IKEA’s social innovation strategy at H22

Understanding the narrative of social innovation in cities through living laboratories and communicating CSR

Magdalena Dimitrova
To increase the understanding of the role of CSR in global development practice, this study examined ‘The Oracle’ podcast series, one of IKEA’s projects at H22, Helsingborg’s open innovation platform and city expo. The current transformations in our communities are met with traditional CSR approaches which are being exchanged for innovative models that encourage participation, consultation and engagement. The ethical discourse on businesses engaging in social affairs remains to be contested, but analysis on individual interests in shared issues using a communication view of CSR leads to innovation in network societies. At the same time, development practitioners are organizing social learning systems to communicate social change (C4D). Findings showed that storytelling can be used to study the shared sustainable development priorities between governments and businesses, and that the functionality of these narratives are just as important as the information they hold. Further research can be made to investigate the function of social innovation as a catalyst for CSR and C4D to find compatible solutions that address global development problems.

**Keywords:** sustainable development, corporate social responsibility, development communication, public-private partnership, storytelling
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Introduction

Helsingborg and H22

The city of Helsingborg in Sweden has embarked on its most significant welfare investment to date: an open innovation platform and City Expo called H22 aimed at improving the quality of life in cities by developing welfare solutions for the future. The emerging challenges facing city governments all over Europe are complex and multi-dimensional, prompting governments to anticipate and create knowledge about future situations while implementing real innovation at present. The threat of declining revenue in Swedish municipalities is one of the many issues exacerbated by the disproportionate tax-paying population and the distributed demographic in cities, which are symptoms of other, more visible challenges like environmental degradation and social exclusion. To afford a better future for its residents, Helsingborg launched a platform for people to create the future they want, making H22 a testbed of ideas open to citizens and various stakeholders in the academe, intergovernmental organizations, civil society, and the private sector.

Primarily, H22 is a wide-scale local initiative for Helsingborg residents with international collaborators, named as such because the H22 City Expo is taking place in 2022. In the past, Helsingborg staged the H55 expo to show how modern architecture, crafts and design could be used for commercial and luxury goods. At the same time, H99 was dubbed as the “last nest fair of the century” and showcased Swedish living, architecture, design, and technology. While exhibitions are staged narratives of how the city presents itself to residents and neighbouring citizens, it also invites critical debates about the future of housing and visions of sustainable living in European cities. The purpose of H22 is to find smarter and more efficient ways to solve the city’s identified challenges, starting with communicating

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1 The Helsingborg Museum referred to H99 as a “meeting between past, present and future” where many opportunities occurred between the Swedish and the Danish. Held in the year before the millennium, it was a time to reflect, react and sum up the past century and at the same time, look ahead to where Europe was headed.
a shared responsibility to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Micco Grönholm, the Head of Future at the city of Helsingborg, emphasized that H22 is about co-creating value through meaningful partnerships where citizens can learn from others while contributing their own experiences. With a budget of SEK 250 million (US$27 million) over three years, H22 has attracted national and international partners from both the private and public sectors. The call to action for these partners is to focus on initiatives that can be implemented within the city or pilot projects for further research and development.

Despite the huge scale of H22 exceeding its predecessors, the ability to demonstrate lasting impact beyond commercialized products, revitalized buildings, and media archives is lacking. The restaurant Parapeten was one of the building exhibitions during H55. BoKlok, the joint venture owned by Skanska and IKEA, was first exhibited during H99. While international expos often aim to be powerful agents of urban transformation, it was only at the start of the 21st century that we began to see a demand for sustainable urban development initiatives at the stakeholder level. As we move closer to 2030, sustainability experts and practitioners around the world are using the SDGs as a framework to revitalize global partnerships among governments, businesses and civil society as a whole.

**Communicating social sustainability**

In order to study the shared sustainable development priorities between government and business, this research maps the involvement of a private development player, IKEA, as a central partner and co-creator in H22. Social involvement through partnerships is based on the view that the public sector cannot solve social problems on its own (Brejning, 2012). The United Nations has existing normative frameworks that provide the business case for corporate sustainability, such as the Global Compact Principles that promote responsible corporate citizenship in the areas of human rights, labour standards, environment and anti-corruption. While critics argue that the program is flawed due to its lack of verifiable obligations, member firms are expected to submit their Communication on Progress.
to keep their listings. A multinational enterprise founded in Sweden, IKEA has been a signatory to the UN Global Compact since December 2004 and is once more stepping up at the Helsingborg city expo to connect resources and collaborate with sustainability experts in markets where they operate. Among the many partners of the City of Helsingborg for the H22 City Expo, this study has chosen to focus on IKEA’s public engagement activity, The Oracle, a podcast series for H22. Produced in collaboration with Munck Studios, The Oracle is a storytelling initiative created for H22 that engages experts from cities outside Helsingborg to share their views on what the “Future of the Home” is to them.

**Research Questions:**

1. How are partnerships and storytelling tools approached for social change and to what extent can they be applied to city-wide collaborations?

2. How can public-private partnerships take advantage of storytelling and new media to engage in sustainable development priorities?

A literature review of book chapters and academic papers on the concept of sustainable development will be conducted, as well as direct and indirect ideas within this field of research. This will be followed by an analysis of the theoretical framework used in this study.

**C4D and corporate social responsibility**

The field of communication for development and social change (henceforth, “C4D”) does not have a strong record of demonstrating change or impact within corporate social responsibility (henceforth, “CSR”). Scholars like McAnany (2021) and Obregon (2014) discuss the need to broaden the scope of the field to include economics, technology and social entrepreneurship. However, while there is a call

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2 Submitting an annual Communication on Progress (CoP) is a substantial requirement for a company's commitment to the UN Global Compact. The format is flexible and can be prepared in any language as long as they fulfill the following minimum requirements: a statement by the CEO expressing continued support; a description of actions taken to implement the Ten Principles; and a measurement of outcomes.
for a new development paradigm that includes sustainability, participation, ownership and civil society, development communication specialists are wary about including public relations and corporate communication approaches to C4D (Balit, 2021; van de Fliert, 2013). What can C4D learn from corporate communication and vice versa? The challenge to development practitioners is identifying the relevant indicators of social change as a result of communication and corporate social responsibility. The development arena is presented with many opportunities to facilitate innovation provided by different views on social learning, storytelling, and partnerships. I argue that the emergence of sustainable development calls for the reconciliation of CSR and C4D approaches, but the different traditions have yet to learn from each other.

By critically examining the potential advantages and limitations of public-private partnerships, this research will investigate the role of IKEA at H22 as a major development player and active corporate social innovator. Through this research, I discuss how IKEA is paving the way to show the compatibility between CSR and C4D when applied to similar and related phenomena, such as reimagining a sustainable city in Europe.
The bibliography chosen for this thesis sets up an academic discussion for key terms such as public-private partnership, social learning, and storytelling through the analysis of quantitative and qualitative studies. It sets up our perspective in examining the function of participant narratives in sustainable development initiatives.

**Finding the most appropriate bibliography**

This thesis aims to add knowledge to the field of C4D and CSR. Therefore, the selection of the different articles considered the journals they were published in, which were mainly in the social sciences, including a few from business ethics journals. A multidisciplinary approach was taken when choosing the different texts, which meant that the keyword “social innovation” was searched and related in various fields but mainly in the context of cities. The Google Scholar platform was used to find most of the articles.

**Limitations in the bibliography**

Theories in CSR and C4D continue to evolve, and these terms have competing and co-existing meanings in the academic literature. While this thesis aims not to establish a methodological guideline, the attempt to form a context of analysis is present even though it can change significantly in a short period. Additionally, social science researchers are aware that research conducted a year ago may partially become obsolete with the emergence of information and new media. As such, qualitative studies published within the past five years were prioritized, except for qualified textbooks and verified authors who have been in the field for a long time.
Conceptualizing social innovation in cities

The experiences of social innovation in cities, whether supported by institutions or carried out by private citizens through civil society organizations, have been invoked by international development associations such as the United Nations and the European Union. Prior to adopting the UN Sustainable Development Agenda, the Millennium Development Goals only sought the agreement of governments rather than a holistic view that both public and private entities can be enlisted to support. The 17 Global Goals (henceforth, “SDGs”) represent a shared development vision of our present world from a narrative perspective. The SDGs ability to communicate what needs to be done by the year 2030 exceeded the outcomes achieved by its predecessor. At the same time, the SDGs cast a wide net where funders from every sector and industry are welcome to participate, urging governments to allocate funds for the global development agenda that aims to promote national security and bilateral interest between some countries influenced by economic policies and political ideologies (Brejing, 2012; Hancock, 2021).

