



Innovation in Urban Planning Final Report

Conclusions

The objective was to assess the current state of digital transformation in urban planning across municipalities and explore similarities and differences in their processes. This served as a basis for investigating the need and prerequisites for a pilot project testing new technical solutions in urban planning, particularly in resident-official dialogue. By examining the municipalities' processes and conducting trend analysis, alongside stakeholder views, we prepared for future implementation.

Existing knowledge about residents' needs was augmented by testing feedback tools during the process. The feasibility study surveyed resident dialogue tools, municipal innovation attitudes, and technical development needs. It also identified the necessity of a strategy to systematize data management. A significant responsibility for involving children and youth in urban development rests with the public sector. Young people need to see participation as meaningful and feel their input has tangible impact. Residents, as experts in their local environment, are invaluable contributors to community building.

Härnösand is advanced in digital transformation and the use of digital tools for public services but lacks an overarching strategy. Nykarleby, however, requires a comprehensive digital strategy to guide actions over the next 5-6 years. Both municipalities can benefit from enhanced frameworks to support structured innovation.

Overall, this aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 16, promoting peaceful societies and transparency in decision-making. It also aims to improve satisfaction with public services. By fostering dialogue and co-creation, municipalities can empower residents while leveraging their insights. In turn, this helps bridge gaps in communication between citizens and decision-makers.

The study highlights the importance of innovative tools for inclusive urban planning. Developing digital strategies tailored to local needs ensures long-term success. Municipalities that prioritize systematic data management and inclusive dialogue stand to gain significantly. Finally, empowering youth and local experts through meaningful participation is essential for sustainable development.

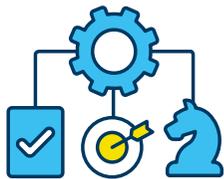
16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



Key development points

The urban planning processes of the two municipalities and countries showed more similarities than differences; the latter concerned participatory mechanisms and internal work processes and organizations rather than the formal processes. From a development point of view this opens up a possibility of developing a shared understanding and cross-border exchange of good practices that caters for the specific needs of mid-sized or smaller municipalities in peripheral areas.

Based on the desk research, presentations and interviews we have identified a number of topics and action points – in no specific order – that should be considered when the following actions are planned, in a development project and/or as parts of the municipalities' future development work.



STRATEGIES

- How does urban planning fit in with other development plans? Ensure that planning is linked to the overall strategy and to other

elements such as resident dialogue and communication, sustainable development and sectoral development plans for the municipality's areas of responsibility. Synchronise activities regionally, between different actors, and locally – is it possible to develop systematics?

- The digitalisation strategy is the key development point. Make sure it includes both the link upward to higher-level rules and plans and sufficient level of detail:
- Make the connection to the points we identified at the beginning: Business structure, demographics, future work, data. Impact assessments need to be carried out if they are lacking – and broader than just financially; the different aspects of sustainability – ecologic, economic and social.
- Choice of indicators – qualitative and quantitative – for the process and its components
- The overall strategies aim for 2040, the concrete plans need to embrace approximately the time until 2030 in the first place.
- Ensure that foresighting activities such as trend and external monitoring works and knowledge is spread in the municipality's organization – and that communication also runs vertically, for example; The work for the future is largely based on joint efforts and their localisation.
- Resource supply for development needs: Long-term: into budgets – and short-term: projects?



DIALOGUE AND INCLUSION

- To be able to ensure that residents and other dialogue partners can meet in forums and through channels that respond to varying communication needs, regardless of who takes the initiative or whether the dialogue is part of a formal process or not.
- This includes both physical and virtual places as well as the activities that take place there – both inviting and reaching out, to cover as many diverse needs of the target groups as possible
- Given that children and youth were identified as especially important target groups, the measures and tools chosen should reflect their preferences in communication and interaction – while still keeping the other target groups in mind as well
- To be able to develop the skills of all stakeholders in using available and new channels and tools.
- Guidelines and “service promise” – what tone of response and what response time are we aiming at?



TECHNOLOGY

- New tools for dialogue: Visualisation, feedback – which gives both residents and staff a good experience and supports administrative work.

- New tools for planning – which must both make the process more efficient and increase transparency, while at the same time responding to different coordination needs.
- How do the municipality's IT and other technical infrastructure fit together – to create the most coherent entities possible? And secured support!



