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Place Matters: Understanding the Influence of Emotional and Psychological Connections on Civic Engagement

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Abstract

The global trend of democracy has shown a marked decline, characterized by the erosion of democratic values and the rise of autocratic tendencies and political populism. Simultaneously, citizen participation in liberal democracies has notably decreased in recent decades. Engagement within participatory budgeting will be analyzed through the lens of sense of place. The research aims to investigate how individuals' emotional and psychological connections to their environments influence their involvement in participatory budgeting processes. Utilizing a constructivist grounded theory, a case study of Trelleborg's participatory budget initiative "One Million Ideas" was conducted, involving interviews with three participants. Seven categories emerged, which were examined in relation to concepts of place identity, place attachment, and belief in civic participation. The findings suggest a positive correlation between sense of place and engagement in participatory budget. This research calls for a reevaluation of participatory budgeting processes as a means to democratize democracy, emphasizing the importance of individuals' connection to their places.

Keywords: Participatory budgets, Sense of place, Place identity, Place attachment, Civic engagement

Word count: 18180

1. Introduction

The post-world war II era was characterized with a democratic growth, where over 20 countries worldwide transformed to democracies from autocracies or authoritarian rule. Fascist, totalitarian and militaristic ideologies appeared to be less convincing alternative governing systems to democracies. For many Western countries, there was a political, economic and moral collapse that proved these regimes to be delegitimizing, therefore, democracy demonstrated itself to be a better option (Merkel & Gerschewski, 2019). According to the Varieties of Democracy Project, liberal democracy culminated in 2012, where 42 countries were characterized as democracies. The democratic trend has been declining ever since, where most democratic countries have become less democratic with increasing levels of autocracy, political populism, higher degrees of personalized political power, and restrictions on free speech, as well as other impositions on democracy. This shift is often supported by the people (Kingsbury, 2023). Populism uses, to a greater extent, pathos in its political performance, meaning that emotions and intuition can sometimes carry more weight than rational or logical considerations (Aiolfi, 2022). It has also been recognized that mainstream politicians have used populist methods when speaking to the public even if populist agenda is not used (Ekström et al., 2018). While this could be seen as alarming, it should be noted that it is also of significance to include emotions and feelings of human beings not only rely on numbers and “objective” facts and is something that will be approached in this study.

Citizen participation in liberal democracies have in the last decades been decreasing. Citizen participation in politics reassures that elite powers are in check and that those in power serve all social, economic, and cultural groups in society (Pervin, 2017). Despite being conscious of the importance of civic engagement in politics, trust in political institutions has declined and the voter turnout has dropped in Western countries. There is an acknowledgment by many scholars that the legitimacy of governments or parliaments is diminishing. This is also confirmed by the citizens born in the latter half of the 20th century. They perceive that democracy as a political system is not as valuable compared to their older counterparts, meaning that there is now a higher support for political radicalism among the youth than previously. (Foa & Mounk, 2016). In deliberative democracy, citizen participation is at the core of reaching democratic values. Deliberative democracy focuses on doing democracy through dialogues and argumentation, both during and between elections. Hence, it is important to create and maintain arenas or spaces where discussions can be had, opinions can be made and questioned (Premfors & Roth, 2004). Liberal democracies are, according to Freedom House, something that should be sought after as they see this type of regime to be the one that assures freedom for all people (Freedom House, 2024). If the aim of Western society is liberal democracy then there might be a need for innovative ways of learning democratic values again. Three essential elements underpin a deliberative democracy. Firstly, conditions for a democratic society should be discussed and decided collectively. Secondly, legitimacy and reasoning can only be reached through deliberation. Lastly, the conditions established for the deliberative process should be selected and governed by the citizens themselves, ensuring equitable participation and free expression of opinions (Premfors & Roth, 2004). In line with the principles of deliberative democracy, participatory budgets offer an expression of these guidelines.

1.1 Aim

Building upon the context provided in the introduction and background questions are raised about the effectiveness of such democratic innovations in elevating citizen participation in Sweden. In addition, contemporary politics increasingly emphasizes the elicitation of powerful emotions and personal connections over-relying on logical reasoning and evidence. Inspired by humanist geography and environmental psychology, this analysis delves into civic engagement within participatory budgeting, particularly through the lens of sense of place, amidst the evolving political landscape.

The primary aim of this study is to analyze if a sense of place can provide insight into how individuals' emotional and psychological connection to their environment can impact their engagement with participatory budgets. Although humanistic geography typically avoids discussing the dichotomy between free will and structural factors, this study aims to address it, particularly through the perspective of the participants, being the secondary aim of this research.

1.2 Research question

Based on the aforementioned objectives, the research questions are stated as follows:

Primary research question: What are the primary determinants influencing engagement in participatory budgeting processes among participants?

Secondary research question: To what extent do participants believe that their sense of place originates from free will, and to what extent do they believe it originates from structural determinism?

1.3 Scope of study

As the nature of the study is very subjective, it will only look into the perceptions of those who will participate in the study. Therefore, it will not analyze what is, but rather what is perceived and how this perception can impact the engagement in the participatory budget. This will be recognized in the secondary research question mostly.

1.3.1 Conceptual delimitations

Sense of place is a broad concept which has been studied by numerous scientific disciplines. There are many definitions of the concept which come from different perspectives, which describe sense of place as the relationship between the human and place (or its geographical setting) (Ellery & Ellery, 2019). According to Khaidzir and Kamal (2023), there is a general notion that the concept sense of place includes the ideas of place attachment, place identity, and place dependence. In this study, particular emphasis will be on examining place attachment and place identity. Drawing from the perspectives of many human geographers and environmental psychologists (Ilovan & Markuszewska, 2022), this research will primarily analyze place attachment within the discourses and practices of place identity.

1.3.2 Locational delimitations

This research will only look into Swedish examples, more specifically those that are within a close or relatively close distance to Malmö, Sweden. This study will take a closer look at Trelleborg municipality and their participatory budget project, “One million ideas”. This participatory budget is selected due to the fact that the researcher can execute the chosen methods more satisfactorily, rather than conducting it through the internet.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

The structure of the thesis is designed to systematically explore the relationship between participatory budgeting and sense of place. Firstly, this will be done by delving into the key concepts while also utilizing the literature review as examples of research done in the field. Secondly, the chosen methods will be presented and discussed in the methodology section. Thirdly, findings will be presented from the conducted interviews with the participants. This will follow up with a discussion where key categories will be presented and examined through the lens of sense of place. Lastly, the thesis will be concluded with a summary of the main findings of the research and proposed future research within the field.

1.5 Background

1.5.1 Participatory budget

Participatory budget has its roots in Porto Alegre, a municipality in Brazil that previously had tendencies to invest public funds in areas with a majority of middle and upper-class residents. The municipality and the country at large faced issues of corruption, and a participatory budget would be a way to address the problems (SKR, 2019). The participatory budget would function as a civic school where residents would gain better knowledge of their rights and responsibilities, while also providing transparency into how the municipality and government operations function (Wampler, 2000). Since then, participatory budgets have been implemented worldwide by various governments, municipalities, and housing companies.

Participatory budgeting is a democratic process where citizens take part in deciding how certain resources should be allocated (SKR, 2019). It provides an opportunity for citizens to learn about the municipality's operations, how decisions are made, and how resources are determined (Shah, 2007). In concrete terms, it is a process where residents actively engage in decision-making processes and propose how the budget should be used and for what purposes. The purpose of the participatory budget is multifaceted: residents gain a voice in resource allocation, it enhances transparency between citizens and politicians/officials, citizens become part of deliberations rather than just being consulted, and resources are redistributed equitably among different socio-economic areas (Bartocci et al., 2022). The openness and accountability during the process help counteract patronage, corruption, and clientelism, which are often relevant to those excluded or marginalized in society. With a participatory budget, these societal groups can have a voice and participate in decisions that are in their interest, making governance and ruling more inclusive and democratic (Shah, 2007). The results of various participatory budgets worldwide have shown positive developments in democratization and decentralization of decision-making, with some experiencing better success than others (Nugra &

Mera, 2018).

1.5.2 Unveiling the emotions in participatory budgeting

Authors Yeh and Lin (2019), analyze the impacts of memories in participatory budgeting in a small village in Taiwan. In their article they discover that the collective memories deliver some sense of place for the locals, and also impacts the participatory budgeting process. The authors argue that the process itself could serve as a way of place-(re)making from the bottom-up (Yeh & Lin, 2019). Another study suggests there is a correlation between place attachment and citizen participation, in this case, in participatory budgeting (Anders-Morawska & Hereźniak, 2019). The authors suggest that a strong place attachment can motivate individuals to actively engage in participatory budgets, and conversely, involvement in a participatory budget can deepen individuals' place attachment (ibid). During the participatory budgeting process, people can express their wants and needs for a smaller issue in their lives. It becomes an arena where politics and peoples' desires meet and are to some extent realized. Even individuals who had previously been indifferent to their living locality, found themselves expressing and articulating opinions about their surroundings during the deliberative process (Yeh, 2023). In these cases, emotions do not only capture feelings and sentiments but also subjective experiences, attachments and meanings associated with a particular place or situation. Emotions in this context capture the broader spectrum of subjectivity and meaning, rather than simply referring to feelings of joy, anger, and sadness. This aligns with the central concept of sense of place, which will be pivotal in this study.

1.5.3 Participatory budgeting in Sweden and the democratic challenges

Sweden has had a history of successful citizen dialogue, the next innovative step would now be to begin utilizing participatory budget as a tool to realize the democratic values that the country stands for (Sobis, 2022). The various participatory budgets that have been implemented have given the impression that they were introduced due to the pressure Sweden received from the EU, the Swedish government, and the SALAR (SKR, 2019). SALAR urged all municipalities in Sweden to participate in an experiment where they would carry out a participatory budget. Through various incentives from SALAR, different municipalities would take part in the pilot study. Only 12 out of 290 municipalities participated in the pilot study, and of those 12 municipalities, none chose to continue with the participatory budget (Sobis, 2022). The slow establishment of participatory budgeting as a democratic tool in Sweden has mostly been due to the fact that there has not been an urgent need for ways to deal with corruption, clientelism, and general distrust in state institutions as they have been minimal according to the Swedish population. Previously, there was little necessity for participatory innovation to reshape the political landscape in Sweden. Yet, there have been various successfully executed participatory budgets in Sweden (Trelleborgs kommun, 2023; Kennedy, 2023; Upplands Väsby Kommun, 2014; Digidem Lab, 2020) that have been positively received by the participants and other residents (Sobis, 2022).

However, there has been a shift in attitudes toward the state, particularly among the younger generations. There has been a downward development in the confidence of the political parties as well as a decline in the interest of participating in political parties (Langlet & Allegretti, 2014). Swedish citizens have noticed a shift in political parties, perceiving them as prioritizing the interests of the state over serving as advocates and representatives for the citizens. As political parties have increasingly become voter-oriented, much points to a rise in mistrust stemming from unattainable

promises to garner support. Consequently, this trend results in a broader erosion of trust in the democratic system. This elucidates the reason behind the decline in political engagement among Swedish citizens regarding political parties (Möller, 2020). The erosion of democracy amplifies the relevance of participatory budgets in the future.