On the one hand, it highlights a commitment to improving the state of the world. On the other hand, it reveals the systemic weaknesses of social services that, if left unaddressed, will mean catastrophic disaster for people, the planet and society. When development funds are limited, and donor fatigue is being felt, how can we find more capital investment for welfare projects? Recent literature suggests that global development practice needs both top-down and bottom-up development approaches (Kaiser, 2020) and argues that no single approach is necessarily better than the other. The gross failures of mostly top-down financial aid support on development projects have shifted contemporary practices toward a community-led development. However, operational frameworks are still needed to facilitate a sustainable bottom-up approach.
Public-private partnerships and social learning models

The World Bank defines the concept of public-private partnership (PPP) as “a long-term contract between a private party and a government entity, for providing a public asset or service, in which the private party bears significant risk, and management responsibility and remuneration is linked to performance” (World Bank Group, 2017). This describes the formal relationship between public and private actors where the private sector usually provides finance and execution, and policy oversight and regulation are the responsibility of the public sector. Risks are shared and transferred depending on the contract term. While governments enter into a wide range of contracts with private companies, specific institutional characteristics such as high capital investment and credible performance commitments identify PPPs. Most arguments developed by the proponents of PPP focus on the economic factors and how it contributes to efficiency and productivity. The interest in studying the social innovation in PPP models has intensified in recent decades as strategies and contracts are being developed alongside national and international policy agendas. Whereas PPP is key to achieving the 2030 Agenda and is promoted as a development goal (SDG 17: Partnership for the Goals), an analysis of SDG outcomes is critical to understanding the concept of sustainable development from an integrated view and systemic perspective (Donaires et al., 2018) limited by our existing technological and human capabilities.

A prominent and compelling issue addressed by the sustainable development agenda is the expected growth of our global urban population by 63% between 2014 and 2050 compared to the total population growth of 32% in the same period (Estevez et al., 2016). The rapid urbanization of megacities makes them the centre of economic development and technological innovation, which also causes social problems such as poverty, inequality, and inadequate living environments. However, scholars have demonstrated the emerging trends within PPP in the context of smart city projects through theory and practice. A systematic literature review by Nguyen et al. (2019) reports that infrastructure and information communication technology (ICT) ranks first in the industrial sectors.
with most PPP projects, followed by health, then public services. Likewise, the European Union
developed social innovation strategies to find new answers to these emerging problems in financial
constraints, such as those linked to ageing, unemployment, migration, and climate change (BEPA,
2014). PPP models in smart city development have emerged and can be classified into four different
types: business-as-usual, incremental innovation, ground-breaking innovation, and co-research. Table
1 shows the classification based on the level of innovation in the reviewed projects (Nguyen et al.,
2019) along with its characteristics and common approaches. However, PPPs lead to criticisms of the
liberalization of social services, where social innovation is seen as a substitute for the social welfare
provision of the state (Brejning, 2012; Morsing et al., 2007).

**Table 1.**

*Public-private partnership (PPP) project classification*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PPP types</th>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business-as-usual PPPs</td>
<td>The public sector determines and specifies the level of technological incorporation that it expects</td>
<td>Standard ‘hard’ infrastructure development; Prescriptive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incremental innovation PPP</td>
<td>Built up on the infrastructure systems that existed before and charge citizens more from the added convenience</td>
<td>Mostly used to implement ICT development; Validated through maintenance and quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-research PPP</td>
<td>Meet the challenges of business and innovation through universities and research centres</td>
<td>Alliances and network establishments tasked to evaluate and provide explanations for outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground-breaking innovation PPP</td>
<td>Linked to isolated exploratory pilot actions to test “proof of concepts”; also referred to as the creation or recreation of new business</td>
<td>Mostly initiated by companies where knowledge, ideas and stakeholders come together to experience change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another approach to social innovation refers to processes that involve the transformation of trust relations between citizens, often exemplified by digital technology companies that develop new forms of economic exchange (García et al., 2015; Wilkins et al., 2014). There is an inference here that the trust that social relationships augur through reinforced transactions and over a period of time, these transactions are now par for the course and the time element for the trust to be built in to that systemic cycle has become a pre-mandated requirement for such transactions to be effectual. Yet, in such cases, the trust is a predetermined eventuality, that is taken as a by-product of the CSR and C4D processes, which may need to be studied in depth. Furthermore, where there is an exceptional case of an established firm, there can be a presupposition that such trust or company values are well entrenched in public memory, as if a reservoir, to be drawn on, as the company engages in meaningful CSR and C4D activities. Whereas the empowerment of public actors is a crucial tenet of social innovation in the private sphere, the change in governance structures can still result in social exclusion, even when it is the issue to be addressed in the first place. For example, studies have shown that today’s society is experiencing a loneliness epidemic (Cacioppo & Cacioppo, 2018) not just from social distancing incidents as an outcome of the 2020 pandemic but also from the physical isolation brought about by urban infrastructures which impact public health, labour opportunities and selection of housing. As communities organize and collective efforts to address social needs are institutionalized, it only follows that concepts of social innovation in this way are understood in economic terms. The development of social enterprises and business model innovations provide an alternative to the top-down promotion of social capital and thus finds it bottom-linked in groups and communities.

**Living laboratories and social learning applications**

The Western capitalist model of development was believed to have the answers to societal problems and weaknesses, primarily through science, technology and education (van de Fliert, 2014). However, economic growth centred development came with unfavourable environmental, cultural and social
side effects. Whereas some parts of the world experienced an improved quality of life, it was at the expense of underdeveloped economies in the Global South. The concept of sustainable development seeks to reconcile economic activity with social progress and environmental protection, with researchers, urban planners and global pioneers playing a pivotal role in generating evidence for the Sustainable Development Goals. One can examine the efficacy of such activities as carried out by non-profit organisations that have immense trust capital as they have no ‘product’ beyond their core values, that is to exist for the perpetuity of social good and benefit, deriving enormous social capital when engaging in C4D activities. The eradication of poverty, hunger, access to healthcare, sanitation, are a few of the 17 listed goals that are key markers for Sustainable Development, as streamlined by the UN. The idea of podcasts and storytelling being effective mediums to enthuse public participation through society, aided by private players and the government to speak of the consequences of non-amelioration of such ills can be an effective way to inform, disseminate, communicate, take feedback and change the way these ‘social issues’ are worked on, at the intermediary level. However, there is an inference that can be made here, which is that each of the three stakeholders, the society, the corporates as well as the government are on an equal footing and have an equal mandate to engage in such activities.

There is no evidence to say that one is considered a member of society only if, one works in cohesion, to achieve the social development goals, and therein, lies another supposition, that must be aptly explored, through quantitative research methods, for a clear and distinct demarcation of the role, motivation and the ‘reward’ for each stakeholder, whose efforts can be proportionate to the ‘reward’ element. In the case of the government and the ‘business’, trust capital and continuity serve as ample reward, aside from residuary benefits, to maintain such a course of action. Let us examine the experiential activity within universities and cities, that is the experimental living laboratory. This concept originated as a corporate methodology because it fills the gap between innovation and conventional R&D (Dutilleul et al., 2010) through its process of generating ICT innovations in-house.
(König & Evans, 2013). The European Network of Living Labs describes them as “user-centred, open innovation ecosystems based on a systematic user co-creation approach integrating research and innovation processes in real life communities and settings... [that] place the citizen at the centre of innovation, and have thus shown the ability to better mould the opportunities offered by new ICT concepts and solutions to the specific needs and aspirations of local contexts, cultures, and creativity potentials.” In other words, living labs equip traditional R&D departments with the knowledge and tools to research social innovation.