THE ORGANISATION'S INNOVATION CAPACITY AND COMPETENCE

- The ability to take up new proposals and needs and respond to them – in the interface with residents and partners, and up to the decision-making level. Connect to learning outcomes of the project.
- The organization's ability to generally take up new ways of working and processes if there is a need and opportunity.
- Data management in the organisation – how to ensure that the right data is collected, stored, analysed, combined and utilised fully and correctly.
- Ordering/procurement expertise in the organization.
- Skills supply and the capacity for developing the organization in general.

Background materials:

The analysis is based on the following actions:

Desk research was done on both practice and theory – urban planning, participatory planning, public sector innovation, participatory methods, the potential of new technology as well as documents and strategies of the two municipalities and their regions.

Through presentations and interviews, the two municipal organisations gave their view on the current state of things, challenges and plans ahead in the field of urban planning.

The planning processes of the two municipalities and their respective countries were mapped and compared, in order to identify similarities, differences and points where there can be gains from collaboration and exchange.

The Metacity project, its materials and the small scale actions formed the backdrop for the process in the sense that the joined development challenges and interests surfaced in the introductory phase of the Metacity journey, leading to the pre-study application.



Appendices:

- Takeaways from the desk research
- A summary of open and follow-up questions
- The general and detail planning processes of Härnösand/Sweden and Nykarleby/Finland, graphically and in comparison
- Notes on a structure for implementation in a larger-scale project
- Analysis matrix template



Innovation in Urban Planning: Takeaways from the desk research

DECEMBER 2024

Innovative urban planning is a mix of several trends and features that are driven by the need to address complex challenges like climate change, rapid urbanization, social equity, and technological advancement.

A cross-cutting search reveals a number of themes that permeate the field, including

- sustainability and resilience,
- smart solutions and digitalization,
- accessibility and new housing and mobility solutions,
- circular economy,
- well-being of citizens,
- integration of AI and big data and
- participatory and inclusive planning.

Most of these are pointers towards the need of engaging the residents through a variety of dialogue forums as well as the use of new technologies for visualization and interaction in order to make the planning process more accessible and transparent.

ADVANTAGES IN SMALL CITIES (CHATGPT)

- Strong Community Ties: Easier to mobilize participation and foster collaboration.
- Quicker Implementation: Smaller populations and geographic areas allow for faster project rollouts.

- Localized Focus: Solutions can be deeply tailored to local needs, histories, and identities

SOME OBSERVATIONS FROM THE MATERIALS:

A significant part of the functioning of government is the culture of decision-making and the professional expertise of public servants (Christiansen)

What matters in today's quest for new ways of working with change in a systemic way is how human centered design connects people with services, services with organisations, organisations with policy-making and policy-making with policy intent. When policy efforts begin with people, public services become central to policy success. Services are key to successful policies for several reasons:

- People do not experience policies but rather that they experience services attached to a specific policy.
- Services bring policies to life. Without services, policies remain words on paper.
- Services communicate values. If these values differ from those of a given policy, trust in government is at stake.

To take a human-centered design approach to policy-making and policy implementation puts the spotlight on design practices and design processes in the policy cycle (Junginger)

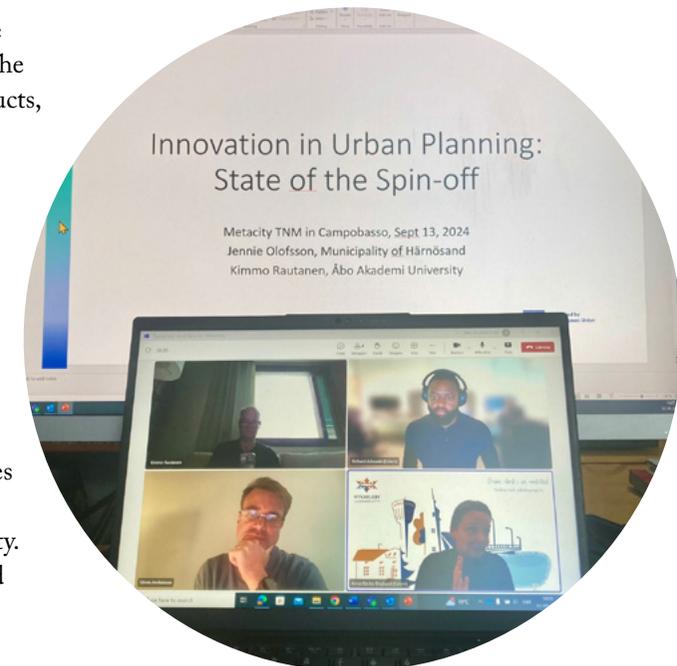
Even the best service will fail if the organization responsible for delivering and maintaining it is ill equipped to do so. Re-orienting services around people requires organisations to change, adjust, and sometimes to innovate their own internal ways of going about business (Junginger)

