sustainability and climate change.
- Diversity of political parties.
- People from different committees.
- Aiming to talk to the highest-ranking people.

Structure: 30-60 min one on one interview. Online setting using Zoom or any other platform in case of technical difficulties.

Consent: All participants voice their agreement to participate and be audio recorded.

Data collection: interview audio recording and transcribing.

Appreciative inquiry (AI) lens: The goal of these interviews is to reveal the inner dimensions of sustainability. Asking positive (appreciative) questions and bringing to the surface values and best practices that drive these people will help to understand what kind of positive foundation is there in place to build upon to sustain the pursuit of sustainability. According to Cooperrider and Fry (2020) "AI is about the search for what gives life to people, their organizations, and the opportunity-saturated world around them." They also clarify that AI is aiming to overcome positive-negative thinking polarity. The fundamental assumption here is the belief that the questions we ask determines what we find. These findings determine how we talk and think about the studied phenomenon and in return these talks and thoughts are intertwined with what we can imagine and what we choose to pursue. Interview design is made to discover what makes sustainability ideas alive and vibrant so they can grow and spread.

QUESTIONS - In English and Lithuanian

Interview questions:

5 quick questions to warm up:

1. You hear/see/read word sustainability what are your first thoughts?
2. Sustainability - what feelings and emotions does this word awaken?
3. How would you define sustainability?
4. Who is actively talking about sustainability in Tauragė?
5. What are 3 projects/places that are now building foundation for sustainability?
6. Is sustainability theme important to you?

Your sustainability journey:

1. How this topic entered your life?
2. What attracts or pushes you away from this topic?
3. Why is it important for you to talk about this subject?
4. What encourages/motivates/stops you to continue talking about it?
5. Do you bring up this topic at your job/life?
6. Is there space and time in Tauragė to discuss this topic?
7. Where and under what circumstances you talk about sustainability?
8. Are you planning to connect your work and life with this topic?
9. Should Tauragė pursue sustainability?
10. Do you think you can contribute to the pursuit of sustainability?
11. What would help you to engage with this topic more?

Last questions:

1. What bold decisions are being made now or have been made recently that you believe will significantly contribute to sustainability in the future of Tauragė?
2. What are the 3 top priorities for sustainability pursuit in Tauragė?
3. What would you wish yourself and other people who are pursuing sustainability?

Interviu klausimai:

5 greiti klausimai apšilimui:

1. Girdite / matote / skaitote žodį darnumas, kokios jūsų pirmos mintys?
2. Darnumas - kokius jausmus ir emocijas pažadina šis žodis?
3. Kaip apibrėžtumėte darnumo sąvoką?
4. Kas aktyviai kalba apie darnumą Tauragėje?
5. Kokie 3 projektai/vietos šiuo metu kuria pagrindą darnumui?
6. Ar jums svarbi darnumo tema ir sritys?


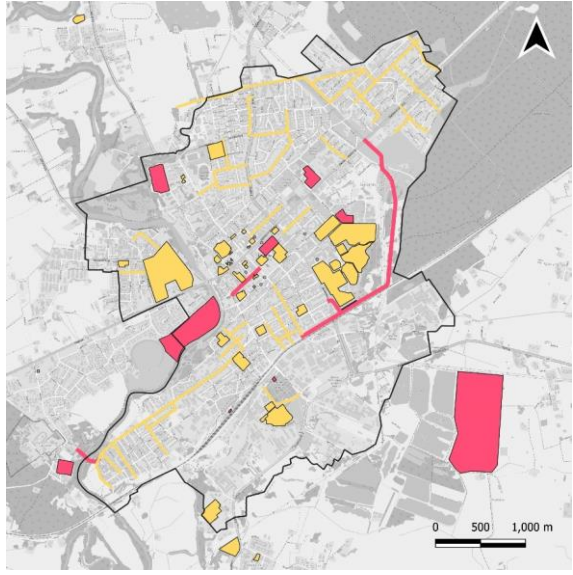
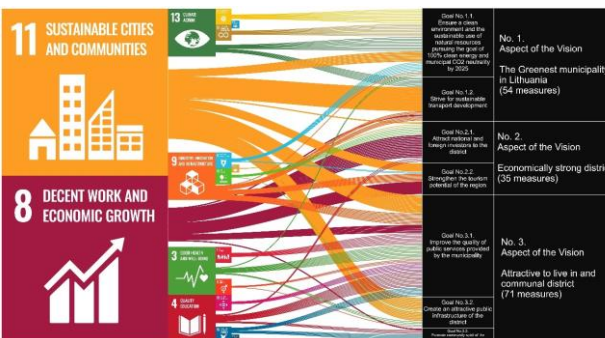
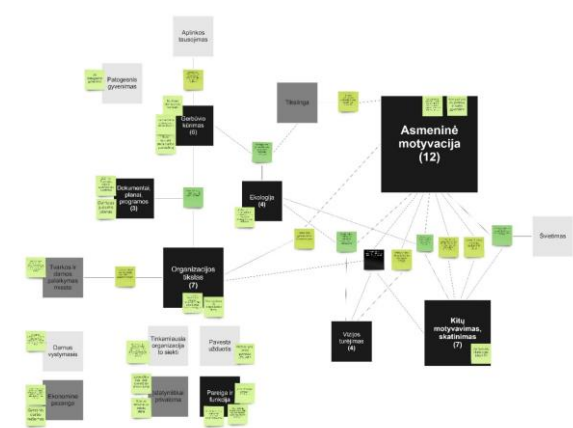
Jūsų darnumo kelionė:

1. Kaip ši tema atėjo į jūsų gyvenimą?
2. Kuo jus traukia/stumia ši tema?
3. Kodėl jums svarbu kalbėti apie darnumą?
4. Kas jus skatina/motyvuoja/stabdo kalbėti šia tema?
5. Ar keliate šią temą savo darbe ir/ar asmeniniame gyvenime?
6. Ar tauragėje yra skiriama vieta ir laikas šios temos aptarimui?
7. Kur ir kokiomis aplinkybėmis kalbate apie tai?
8. Ar planuojate sielti savo darbus ir gyvenimą su darnumo tema?
9. Ar tauragė kaip miestas turėtų siekti darnos?
10. Ar manote kad jūs galite prisidėti prie darnos siekimo?
11. Kas jums asmeniškai padėtų labiau įsitraukti į šią temą?

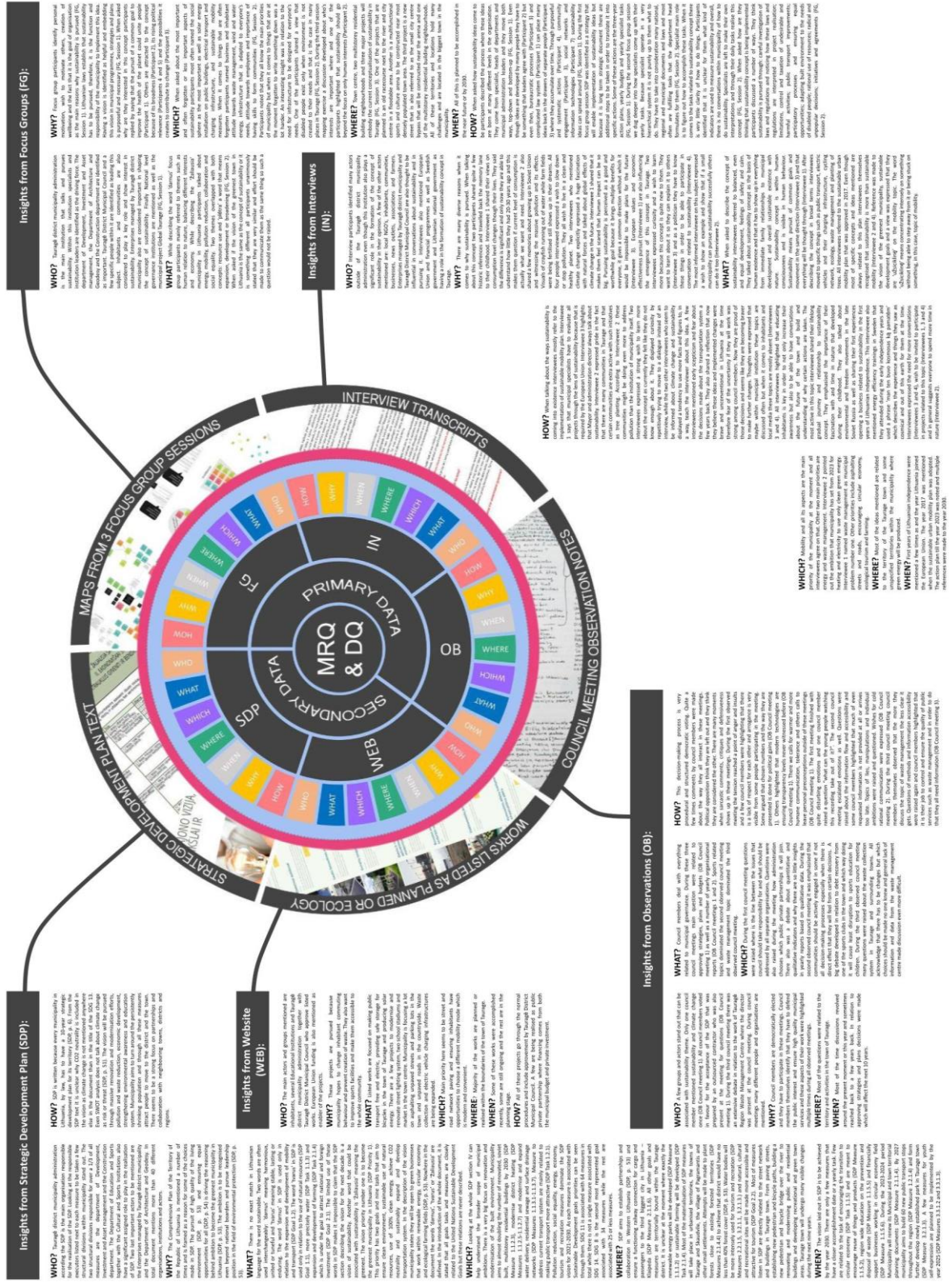
Baigiamieji klausimai:

1. Kokie drąsūs sprendimai priimami dabar arba buvo priimti neseniai, kurie, jūsų manymu, reikšmingai prisidės prie darnios Tauragės ateities?
2. Kokie yra ar turėtų būti 3 svarbiausi darnumo Tauragėje prioritetai?
3. Ko palinkėtumėte sau ir kitiems žmonėms, siekiantiems darnumo?