Beyond the allure of cities as testbeds for living laboratory “scientists”, other public and private organizations are given access to heavily-funded or otherwise free testing facilities and research capacity. Whereas old buildings and cityscapes are transformed into creative hubs that guarantee the social relevance of sustainable development in citizens’ everyday lives, there is a need to view such open innovation platforms as negotiations between stakeholders rather than the free spirit of collaboration with the majority. As far as the innovation literature is concerned, the open innovation process weakly supports the inclusion of relevant social groups as active participants (Battisti, 2014).

Dutilleul, Birrer & Mensink (2010) problematizes the performance of living labs from the perspective of businesses and users and how they interact with each other by examining three features: contact, communication, and collaboration (Table 2). Understanding living labs as an innovation system benefits from structured networks of stakeholders at the regional, national and international levels; however, communicating the users’ involvement in the co-creation of innovation systems is often overlooked at the high level. Likewise, the users’ participation in Living Labs has ethical implications due to its open social settings and the extent of data collection and documentation. With a heightened focus on the ability to innovate and create applications of value, there is a shift toward innovation processes (Eriksson et al., 2005) that is away from research and development. As Geoffrey Nicholson of 3M once said, “[r]esearch is the transformation of money into knowledge. Innovation is the transformation of knowledge into money.” By involving users in product development, Living Labs
empower entrepreneurs, designers and researchers as innovation specialists who are aware of consumer needs. Whereas the product development process may outline these needs from multiple perspectives, Dutilleul et al. (2010) argue that a product can only be fitted to needs or needs can be fitted around a product. What does a valid user involvement in a Living Lab mean?

Table 2.

Three social configurations equally referred to as ‘Living Labs’ and how they are organized

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typologies of Living Labs</th>
<th>How do actors come into contact?</th>
<th>How does communication take place?</th>
<th>How is collaboration sustained?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Living Labs as an Innovation System</td>
<td>Structured and organized networks of innovation stakeholders at the regional, national and European levels</td>
<td>Standardized regional technological infrastructures and the harmonization of approaches and methods to knowledge sharing</td>
<td>Through multi-business collaborations and cooperation with public institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living Labs as In Vivo Experimental Settings</td>
<td>Enlisted users by the innovators or through the use of collective spaces that should be known as experimental facilities (e.g., airport, personal home, an apartment showroom)</td>
<td>Constructed artificial boundaries between users’ realistic setting and external actors which precludes participants from interacting</td>
<td>Through the cooperation of participants which may or may not be in direct contact with the facilitators of the experiment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living Labs as a Product Development Approach</td>
<td>Qualified forms of collaboration between users, i.e., designers,</td>
<td>Ideation and evaluation to capture problems and</td>
<td>Through the close and intensive interaction between diverse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
technology specialists, researchers and entrepreneurs

solutions as well as test assumptions based on feedback

contributors with distinct and complementary specialities

Living labs facilitate incremental learning by developing and introducing new technologies, but minimal studies have been done on monitoring and assessing their societal impacts (König & Evans, 2013). Worse, innovation projects aimed to generate new knowledge often result in demonstration projects that are dropped once the event is finished rather than embedded into processes that local communities can benefit from. When cities create for themselves a Living Lab but fail to establish a robust social learning system, the supposedly ‘user-centric’ and ‘user-driven’ innovations will have little impact on achieving sustainable development due to their lack of interest in the cognitive, social and normative aspects of people’s lifestyles. Therefore, creating social learning spaces is a central yet overlooked feature of sustainable development that not only living laboratories can deliver but also city expos, galleries, and exhibits.

Innovation in CSR

Donaires et al. (2018) envision the SDGs as a tool for the world and society to self-organize towards sustainability. By providing the indicators for the planet’s long-term viability, the 2030 Agenda and the UN Global Compact encourages civil society, businesses, and governments to take an active role in global development practice. On the one hand, individual-level progress can be seen through a person’s attitudes and willingness to abandon individualistic lifestyles toward a more cooperative way of decision making. On the other hand, organizational level attributes can be proven by how public and private actors balance the environmental and social costs of growth given the prevailing ideologies and systems in place. In the context of this paper, social innovation is understood to be a creative collaboration between public individuals and private sector agents whose actions often
intersect in pursuit of a sustainable outcome. It is interpreted using a communications perspective as we focus on ground-breaking innovations that are linked to the creation or re-creation of new businesses. This interplay among state, society, and business is depicted here as corporate social responsibility (CSR). It demands two analytical approaches: the “business case”, which describes CSR as enlightened self-interest, and the “normative case”, which distinguishes CSR as an outcome of the desire to do good (Morsing et al., 2007).

As a social construct, CSR has competing, and co-existing meanings since people’s beliefs and attitudes vary depending on issues that prevail in their communities. This highly-contested position in the academic literature makes CSR best understood as a “free-floating” concept that can potentially challenge the status quo given its ability to be researched independently within institutions (Brejning, 2012). While public management models use CSR to achieve their social mission at substantially lower costs, corporations use CSR to address complex social problems that affect their industry to fulfil stakeholder expectations. The two communications perspectives on CSR that this paper will focus on are corporate communication and development communication.

**Corporate communication toward CSR**

According to Schultz et al. (2013), CSR is a communicative event that enables corporate legitimacy through symbolic means. The ongoing and changing descriptions are interactively located in communication practice, representing the dynamic continuum of narratives about the roles of corporations in society. Figure 1 shows a map of the prevailing CSR discourse in a mixed economy welfare state, such as Sweden, which characterizes a “social democratic CSR” where fundamental beliefs about social contracts are exerted on business and society. This means that the community is more concerned with CSR benefits to society rather than the business, therefore emphasizing the ability of companies to be morally informed and socially engaged beyond profit-making behaviours (Brejning, 2012; Morsing et al., 2007; Schmeltz, 2014). This particular discourse aligned with the
communication view of CSR is used as a theoretical paradigm in this study because it expects companies to spend their money and time on projects that are not necessarily a firm’s core business, but due to social pressures, neglecting this responsibility can inflict unforeseen damages to a company’s future.

**Figure 1.**

*The continuum of the dominant CSR discourse in a political ideological context*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>liberal discourse</th>
<th>social democratic discourse</th>
<th>radical discourse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Business Case for CSR”</td>
<td>Public-private partnerships</td>
<td>“Corporate Citizenship”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business gains</td>
<td>Social gains</td>
<td>Global fundamental change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adopting a non-communication view of CSR poses several problems in terms of contract negotiation and the acceptable level of governmental involvement in developing welfare solutions. On the left side of the continuum lies the “liberal CSR discourse”, described as being driven by business gains aligned with stakeholder interests. Viewing CSR as an instrument and strategic tool for value creation, it argues that business activities should focus not only on satisfying shareholders but also on other members of the public that hold a “stake” in the company (Brejning, 2012; Schultz et al., 2013), leading to results that impact a company’s financial performance, industry reputation, job satisfaction rates of its employees, and brand affinity of its customers. On the right side of the continuum lies the “radical CSR discourse”, which aims to negotiate a global social contract between business and stakeholders. This case includes all actors mentioned earlier and the company’s partners in government, NGOs, academics, and politicians. This political-normative view highlights a corporation’s influence on societal norms as its assigned power and political identity leads to a complex corporate environment with ambiguous practices of maintaining legitimacy (Schultz et al., 2013). While the
liberal CSR discourse talks about the ‘business case for CSR’, the radical CSR discourse emphasizes the notion of ‘corporate citizenship’ as the preferred terminology for CSR (Brejning, 2012).

Adopting a communicative framework for CSR also has its challenges. Schultz et al. (2013) offered this approach to add to the CSR discourse but defining CSR as a symbolic resource leaves a broader space for interpretation rather than determination, which means we are no closer to defining CSR than arriving at a generally accepted definition of social innovation. Nevertheless, it can be argued that CSR is a dynamic process that enables trust and deliberation among various stakeholders due to its acknowledgement of multiple discourses and interpretations. However, an aspect of CSR that cannot be denied is the inherent bias in the feedback mechanism, that could well weigh in on the efficacy of the process. As an example of this approach, businesses and organizations follow frameworks and adapt development practices to meet the SDGs, which can take multiple forms. In reviewing the reporting mechanisms of the SDG Compass, companies use various types of corporate communication to inform their employees, shareholders and customers about their sustainability commitments. These include internal media such as annual reports, employee handbooks, intranet announcements and CEO letters, and external media such as newspapers, press releases and corporate publications. CSR activities result in the generation of immense social capital that the company can and does put to use for furthering the business objectives, which can be ironic, given that the company rewards itself, through philanthropic work, that it does, as a socially responsible citizen. These aspects of CSR are better studied under the quantitative methods, deriving ample evidence as well as feedback from the passive observers and the active beneficiaries of the process.