The concept of "Innovation Readiness" takes into account the relevance of internal as well as external stakeholders within the innovation process (stakeholder orientation) and considers the relevance of regional and branch-specific innovation systems (cluster development). It also highlights the importance of communication for the implementation of new ideas, products, and services (Zerfass)

The struggles and shortcomings of delivering in government are well rehearsed. Many of the root causes that make it tough have been restated several times over several decades. The Radical How is about changing how the public service delivers change. When government tries to predict the future and figures out all the answers upfront, it fails. Responding to reality requires agility. We believe the government can and should change how it delivers, by:

- embracing test-and learn approaches at scale
- organising around multidisciplinary teams
- focusing on outcomes (NESTA)

Rather than asking for citizen commentary on already set initiatives, collaborative techniques view city populations as agents of positive change, giving communities tools of direct involvement in outlining their needs and priorities, collaboratively finding solutions, influencing decisions and achieving better outcomes (Maciulienė).



A summary of open and follow-up questions

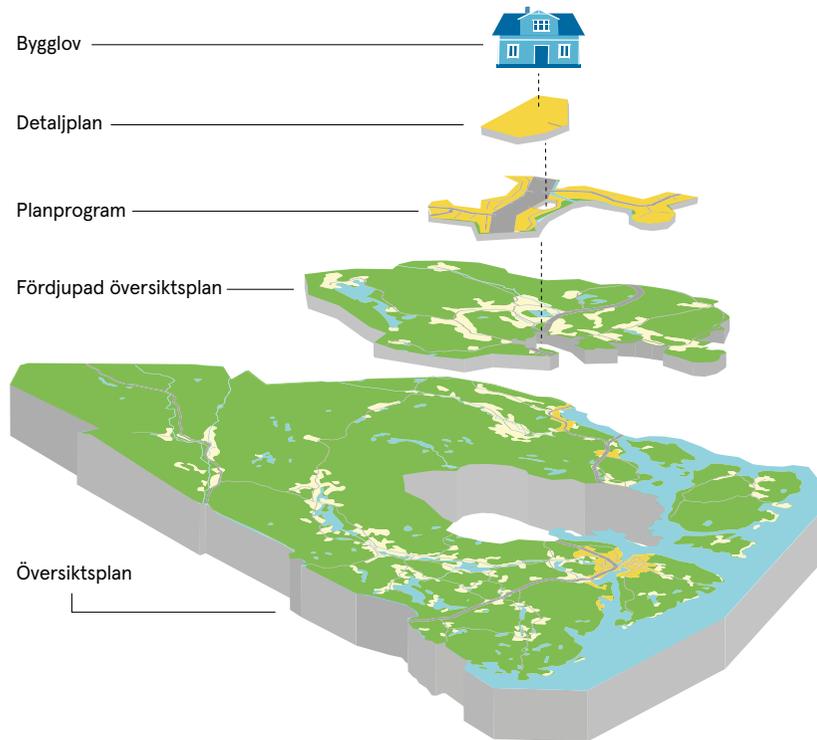
Innovation in Urban Planning: Matrix of questions/topics from interviews and desk research to be addressed

