

Pros and cons with using dialogues on housing with older people in Sweden

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FORMAS



How do older people live in Sweden?

- 20 % of the population are 65+ (80+ is growing fast).
- Sweden has one of the most **developed welfare system** in the world, including elderly care
- The majority of **older people live in housing on the ordinary market** (95 %)
- Three types of housing for elderly:
 - **Ordinary housing:** Detached houses, semi-detached houses or apartments
 - **In between housing:** Senior housing, extra-care housing, cohousing for seniors.
 - **Residential care/nursing homes:** Older people with dementia or severe functional limitations/health problems, needs assessment.



Picture: Wikimedia commons

What does dialogues mean?

- **Dialogue: The opposite to monologue**

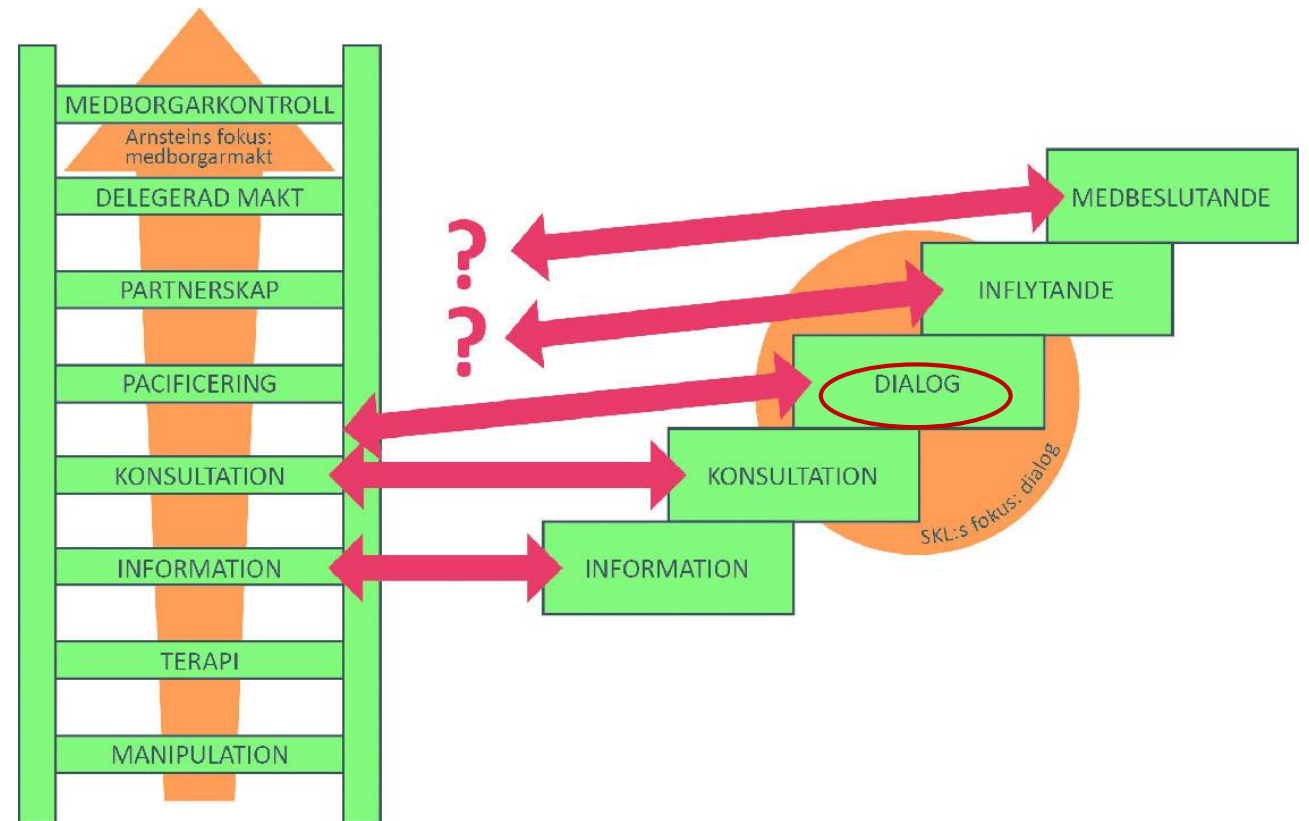
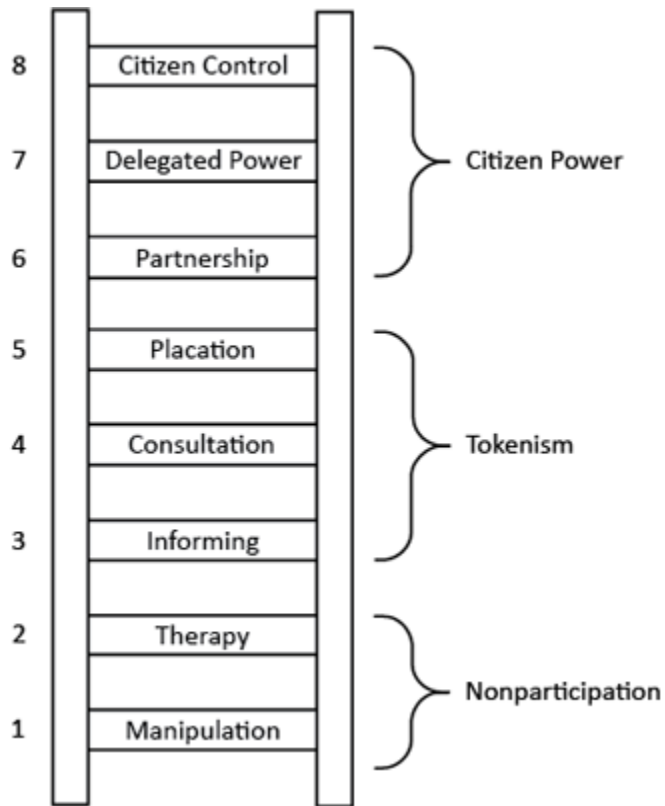
“A discussion between two or more people or groups, especially one directed towards exploration of a particular subject or resolution of a problem.” (Oxford dictionary)