However, many companies are moving beyond the argument for a business case of CSR toward engineering the business case itself. IKEA illustrates this in their Communication on Progress to the UN Global Compact, where, in 2020, describes their group of companies to be advancing all the 17

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3 The SDG Compass provides guidance for companies in aligning their strategies with the SDGs and in measuring and managing their contribution. The guide is developed with a focus on large multinational enterprises.
SDGs. While the debate is still on whether the UN Global Compact should be viewed as a compliance-based CSR standard, it is an effective tool for social learning that connects companies to different stakeholders and encourages global commitments. For example, IKEA advances their ambition to inspire healthy and sustainable living through voluntary membership in multi-stakeholder committees and reporting initiatives such as the 2020 GlobeScan Healthy & Sustainable Living Report and the 10x20x30 Food Loss and Waste Initiative.4

**Development communication toward CSR**

While most of the research on social change outcomes is biased against corporate social responsibility or “CSR” (Balit, 2021; Wilkins et al., 2014), demonstrating the impact of global development practice takes on many forms and thus, no single approach is necessarily better than the other (Kaiser, 2020). As Brejning (2012) argues, welfare state administrations can get the assistance of businesses whose involvement is expected to spread enthusiasm toward CSR and social sustainability outcomes. Whereas C4D does not have a strong record of demonstrating change or impact within CSR, broadening the scope of the field to include CSR is one of the biggest arguments in creating a new development paradigm within sustainability.

Stanley Deetz (2007) argues that CSR practitioners are managers whose approach to communication is influenced by concepts of hierarchy and control. Because of their corporate training in public speaking and design presentation skills, they are prone to treating theories of persuasion substantially more than observing team facilitation and group creativity. This can result in the undervaluing of skills such as listening and negotiation when it comes to practising participatory communication, a key trait of development field practitioners. However, viewing C4D as a discipline where CSR models can be applied is an overlooked opportunity, especially since other communication specializations have closed the gap with strategic communications, often another word for corporate communications.

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4 IKEA FY20 Sustainability Report, p.78
(Deetz, 2007). We undertake the following analysis of the two paradigms through a reconceptualization of C4D as a form of strategic communication that is persuasive or participatory (Wilkins et al., 2014).

The first visible difference between the two paradigms lies in the directional flow of information in the communication for development practice, more frequently perceived as being top-down (persuasive) or bottom-up (participatory). The top-down or persuasive paradigm views strategic communication favourably through its organized plan of action aimed at democratizing information to others. We see this commonly used in social and development sector campaigns to frame health literacy programs that equip people to make better choices and thus promote positive changes such as good nutrition habits, sex education and family planning (Waisbord, 2014). On the other hand, a bottom-up or participatory paradigm views strategic communication as a facilitator of activist strategies, or that which is not limited to a hierarchical diffusion of information. Waisbord eliminates the notion of “strategy” in communication in his participatory critique:

> Communication should encourage citizens to take an active part in communities through the discussion of issues, problems and strategies. There’s no “strategy,” so to speak. Strategic implies that someone has already delineated goals and tactics. The guiding principle should be fostering communication without specific, predetermined goals. Democratic communication, instead, assumes the absence of preconditions and plans. Communication that nurtures critical consciousness and evaluation of social conditions is antithetical to goal-oriented actions. (Waisbord, 2014: 153)

Whereas the literature on participatory communication avoids using the word “strategic”, social studies and research on social movements have referenced “tactics” and “tools”, which are analytically similar. Communication is a powerful tool to discover, define, and understand problems and their potential solutions. Rather than changing people, the most considerable value derived from participatory C4D is in introducing ideas, developing existing knowledge, and resource mobilization.
In this context, C4D can be viewed as a form of strategic communication that entails careful consideration of goals and tactics that enable communicative dialogue. Furthermore, this type of democratic communication requires little training or development: “if we build a trusting team, members will communicate well; if we develop participatory attitudes, appropriate skills will spontaneously arise” (Deetz, 2007: 275). However, as Kaiser (2020) points out, single approaches to development are counterproductive if we want to maximize the benefits of social innovation today. There are situations where persuasive strategic communication is needed, but open, communicative processes should be the foundational framework of operation for C4D. Traditionally, communication is seen as an instrument, but the cultural turn in development practice and research brought a significant reaction to these paradigms. Whereas the result of C4D work often contradicts the aims of raising awareness and advocating for change (McAnany, 2021), this points to a lack of strategizing and clarifying objectives on the part of the C4D proponents who, rather than preach to the converted, should caution against strengthening echo chambers which will dilute the data gathered from development practice, therefore risk persuading people who are already convinced. Scholars in the C4D field argue that this phenomenon underscores the need for transdisciplinary approaches to push C4D outside the Media and Communication Studies discipline toward a more globally oriented perspective (Hemer & Tufte, 2016).

Narrative frameworks are helpful in studying C4D ethically as it values time with and diversity among participants (Riessman & Quinney, 2005). With the rise of ICT and globalization, digitalization is changing public engagement by introducing new media in the form of tweets, videos, podcasts, and other online artefacts. As such, private firms and development players meet their audiences in the digital space by creating online communities and platforms to aggregate information. Media and communication scholars have allowed the digitalization of C4D methodologies as in any sociological and anthropological field which uses qualitative methods like netnography (Kozinets, 2006), digital
Digital storytelling through podcasts

Podcasts are published compositions of sequenced audio files typically delivered as conversational between two or more speakers. These conversations carried fluid and contested ideas that mimic everyday social interaction, making it a suitable medium to study for the production of ideas (Lundström & Lundström, 2021). Although podcasts have a one-sided characteristic, researchers who use this medium shift from an overt responsibility towards a covert role and become non-participant observers, a challenge when conducting traditional ethnographic methods. It is convenient and accessible to researchers, but the study of podcasts also allows for distant engagement between the researcher and the participant, which creates fewer interferences and obstructions, particularly when the subject is telling a story.

Storytelling for social change describes our ability to use stories in shaping our environment. Narratives are fundamental to how we make sense of the world, and researchers have examined the role of stories in organizations and policy assessments to craft storytelling as a valid research method and communication tool (Kendall & Kendall, 2012). It assumes that the qualitative researcher is interested in the text, the order in which events are told, and the participant’s telling of the entire story. While narrative analysis takes story fragments as data units, storytelling is more concerned about the whole story as its object.

There are four functions of shared stories. These are (1) experiential, (2) explanatory, (3) validating, and (4) prescriptive. Table 3 describes their conceptualization based on Kendall & Kendall’s (2012) typology of organizational stories. Whereas narratives can be found in “behaviour change communication, in processes of cultural change, in the cultivation of critical consciousness, and via consideration of questions of voice and representation, in processes of social change” (Winskell &
Enger, 2014: 190), our purpose is to illustrate how certain narratives function within the context of sustainable development in C4D. The perspective taken in this paper will be elaborated on in the discussion.

Table 3.

*Kendall & Kendall’s (2012) Functions of Storytelling*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Storytelling Functions</th>
<th>Description of the Storytelling Function as it Relates to Modern Organizations</th>
<th>Common Stories Found in Organizations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experiential</td>
<td>Stories that describe experiencing what the organizational universe is like</td>
<td>• Describe corporate culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Enhancing team camaraderie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Encouraging social inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanatory</td>
<td>Stories that attempt to explain the organizational universe</td>
<td>• Revealing how problems are solved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Analyzing culture and behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Explaining how decisions are made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validating</td>
<td>Stories that try to maintain the organizational value structure</td>
<td>• Articulating company values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Managing or slowing down change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Extending corporate knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescriptive</td>
<td>Stories that recommend correct and proper behavior in the organization</td>
<td>• Educating future decision-makers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Changing or controlling behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Promoting image of the company</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Background on the history and use of podcasts as a medium for storytelling at the intersection of business, CSR & “communicating development issues”*

People have always enjoyed hearing a good story. This exigency has not disappeared over the decades, and media landscape development has made it possible to tell the story in new ways. One of them is
podcasting, a series of recorded spoken word, audio episodes focused on particular topic or theme. This form of storytelling has turned from a niche phenomenon into a global phenomenon, and as it evolves into a key part of the technological landscape, reflecting social and cultural touchpoints in society it has also become an area of critical evaluation. Unlike a radio broadcast, a podcast is accessible as a digital file that can be downloaded on a personal mobile device or computer and listened to at any given time (Watson & Pollette, 2005; Gray, 2021).