Version 3, 1.11.2024	Activity/phenomenon: Participation/dialogue	Innovation/process	Technology/Development	Strategy/planning	External connections?
Actors: Inhabitants	How can people reach the municipality – both in general and especially, for example, in planning issues? Is there commitment without a reward? What are the rewards?	How can people make initiatives?	How is the needs assessment carried out among residents?	Resident input: How are residents and other stakeholders engaged at this stage? Document existing ways + draw the way forward	<i>Examples of functioning dialogue and dialogue interfaces?</i> <i>Do NGOs, for example, have those?</i>
The municipality/ staff	How does the municipality reach out to people (see above)? Is there an overview of how different ways of reaching people work/don't work? Is the process sufficiently broadly anchored – are all relevant interests taken into account? When can one involve residents and/or other stakeholders, when should one hold back? Transparency, publicity versus efficiency	Challenges in the preparation process – communication between departments, the relationship between officials and decision-makers? "Political" issues (e.g. between parts of the municipality, between parties, etc.) and community planning at the general level? Is the municipality able to pick up the ideas – from the residents via the workshop floor to the planning and decisions?	Who takes the initiative to test new solutions? What is the relationship between the municipality and external suppliers when new technology is considered? How are the decisions on deployment made – is everyone involved?	How is strategy work distributed and anchored in the municipal organization? See also the challenges on the left	<i>Organizational developers with validated, simple models?</i> <i>Check out Demos, SKR, the Association of Local and Regional Authorities, Bloomberg etc Tools/working methods that have been tested – hackathons?</i>
The technology/ developers	Who takes the initiative to test new solutions? How do residents react to and take up new methods and technologies – and do they make requests?	How are new technologies and ways of working introduced in the organization? "The digital ecosystem" in practice, what does it mean and what does it require? Who's involved?	"The digital ecosystem" in practice, what does it mean and what does it require? Who's involved? How do we keep track of technological developments?	What is the relationship between strategy work and keeping track of technological developments?	<i>Examples of successful tools and how they have been received?</i>
The strategy mindset/ management, experts, decision- makers	How do we engage residents and other stakeholders at this stage?	Vertical integration – national and regional initiatives and the relationship of municipalities to them? Is there a dialogue?	How do we choose the right one from the range of new solutions?	The strategies as a whole – overall and the different parts: Is the picture complete? The path from growth strategy 2040 to concretizing the next step – like 2030; What steps?	<i>Organizational developers again</i> <i>Regional, national strategies and networks</i> <i>EU programmes?</i>
General/overlying topics	Are there particularly challenging points? Data – collection, storage, use: Is there a mechanism to follow up on this?				<i>Relevant AI solutions and their providers</i>

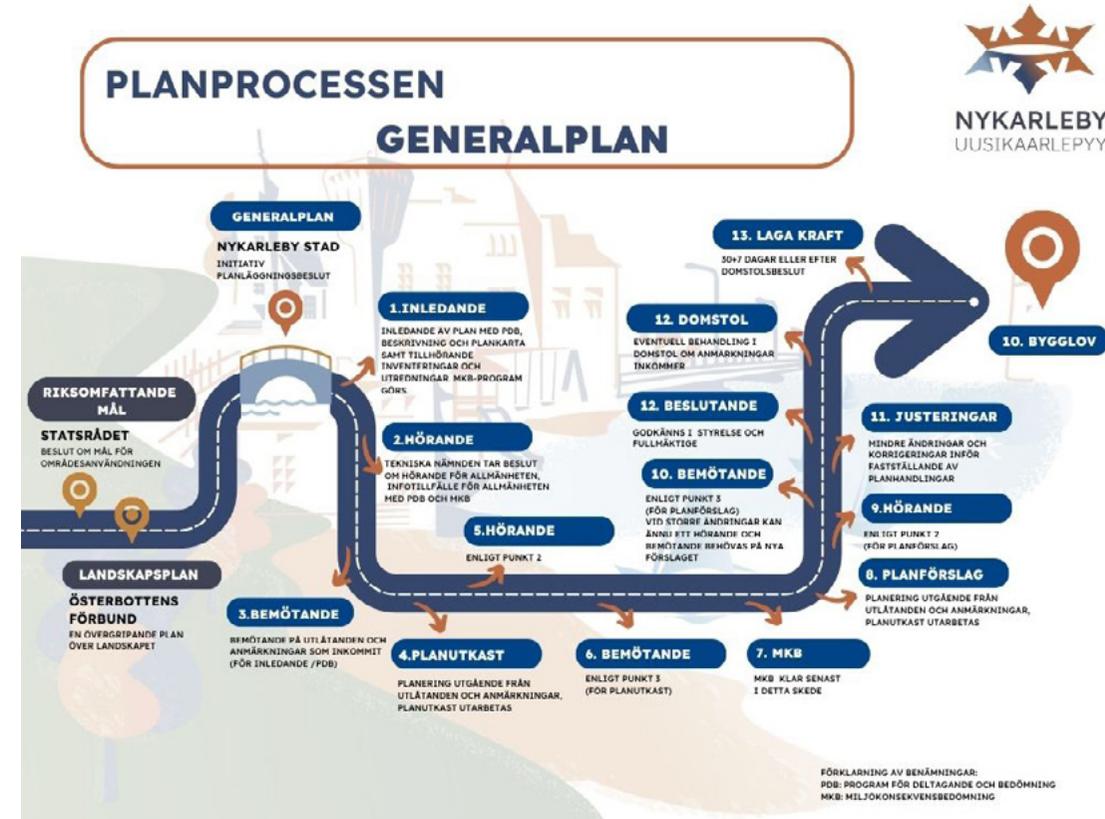
The general and detail planning processes of Härnösand/Sweden and Nykarleby/Finland