2. Theory Framework

2.1. Place Attachment

Place attachment, a broad concept with different perspectives, is generally defined as the emotional connection individuals form with specific locations, which is similar to Tuan's description of the concept of topophilia (Tuan, 1974; Popescu et al., 2022; Lewicka, 2011). According to Tuan (1974), topophilia is impacted by emotional memories, physical intimacy, and hope for the future.

The concept of place attachment is mainly used to describe the strength of attachment to a place and also to describe the processes of attachment and the meanings that are linked with a place (Popescu et al., 2022), resulting in individuals maintaining close proximity to those specific places (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001). There is a spatial aspect to which attachment is related, and cannot only be seen as a subjective experience outside the spatial referent (Ilovan & Markuszewska, 2022).

Seamon's (2014) phenomenological view of place attachment, specifically the holistic perspective, explains that place attachment cannot be viewed in isolation but should be seen through the interconnectedness and interdependence of geographical and cultural characteristics, degree of personal and social involvement, environmental aesthetics, individual and group identity with place and so on (Seamon, 2014), ultimately making place attachment a transactional and contextual concept that is influenced by social and physical factors (Ilovan & Markuszewska, 2022). Place attachment is not static and can change over time. The individual's feelings over a place are directly linked to their control over their environment (Seamon, 2014). When it comes to local life, a greater place attachment can increase the willingness to participate in local issues (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001). There are also indications that there is a correlation between length of residence, age, routine, and place attachment (Hay, 1998; Kindel, 2022). If people experience losing control over their living environment when unwanted changes occur, their attachment to the place will be impacted by the loss of control of their surroundings (Seamon, 2014). However, even through environmental unpredictability, place attachment can persist, offering a sense of familiarity and protection from outside things that are unfamiliar (Tuan, 1974).

There are two different traditions; qualitative and quantitative measures of place attachment (Lewicka, 2011). As most measures of place attachment and place attachment studies have been focused on the significance of place, which is the quantitative method, the qualitative method focuses mostly on the places and their meanings. Even though the meaning is to some extent woven into the dimensions of place attachment in the quantitative methods, it does not delve into the complexity of place attachment and its meaning (Lewicka, 2011). To fully understand a place's physical characteristics and the

strength of emotional ties to it, it is essential to comprehend the meaning of a particular place. This understanding, in turn, gives an insight into people's emotional attachment to a place (Stedman, 2003a; Stedman, 2003b).

Scannell and Gifford (2010) introduced a tripartite organizing framework when discussing place attachment. The first dimension, the person dimension, analyzes place attachment of both the individual and the group, the emotional and affective connection they have with a specific place. From an individual point of view, this emotional bond with a place can intensify if a setting evokes memories, milestones, realizations, and so on, and thus becomes more meaningful. The group can enhance its emotional bond with a place where symbolic meanings are shared, which can be something that is of the same culture, religion, or maybe even gender. It is frequently encountered that the group and individual levels of place attachment influence each other (Scannell & Gifford, 2010).

The second dimension, which is the psychological process of place attachment delves into people's ways of relating to a place, the interaction with a place that is of importance to them, which in turn is divided into three components: affect, cognition, and behavior. Place attachment is viewed as something that is grounded on emotions, and the authors use literature on displacement as further evidence to clarify their point, essentially stating that displacement can generate a feeling of loss, sadness, and longing, concluding that place attachment is primarily based on the first component, affection (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). Research emphasizes the sociological or socio-demographical attributes when the individual or person is in focus on the concept of place attachment. This resulting in place attachment being more centered on the characteristics of the person and not the place where the attachment occurs (Lewicka, 2011).

The second component of the process explains how people construct meaning, beliefs, and memories of the places they interact with, thus creating a personal bond with that place (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). Cultural and biological factors can be influential in gender roles, consequently impacting the perception and response to the environment (Tuan, 1974). One can say that the place attachment is correlated to the representation of the place's past. It could culminate to the point that an individual's connection to a place is so profound that it becomes representational of their identity (Scannell & Gifford, 2010).

The last component, behavioral attachment to place, concerns expressions of attachment through actions, for instance keeping a close distance to a place. Proximity-maintaining as a way to express attachment towards a place is supported by the literature on place attachment and length of residence and attempts to come back to the same place. There is a dialectical interplay between being away and having a proximity to home or a place, that can generate further meaning to the place. Being away

from home drives people to recognize the value of routine aspects of their environment. Another way to analyze place attachment as a behavioral expression is through examination of the reconstructions of place. There are instances where people have chosen to recreate a place, even if doing so meant that previous planning flaws reemerged. The behavior of place attachment is not always territorial (which is based on ownership and control of space), however, it is based on one's desire to keep close to a place. There are still strong indications that attachment to specific places is present (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). Despite increasing globalization, mobility, and cultural homogenization, place attachment still holds significance among humans (Lewicka, 2010). An increase in mobility among people only generates attachment to more places than no attachment to any place (Ilovan & Markuszewska, 2022).

The last dimension examines the place, more specifically the characteristics and the physicalities to which the attachment occurs. This is done in different geographical scales and is usually divided into two levels: the social place attachment and the physical place attachment. People's place attachment can very much differ based on what scale is being examined, where home and city had a stronger place attachment than neighborhood (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). There is evidence that there is a curvilinear relationship between place attachment and scale, indicating that the emotional bond to a place can increase to a certain point and then decrease. This is most prevalent in cities that are labeled as attractive. Conversely, a linear relationship has been noticed in those cities that are not viewed as attractive (Bernardo & Palma-Oliveira, 2011). The social aspect of place attachment is mostly focused on social ties, belongingness to neighborhood, and familiarity with other residents, compared to the physical aspect where the place attachment is steered by factors such as length of residence, ownership, and future plans for residence. An attachment to a social place requires an attachment to the group to which that place represents, which in turn is very much aligned with place identity. A place elicits feelings of attachment if the place promotes the specialness of a group. This can imply at times that social attachment can be derived or grounded on a physical place as an arena where the social interactions occur, or as a symbol for the group, consequently highlighting a central role physical elements can play in place attachment. Specificity can also be a factor in one's attachment and willingness to abandon or trade that place with another similar one. The more specified their place-focused attachment was, the more intense their loyalty toward that place (Scannell & Gifford, 2010)

As many studies examine the people and the individual attributes that makes one attached to a place, there are not as many researches that look deeper into what places foster place attachment (Lewicka, 2011). Droseltis and Vignoles (2010) argue for a deeper focus on the difference between places rather than emphasizing the individual. In their study, they asked their participants to arrange the places of their preference and assess them based on identity theories. The places were in turn assessed

grounding on theories of place attachment and place identity. The authors do not directly address the actual features of places that generate meaning, but rather the components of the meaning that is associated with a place (Droseltis & Vignoles, 2010).

2.2 Place identity

Seamon (2014) argues that place identity is one of the key factors that shape the creation of place and place attachment, which in turn is based on people's emotions and lived experiences within that specific place. Rituals and routines executed in the place reinforces the local and regional identities that are associated with them. The identities are not fixed but are constantly challenged or affirmed by different groups' perceptions and definitions of the place. An individual's sense of self is often integrated with places they feel connected to (Seamon, 2014). Raymond et al. (2010) explain place identity to be aspects of ourselves that are formed by feelings towards the physical environment and the symbolic association to a place. Place attachment influences how a person identifies with a place and which experiences they have with the place. A place with a strong attachment is usually seen as a place with a strong familiarity and is commonly described as home. How much a group relates, represents, or defines said home, contributes to how individuals perceive the identity of the place (Farrell & Carr, 2022). The identity of the place is not taken for granted, nor is the process of shaping this identity peaceful, bringing about constant negotiations for what characterizes the identity of a specific place (Ilovan & Markuszaska, 2022).

Paasi (2000) defined place identity in two different ways, identity of a place and place identity. The identity of a place is the characteristics of the place's nature, culture, and people that are utilized in various practices and discourses to differentiate one place from another. The latter, place identity, is people's factual identities that manifest, both in a collective and individually. Place identity is in this sense seen as an expression of one's identification with a place (Paasi, 2000). In other words, place identity is more of a social process that is formed by the perceptions of themselves and the views that are pushed onto others. Some factors that play a role in place identity are institutions, public opinion, and what is said in the media. Place identity is more connected to personal spatial history and someone's sense of belonging, rather than being tied to a specific region or territory (Paasi, 2003). Consequently, place identity elaborates how a perception of a location can become a part of someone's personal identity and how an individual chooses to define themselves (Raymond et al., 2010). This is put in contrast to territorial identity which is more focused on the homogeneity within a space, group, and culture. Territorial identity, therefore, addresses the opposition of the Other. This is to say that place identity is not concerned with primordial ethnos and their spatial ties but rather takes into consideration a more diverse demographic (Paasi, 2003).

The distinction between those who belong and those who do not is also discussed by Relph (1976) when he describes the terms insiderness and outsiderness. When an individual has a feeling of being inside a place they feel included, safe, and enclosed, consequently, increasing one's familiarity with the place's identity. When an individual is being alienated or separated from a place then their place experience is an experience of outsiderness, which may even result in feeling homesick for another place. The experiences of insiderness and outsiderness constitute a dialectic relationship, influencing how different places are perceived and experienced by different people. The strongest form of insiderness is something called "existential insiderness", something that is not self-conscious but familiar, which is felt by those who are in their home country or neighborhood. In contrast to existential insiderness, is "existential outsiderness" in which one usually feels a place where one has once been familiar with but is not any more or a place where there is a profound sense of alienation (Seamon & Sowers, 2008).

Place identity as a phenomenon can also be divided into two ways. The first one is, through social identification, easily explained as an individual identifying with a place by expressing some kind of membership of the population who are defined by that location adopting the population's behavior, and following the same "rules". The second way expresses place identity as a person's personal identity being shaped by their interactions with their physical environment, similar to how one's identity is shaped by the interactions between an individual and a social group (Kindel, 2022).

Similar to place attachment, place identity can also differ when examining it on different scales. The local identity tends to be stronger than the regional, however, national identity can also prove to be just as strong as the local at times (Lewicka, 2008). When considering the relationship between place attachment and place identity, one can feel an attachment to place without adopting the place identity (Kindel, 2022).

2.3 Belief in civic participation

Participatory democracy has in many instances been seen as complementary to representative democracy. Many countries with representative democracy are facing issues such as not representing the will of the people, being insensitive to informal negotiations resulting in improper decisions being made by politicians, and so on. A lower trust in politicians can in turn reduce voter turnout (Radzik-Maruszak et al., 2020). Deliberative democrats argue that people will develop trust in their government if they can partake in the political processes, which will generate further will to participate in political processes. This stands in contrast to the stealth democratic perspective, which argues that a population with high trust in government will lack the will to partake in political processes. They prefer a representative democracy without needing to directly be involved in

decision-making. The political dissatisfaction model resembles the stealth democratic view, saying that people who have low trust in their government are usually those who are most likely to participate in political processes (Lee & Schachter, 2019). Even if increasing citizen participation should result in an improved relationship between the government and its citizens, there is not much evidence to completely support that fact due to its complexity. It has been found that participation can positively affect trust and that it does not have any effect on trust. However, trust does have a role in the likeness of participation among citizens, where individuals with higher trust require more political interest to be willing to participate rather than someone with lower trust. The reason for that can be that lower-trust people have bigger incentives to participate than someone who believes that the government is capable of solving an issue (Holum, 2023).