- **Related to participation** (Arnstein, Castell)

- **Different types of dialogues about the neighborhood/ housing environment:**

- Citizen dialogues (held by the municipality)
- Design dialogues (held by architects, construction clients etc.)
- Dialogues between the landlord and the tenants

Arnstein's ladder and Castell's stairs



Sherry Arnstein 1969, Degree of citizen participation. Pål Castell (2013), Stegen och trappan (The ladder and the stairs).

Why use dialogues with the local community?

- Citizen dialogues – democratic rights
- Design dialogues – to get more knowledge about a certain group's needs and preferences.
- To create user involvement

Housing for older people is a multi-faceted area

Housing for the elderly (65+) is a multi-faceted area affected by **many perspectives**.

Due to **specialization**, different organizations have very specific assignments and **focus on either elderly or housing**, which increase the need for **dialogue between organizations as well as with the citizens** of the local community.

There is a need of **collaboration** to reach the goal of an age friendly environment.

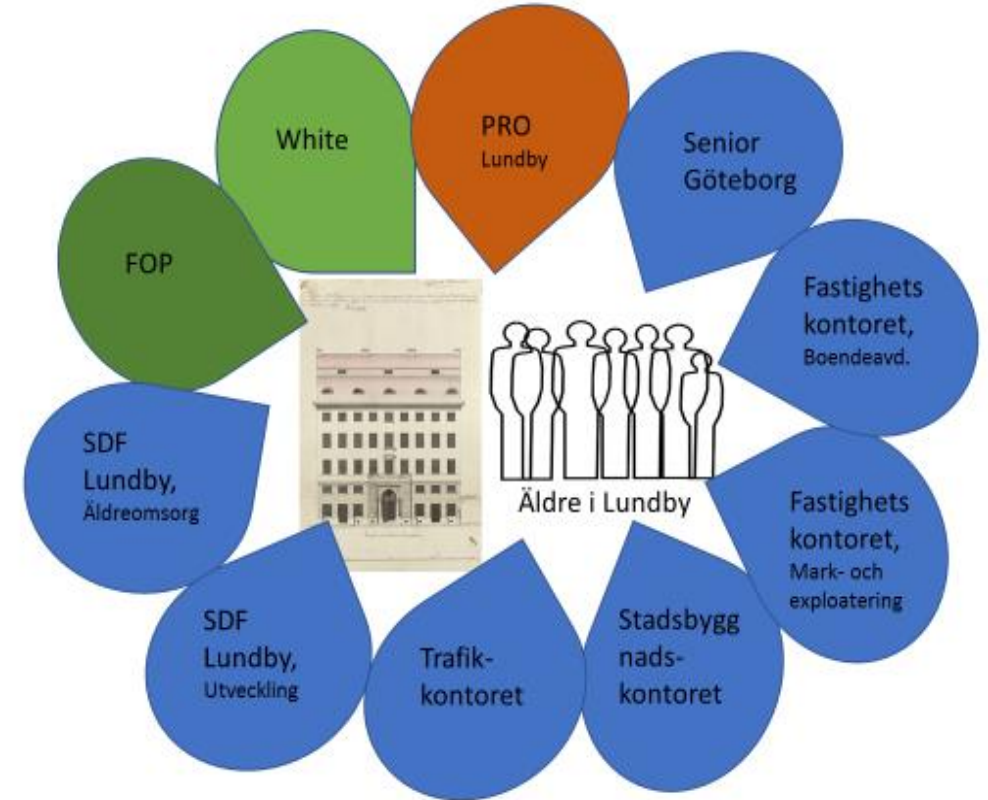


Illustration of the organizations involved in one of the cases where dialogues were held in the early planning phases.

Ongoing research study

- **Four cases in different stages**, one is not built yet. Two senior housing and two Extra-care housing.
- Following/following up **processes** from the stage of planning, building and after the tenants have moved in.
- Include **constructions clients/land lords, architects, tenants, civil servants/managers** in the municipalities, pensioner organisations etc.
- **Mixed methods:** interviews, questionnaires, observations, official documents, statistics from the landlords etc.
- 2016-2019



Aim of the project

The overall aim with the research project is to shed light on how to build sustainable housing for seniors and to describe the role of dialogues.

Preliminary findings

- **Dialogues are rarely used** among construction clients and architects when it comes to ordinary housing.
- The construction clients or architects who use dialogues do that because they **want to learn from potential users** (needs, preferences) and to **create user involvement**.
- All tenants who had signed up for an apartment/or moved in **wanted to influence more** than they were allowed to.
- But, there is a **dilemma between using dialogues/give the power to the tenants or not**.



Consequences of using or not using dialogues

- In one case, the tenants had the possibility to **influence the common space for social activities** after one year. A majority wanted it to be closed (to reduce the rent). However, some of the tenants wanted to keep it.
- In another case, **the dialogues in the early phases of the planning processes were devalued due to severe delay** of the project. This might jeopardize the trust from the local community in the future.
- Interviews with tenants who had not been involved in dialogue, reveal **features that are not age friendly**. Such errors might have been reduced if dialogues would have been used.



A cupboard that is not easy to use for older persons.

Reflections

- There seems to be **more advantages** than disadvantages with using dialogues.
- Actors who invite older people to participate in dialogues should be **aware of the limitations of using dialogues**.
- Dialogues should **include the needs of more vulnerable groups** to create age-friendly housing for all older people (vulnerable groups cannot always participate).
- It is important to **inform** the participants about the **aim** of the dialogues, how **their contribution** will be considered, and **if a building project is delayed** to create trustworthy relationships.
- A limitation with dialogues is that they do not cover the **prerequisites and preferences of older people in the future**. The buildings will last for 50 to 100 years and should be built with flexibility to different needs in the future.



Thanks for listening!

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