graphically and in comparison

GENERAL PLANNING PROCESS



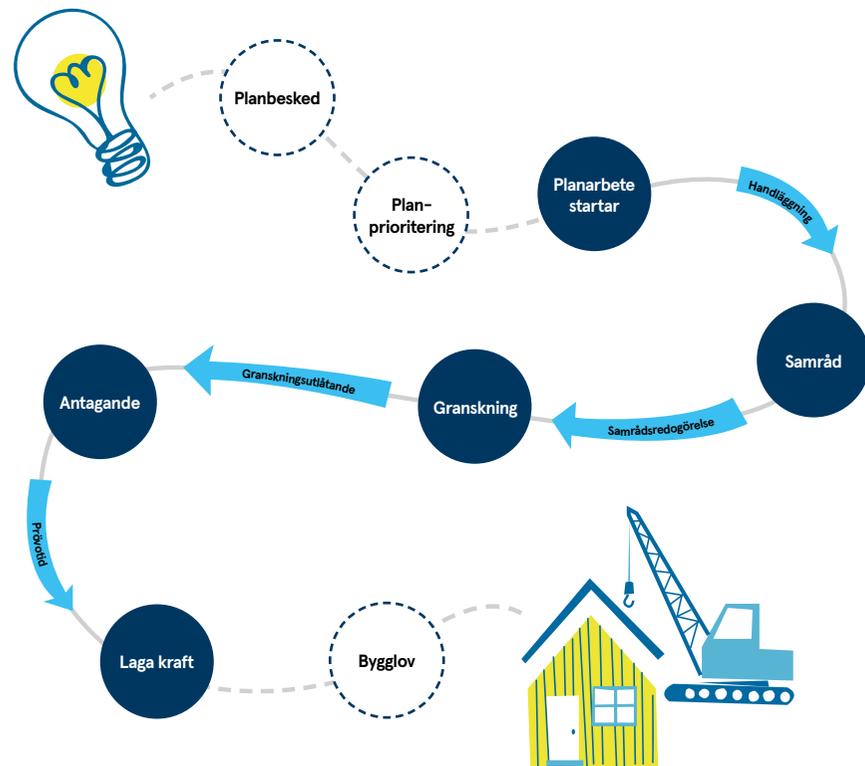
Stadsutvecklingsprocessen



The general and detail planning processes of Härnösand/Sweden and Nykarleby/Finland

graphically and in comparison

DETAIL PLANNING PROCESS



Detaljplaneprocessen

PLANPROCESSEN DETALJPLAN



Innovation in Urban Planning: Comparison of the planning processes

Sketch based on pictures and notes November 2024/KR

Nykarleby			Härnösand	
Inputs – Citizen – Environment – Technology	Process	Similarities ¹ Distinctions Interesting questions	Process	Inputs – Citizen – Environment – Technology
Government Decision on Land Use Objectives The Ministry of the Environment and others provide guidelines and rules	National plan	Fairly similar legislation: MBL (Fin), PBL (Sve) Time span?	National plan	The National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, the Swedish Transport Administration, other authorities: Guidelines and laws for urban planning
		At what stage does external monitoring, assessment of new technology, come up?		
Regional Council decides	Landscape plan an overall plan for the landscape	Different regional structures: Different division of labour Time span?	No common plan at regional level; Different regions adopt different perspectives on development, including urban planning	The county administrative boards monitor that the plans comply with national guidelines and take regional interests into account
Trends: Norm deregulation		Vertical integration – national and regional initiatives and the relationship of municipalities to them? Is there a dialogue?		Challenges: Difficult structure of the regional superstructure