There have been studies showing that if one belongs to an ethnic minority they are less likely to participate in local civic engagement (Torney-Purta et al., 2007). However, this premise is rejected by Stepick et al. (2008), arguing that ethnic minorities are not less engaged, but are rather engaged within their own communities. Another factor that could play a part in this equation is socioeconomic status, where lower socioeconomic standards are associated with lower civic engagement (Foster-Bey, 2008). A heterogeneous neighborhood can impact the level of participation in civic engagement. There is disagreement in research, where some show no correlation between the level of civic engagement and ethnic diversity and others point to a negative correlation, due to trust issues that may arise within the community. When it comes to gender, women tend to be more engaged in their communities, however, this can differ based on the activities (Dang et al., 2021). There also seems to be a positive correlation between the parents' level of civic engagement and their children's level of engagement. Additionally, if the parents are interested in political and social issues, this will result in a higher civic education among their youths. A higher trust among the population has resulted in a higher incitement for participation in societal activities (Cicognani et al., 2012). It is also common among non-voters, those who usually have lower educational levels, to value participation in their own community. In other words, participation can only be trusted if it is for the community (Butzlaff & Messinger-Zimmer, 2020). Even local patriotism (not to confuse it with nationalism or even xenophobia), can show a positive relation to both civic and political participation. Given that most of the local activities are for the reason of improving the local situation, citizens with a higher affection for their town, therefore, engage in these activities to promote its enhancements (Richey, 2023).

According to a study done by Ganuza and Francés (2012), those who actively participate in participatory budgets are usually those who otherwise also hold a political opinion and are politically interested. Those who have previously attended and taken part in participatory budgeting have also been those who have been most active in the process and been most deliberative compared to those who are doing it for the first time, not to suggest that all first-timers take a passive role, but rather that

it is more likely to be active if one has prior experience in participatory budgeting (Ganuza & Francés, 2012). Socioeconomic status can become a barrier entering participatory budgeting, resulting in a lack of engagement. Poorer households can have more pressing issues to face and end up not prioritizing engagement in participatory budgets (Grillos, 2017). One important thing to note is that the participants, in general, prioritize the process being fair and transparent, rather than focusing on the outcome of the participatory budget. It is the process itself that can enhance trust in the government and officials (Swaner, 2017).

Specifically in Sweden, the belief in participatory budgeting is low among politicians, but there are still other citizen participatory strategies that are seen of value to them such as citizen's dialogue. Sweden has a high percentage of trust for representative democracy and their political parties and has, therefore, not felt a need to incorporate citizens directly in their decision-making (Sobis, 2022).

2.4 Application

The theoretical framework will be integrated into various stages of this thesis. Firstly, it will guide the development of the interview questions, ensuring they are aligned with the key concepts relevant to the study. Additionally, it will serve as a foundation for coding the gathered data. Furthermore, it will be employed to scrutinize and analyze the findings, providing a structured lens through which the data will be evaluated and understood.

3. Literature review

Considering the limited research on the impact of sense of place on participatory budgeting processes, this dissertation will broaden its scope to encompass civic participation more broadly. Participatory budgeting will serve as the primary example studied, empirically. .

3.1 Interplay between participatory budgeting and sense of place

As mentioned in the background, there are studies that imply a correlation between participatory budgeting and a sense of place (Yeh & Lin, 2019; Yeh, 2023; Anders-Morawska & Herezniak, 2019). According to Yeh & Lin (2019), it has been found that during the process of the participatory budget, earlier/collective memories of a place influenced the suggestions put forward by the participants. Factors such as significant events or things that represented the town or its history served as a driving force when it came to voting, which in turn determined which suggestions won. The authors, however, did not claim that the only places where participatory budgets can be successful are in places with a strong sense of place. The article suggested that a participatory budget can become an arena for place-remaking and can be the very place where the participants' sense of place is reinforced and enhanced. Lastly, the authors suggested that collective memories and sense of place should be taken into account when starting a participatory budget as it has significance in its outcomes. However, Yeh (2023) researched further on the impact of collective memory and place consciousness and came to the conclusion that demographic characteristics can also play a part in fostering a sense of place when conducting a participatory budget, such as the community, the level of heterogeneity among the participants, and the motivation among those who took part in the participatory budgeting process. Participatory budgeting does not guarantee an increase in sense of place (Yeh, 2023).

A few articles have shown a positive correlation between place attachment and engagement in physical planning, suggesting that planning or design efforts can also increase engagement intentions (Manzo & Perkins, 2006; Estrella & Kelley, 2017). Through planning and design efforts communities and local authorities can potentially involve and foster healthy behavior among youths (Estrella & Kelley, 2017). This also reinforces the notion that participatory budgeting can serve as a mechanism to boost individual participation, particularly considering that participatory budgets often focus on physical settings. Participatory budgeting offers laypeople, such as youths, a platform to voice their opinions and actively engage in a deliberative process. This inclusion empowers them to feel they have the capacity to be heard and change their community in such a way that it is in line with their desires and needs (Yeh & Lin, 2019). This can demonstrate that participatory budget, together with sense of place, can be an encouragement for future civic engagement, becoming relevant when trying to analyze the determinants for participatory budgeting.

3.2 Enhancing civic participation through sense of place

Shin & Yang (2022) argue that there is a positive correlation between place attachment and an increase in civic participation. Residential length was also a variable in their research, which in itself did not have a significant implication on civic participation. However, together with place attachment length of residency indicated an increase in civic participation (Shin & Yang, 2022). Many authors can agree that place attachment and a sense of place positively impact civic engagement, especially place attachment. Place attachment as a mediating role as well as place attachment in itself has resulted in a heightened intention of participating in civic engagements. An interesting find by Zhu (2022) indicated that place attachment, more specifically neighborhood attachment only increased the latent or passive kind of participation. The author argued that social capital has a more active impact on civic engagement, in the sense that it has the power to mobilize people to participate in civic engagement, something that place attachment cannot do similarly. However, this is not to say that place attachment does not positively influence civic engagement (Zhu, 2022). The article written by Xu et al. (2022), shows that place attachment, indeed, does result in changed active behavior and does not agree with the previous statement that place attachment mostly affects the latent behavior regarding civic engagement.

Findings have pointed towards a positive relationship between civic participation and sense of place. Many studies have also suggested that the implications for their research are very fruitful in policy-making and planning, encouraging local governments to take account of people's sense of place if they need to better tackle the challenges the local communities face and become more inclusive (Dang et al., 2021; Wu et al., 2019; Xu et al., 2022). Xu et al. (2022) indirectly imply that one can have an emotional bond with several places simultaneously, however, one's attachment to other places does impact the sense of place to the current one and is more complex compared to those with a singular attachment. This study sheds light on those individuals or groups of people who may not be native to the place or country and how their relationship to other places can be influential to how they connect to the new place. Another perspective highlights the significance of the historical view on place attachment. Understanding local history has been shown to prove that place attachment is enhanced, thereby fostering increased social trust and civic engagement Stefaniack et al. (2017).

Social trust can bolster confidence in municipal institutions or officials, consequently enhancing the trust or belief in formal participation, such as participatory budgeting processes. Some studies have focused their research on analyzing the relationship between sense of place, trust, and civic engagement. It has been detected that trust has a positive influence on civic engagement, where it can foster a sense of belonging, cooperation, and motivation to participate in civic activities. Trust also has the power to encourage people to participate in the betterment of their communities and society,

collectively and individually (Stefaniack et al., 2017; Payton et al., 2005; Dang et al., 2021; Zhu, 2022; Acedo et al., 2019).

The findings of the article written by Shin and Yang (2022), suggest that immigrants' place attachment can be increased by understanding their origin or taking into account their ethnicity as it also impacts their place attachment in the new location they are residing. Regardless of its lack of generalizability, it gains relevance to this research as it takes into account the diversity of the population which is significant in a country like Sweden.

In addition to place attachment, place identity has also shown a positive relation to civic participation, however not in the most evident ways. Manzo & Perkins (2006) have studied how place attachment and sense of community influence community participation. Their results showed that being a part of the place's identity and having a sense of community also had a part in increasing civic engagement (Manzo & Perkins, 2006). The willingness to participate in civic engagement is influenced by place identity, as it reflects a person's self-perception and how that self-perception is reflected in the identity of the place. The greater one's place identity reflects their self-identity the more likely the individual will be to participate in civic engagement. It is suggested that a strong place identity can foster a sense of commitment igniting one's motivation to participate in the neighborhood's betterment (Acedo et al., 2019). Dang et al. (2021), studied civic engagement and place attachment through the theory of social identity and the findings confirmed the theory which said that one's connection to their neighborhood would be an indication of how much they are inclined to take voluntary action in their community.

3.3 Unraveling sense of place and civic engagement: exploring their multifaceted definitions

In the article written by Yeh & Lin (2019), sense of place is mostly defined as place-(re)making and the commemorations of each place. As place attachment is defined in many ways, it was apparent in the study of Yeh & Lin (2019) that the recollection of memories was a way to express affection to the town in question. However, when defining the main concepts, lines are drawn between collective memories, place-making, place attachment, and place identity, but not as clearly as one would assume (Yeh & Lin, 2019). Xu et al. (2022) conceptualized place attachment by using a tripartite model, which suggests that place attachment encompasses affection, cognition, and behavior. Place attachment has also in some instances been differently defined, where various studies have defined place attachment as something that occurs on an individual level, some have seen it as something that occurs on a collective plane, and others identify place attachment both on an individual and collective level (Shin & Yang, 2022; Xu et al., 2022; Dang et al., 2021). Various studies also add a historical perspective on their definition of place attachment, either it being that place attachment encompasses

shared history or the individual's history with the specific place (Manzo & Perkins, 2006; Yeh, 2023; Stefaniack et al. 2017). The historical perspective gains relevance when considering the focus of a participatory budget, especially in its inclusivity towards those who may not share the same historical background as the majority.

Place satisfaction is tightly connected to place attachment as it speaks to one's fondness of their setting which does not necessarily have to be physical. Xu et al. (2022) describe place satisfaction to be the perceived quality of a specific place including sociability, physical characteristics, and services. Place satisfaction does not require a relationship with a place for it to induce a positive emotion, in contrast to place attachment. However, it is a prerequisite for place attachment and an increase in place satisfaction increases the likelihood of individuals developing a deep attachment to place (Xu et al., 2022).

In numerous articles place identity had to be realized to achieve a positive place attachment. However, place identity was not always similarly defined. In Manzo & Perkins (2006) sense of community was a central concept of which they tried to understand civic participation. Sense of community is described as being a member of a community, belonging to a specific group, and connecting to the community based on shared history, interests, or concerns (Manzo & Perkins, 2006). This is closely related to place identity and can therefore, also be synonymous with the concept itself as it relates to a feeling of belonging to a place or a community and familiarity with that specific place. Regional characteristics are also important and should be considered when studying the relationship between civic engagement and sense of place. By regional characteristics, the study suggests that factors such as mobility, housing dynamics, and population diversity can also be of significance when examining the level of civic engagement of the population (Shin & Yang, 2022). Place identity has also the potential to develop a sense of responsibility and empowerment among individuals. In addition to that place identity can also act as a source of resilience and empowerment, especially among those who belong to marginalized groups in society. An ethnic minority can through their place identity participate in those actions that are more specifically aimed to preserve and promote their heritage and pride (Estrella & Kelley, 2017).