The history of podcasting goes back to the early 2000s when Apple released the first portable music player – iPod in October 2001. However, the term podcasting came from renowned journalist Ben Hammersly who was writing for The Guardian in 2004. He suggested that the term “podcast” is the combination of the word “iPod” and “broadcasting” shortly after Adam Curry and Dave Winer enabled people to download formerly known as audio blogs to their iPods, which eventually evolved over time to what it is today. They are now available on multiple platforms spanning millions of hours of content and giving freedom to listen to them when it is convenient (Hammersley, 2004).

Even though they have been around for nearly two centuries, recognition and interest in podcasts are evident now more than ever, to a great degree during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the rise of this medium has rapidly grown in popularity. Each year, Edison Research produces the longest-running study of consumer media usage and behaviours in America, the Infinite Dial report. In 2006, Edison added podcasting to Infinite Dial, and has tracked it every year since, becoming the industry standard for quantifying and characterizing the audience of podcasts. The statistics show that this form has become an important part of today’s media landscape. As an example, in 2018, 44% of Americans 12 or older had listened to a podcast, compared to 57% in 2021. At the same time knowledge around this medium is also soaring with 78% of Americans that are now familiar with podcasting, which is approximately 222 million people and an increase of 10 million in one year. Annually the percentage of Americans who have listened to a podcast in the last month, or in the last week, has grown until now (2021, Edison Research).
Podcasting may not only be a powerful storytelling tool, but it can function as a branding tool as well. The audience tuning in is immensely engaged, dedicating a significant amount of time to listen to long-form conversations on niche themes. The quality of engagement of podcast listeners is much richer according to John Shields, the producer from Beyond Today. Also, there is an aspect of emphatic accuracy that is apparently enhanced by voice-only communication above that observed in communication across senses according to the research done by Michael W. Kraus (Kraus, M. W. 2017). This emphatic accuracy coined with the engagement creates intimate relationship between listener and host establishing one-sided feeling of closeness and trust. Listeners are therefore provided with a sense of belonging, and the podcasts serve as alternative accessories for individuals’ self-image. The choice of podcast reflects personal preference and signals to friends and family who they are and what they value. A podcast provides both convenience - to listen anytime, anywhere and learning value for its listeners with wide variety of topics or hosts. The same format could provide numerous advantages to both private and public sector in reaching the right audiences and conveying either branded messages or raising awareness on important development challenges (OBE, 2021), especially that these type of branding initiatives are often deemed as more engaging and relevant, and less intrusive than other forms of advertising (IPSOS, 2020). However, the success in using podcasts as a medium for storytelling within business, CSR as well as in communicating development issues would of course rely on the right approach, strategy and collaboration while planning and executing. The strategic initiator ought to intentionally design a strategy to utilize story’s fullest capability. Impactful storytelling requires strategic thinking to recognize which audiences and which movements to action they can mobilize. At the same time, the power dynamics must be understood in a given issue area so that the target community could be skilfully pulled together in a suitable way. The funding for this sort of storytelling innovation also raises the question whether better partnerships would be a good investment for the future. Certainly, the gains and losses between different actors would need to be explored further, and adequate measures for social impact developed in a way that
doesn’t necessarily give priority to economic measurements of societal impacts noticeable in contemporary policy in the Global North (Fougère & Meriläinen, 2021).

Objectives and Methodology

As we have examined in the literature section, the research on social innovation can be found in policy journals with its orientation toward cities. However, it is significantly changing towards acceptance in the business field, especially in the CSR literature. The research on digital storytelling is limited, and while studies in C4D would have more to offer, the focus areas found were usually agriculture, public health and entertainment education (Wilkins et al., 2014). Despite this, some frameworks can be applied to our object of analysis that our choice of methodologies can validate. Through this research, we discuss how IKEA is paving the way to show the compatibility between corporate communication and development communication towards sustainable development when applied to similar and related phenomena, such as reimagining a sustainable city in Europe.

This research aims to discuss the extent to which IKEA engages its stakeholders to co-create social innovation at H22. While the public-private partnership consists of different elements, the focus of this study is on the communications-related initiatives and the city expo’s function as a living laboratory that facilitates social learning. The objectives of the research are two-fold:

- To investigate how social innovation stories can contribute to social learning
- To examine the purpose of seeing and experiencing the future in the context of H22

The methodology will adopt textual analysis to review IKEA’s CSR approach and commitment to the sustainable development agenda. This analysis will be supported by identifying categories and themes that emerge from the podcast episodes through content analysis. In contrast, elements of the structure, content and functionality will be explored using narrative analysis to investigate the
motivations and underlying ideologies embedded in the text. Access to free and public resources was prioritized in selecting these three methods.

Research methods

Textual analysis

Case studies, digital assets and online publications were used to examine IKEA’s business model and stakeholder commitments. Reports and UN Communications of Progress were also reviewed to understand their role as private development players better.

Content analysis

Of the many publicized activities of IKEA at H22, a collaborative podcast entitled ‘The Oracle’ was chosen as the object of analysis due to its ability to be analyzed using a narrative perspective. A total of 17 episodes were released between February and October 2021 with an average runtime of 30 minutes per episode, downloaded and transcribed using Welder, a free transcription software. The text was coded and counted for word frequency using a summative approach to explore the usage and identify categories inductively.

Narrative analysis

Analyzing the coded data using narrative analysis provides opportunities to make diverse yet meaningful interpretations of the text, mainly when different elements and categories have emerged. Using Kendall & Kendall’s (2012) four storytelling functions as a theoretical paradigm, the analysis focused on the podcast episodes, which fall under the “experiential” function for more clarity and substance. While each podcast episode is unique, the analysis presented here is based on observations of the episodes’ structure, content, and functionality and will not try to describe or provide definitive proof for the arguments conveyed in each.
Research limitations

Due to time and resource constraints, only a handful of the podcast episodes will be selected for analysis. The reason for the sample will be further discussed in the following chapters; therefore, the results could provide conclusions that need further investigation. The backgrounds and beliefs held by the narrative speakers were also excluded from the analysis, which is especially relevant in conducting social science research. Given the distant relationship between the speakers and IKEA, this thesis will only explore the potential contributions of the stories to H22 as a social learning model rather than view it as a CSR event or C4D outcome. The knowledge of the platform used is essential in recognizing the structure, together with publicized organizational materials to form the analysis.

Furthermore, the research has been conducted through qualitative methods and literature reviews, which do not cover the perceptual, cognitive and cognitive impacts of such CSR and C4D activities nor measure these initiatives for such impact. Also, there is an acceptance of the normative idea that the communication received through podcasts and storytelling are wholly accepted by the audience, without accounting for the limitations in the communication process, namely mechanical failure, cultural bias, and individual perceptions which can act as barriers to the successful acceptance of C4D and CSR activities, especially when they are focused on mobilising the masses.

Yet another limitation that has been inherent is that there is immense scope to gauge the perceptions and extent of acceptance of such communication among the target audience, through feedback mechanisms like interviews, survey, questionnaire methods, which have not been employed in this present study. This subject remains at the forefront of my interest in the field of DevCom and I hope to expand the scope of my study in due course.
Produced in collaboration with Munck Studios, ‘The Oracle’ is a storytelling initiative that explores the broader definition of “home” concerning affordable housing, city retail, food and togetherness, and health and wellbeing. The following sections will outline the structure, functionality, and content of the project and how it relates to the purpose of IKEA at H22. This provides us with the basis of our sample selection and examines the relationship between the participants and IKEA.