Local Master plan		For the municipalities: Which areas, strategies and plans are relevant for urban planning? Are they taken into account?	Comprehensive plan	
The municipality decides: Initiatives, decisions Preparation of officials What external resources are needed? What are the problems with them?	Introduction: Participation and Assessment Programme (PDB), Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), Planning Map	When can one involve residents and/or other stakeholders, when should one hold back? Roles of different stakeholders Transparency, publicity versus efficiency	Introduction: Investigation via cross-administrative dialogue, local dialogues	The municipality decides: Initiatives, decisions Preparation by officials Dialogue point What external resources are needed? What are the problems with them?
The Technical board decides Dialogue point – formal	Hearing , if necessary information session on the draft	Examples of dialogue areas and tools that work? Difference between formal and informal? Also check the resident dialogue list	Consultation	Dialogue point – formal
	Response to statements and remarks for PDB	How does the feedback take place?		
	Draft plan	Forms of notification and publication after decision/proposal: How to do it		
Dialogue Point – Formal	Hearing			
	Treatment			
	EIA	Separate treatment or integrated?		
	Plan proposal		Plan proposal	Municipal Executive Board
Dialogue point – formal	Consultation on plan proposals		Review	Dialogue point – formal
	Treatment			
	Planning document			
The Municipal Executive Board and the City Council	Decision		Adoption of the plan	The Municipal Executive Board and the City Council
	Court			
	After 30+7 days legal force			

¹ NB! A mere comparison between the processes does not highlight all the issues we have identified during the project – rather, issues that specifically concern technology, innovation capacity or participation/inclusion are relevant regardless of the framework

Tools also to address the fact that the master plan itself is outdated?	Partial master plan	Differences beyond names?	In-depth comprehensive plan (PREP)	The municipality: Guidance on the development of a specific area in more detail
			Thematic Comprehensive Plan (TÖP)	As above, but around a theme
			Planning program	The municipality: visionary planning basis for a less contiguous area, e.g. a district
Local Detailed plan		Most of the questions are relevant for both general/ comprehensive plans and detailed plans	Detailed plan	
The municipality decide: Initiatives, decisions Preparation of officials	Introduction: Participation and assessment programme, plan map,	Detailed plans tend to be more flexible, providing room for interpretation in Finland. The scope for political control?	Initiation: Planning decision based on application or need Plan prioritisation	The community administration assesses, the community committee decides
	Related inventories and investigations	Challenges in the preparation process – communication between departments, the relationship between officials and decision-makers?	Processing: surveys, citizen dialogue and dialogue with other actors	Dialogue point
The Technical Committee decides Dialogue point – formal	Hearing, if necessary information session on the draft	Who is specifically invited, how does the public find out what is happening?	Consultation: Stakeholders are invited to give their views, anyone can participate	Dialogue Point – Formal
	Response to statements and remarks		Consultation report: summary	
	Plan proposal			
Dialogue point – formal	Consultation on plan proposals		Review: as a consultation, second opportunity to comment	Dialogue point – formal
	Treatment If necessary, another round		Audit statement, if necessary adjustment of the plan proposal	

	Planning document			
The municipal executive board or the council, depending on the scope	Decision		Assumption	The community committee, in some cases the council
	After 30+7 days legal force	After adoption: How are the plans available to users?	Trial period three weeks, then legal force	