3.4 Exploring methodologies, variables, and intersectional perspectives

By observing and interviewing participants as well as conducting document analysis, they managed to gather data about the effect sense of place has in the participatory budget process (Yeh & Lin, 2019).

To analyze their findings they utilized the structural equation model as a way to determine if residency length has any significance in engagement in civic participation (Shin & Yang, 2022). When it comes

to methodological choices in similar studies, there is a large amount of quantitative studies that look at the relationship between sense of place and civic engagement. There is a lack of research that analyzes place attachment and civic engagement, especially deliberative participation. Despite the deep and qualitative nature of the theme and parameters, the majority of the few studies that were found were quantitative (Shin & Yang, 2022; Wu et al., 2019; Acedo et al. 2019; Stefaniack et al., 2017; Dang et al., 2021, Payton et al., 2005; Xu et al., 2022). This indicates that there is a need in the field that acknowledges and delves into the complex and intricate concept of place attachment.

Considering the individualistic character of the topic, many studies overlooked variables such as gender, race, ethnicity, class, etcetera (Dang et al., 2021; Estrella & Kelley, 2017; Shin & Yang, 2022). This can in turn disregard factors that might be potent powers to influence civic engagement. Dang et al. (2021) demonstrate this by arguing that there have been significant differences between the level of civic engagement among different races and socioeconomic classes. Arguing that, historically, ethnic minorities have not had the same opportunities to engage in civic participation. Although aware of this, Dang et al. (2021) did not include ethnic origin when conducting the study which was conducted in Germany, a country with a diverse population. There is a pressing need in this specific field to also include other factors such as gender, socioeconomic class, race, and ethnicity. Many researchers have acknowledged this when conducting their studies. In addition to that, it could point to the wider concern that there is not enough research done on the topic. It may also indicate that they have observed the differences in civic participation between these different social groups, which, in turn, offers further understanding into the participants' interpretation of how they perceive their actions to be driven by free will or structural determinism.

Civic participation/engagement has been defined by several authors as both formal, structured forms of participation such as voting, and attending meetings, as well as informal, everyday acts of civic engagement, such as engaging in local community projects or participating in activism (Payton et al., 2005; Wu et al., 2019; Acedo et al., 2019; Estrella & Kelley, 2017). The choice of participation can also have a significant impact on the results when studying the willingness of people to participate and how sense of place can influence participants' level of engagement in a participatory budget. Given that some individuals may be more inclined to participate in informal civic engagement, it could pose a disadvantage when equating participatory budget to civic engagement. This assumption becomes particularly critical in the formal context of participatory budgeting, which may be perceived as politically charged by some.

3.5 Application

The literature review will be employed throughout this thesis in multiple ways. The various studies conducted on the topic will serve as valuable examples to compare and contrast with the research findings. Additionally, it will provide a foundation for comprehending the existing body of knowledge on the subject. This research notably differs from most previous studies in the field, which are predominantly quantitative or do not address the relationship between sense of place and participatory budgets, which this research will try to do. Moreover, Civic engagement will be examined in close relation to participatory budgeting, treating them as interconnected processes. By doing so, this study aims to explore the broader implications of sense of place in participatory budgeting processes.

4. Methodology

This study is underpinned by a constructivist understanding of knowledge. Knowledge is gained through the simultaneous interplay between multiple mental constructions, which are both socially and experientially based. Within this framework, emphasis is placed on the subjective nature of a person's perception. These perceptions are neither more nor less true, nor are they considered as objective but rather viewed as constructed interpretations based on the individual's background. The perceptions will never become fixed, as the individual gains more information about their realities and is, therefore, always changing (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). By recognizing the participant's subjective construction of place identity and place attachment among participants, this study has the potential to become heuristically enriching and contribute to filling the current gap in knowledge regarding the relationship between participatory budgeting and sense of place. Although this research may develop definitions for specific concepts, that information will not be explicitly disclosed to the participants. The intention behind this decision is to maintain a degree of separation between the researcher's understanding and any influence on the interviewees' responses. By withholding these definitions, the research ensures that participants' responses and understanding remain uninfluenced. However, this research will also consider the participants' situatedness, as proposed by Haraway (1988). By acknowledging the participants' unique context and experiences, this study aims to shed light on how the individual perspective influences the formation of knowledge. The researcher will also become a facilitator and participant in this study as their role will be to interpret the answers of the participants which in turn will also give away their preconceived notions about the subject and phenomenon. In this study, the researcher will take on the dual role of a participant as well as a facilitator. They will be able to guide the discussion and interpret the responses of the interviewees (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Nevertheless, one should keep in mind that there runs a risk of inadvertently revealing the researcher's preconceived notions about the subject and phenomenon. This brings to light the complexity of the research process and the researcher's need to navigate through their own biases while conducting meaningful interviews. To mitigate the potential risks, the researcher implemented proactive measures. By deliberately abstaining from obtaining prior knowledge about the location that was visited, which happened to be the same city where the participatory budgets were conducted. Furthermore, the researcher refrained from informing themselves about each participatory budget that the participants have been involved in. This strategy was aimed to prevent biases that could arise from preconceived notions or official representation of the place that has been presented by media, local authorities or other institutions. By taking this approach, an environment was facilitated where the participants could freely express their opinions and perceptions about the topic, with minimal influence from the researcher. This would also guarantee that the participants' perspectives reflect their firsthand experiences (Wisdom & Cresswell, 2013).

4.1 Reflexivity in qualitative research

Reflexivity is defined as a researcher's evaluation of their own role in the research process. This is done by acknowledging and addressing different factors that can influence the outcome of the study (Olmos-Vega et al. 2023). While the researcher's background as a child of immigrants generates a unique lens on diversity and integration, its direct influence may be limited. However, a potential bias that should be considered is the researcher's possible lack of firsthand experience with what is so called existential insideness or outsideness, due to them not being fully able to identify with a place as an ethnic minority living in Sweden. Another factor that should be considered is the age disparity

between the researcher and the participants. It can introduce a bias into the study, potentially resulting in misinterpretations or misunderstandings due to generational differences. This could affect the depth of understanding and rapport established during the interview. Additionally it can change the dynamics between each party as one might feel inferior or superior to the other. A female researcher can influence the dynamics of interaction as well, particularly in mixed gender settings. The response from participants may differ based on their perceptions on the researcher's gender. The methodology, to some extent, mirrors the researcher's identity as a member of a minority. This identity has influenced the emphasis on raising the voices of those who are usually marginalized or overlooked in society. In this case, it can offer a different understanding of the rural in comparison to the urban, a more sympathetic understanding which can color the findings in a different way.

4.2 Research design - case study

This research is structured as a case study (Flyvberg, 2011), meaning that this research will only focus on the relationship between sense of place and participatory budget in the municipality of Trelleborg, more specifically their participatory budgeting initiative "En miljon idéer". As this study specifically focuses on the relation to the environment, a case study seemed fitting (Flyvberg, 2011). Given the complex and exploratory nature of the research questions, this study adopts a qualitative research design. The research aims to gather insightful findings from the collected data allowing core codes and themes to emerge organically (Bryman, 2012). Due to the unfamiliar field of research, this approach is deemed appropriate. This study will exemplify the typical idiographic approach that a qualitative case study can take. Stake (1978) argues that case studies, despite their non-generalized nature, can still remain preferable to the readers due to their perceived down-to-earth characteristics, potentially aligning with their personal experiences. Despite the limitations that come with conducting a case study, it can still offer value to both the research community and individuals interested in the topics, especially when it concerns something as intimate and individual as their ties and bond to a particular place.

As mentioned in the section on research philosophy, the researcher has taken precautions to ensure that their researcher's bias and preconceived notions would be kept to a minimum. This is supported by Yin (2015), who argues that when conducting a case study, researchers must exhibit strong listening skills and remain vigilant. It is done to ensure that the participants are not influenced by the researcher's preconceptions or ideologies. Thus, there is a great emphasis on active listening if one wants to maintain the integrity and validity of the research process. It should also be mentioned, that Yin (2015), also suggest that one should be familiar with the issues being studied, which was assured, but not with the case or the geographic location being studied, but rather the theoretical background and other similar literature to guarantee that the research questions will be answered. The researcher maintained their objectivity regarding the portrayal of the setting of Trelleborg, by not preparing and having minimal information about the participatory budgets and Trelleborg municipality. This deliberate decision aimed to mitigate the influence of external sources and prioritize the information provided by the participants. By ensuring that the participants' perceptions served as the primary source of information regarding the participatory budget and Trelleborg, the researcher sought to reduce the risk of biased interpretation of their opinions and perceptions. This approach made it possible for the research to uphold the integrity and authenticity of the findings by allowing the participants' voices to shape the narrative.

4.3 Data collection

4.3.1 Interviews

To support the structure of interviews and ensure a comprehensive coverage of the specific topics, while also allowing space for narrative elements, the study adopted a semi-structured guideline (see Appendix A + B). The questions were asked and formulated in a way that created room for interpretation by the participants. These actions were undertaken because they enabled the exploration of the topics of place attachment, place identity, civic engagement, and involvement in participatory budgeting processes. The researcher ensured that the questions were open-ended to guarantee that the participants were not led on by the theoretical knowledge that was gathered by this research. For this research, semi-structured interviews were opted, considering the subjective nature of the topic. This approach makes it possible to obtain the necessary answers while also giving the participants the freedom to express their personal thoughts as well as enabling the researcher to follow up with more specific questions based on their responses, facilitating a deeper exploration of their perceptions and opinions and adding further clarifications (Bryman, 2012). Before starting the interviews, consent was sought from all participants to record the sessions, which proved instrumental in maintaining focus, and relieving the researcher from note-taking (Yin, 2015). Prioritizing note-taking could have impacted the researcher's focus on the content of the interviews, and hindered the full focus on the interview, thus minimizing the risk of overlooking crucial information (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2008).

Two interviews were conducted with three different people. The first interview was executed with two individuals in their 70s, who were in a relationship. The second interview was with an elderly woman. The first interview generated a multifaceted exchange that was characterized by simultaneous responses, individual insights, and discussions. The first interview was more like an interactive dialogue rather than a conventional interview. This could have both been to an advantage, as they could have spurred on thoughts and opinions that would not have been thought of if one or the other had not mentioned it in the first place. However, it could have also limited the participants in such ways that they might have not been able to fully express themselves or hold back as a consequence of the other partner being present. Reflecting on the first interview, the researcher identified areas warranting further revision and exploration of the interview questions that might have been fruitful to the research. Before proceeding with the interviews, a mock interview session was conducted to detect any possible flaws in the questions or if any rewording was necessary for better clarification. This exercise aimed to refine the questions and ensure that they are comprehensible. The interviews were conducted in Swedish as per the participants' wishes, as it was easier to communicate in their native language. Writing the research in English while conducting interviews in Swedish could present its challenges as things could get lost in translation specifically when studying emotions and perceptions, specifically where words could be emotionally charged and might not have an English counterpart. Nonetheless, to maintain consistency, all references used in the results and analysis will be translated from Swedish to English.