Appendix 3: Visualisation examples developed during analysis

<h3>EXCEL EXAMPLE</h3> <p style="text-align: center;">KAS formuoja, šiuo metu besivystančią, darnumo viziją Tauragėje?</p>  <p>Legenda Dažniai paminėta visuose 3 dokumentų šaltiniuose Kartais paminėta 2 iš 3 dokumentų šaltiniuose Retai minėta tik 1 iš 3 dokumentų šaltiniuose</p>	<h3>QGIS EXAMPLE</h3> 
<h3>MIRO EXAMPLES</h3>	
	

Appendix 4: Insights from each data source



Insights from Strategic Development Plan (SDP):

WHAT? The SDP is a key document in the strategic planning process. It outlines the long-term vision and goals of the organization. Key findings include the importance of sustainability and the need for a holistic approach to planning. The SDP also highlights the need for a strong leadership team and the importance of stakeholder engagement.

HOW? The SDP was reviewed and analyzed for key themes and insights. This involved a thorough reading of the document and the identification of key sections and findings. The insights were then synthesized and presented in a clear and concise manner.

Insights from Website (WEB):

WHAT? The website is a key communication channel for the organization. It provides information about the organization's mission, vision, and values. Key findings include the importance of a user-friendly website and the need for regular updates. The website also highlights the organization's commitment to transparency and accountability.

HOW? The website was reviewed and analyzed for key themes and insights. This involved a thorough reading of the website content and the identification of key sections and findings. The insights were then synthesized and presented in a clear and concise manner.

Insights from Focus Groups (FG):

WHAT? Focus group discussions provide a valuable opportunity for the organization to gather feedback from its stakeholders. Key findings include the importance of listening to the voices of the community and the need for a more inclusive decision-making process. The focus groups also highlighted the need for a strong communication strategy.

HOW? The focus groups were conducted using a structured approach. This involved the development of a discussion guide and the selection of a diverse group of participants. The insights were then synthesized and presented in a clear and concise manner.

Insights from Interviews (IN):

WHAT? Interviews provide a valuable opportunity for the organization to gain a deeper understanding of its stakeholders' perspectives. Key findings include the importance of one-on-one conversations and the need for a more personalized approach to communication. The interviews also highlighted the need for a strong relationship-building strategy.

HOW? The interviews were conducted using a structured approach. This involved the development of a list of key questions and the selection of a diverse group of participants. The insights were then synthesized and presented in a clear and concise manner.

Insights from Observations (OB):

WHAT? Observations provide a valuable opportunity for the organization to gain a deeper understanding of its stakeholders' behaviors and attitudes. Key findings include the importance of direct observation and the need for a more systematic approach to data collection. The observations also highlighted the need for a strong data analysis strategy.

HOW? The observations were conducted using a structured approach. This involved the development of a list of key behaviors and attitudes to observe and the selection of a diverse group of participants. The insights were then synthesized and presented in a clear and concise manner.

Insights from Interview Transcripts:

WHAT? Interview transcripts provide a valuable opportunity for the organization to gain a deeper understanding of its stakeholders' perspectives. Key findings include the importance of a thorough review of the transcripts and the need for a more systematic approach to data analysis. The transcripts also highlighted the need for a strong data analysis strategy.

HOW? The interview transcripts were reviewed and analyzed for key themes and insights. This involved a thorough reading of the transcripts and the identification of key sections and findings. The insights were then synthesized and presented in a clear and concise manner.

Insights from Council Meeting Observations (CO):

WHAT? Council meeting observations provide a valuable opportunity for the organization to gain a deeper understanding of its stakeholders' perspectives. Key findings include the importance of direct observation and the need for a more systematic approach to data collection. The observations also highlighted the need for a strong data analysis strategy.

HOW? The council meeting observations were conducted using a structured approach. This involved the development of a list of key behaviors and attitudes to observe and the selection of a diverse group of participants. The insights were then synthesized and presented in a clear and concise manner.

Insights from Strategic Development Plan Text:

WHAT? The strategic development plan text provides a valuable opportunity for the organization to gain a deeper understanding of its stakeholders' perspectives. Key findings include the importance of a thorough review of the text and the need for a more systematic approach to data analysis. The text also highlighted the need for a strong data analysis strategy.

HOW? The strategic development plan text was reviewed and analyzed for key themes and insights. This involved a thorough reading of the text and the identification of key sections and findings. The insights were then synthesized and presented in a clear and concise manner.