**Structure**

All episodes follow a consistent structure with five major parts (Figure 2). First, the episode begins with a welcome spiel stating the name of the podcast with slow beats playing in the background. The speaker’s introduction is around 1-2 sentences completed within the first two minutes, including brief descriptions of the guest’s occupation and contributions to sustainable development. Then, the guest illustrates their vision with the speaker’s prompt, “Let’s start in the future.”

As ‘The Oracle’ of each episode, the guest assumes the role of narrator for the rest of the podcast that centres on the ‘prophecy’. Listeners are given a visual account of what the next 20 to 30 years will look like in the eyes of the narrator. The imagery ends when the guest shifts the narrative to the status quo with their fact-based observations and general descriptions of their experiences.

The third part of the podcast focuses on providing context through storytelling. The guest delivers a self-introduction about their background and career, along with one or more sustainability challenges that they are currently addressing. Without a conversational interviewer, the guest conducts a semi-structured, free-form narrative on how they understand particular problems in the context of their culture, identity and society.
Implicitly, the producer takes back control by compelling the guests to explain why they are optimistic as they talk about solutions and evidence stories of what can be done to reach their prophesied future and what is already being implemented in the industry.

Finally, the guest concludes the episode with, “I said I was optimistic and now you know why.”

Figure 2.

Narrative structure of ‘The Oracle’ podcast episodes

- Speaker’s introduction
- Visual imagery
- Storytelling function
- Storytelling function
- Concluding remark

Functionality

To explore the “future life at home”, IKEA and Munck Studios invited researchers, designers, architects, educators, musicians, doctors and urban farmers to encourage diverse views on the definition of home. Unique storylines emerged, and participant narratives shed light on the challenges, solutions and co-creation opportunities that are present in cities all over the world. Although ‘The Oracle’ is a podcast for H22, it featured guests outside of Helsingborg. The majority were from other cities in Europe like Stockholm, Malmo, Copenhagen, Amsterdam and London in the UK.
Participants’ stories serve one of four functions (Kendall & Kendall, 2012). Figure 3 depicts the differences among the four functions and separates the experiential, explanatory, validating and prescriptive functions into four quadrants. On the practical quadrants, we found episodes recommending actions that educate, describe and promote. In contrast, on the philosophical quadrants, we heard narratives that explain, articulate and analyze concepts rather than actions. From left to right, the normative side consisted of stories that told listeners how to act, while on the descriptive side, these episodes mostly revolved around describing how things are.

**Figure 3.**

*Story matrix of ‘The Oracle’ podcast episodes*
Although the stories were narrated by single talking heads, the podcast was curated and all episodes co-written by several producers at Munck Studios. Therefore, the storytelling function derived from listening to each episode may differ if the listener wears the hat of the producer (private actor) or an audience member (public actor). Moreover, each episode is edited to fit a format with applied sound mixing to elicit specific responses from the audience which extends beyond the scope and duration of the H22 City Expo. Not only is The Oracle a public engagement activity of a private-led initiative, but it also mimics a development communication method that uses corporate expertise and communication techniques to deliver the results of the social investment. Through its digital hub, IKEA at H22 has made The Oracle a publicly accessible library of its stakeholder engagement that innovates on the traditional focus group interviews and public relations campaigns. Without the H22 as the home for the podcast initiative, one can argue that the stories in The Oracle would not bear the same weight in relation to processes of cultural and social change.

Content

All four pillars identified by IKEA share several themes, yet some topics emerge more than others: food and togetherness (7 times); health, sustainability and wellbeing (4 times); affordable homes (4 times); and shopping in the city (2 times). While the narrators touched upon multiple themes as they told their stories, the most prominent solution presented was prioritized and matched with a corresponding pillar in the context of this analysis.

**The Future of the Affordable Home**

The first pillar is characterized by the concept of efficient resource sharing with guests like Lisa Renander and Zeynep Erdal contributing their research on co-living spaces and improved student housing, respectively. Neel Tamhane introduced the concept of a participatory energy system in Bangladesh where small and remote neighbourhoods are able to generate solar power and upload them to the grid for efficient distribution. In addition, reducing material use involves reuse and
recycling, which Peter Ullstad emphasized through his work on researching reusable concrete for building houses.

*The Future of Food and Togetherness in the Home*

The Oracle offers perspectives on the future of the food industry and how it can improve togetherness in the home. Replacing industrial agriculture with other sustainable means, such as animal husbandry, crop growing and forest management, is critical to supporting a circular system. Saba Nazarian provided an alternative model of small-scale ecological farming that can help educate and advocate food nutrition to the community and bring them closer to the food source. Claus Meyer promoted a similar approach that focuses on pulses, a group of plant-based foods that are excellent meat substitutes to minimize the consumption of livestock products.

The second pillar can also be characterized by developing innovations with stakeholders who will inherit our society’s problems and benefit from their solutions. Mustafa Sharif used participatory approaches to urban planning in designing child-friendly cities. Josephine Forsman organized multicultural music workshops for young students to learn instruments and team communication, organization, and creativity as a band member. Gitanjali Rao described that innovation can produce other young scientists and inventors like her who can inspire both older and younger people to solve environmental problems if incorporated into early STEM education.

Predicting the next generation of city dwellers also involves university students and the elderly who will be living in shared homes. To combat involuntary loneliness, Harry McNeil emphasized the need to create a sense of community within apartment residences and city blocks. Micael Dahlen proposed the concept of time economics as he believed that automation and digitization could catalyze better interactions with other people.
The Future of Health, Sustainability and Wellbeing in the Home

The third pillar is characterized by collaboration and co-creation. To overcome the challenges of urban life, we have to acknowledge the relationship between health, sustainability and wellbeing. Oskar Kihlborg used his knack for adventure to help scientists collect data in the middle of the ocean and empower groups of people to use their talents to benefit society. Johan Kuylenstierna emphasized that fundamental shifts toward collaboration between seemingly disparate industries can make a difference in our sustainability approaches. Elisabet Lindgren preferred nature based solutions such as rooftop gardens and more green lungs in the city to minimize air pollution. Ida Hallgren proposed using a pessimistic philosophical approach to cope with a warming planet's eco-anxiety and mental health issues.

The Future of Shopping in the City and at Home

The sustainability movement has inspired entrepreneurs, business leaders and private citizens to demand accurate information on their carbon emissions as more scientific studies show its adverse effects on the environment. The fourth pillar can be characterized by trust frameworks that operate towards social sustainability. Josie Stoker came up with a free-to-use app that uses technology to calculate and reduce an individual’s carbon footprint from their travel choices. At the same time, Melissa Wijngaarden started Project CeCe. This e-commerce platform curates sustainable fashion brands and second-hand shops to help customers find ethical clothing while educating them on the fashion industry’s negative impact.

Context

It was not explicitly said if the 17 narrators were participating in other IKEA collaborations at H22. However, the relationship between each speaker and IKEA as the lead instigator can be viewed as that of a researcher and a subject matter expert, where IKEA takes on the role of a product manager asking
questions to its focus group and the “oracles” as participants who share their stories according to a prescribed format by the producers.

In the next chapter, we will introduce the business case and social case of IKEA and its role as a private development player in the innovation system of Helsingborg.
IKEA: Partner in better living

Since its founding in 1943, IKEA has focused on its commitment to product design, consumer value and clever solutions. With a vision to “create a better everyday life for the many people”, IKEA’s business model is to offer a wide range of home furnishings and accessories that are well-designed and functional at affordable prices. By using inexpensive building materials and minimizing production, retail, and distribution costs, IKEA has positioned itself to customers as a “partner in better living” that understands sustainability as a concept beyond the customer’s purse. While every IKEA product is developed in Sweden, the company has worldwide distribution and trading service firms in more than 55 countries. More than 1,220 suppliers produce for IKEA in places like Germany, China and Poland, but IKEA’s conscious efforts to be a “partner in better living” also impact its supply chain. For example, IKEA buys production capacity rather than product quantities which means that they pay for 10,000 production hours rather than 10,000 manufacturing units. This investment strategy is combined with setting up offices near suppliers’ factories to minimize transportation costs, ensure fair working and social conditions, and maintain quality through cooperative relationships over long-term agreements.