Lastly, during the first interview, the male interviewee offered a comprehensive tour of the village. There the participant continued to highlight the history of the village and local initiatives that they have taken part in. This also included the project that was suggested by the male participant in the participatory budget, which was the project that won. This part of the interview was informal and similar to an everyday conversation.

4.4 Data analysis: Grounded theory

Given the relatively limited existing research on the relationship between participatory budget and sense of place, this research will adopt grounded theory as its framework for data analysis. It offers a flexible approach which is well-suited for underexplored areas of inquiry. Hence, this study will take an inductive approach, taking into account insights that emerge directly from the data without preconceived hypotheses or theories (Bryman, 2012). This research will depart from the objective perspective often associated with grounded theory. It will, instead, adopt a constructivist approach, founded upon Charmaz's (2017) approach to grounded theory. This methodological choice aligns with the study's focus on the participants' perceptions as central to the acquired knowledge. Additionally, adopting this approach will allow the researcher to explore the diverse perspectives held by both the researcher and participants while being critical of their perceptions and biases throughout the research process.

The key tool in grounded theory is coding. The process involves examining the collected data and breaking them down into different codes which are given labels. This data analysis tool is useful as it exempts the researcher from utilizing predefined codes. Hence, giving the researcher the ability to shape the codes based on the data that has been gathered (Bryman, 2021). Through coding the gathered data from each interview are broken down, analyzed and categorized to unveil underlying patterns and themes, until a core category emerges that signifies a theme or concept within the dataset (Mills et al., 2006; Bryman, 2021). This was carried out by familiarizing with the data and organizing the data, through analysis and codification. The researcher should acknowledge their values and beliefs on the research outcome and process while also providing detailed descriptions of the research context. The aim behind this is to deepen the richness of the data and capture the participants experiences (Mills et al., 2006). Throughout the coding process the researcher has maintained an open mind to different interpretations and perspectives to mitigate bias as much as possible. However, it is also recognized that the theoretical framework could have played a role during the coding process, as the research is based on the concepts of place identity, place attachment and civic engagement literature. During the coding process, different concepts were discovered in the dataset such as....., which in turn were revised and compared to other concepts and indicators, consequently generating different categories. The final categories that will be used in the findings are....

In regards to the subquestion, there have been few interview questions that have directly asked about their opinions regarding structural determinism vs free will. Therefore, it will mostly be the researcher's interpretation of the participants' answers of how they perceive their sense of place. The researcher's bias may come under scrutiny, however, the interpretation of the subtext will unveil a more unfiltered and raw understanding of the participants view of the question. There can be tension between the exploratory nature of grounded theory and the need to tightly define a research question (Bryman, 2021). However, this conflict has been attempted to be avoided by posing open-ended research questions, as well as interview questions. Nevertheless, relying on that type of questions can also present some challenges, especially when dealing with a limited number of participants.

4.5 Sampling strategy

The sampling approach employed in this research was purposive (Bryman, 2021), focusing specifically on those who have been engaged within participatory budgets. The research aimed to understand the motivations behind people's involvement in participatory budgets and how sense of place this decision. As a result, the selection criteria for participants were stringent to ensure that the

data would be of relevance for this research. Efforts were made to gather a diverse group of participants, however this was not achieved. This, together with the fact that challenges arose in recruiting people, generally, resulted in a smaller sample size than initially desired.

As many participatory budgets involve participants that are under 18 years old, this research chose not to include them. The decision to specifically interview participants aged 18 years and above was primarily driven by practical considerations, notably convenience. While participants under 18 years could have provided valuable insights, it would require additional administrative steps, such as obtaining parental consent for adolescents, which could result in ethical reconsiderations and complexities to the study. By interviewing more experienced people it can serve as an advantage to the research when it comes to history and sense of place as they may be more knowledgeable about the topic. While a larger and more diverse sample size is preferred in research endeavors (Bryman, 2021), achieving this was not feasible. The time constraint served as the main reason for not being able to diversify the sample size. There were efforts to engage people with other cultural backgrounds by reaching out to areas such as Hisingen and Biksåpsgården in Gothenburg. These areas were targeted due to their high percentage of residents with a foreign background, with the intention of capturing a broader range of perspectives and experiences related to participatory budgeting. The participants, however, are a part of the periphery of Trelleborg, representing a segment of the population that is often marginalized in comparison to their urban counterparts. This geographical distinction is noteworthy as it can influence lived experiences and perceptions. By focusing on individuals from the periphery, this research can shed light on the perspectives of these often overlooked demographic group. Nevertheless, despite these proactive outreach efforts, the desired participation from individuals from diverse backgrounds was not achieved, which in turn resulted in a homogenous sample which could impact the research findings negatively.

One method employed to identify potential participants for this study involved utilizing social media, specifically Facebook. Initially, a personal post was made by the researcher targeting those who knew the researcher personally. Subsequently, announcements were posted in other Facebook groups that focused on community concerns or related topics. These groups were selected based on relevance to participatory budgeting, often incorporating the names of the towns or cities with prior experience in such processes. Despite these efforts, no suitable candidates were identified through this method. Concurrently, emails were sent to municipalities with a history of participatory budgeting. emails were sent to municipalities such as Gothenburg, Trelleborg, and Lund, among others. Although responses were received from several municipalities, the limited timeframe constrained their ability to find suitable participants. Trelleborg municipality, located three participants that were willing to take part in this research. For this reason, the focus on this research became Trelleborg and their participatory budgeting initiative, known as "En miljon idéer" or "One million ideas" in English. A snowball sampling was also attempted but had no success.

4.6 Trustworthiness and authenticity - a research evaluation

In contrast to the validity and reliability of evaluating qualitative research, this research will be using other criteria to be judged. The data that is gathered in this study will be evaluated by the criteria of trustworthiness and authenticity (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This becomes an alternative approach to assessing qualitative research, which differs from validity and reliability as it assumes that there is an objective truth beyond the social world (Bryman, 2021). There are four aspects of trustworthiness and the first one is credibility, which is about reassuring that the research is done accurately, through

respondent validation and triangulation. Respondent validation entails assurance about the accuracy and interpretation of the respondent when writing the research findings. Triangulation involves many data sources to confirm the results (Bryman, 2012). To enhance the credibility of this research, proactive steps have been taken to validate the accuracy of the interpretation made from the respondents' interviews. After completing the interpretation of the respondents' experience of engaging in participatory budget and their relationship with the place and its identity, the finished text was sent to them and a confirmation was requested to ensure that the perceptions have not been misconstrued or misinterpreted. By taking this action, the research can come a step closer to accurately reflect the participants' viewpoints and it also works as a guarantee to ensure that the researcher themselves have not been biased. Transferability, which is the second aspect of trustworthiness, entails the extent to which research can be applied or transferred to other contexts or settings (Bryman, 2012). To fulfill this criterion this study will be as detailed as possible when describing the context of the research and the participants, to be able to make an easier assessment about the applicability of the findings. The third criterion, dependability, ensures that the research is consistent over time and across other scientists or researchers. This is done by tracking every step the researcher has taken. Lastly, confirmability seeks to address the objectivity and neutrality of the scientific process. This is done by ensuring that the findings are not influenced by the researcher's biases or preconceived notions. Similar to dependability, confirmability is achieved by external auditing to establish a research process that remains free from value judgments and hidden agendas (Bryman, 2012). The third and fourth criteria will be upheld by assuring that there is a supervisor who will overlook the whole process and will have the ability to critique and provide input.

Additionally, four authenticity criteria concerning the broader political impact of the research. The first criterion, fairness, examines the representation of diverse populations (Bryman, 2012). Due to challenges in gathering sufficient data on the topic, this criterion will not be fully met, posing a potential weakness of the research. However, despite this limitation, the study is expected to significantly contribute to the field, as few existing studies are addressing this specific topic. The second criterion for authenticity, ontological authenticity, evaluates whether the research aids individuals in comprehending their social environment (Bryman, 2012). This study has the potential to achieve this goal. Despite its focus on individuals, it can still raise awareness and prompt individuals to reevaluate their understanding of the phenomenon. The research will also be shared with the participants themselves, in an effort to enhance their understanding of the social milieu as well. The third criterion, catalytic authenticity, examines whether the research can act as a way to engage people to take action and change their circumstances (Bryman, 2012). Given the nature of this topic, the research holds the potential to catalyze such action. Merely interviewing people, can spark conversations and stimulate further reflection among participants, as well as their broader social network. Lastly, tactical authenticity, suggests that research must empower individuals to take steps to initiate action (Bryan, 2012). It is important to note that this study, despite its depth, has a limited sample size, the scope of its impact may be constrained by the small sample size.

4.8 Ethical considerations:

The gathered data has been recorded through a dictaphone with the consent of the interviewees. Ensuring compliance with security protocols, when transcribing the interviews from the dictaphone the actual identities of the participants have not been disclosed. The research findings will remain from including details that could result in the identification of the participants. Each interviewee has not been mentioned by their name to safeguard their identity and privacy. As previously stated, due to

ethical standards it necessitated that individuals under 18 years were not included as participants in the study.

5. Findings and Discussion

5.1 Findings

The forthcoming presentation of interview findings will begin with an overview of the two interviews with the three participants. This initial summary will serve as an introduction to a more comprehensive analysis. Through this approach, an extensive understanding of the research outcomes will be provided.

Each of the three participants shared personal experiences and perspectives related to their individual engagements. The participant from Södra Åby has been a chairperson of the Södra Åby local heritage association, where she has been active since 1976. The association has grown, especially after the association, under her leadership, managed to secure funding to purchase a location where they could meet. This resulted in an increased level of activity of the association. She has also participated in Leader Söderslätt and other EU projects, one of them being a rural co-working café, which started before the pandemic and restarted by her after the pandemic. Her constant involvement in civic engagement is mostly motivated by her strong desire to contribute to her social nature. Similarly, the couple from Skåre have also been active in previous civic activities, the woman stating Red Cross and the man stating a political association. The couple's involvement in the village council goes back to approximately 20 years, stating that the motivation behind this engagement is to positively contribute to the community. The man explains that they have worked hard to get municipal representatives to improve the environment in Skåre. Moreover, the participants extended their insights to encompass different views on civic engagement, touching upon topics such as gender dynamics. Each participant remains actively engaged in their local associations and councils to this day.

Among the interviewees, a fondness for historical knowledge is evident in the couple from Skåre and the female participant from Södra Åby. They all presented a familiarity with the historical narratives, demonstrating an intimate understanding of their cultural heritage. For the individual from Södra Åby, when describing the village to the researcher, she explained about the history and how it was formed. She explained how the village was one of the few remaining circular villages, displaying her knowledge about the origin of the village. One interviewee explained that the cultural heritage of the place played a significant role in their decision to make their home of that particular place. He demonstrated his historical knowledge when explaining the Skåres historical significance. Right outside his house, there was a defensive embankment from the 1700s, built to protect against Danish attacks, although no war occurred. Some significant activities date as far back as the 1300s, including the export and import of herring, which was a major industry until the fish disappeared. The woman from Södra Åby was also one of the families in the village that had lived there for generations. Both the male participant from the first interview and the female participant from the second interview actively contributed to the preservation of the local history and educating others about the history of the place they live in.