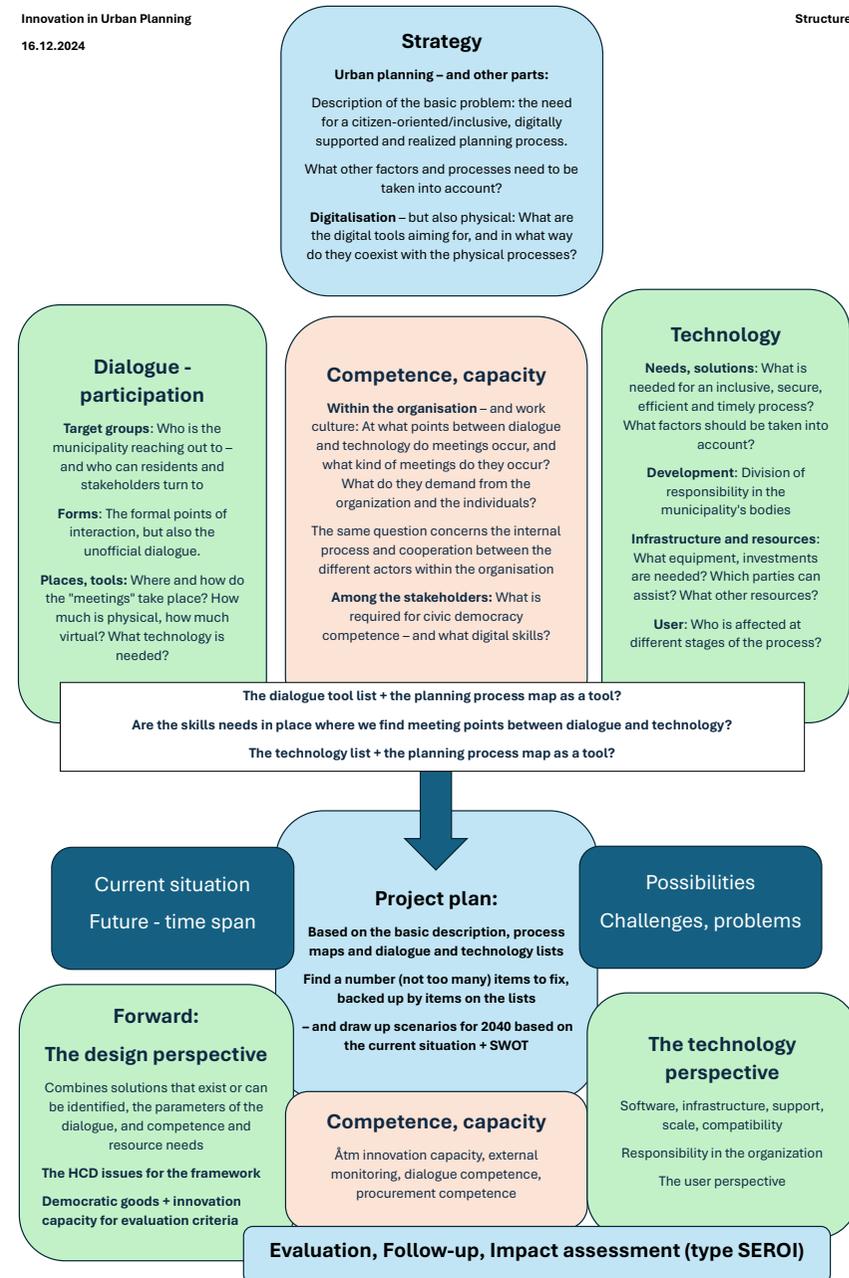
Aspects of the planning that are not directly visible here but which may be different in Sweden and Finland:

- Other planning processes and their characteristics – insofar as they relate to urban planning
- Different target groups with different special needs, inclusion aspects in addition to the general
- Technology development and how new technologies are taken up or tested
- Innovation culture and capacity of the municipality's organisation

A structure for implementation in a larger-scale project

Innovation in Urban Planning
16.12.2024

Structure



Analysis matrix template

IUP Problem Matrix - background for the analysis

Theme	Problem/challenge	Who owns the problem	Similarities/differences S-F?	Supplementary questions - Proposals for action
Population/labour force:				
Demography				
Migration/attractiveness				
Labour and housing shortages				
Content and connections of planning: How do we want to live, work, thrive?				
Economical structure				
Mobility				
Sustainability in planning and construction				
Data and how it is used				
Time horizon				
Cross-cutting perspective				
Steering				
Laws and regulations				
Overall plans and strategies				
Operating culture				
Time horizon and future perspective				
The roadmap to 2040 overall - emphases, milestones, trends				
Concrete new needs and tomorrow's services				
Other?				

Sources for further reading

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Härnösands
kommun



NYKARLEBY
Dröm stort i en småstad



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