As a brand, IKEA promises convenience and value for money through its products. One of the key customer experiences of owning a product sold by IKEA is that they are packed flat, enabling customers to transport easily and build intuitively. In 1992, IKEA adopted an “Environmental Action Plan” to ensure that its suppliers keep to its standards of keeping IKEA products safe for customers and manufacturers. Some of its initiatives included the following:
- replacement of harmful synthetic materials such as polyvinyl chloride (PVC) in wallpapers, home textiles, shower curtains, and furniture

- usage of recyclable materials for flat packaging and “pure” (non-mixed) materials for other kinds of packaging to assist in recycling

- sourcing of wood from responsibly managed forests that replant and maintain biological diversity

The IKEA People & Planet Positive strategy introduced in 2012 describes the sustainability agenda, ambition and commitments for everyone in the IKEA franchise system and value chain in alignment with the 2030 Agenda or the UN SDGs. For IKEA, sustainability balances economic growth and positive social impact with environmental protection and regeneration (Inter IKEA Systems BV, 2020). IKEA has identified three significant challenges impacting the IKEA business: climate change, unsustainable consumption, and inequality (Figure 4).

**Healthy & sustainable living**

By defining what sustainable consumption for IKEA is, the company has embarked on a journey to make a healthy and sustainable living “affordable, attractive, and accessible” through household innovation. IKEA has also committed to improving the health and well-being of its consumers through its food products, solutions and services. While product improvements such as easy-to-fix designs and prolonging life spans of materials are key to the sustainability agenda, IKEA takes it a step further by recognizing the need for a mindset change, especially in the transition away from unsustainable consumption patterns.
Three focus areas to the three major challenges impacting IKEA’s business.

**Circular & climate positive**

The global resource scarcity has affected IKEA businesses and the lives of people throughout their value chain. With the belief that responsible sourcing programs can reduce greenhouse gases and material waste, IKEA’s ambition is to be “a circular business built on clean, renewable energy and regenerative resources” (Inter IKEA Systems BV, 2020). Wood and paper from sustainable sources are part of their commitment to becoming “forest positive” or promoting sustainable forest management that eliminates forest degradation and deforestation.

**Fair & equal**

Aside from providing decent and meaningful work to all its co-workers, IKEA pays close attention to families and communities in its value chain as partners and customers. With the best interests of children in mind, IKEA was part of the development of the Children’s Rights and Business Principles to
prevent child labour, along with the implementation of IKEA’s supplier Code of Conduct, IWAY, established as a set of standards that IKEA suppliers and service providers must comply with if they want to keep doing business with the company. Through IWAY, IKEA intended to set clear expectations and ways of working for environmental, social and working conditions, and animal welfare, in the responsible sourcing of products, services, materials and components. Furthermore, IKEA also expands its reach and opportunities to social entrepreneurs who have access to smaller and underrepresented communities so that IKEA may learn and promote its inclusive workplace and empower people to be themselves at work.

H22: A ground-breaking innovation PPP with IKEA

To meet the current transformations in our communities, traditional CSR approaches are being exchanged for innovative models that encourage participation, consultation and engagement. Ojasalo and Kauppinen (as cited in Nguyen et al., 2019) referred to the use of cities as a platform for new ideas as a “ground-breaking innovation” project (see Table 1). H22, Helsingborg’s open innovation platform and city expo can be interpreted as a living laboratory to explore ideas for the long-term investment in the city’s vitality. With IKEA as partner and co-creator, we analyze the characteristics of private-led sustainable urban development initiatives toward city-making. IKEA’s collaborative projects at H22 can be found at three locations around Helsingborg: Drottninghög (The Neighbourhood), Fredriksdal (The Forest), and Oceanhamnen (The Harbour). These three sites are mini-living laboratories that showcase IKEA’s take on sustainable living, which will be open to the public for 35 days during the H22 City Expo. In collaboration with the city of Helsingborg, businesses, organizations, and members of the urban population, IKEA takes advantage of this city-wide opportunity to build, fund, explore and test solutions that contribute to their mission and ambitions for 2030.

Magasin 405: the new IKEA hub
The old harbour of Helsingborg, Magasin 405, is a 4,000 square-metre, three-storey warehouse that has been used as an event space in recent years and will be transformed to become IKEA’s newest retail concept. Once used to store goods imported through the pier, IKEA will establish dining halls, installations, and activity centres where many “first-homers” will be invited to experience IKEA’s vision of an affordable first home. IKEA classics will be reimagined through IKEA Food of 2025, where hotdog stands will meet fine dining, and plant-based restaurant dishes will make up 50% of the menu. IKEA emphasizes its commitment to circularity, well being and community by sharing its take on the “Future of the Home” in Oceanhamnen.

SKOGEN at the Ocean Pier

IKEA’s future village of flat-pack first homes will be displayed in an urban forest called SKOGEN, located near Magasin 405. Through an open competition, IKEA invited young creatives from across disciplines around the world to design nature dwellings that can be adapted and recontextualized. The winning proposals will be built during the H22 city expo, and SKOGEN will be the home to showcase these innovative solutions. To creatively respond to the climate impacts of existing urban housing, SKOGEN highlights IKEA’s values and ambitions to improve society’s relationship with nature through the themes of connectivity and interaction.

DM - Drottninghög Market

In the northeast part of Helsingborg, IKEA is building a new meeting place that will consist of a market, urban farm and food court called DM, which means “do more”. IKEA positions DM as a neighbourhood project that can deliver business to the community while promoting positive social engagement with the city population. Whether it is culinary farmers who are testing out new concepts in the community kitchen or food truck owners driving by for a pop-up, DM is designed to offer diverse rental options for entrepreneurs and inclusive working opportunities for youth and unemployed individuals.
Due to the diversity of its initiatives, IKEA created a digital home (https://h22.ikea.com/) where all the content, news and announcements will be live leading up to H22. Aside from the podcast, global competitions, invitations to vendors, and other retail partnership updates can be found on the website. While IKEA’s collaborative projects at H22 are scattered around Helsingborg, The Oracle podcast series engages experts from cities outside Helsingborg to share their views on what the “Future of the Home” is to them. The choice of the podcast as a storytelling medium will be discussed in two parts: its research function through community engagement (C4D) and its innovation function through strategic communication (CSR).

The Oracle: Participatory narratives with multiple storytelling functions

Can stories impact a city’s sustainable development progress through myths and visionary tales? How does IKEA align its business and stakeholder interests in solving social problems by producing The Oracle? I argue that IKEA’s campaign to promote sustainable living includes meeting with academics, artists, designers and urban planners who can be tapped as resource individuals for their H22 projects. However, the question now becomes: why make a podcast out of it?

Based on the story matrix of The Oracle podcast episodes (see Figure 3), I analyzed the stories that prominently describe the universe and how participants experience it. The ‘experiential’ storytelling function theoretically fits the ground-breaking innovation model of PPP that will allow us to examine whether a podcast can be developed as a tool to communicate social innovation in public-private partnerships. Rather than choose stories that explain why something happens, I selected stories that describe how things unfold. While most of the episodes reveal how problems can be solved, they are told to support the existing value structures and decisions made by the narrators, which is too broad to tackle and beyond the limitations of our research questions. Finally, whereas most of the episodes prescribe actions and behaviours that are socially sustainable, promoting the narrators’ ideas is outside the scope of this study. In the following discussion, I argue that podcasts are practical tools to
utilize for CSR and C4D initiatives if only to encourage social inclusion through the process of storytelling that functions practically rather than philosophically. Therefore, I have focused on the episodes of Gitanjali Rao, Josephine Forsman, Josie Stoker, Mustasa Sharif, and Neel Tamhane.

How do the storytellers experience change? How do they see the city's future given their experiences, dreams and hopes? What social responsibility elements do they express in their stories, and how does this relate to IKEA’s four pillars? By analyzing the narrative perspective of these five selected storytellers, we are able to identify their organizational universes through their experiential storytelling. The five episodes analyzed allow us to identify IKEA’s three key sustainability indicators: environmental protection, ethics and social inclusion, and philanthropic responsibility.