The participants elaborated on their experience with the participatory budgeting process which they had taken part in and won. When asked about their involvement, they elaborated on the details of their proposals and the thoughts behind them. The proposal for Södra Åby was to install two goals for an existing field that the children of the village use to play football, as well as an extended roof for a building where the inhabitants can use to rest and socialize under, and an outside gym. The proposal

from Skåre was a deck onto the ocean that had seatings. The male participant was the one who designed the deck and the bench. The participant had more recently won another participatory budget which included building two beach huts where people could change their bathing suits. All participants viewed the participatory budget as a way for smaller communities like Skåre and Södra Åby to secure priority within the municipal agenda. The participants emphasized that there are inherent challenges that smaller communities might have harder to pass due to the small population size. Continuing to explain that one proposal must at least have 50 votes to be eligible for voting, which can become a hurdle they cannot always pass. All three participants have previously participated in the participatory budget that Trelleborg municipality has started called "One million ideas". The couple explained that Trelleborg municipality have conducted the participatory budget by dividing the city into northern and southern Trelleborg, with Skåre belonging to the northern area, which they were skeptical of considering it is in the southern part of Trelleborg geographically.

Both Skåre and Södra Åby, being small villages, fostered a strong sense of community that the participants emphasized multiple times. All three interviewees expressed their appreciation of the small size of their villages, which they felt contributed to their feelings of belonging and comfort. This was exemplified by the participant from Södra Åby, who recounted an incident during New Year's Eve 1979/1980. When everyone was snowed in some families faced problems due to canceled travel plans, neighbors came together to help each other. They invited those who had not prepared any dinner, regardless of their usual social circles, demonstrating the nature of the community of Södra Åby. The participant from Södra Åby highlighted that the community also was welcoming of newcomers. This sentiment was echoed by the couple from Skåre. When they acknowledged their difficulties with some newcomers who preferred to keep the community closed off from outsiders - an opinion the couple and those who have lived in Skåre for a longer time, did not agree with.

The male participant from Skåre and female interviewee from Södra Åby expressed that the villages are skilled when it comes to local activities for the inhabitants. According to the woman from Södra Åby, social interactions are facilitated by the meeting places. She argues that having places to meet allows them to deepen their connections and get to know each other better, also giving them more opportunities for the social activities to continue. In Södra Åby they offer seasonal activities such as barbeque and pizza nights, where they share conversations and give the newcomers the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the people who already live there. In Skåre they often have community projects that serve as a way to strengthen the ties within the community, however, the couple expresses their desire to engage the younger population of Skåre, which they feel would enrich the community further. Södra Åby did not share similar issues when it came to local engagement, however, it has been something that they have dealt with previously.

When asked about the villages they lived in, the participants identified Skåre and Södra Åby as rural places with typical rural characteristics. All interviewees expressed concern about the lack of attention given both Skåre and Södra Åby in the municipality's agenda. The female participant from Södra Åby disclosed that the official representation of the village is sometimes devalued, an opinion she did not agree with. She mentioned that there used to be market days in the center of Trelleborg featuring goods from the villages, which were eventually discontinued. Despite the elimination of the market of Trelleborg, the people of Södra Åby decided to revive the market days in their own village instead.

The couple from Skåre shared that they enjoy the small-community atmosphere of Skåre, which aligns with their desires and who they are as people. The municipality of Vellinge came up as an opposite to Skåre, arguing that Skåre is not a place where status matters more compared to Vellinge.

Both of them have lived in different places. The woman, originally from Lund, said that Skåre has become her home, though Lund will always hold a special place in her heart. The male participant explained that he had lived in various Swedish coastal cities and towns but never felt at home or enjoyed the places a lot. Being near the water and the sea was important to him and aligned with his personal interests. After moving around on the west coast of Sweden, he found Skåre to be the place for him. When asked about their perception of the official representation of Skåre, they noted that it has started to change due to increased tourism and the growing popularity of the beaches.

The participants expressed that there is an inadequate bus service, particularly for young people who rely on public transportation to commute to and from school or work. In Södra Åby, the existing bus schedule was deemed insufficient by the participant, as it has become difficult to ensure safe and efficient travel. The interviewee from Södra Åby argued for the need for a more tailored and accessible transportation system, emphasizing its potential to foster a sustainable and thriving community. Such improvements, they contended, could contribute to creating a more livable and safer village environment for all the residents. Similarly, in Skåre, the absence of the bus stops was identified by the couple as a notable disadvantage. A way to weigh up this lack of commute was to ensure that there is a bicycle track on the roads. According to the couple from Skåre, there have been many attempts by Skåre and its residents. Despite initial positive momentum regarding infrastructure improvements in the neighboring municipality's stance, Vellinge, Vellinge's priorities shifted, leaving the community of Skåre in limbo regarding this essential infrastructure project.

The couple went on to explain how Skåre looks like and how they preferred living so close to the sea. During the tour of the village the man precedes to tell me that Skåre is a typical Swedish fishermen society, which he exemplified by pointing out boat wheels that people have displayed on their houses or miniature boats in window displays in different homes. There was a nearby beach that the couple explained has become bigger due to a storm, which is something they are used to as the place is characterized by harsh winds and damp conditions during the autumn and winter months. Nonetheless, the warmth and vibrancy of the summers compensate for the drawbacks.

Many villages originated with the introduction of the railway traffic, resulting in a construction of the communities around the railway lines both north and south, and Södra Åby was one of them. When the railway disappeared, the roads remained. Södra Åby is thus considered a typical old rural community, characterized by its lack of new houses, where most buildings maintain a traditional low-profile architectural style.

5.2 Discussion

The study uncovered several key insights into the dynamics of community life both in Skåre and Södra Åby. Participants demonstrated a remarkable level of involvement in local engagement, reflecting a commitment to their communities. The deep appreciation for the cultural heritage of their villages demonstrated the importance of preserving the cultural identity. Participatory budgeting became for the participants a mechanism, for communities that are smaller in size, to ensure the inhabitants' needs and desires that they otherwise would be difficult to secure. The interviews highlighted the close-knit community and displayed a strong sense of belonging. Nonetheless, concerns were raised about the lack of attention from the municipality, particularly regarding transportation infrastructure. Be that as it may, the participants showed positive emotions towards the

physical settings of their villages. The codes that emerged are: Local civic engagement, History, Participatory budget, Community and belonging, Local representation, Traffic, and Settings.

5.2.1 Local civic engagement

The code *Local civic engagement* emerged prominently by all the interviewees, particularly when the participants were questioned about their past involvement in civic issues. It has been evident in both the theoretical framework and literature review that there is a positive correlation between place attachment and interest in civic engagement (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001; Shin & Yang, 2022) which is something that has been evident even among the participants of this study. All the participants have had a long history with different types of civic engagement demonstrating a deep commitment and connection to their communities. Dang et al. (2021) argued that there might be a difference in participation between the genders claiming that women tend to be more engaged in their communities. This was echoed by the participants also agreeing to the fact that there are still divisions when it comes to civic participation. The woman from Södra Åby explained that coming from a small village the gender roles are still evident among the participants, arguing that women tend to mostly take more social and less physical tasks when it comes to local engagement. She believes the reason for this is that the older generations are set in their ways, simultaneously drawing comparison to younger generations from the city must be better defying these gender stereotypes. The couple from Skåre also discussed the topic of gender and its effects on their local village council, arguing that the council usually consists of male members. The female partner could concur with the fact that women tend to usually take those tasks within the community that are not typically female such as book circles which is something that she herself partakes in. The village council in Skåre has had problems with engaging the younger public which the couple think could be problematic. This is something that Hay (1998) and Kindel (2022) bring up in their studies, arguing that there can be a correlation between age and place attachment. However, one cannot directly say that age is one of the main determinants behind the lack of engagement.

The participant from Södra Åby acknowledged the fact that she was primarily motivated by a strong desire to contribute to the betterment of her community, stating that this drive was a fundamental aspect of her character. This was exemplified by her many involvements in different civic engagement and projects at different scales (municipal, regional, and EU level). However, it is important to recognize that her sense of place undeniably influences the level of her engagement. This is evident when comparing her deep involvement in Södra Åby, where she has been a key figure in the local heritage association, demonstrating a higher level of engagement than her activities on a larger scale. This suggests that while her inherent nature drives her to contribute to civic issues regardless of the place, her connection to Södra Åby enhances her dedication and active participation in its civic matters.

5.2.2 History

The theme of History emerged prominently throughout the interviews, infusing the conversations with a rich tapestry of cultural significance. All three participants showed great knowledge of the history of the village. It was clear that history played a significant role in their sense of place, as they could relate to and had affection for the place on a personal level. This can be explained by the second dimension of place attachment according to Scannell and Gifford (2010), which emphasizes the emotional and cognitive bonds people form with places. All interviewees actively participated in

spreading knowledge about the local history. The woman from Södra Åby, in particular, had a deep personal history in the village she lived in. One can argue that she became the very representation of the place's history and past, as her family had lived there for many generations. The deep ties with history can also translate into the representation of the village as a whole. This is evident in the interview where she tells the researcher:

" Even those who buy the houses often come and ask me, 'Can you tell me a bit about who lived here before? Can you show me pictures of how it looked before?' They seem very interested in getting to know the history as well."

This personal, familial link to the village underscores the relevance of the historical perspective on place attachment, as suggested by Stefaniack et al. (2017). When asked about their respective villages, the first topic that emerged was history, indicating their view on the importance of history in their attachment to place and sense of place. This emphasis on history aligns with how some studies have defined place attachment and sense of place (Manzo & Perkins, 2006; Yeh, 2023; Stefaniack et al., 2017), exemplifying that history does play a crucial role in one's sense of place and should not be ignored. Overall, the participants' deep historical knowledge and their active roles in preserving and sharing this history highlight the integral connection between history and sense of place. When showing the researcher around the house, the couple explained in detail how they had incorporated materials from a significant historical building that was destroyed and subsequently removed. Specific areas were pointed out where bricks from the old building were reused, highlighting their dedication to preserving a piece of the village's heritage. The male participant shared the historical importance of the building and the events that led to its demolition. By repurposing the bricks, they not only added a unique historical element to their home but also felt a deeper connection to the village's past. This act of preservation and reuse reflected their commitment to maintaining the cultural significance of the community, demonstrating how they actively engage with the history of their surroundings. The couple's efforts to incorporate and celebrate the local history through their home renovation underscored their strong sense of place and attachment to the village. Their personal narratives and communal emphasis on historical preservation illustrate how the historical context enriches their emotional and cognitive connections to their villages and homes, further solidifying their sense of place.

5.2.3 Participatory budget

In both interviews, the topic of *Participatory budgeting* was brought up by the researcher, which prompted a conversation about their experience of the participatory budget process. When discussing their participation, it was evident that the participants viewed the participatory budget more as a tool to meet their needs and desires rather than as an inherently meaningful process. Whether participatory budgeting and the participants' prior civic engagement are considered political processes or not can be up for discussion, nonetheless it is evident that people who hold strong political opinions tend to actively participate in participatory budgets. The previous involvement of the participants may contain political components, thereby aligning with the findings of Ganuza and Francés (2012), who argued that those who actively engage in participatory budgets are mostly those who are politically invested or engaged. However, one can argue that the gathered data aligns with both deliberative democrats and stealth democrats (Lee & Schachter, 2019). The participants have a long history of civic engagement, and when the participatory budget "One million ideas" initiative was introduced to the municipality, the participants engaged with the process to address needs that had previously been

unmet and to overcome challenges in obtaining resources from Trelleborg. being on the outskirts of the city, they were not always prioritized. their initial motivation to participate in the participatory budget stemmed from a distrust of being prioritized by Trelleborg. However, what began as dissatisfaction has now transformed into a motivation to participate next time, aligning more with the deliberative democratic argument (Lee & Schachter, 2019). The findings align with the observations made in Yeh and Lin's (2019) study, indicating that participatory budgeting serves as a motivating factor for participants in and of itself as the participants expressed a desire to continue participating in future participatory budgeting processes if given the opportunity. It is suggested that social capital plays a more influential role in driving civic engagement by mobilizing individuals to participate, unlike place attachment (Zhu, 2022), which could be perceivable in the gathered data. To fulfill the criterion of having 50 votes before the participatory budgeting process one needs to have social capital. This is not to say that place attachment did not play a role, however, it seems that social capital is considered to be an unofficial criterion in this participatory budget that one must have to be able to participate. One can argue how fairness works in participatory budget process, as it is evident in Trelleborg's initiative. It has been fair, however if a village or a person cannot meet the requirements due to lack of social capital or a lower number of inhabitants, each proposal is not then treated with equality, which in turn can diminish the trust in the government (Swaner, 2017).

Both suggestions from Skåre and Södra Åby can be viewed as expressions of local patriotism, their love for their community, and their commitment to improving the local situation, as suggested by Richey (2023). The participants from Södra Åby acknowledged the need to address specific issues, such as installing goals for the children of the village so they could have a place to play football. This initiative is expected to enhance the residents' affection for the place and foster a stronger sense of place. Similarly, the couple from Skåre identified the need for facilities for those who spend time by the beach and dock, including a place to change clothes after bathing in the ocean. They also proposed adding seating not because it was an absolute necessity but rather because it would be a more pleasant environment for people to sit down and enjoy the view. This shows a desire to enhance the quality of life in their community by making it more comfortable and enjoyable for everyone. These initiatives display a deep-seated local patriotism and a proactive approach to the betterment of the community. By contributing to the improvement of their community, the participants have expressed that they have a higher affection for the town as they have taken part into making the villages more enjoyable for both residents and tourists, which is in alignment with the positive impact of local patriotism in civic engagement (Richey, 2023).

There is a clear indication that there is a relation between sense of place and participatory budgeting engagement. However, as Yeh and Lin (2019) suggest, that the participatory budget can be viewed as an arena for further pace-making or to deepen someone's sense of place, similar evidence did not corroborate in the gathered data. This was mostly due to the fact that most of the participatory budgeting process was done through the internet. The requirement for participatory budget suggestions to garner a certain number of votes may foster a sense of collective involvement, without necessarily having the arena or opportunity to meet and let the sense of community grow in a face-to-face interaction.

5.2.4 Community and belonging

When discussing the participants' bond to their place, *Community and Belonging* became an apparent topic that the interviewees mentioned. The social aspect of a sense of place was very evident in the interviews. All participants expressed how the small size of their villages easily facilitated social

interactions with neighbors. All participants argued that this was something that was appealing when they decided to move to the villages. This echoes the phenomenological view of place attachment, where social factors are interwoven and interdependent (Seamon, 2014; Ilovan & Markuszewska, 2022). The villagers' ability to regularly engage with one another further enhanced their connection to the place and to each other. This dynamic interplay between the social fabric and the physical environment underscores the importance of both elements in shaping a profound sense of place. For the woman from Södra Åby, one could argue that the social aspect became more important than the physical place, in some instances viewing the physical factors merely as a facilitator, still, without disregarding the importance of the locations to maintain the social interactions among the people of Södra Åby.

The couple from Skåre shed light on the challenges confronting their community, particularly concerning newer residents advocating for exclusivity to preserve the tranquility in the village and limit access only to current residents. This situation resonates with Relph's (1976) concept of outsidership and insidership, which shapes the perceptions and experiences of individuals within a place. There is a notable contrast between those who support this exclusivity and those who do not. The male participant described these newcomers as "those new people that come from places like Stockholm and only want to close off the community". This highlights a divergence in perspectives regarding the openness of the community to outsiders, while also creating a dynamic of outsiders and insiders within the community as expressed by the male participant who has been living there since 1998.

"[...] towards the end, the last 3-4 years, new people have entered the village who have had slightly different opinions and are trying to hinder our engagement in certain aspects [...] it's often when people come from big cities where influential individuals have had jobs and have decided and directed things before"

It became apparent through the interviews that both Skåre and Södra åby are involved in a plethora of activities for local residents to partake in and familiarize themselves with. What is notable is that all three interviewees have actively participated in organizing these activities, underscoring a strong place identity within these communities. This observation resonated with Paasi's (2003) perspective on place identity, which emphasizes a sense of belonging and personal spatial history.

5.2.5 Local representation

Another topic that emerged during the conversation with the interviewees was Local representation. During the interviews, it was apparent that their picture of their villages was that of a rural community. Beyond merely geographic location, what set these villages apart from urban, according to the interviewees, was the infrastructure but also the interviewees' expressed concern about being overlooked or neglected by the municipality. This concern stemmed from feeling of being on the periphery of municipal attention, with limited access to resources and support compared to cities. The female participant showed some struggle to comprehend the lack of investment from the municipality, as the countryside is being misrepresented by everyone.

"Perhaps if we look at the municipality, it may be so, but if we consider all the tax revenues in rural villages, it's they that contribute to the municipality and the city."

The city generates less tax revenue and costs more than the countryside does, because rural areas have many large businesses and many small enterprises. And then I can feel that sometimes the countryside gets less than what the city receives.”

This quote serves as an illustration of the participant's ambivalence regarding the portrayal and perception of rural areas, shedding light on the complex dynamics of place identity within these communities (Ilovan & Markuszeska, 2022). It underscores the nuanced ways in which the individual navigates and relates to the evolving identity of Södra Åby and other villages similar to it. As she continues to prove people wrong, it can be perceived that her perception being in conflict with the official perception of the rural areas acts as a source of resilience and empowerment (Estrella & Kelley, 2017).

When the male participant compared the village of Skåre to his experience living in other coastal places and the neighboring municipality, where he conveyed a deep appreciation for the unique character of Skåre. He explained that, unlike those other places, Skåre is not a community dominated by status or social prestige. Instead, he described Skåre as a place where people value simplicity and genuine connections. His reflections suggest that his perception of Skåre's identity is rooted in its lack of pretension. In addition to that the male participant has an interest in boats and has during his life mostly been residing in coastal cities. Therefore the historical identity of Skåre as an old fishermen society, fitted perfectly to the kind of person perceives himself to be, which is consistent with Raymond et al. (2010) definition of place identity.

Both female participants expressed the villages as home, for the interviewee from Södra Åby they might feel something that Seamon and Sowers (2008) call as existential insideness. She explains that due to her history to her place she is even called as the grandmother of the village by the younger inhabitants signaling as it being one big family. The female participant from Skåre is originally from Lund and explained Lund to always have a place in her heart and is also considered as home even though she has not resided there in over 20 years, saying that she has 2 homes now. She exemplifies that one does not need to lose the attachment to one place just because they have formed a bond with a different place (Ilovan & Markuszewska, 2022).

The willingness to participate in civic engagements is directly related to one's connection to the place's identity (Acedo et al. 2019). This relationship can be somewhat corroborated by the findings of this study. Although the evidence is not unequivocal, it can be interpreted that the participants who actively engage in sharing the village's history are those who, to some extent, identify with that history and the identity of that place, even arguing that they have developed a sense of community as defined by Manzo and Perkins (2006). By preserving and disseminating the local history, these individuals are not only maintaining the cultural heritage of the village but also reinforcing their own ties to the place.

5.2.6 Traffic

One of the primary concerns voiced by both Skåre and Södra Åby, as highlighted by interviewees, regards Traffic. There was a pressing need to address the lack of public transportation and bicycle roads, which highlighted the challenges faced by those living in rural areas. All participants have been actively working to fix these issues with the municipality, but so far, they have not had much success. This situation characterizes the identity of rural areas and those who live there, illustrating a persistent

struggle for adequate infrastructure and services. The participants' ongoing effort to improve public transportation demonstrates their commitment to their community and their desire to enhance the quality of life for the residents of these villages. Despite the efforts, there has been no success on that front, reflecting an outdated official representation of the identity of people living in rural places still prevails. The woman from Södra Åby specifically expressed that due to insufficient bus traffic, the children living in Södra Åby suffer. They face difficulties getting to and from school, work, and other activities such as sports, which further isolates them. This disconnect between the needs of the rural population of Skåre and Södra Åby and the municipality highlights a broader issue. The identity of place, as expressed by Paasi (2000), is in conflict with the place identity of the population of rural communities. The official identity of Södra Åby, as represented by the municipality, does not align with the perceived identity of Södra Åby. when asked about their perception of Skåre's identity the couple expressed as followed:

“There are many different aspects to this. One very negative thing is that we live in southern Skåne, which is the most densely populated area in terms of communication, yet we have no public transportation at all—no buses, no subways, nothing. It feels like living in Norrland.”

The participants expressed their frustration by comparing the situation to living in Norrland, a place that is a sparsely populated region in Sweden known for its remote and isolated areas. This highlights their perception of Skåre as a location that should not be regarded as a secluded village in the midst of nowhere. This misrepresentation of the villages of Trelleborg leads to a sense of frustration and neglect among the residents. It underscores the importance of updating the representation of rural areas to better align the current realities and identities of the inhabitants.

5.2.7 Settings

When asking about the place of which the participants live, the code of Setting emerged. When explaining the setting of Skåre, the first thing that became apparent was the couple's proximity to the ocean. They highlighted distinct features of the village, such as the boat wheels displayed on houses and miniature boats in window displays, which symbolize the community's connection to its maritime heritage. The fact that the participants from Skåre chose to describe Skåre in such ways may represent how they perceive the place and what they deem important. It could also reflect what they want outsiders to understand about the place and, subsequently, how they want their identity to be perceived (Raymond et al., 2010), similarly for Södra Åby. As Skåre is seen as a tourist destination, it can impact the couple's attachment to the place, especially since the population of Skåre emphasize the heritage a lot (Bernardo & Palma-Oliveira, 2011).

6. Concluding remarks

The findings from this study reveal several key insights into the relationship between a sense of place and civic engagement, specifically in conjunction with participatory budget. During the interviews, it was demonstrated that there is a positive correlation between place attachment, place identity, and civic engagement, as the deep connection to their locations intensifies their dedication to active participation. This is particularly apparent in their involvement in Trelleborg's participatory budget. During the research it has been evident that gender does play a role for the participants, with traditional gender roles influencing the types of tasks men and women undertake during the different types of civic engagement. However, there were no findings that indicate that the gender roles would translate to participatory budgeting.

History turned out to be a significant factor when discussing the participants' sense of place. Their deep personal connections are indicated by their active participation in maintaining and spreading knowledge about the local history. This observation underscores the significant influence exerted by history on the participants' sense of place, consequently fostering engagement in local decision-making processes. Which is evident in how the participants describe their village settings. While the participatory budget suggestions may not have directly correlated with historical aspects, the profound connection to local history played a substantial part in forming the participants' sense of place. This deep-rooted relation, in turn, bolstered their sense of place in regard to the community, thereby serving as one of the catalysts for their participation in various forms of civic engagement, including participatory budgeting processes.

The findings suggest that a participatory budget can serve as a motivating factor in itself for future participatory budget initiatives. It is driven both by the unmet needs and dissatisfaction with municipal prioritization. As this specific participatory budget had a criterion that the participants expressed could be hard to fulfill as a small village with a small population, it might have the opposite effect as it is viewed as unfair. It is, therefore, important to consider the social aspect of a sense of place as it explains how civic engagement can be encouraged. While there is a dynamic interplay between the social fabric and the physical environment, the social aspect appears to be more significant. This highlights a strong sense of place among participants, as evidenced by their active participation in local activities that foster social interactions and strengthen their sense of belonging. The social aspect of the sense of place was more emphasized by the participants as a motivation for engaging in participatory budgeting processes.

A conflict between the participants' perceptions of their place and the identity of the place was detected by the participants. As they continued to feel neglected and overlooked by the municipality, which they felt was motivated by the misrepresentation of the rural area, they saw participatory budgeting as a way to get around that perception. It can be said that this perception drove their agency in challenging stereotypes. Their strong connection to the identity of their villages directly relates to their willingness to engage in civic activities, resulting in a motivating factor for engagement in participatory budgeting processes. This is evident especially when the participants expressed their concern about the lack of public transportation and not a sufficient infrastructure for the residents. It underscores their dissatisfaction with how their villages are represented, resulting in a negative identity of place which is in conflict with their place identity. This dynamic has previously led to a rise in agency from the participants. This agency can be interpreted as a precursor to potential engagement in participatory budgeting.

This study suggests also that participants perceive their sense of place to be emerging from a combination of free will and structural determinism. Their deep connection to their villages and the local history indicates that they have chosen to attach to places that they could identify with. This is evident in the male participant from Skåre, who throughout his life has chosen to live in coastal cities due to his interests in the marina and boats. Despite physical and place aspects to her will to civic engagement, the woman from Södra Åby expressed that being driven to change is the kind of person she is, which reflects how she perceives her engagement. This sheds light on how she perceives her sense of place, saying that she will only feel it if she and the people around her work towards the same goal.

Indications about the structural nature of sense of place have been present during the interviews. The historical development of the villages serves as a structural framework that influences their sense of place. For example, the female participant from Södra Åby described the village's rural image and its history of farming. Although she did not personally share that background herself, her interest in organizing lessons on farming for the local heritage association suggests a connection to this aspect of the village's heritage. While she may not explicitly frame it as such, her interest can be interpreted as indicative of how her sense of place is shaped by and belonging to that community is shaped by the rural image.

6.1 Practical implications

The decline in democratic values and citizen participation poses significant challenges to the functioning of liberal democracies worldwide. Deliberative democracy, which emphasizes collective decision-making and equitable participation, emerges as a promising framework to address these challenges. Although from the limited body of informants, the findings of this study offer some insights into the intricate relationship between engagement in participatory budgeting and the concept of sense of place. Notably, a positive correlation emerges, underscoring the pivotal role that sense of place plays in shaping an individual's desire to engage in participatory budgeting initiatives. Such insights signal a deeper exploration into the dynamics between sense of place and civic engagement, particularly participatory budgeting. Discussing participatory budgeting through the lens of sense of place illuminates different ways in which one can optimize participatory budgeting. As it runs the risk of municipalities utilizing participatory budgets to maintain the status quo, this study invites a reevaluation of participatory budgeting as a catalyst for democratizing democracy, which is rooted in the connections individuals harbor with their places.

6.3 Limitations & Future research

The most significant limitation of this study is the small sample size, which restricts the generalizability of its findings. As such, the study should not be considered as representative, but merely an example of the correlation between sense of place and participatory budgeting initiatives. Despite the limited scope, the study offers valuable insights into this relationship. Nevertheless, much more extensive research is necessary to develop a comprehensive theory based on these observations. By conducting this study, the researcher aims to highlight the potential for valuable discoveries and the importance of further research on this topic, encouraging others to explore it in greater depth.

Additionally, the lack of representation is something that this study does not fully tackle. Participatory budgeting aims to tackle issues such as corruption, and ensure that the fundings are equally divided among the population. The absence of diverse voices within the sample highlights the need for more inclusive research to accurately reflect the varied experiences and impacts across different communities. Addressing these gaps would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how this initiative can contribute to and benefit everyone.

Moreover, there is a limited amount of research that has examined the specific relationship between participatory budgeting and sense of place, giving it an additional reason to conduct further studies for a deeper understanding. Participatory budgeting can be perceived as more political and official compared to civic engagement in general, as it is often initiated by municipalities. Therefore, the existing literature on civic engagement might not fully represent the unique dynamics of participatory budgets. The literature on civic engagement may not entirely capture the nuances and specificities of participatory budgets, drawing attention to the need for more targeted research on the topic. This study also serves as a case study of Trelleborg municipality's initiative "One million ideas", which further limits its representativeness. As previously mentioned, participatory budgeting can be used as a new way to maintain the status quo. This does not necessarily to every initiative, making it interesting to examine how other participatory budgeting initiatives relate to sense of place and how this dynamic impacts each other. Exploring different participatory budgeting all over the world could provide a broader comprehension of these relationships and their varying effects across different contexts.

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Appendix

Appendix A - Interview questions in English

- How long have you lived in this area? Would you say that you have developed an attachment to this place? If so, could you describe your feelings towards the place where you live?
 - Can you share any significant memories or experiences associated with specific places in your neighborhood or city?
- Are you familiar with the history of the place? If so, how has that knowledge affected your attachment to the place?
 - What do you like about your neighborhood or city, and what do you dislike about it?
- What role do human relationships and interactions play in your relationship with the neighborhood or city?
- How would you describe the social dynamics or sense of community in your neighborhood? Do you feel a strong connection to your neighbors or local residents?
- Have you ever participated in community engagement or initiatives? What motivated you to get involved, and how was your experience?
 - Did the previous experience have any impact on your decision to engage in participatory budgeting?
- what motivated you to get engaged in a participatory budget, and can you share your experience with participating in the process?
- Can you describe your perception of the identity of the place where you live right now?
 - Do you think this place has a particular identity that sets it apart from others?
- Do you feel a sense of belonging in this place, and in what ways do you relate to it or feel represented by it? If not, why do you think that is?
- Have you ever felt connected and included in a place? If so, can you describe the circumstances that led to those feelings and how they affected your perception and experience of the place?
- Have you ever felt alienated or disconnected from a place? If so, can you describe what led to those feelings and how they affected your perception and experience of the place?
- How is the place where you live represented officially, either by local authorities, media, or other institutions?
 - How does this official representation align with your own personal representation of the place, and how does it differ from your own representation of the place?

- Can you share how you perceive your identity within your local community compared to your identity on a regional or national level? How does your national identity and regional identity influence your local identity?
- How much do you think your identity aligns with the identity of this place or neighborhood/city/region?
- Have you experienced that people's wishes are taken seriously and that decision-making processes work well in participatory budgets where residents get to be involved?
- Do you think there are external factors or structural barriers that may influence participants' perceptions of their influence in participatory budgets?
- Do you think minorities are less engaged in civic activities? Why or why not?
- Do you think gender affects participation in community engagement?
- Do you feel trust in your community/neighborhood? How do you think it affects your willingness to participate in community engagement?

Appendix B - Interview questions in Swedish

- Hur länge har du bott på detta område? Skulle du säga att du har utvecklat en anknytning till denna plats? I så fall, skulle du kunna beskriva dina känslor gentemot platsen där du bor?
 - Kan du dela med dig av några betydelsefulla minnen eller erfarenheter förknippade med specifika platser i din grannskap eller stad?
- Är du bekant med platsens historia? I så fall, hur har den kunskapen påverkat din anknytning till platsen?
 - Vad är det du gillar med ditt grannskap eller stad och vad är det du ogillar med det?
- Vilken roll spelar mänskliga relationer och interaktioner i din relation till grannskapet eller staden?
- Hur skulle du beskriva de sociala dynamikerna eller känslan av gemenskap i ditt grannskap? Känner du en stark koppling till dina grannar eller lokala invånare?
- Har du någonsin deltagit i samhällsengagemang eller initiativ? Vad motiverade dig att engagera dig, och hur var din upplevelse?
 - Hade den tidigare erfarenheten någon inverkan på ditt beslut att engagera dig i medborgarbudgeten?
- Vad motiverade dig att engagera dig i medborgarbudgeten, och kan du dela med dig av din upplevelse?

- Kan du beskriva din uppfattning om vad du tycker om platsens identitet där du bor just nu?
 - Tror du att denna plats har en särskild identitet som skiljer den från andra?
- Känner du en känsla av tillhörighet på denna plats, och på vilka sätt relaterar du till den eller känner dig representerad av den? Om inte, varför tror du det är så?
- Har du någonsin känt dig knuten och inkluderad på en plats, om så är fallet kan du beskriva omständigheterna som ledde till dessa känslor och hur de påverkade din uppfattning och upplevelse av platsen?
- Har du någonsin känt dig främmande eller frånkopplad från en plats, om så är fallet kan du beskriva vad som ledde till dessa känslor och hur de påverkade din uppfattning och upplevelse av platsen?
- Hur representeras platsen du bor på officiellt, antingen av lokala myndigheter, media eller andra institutioner?
 - Hur överensstämmer denna officiella representation med din egen personliga representation av platsen? och hur skiljer den sig från din egna representation av platsen?

- Kan du dela med dig av hur du uppfattar din identitet inom din lokala gemenskap jämfört med din identitet på regional eller nationell nivå? Hur påverkar din nationella identitet och regionala identitet din lokala identitet?
- Hur mycket tycker du att din identitet överensstämmer med identiteten hos denna plats eller stadsdel/stad/region?
- Har du upplevt att folkets önskemål tas på allvar och att beslutsprocesser fungerar bra i de medborgarbudgetar där invånarna får vara med och bestämma?
- Tror du att det finns externa faktorer eller strukturella hinder som kan påverka deltagarnas uppfattningar om deras inflytande i medborgarbudgetar?
- Tror du att minoriteter är mindre engagerade i medborgerliga aktiviteter? Varför eller varför inte?
- Tror du kön påverkar deltagande i samhällsengagemang?
- Känner du förtroende för din gemenskap/grannskap? Hur tror du det påverkar din vilja att delta i samhällsengagemang?