**Data for the environment**

Josie Stoker is a green tech entrepreneur who wants to “empower people by turning eco-anxiety into eco-action.” As the co-founder of Capture, an app and platform dedicated to providing users with the data to make sustainable choices, Stoker develops digital tools to allow people to learn more about climate change. Before this, she organized learning experiences through corporate training and team building workshops with CEOs and senior executives who wanted to know more about indigenous communities. For years, she ignored the link between relentless consumerism and the suffering of communities affected by climate change. She was haunted by the faces and stories of the elders and families she worked with in Mongolia, Kenya and Indonesia as they became victims of “droughts to wildfires to freak sandstorms and winters so cold that animals freeze standing up.”

Stoker believes that it was in the interest of too few corporations to provide transparent information on the environmental impact of their products. How much of the Arctic ice melted because she arrived by private jet to the remote places they were supposed to be protecting?

**JOSIE STOKER:** Through asking this, I realized how little we know about the sustainability credentials of whom we vote for, bank with, work for and what we buy. We go to the
supermarket and pick up food off the shelves. We have an idea of the sugar, salt and other aspects. At least we can make an informed decision about what we are purchasing. But when it comes to these products and sustainability, whether greenhouse gas emissions or water usage, there is so little information, and there is a massive opportunity to make this data more accessible.

By focusing on the emission inequality brought about by people’s lifestyles, Stoker and her team developed Capture to arm people with the data they should know if they want to practice sustainable living. However, Stoker went beyond this and created a distribution network through companies to challenge them in publishing their numbers and reward them with discerning talent that can become productive employees. In particular, she is excited about the ability of employees to rate organizations based on how important sustainability is in practice.

**Accessible and inclusive**

Mustafa Sharif is an urban planner and podcaster passionate about children’s involvement and participation in urban development. Born in Baghdad, Iraq, Sharif grew up in a family of six members residing in a dense inner city. He remembers being twelve years old when he started to reflect on cities, particularly with the presence of armed groups everywhere, which prompted him and his family to move a lot and find a secure place to live. Sharif could not attend school due to safety, so he spent his time asking questions like, “Why is this area livable and not that area? Why do I like this public space and not the one in the previous city?”

Urban planning with a social aspect means that the plan must be with people of all ages as focus groups, and Sharif considers it part of his job to co-create cities with children. His experience as a young boy navigating smaller cities in Baghdad made him realize the important relationship children should have with their cities. Aside from the feeling of belongingness, Sharif wants the children to own
their cities and appreciate the outdoors – as not many children in war-torn countries could experience for themselves.

MUSTAFA SHARIF: Every child has the right to grow up in an environment where they feel safe and secure, have access to basic services and clean air and water, can play, learn and grow and where their voice is heard and matters. As adults and decision-makers, we have to listen to them instead of assuming and guessing what they need. It is all about making sure that they participate in our processes.

Sharif understands that a socially sustainable city starts with child-friendly city planning. The value of research, funded pilot projects, and city initiatives like car-free zones, bike lanes, green parks, and accessible places for children and families to socialize should be prioritized. Sharif is optimistic that children’s voices will be heard in cities, rather than the car horns and construction noises all the time.

Meanwhile, Josephine Forsman is a drummer and songwriter who has been a member of a band since she was 11 years old. As a young musician, her taking up the drums as an instrument also taught her the art of communication, organization, production, and creative skills. She is the founder and developer of Loud Sweden, an international music program that offers music education to schools and municipalities as a way to foster creativity for individuals and communities.

Forsman remembers her music teacher, who told them about the life of a professional musician. She grew up in a small municipality in Northern Sweden, which made her curious and excited about life outside what she called home. However, she shares that a rehearsal room and instruments were enough to make her and her bandmates feel that they belonged, and together they took off at the age of 16, armed with a record deal and promising opportunities.

As she developed the loud music program for Sweden, Forsman’s priorities were to create social sustainability and give opportunities to diverse students and spread music to those who need it the most.
JOSEPHINE FORSMAN: To build a sustainable future, we need a creative platform where people from all backgrounds and cultures can meet. We need to get students motivated and back in school. We need to give small communities the same chance to experience and learn through equality, multicultural and creative learning. We need to help teachers inspire their students. And we can do all this by bringing the music and arts to all kids free of charge, by cooperation between different instances in the community based on our values.

**Ground-breaking inventions**

Neel Tamhane is a researcher and clean energy advocate from the Global South. He believes that centralized electrical systems are inefficient and capital intensive, supporting the concept of a participatory energy system for households instead. His experience working for a social enterprise in the tiny village of Tamkuha in the foothills of the Himalayas changed his perspective about the sustainability of a renewable power grid after seeing the village use rice, husk and a repurposed old truck engine to distribute electricity to households when it is needed. Apart from this, Tamhane shares his amazement at the social benefits of a well-lit village at night, deterring crime in the village and improving health and economic outcomes in the long term.

NEEL TAMHANE: Many times, I have lived in cities where we had scheduled power cuts every day in the evenings and had to eat dinner early so that we did not end up eating dinner in the dark or in the candlelight. Many people in semi-urban or rural areas still continue to use smelly, noisy diesel generators or kerosene lamps when the sun goes down. Even where grid excess is available, people often illegally tap into existing power lines, which is extremely dangerous. But people would prefer to do that than pay for the electricity they couldn’t use.

A solution that worked in one village may not work in another, so Tamhane worked hard to understand the realities and policies afflicting the efficient distribution of power in villages. He encounters a group of social entrepreneurs in Bangladesh who are helping a neighbourhood build their own localized
bottom-up solar energy grid, which is the opposite of building a centralized power plant. He surmises that because it’s in the Global South, innovations like swarm electrification are often overlooked “even though they have consistently outperformed their influential neighbours on most development metrics. They have more than 6 million solar home systems powering about 30% of their rural homes.”

Gitanjali Rao’s story is quite similar. She is a young scientist and tech inventor, and at 15 years old, she has been named Time Magazine’s 2020 Kid of the Year. According to her, the most important step to secure a better future is to integrate innovation in the early curriculum subjects and match our education system with the world’s demands. Rao uses science as a tool to solve community problems, and she believes that every kid should be able to accomplish what she has for herself. She uses her fame to conduct innovation workshops that have reached more than 490 students over four continents. She recalls one batch which was recluse at the beginning of the semester. However, by the end, they had an array of inventions, including a robotic dog for nursing homes and a Pokemon Go-style game to collect litter and recycle them.

GITANJALI RAO: Whether it was helping to reduce loneliness among elderly people or cleaning up the environment, having that one thing to focus on really makes it possible to find your own way of dealing with problems we face in the world. All of this was done without anyone taking a single test or getting a single grade along the way. All that becomes unnecessary when the actual results start speaking for themselves.

Rao’s passion for science began with a science kit, and even though her knowledge is way beyond it now, she remembers the empowering feeling of inventing something that is of use to someone else. By bringing positive change to the world through innovation or education, she believes that the problems we face can be overcome if we solve them together.
**Practical and descriptive strategies for storytelling**

The previous analysis of the five storytellers revealed similar processes of social learning not from each other but from their networks and lived experiences. When told through a podcast, the listener applies legitimacy towards the narrator through their shared stories written to describe their universe. At the same time, the producer bestows legitimacy towards the narrator through themes designed to enhance their strategies. While some functions overlap between describing and promoting a particular practice, the storytellers selected were more concerned with communicating solutions that influence behaviour rather than advocate for ideas. The variety of storytelling functions point to a more participatory approach that IKEA and Munck Studios utilized in ‘The Oracle’, but it could also be argued that the podcast was co-created to persuade the public in viewing the future of home as a community and private individual affair.

Perhaps it is The Oracle’s design to illustrate a visual future and challenge its participant narrators to tell the story of how this future came to be. However, the heightened focus on product or service development within the episodes are evidences of a shift toward innovation processes that is away from purely research and development. H22 as a living laboratory showcases the experiential involvement of its users which is done by IKEA in multiple ways. Rather than telling listeners how to act, there is value in describing how things are that give agency to the audience. For example, among the four pillars of IKEA’s Future of Home vision, “togetherness at the home” emerged as a core narrative after analysing the universes presented by Josie Stoker, Mustafa Sharif, Josephine Forsman, Neel Tamhane, and Gitanjali Rao. Whereas the stories were similar in structure, we reviewed the functionality according to the storytelling frameworks implied by the episode content. Although our analysis may fall short of the relevant indicators for social innovation podcasts and storytelling as a method, the themes are aligned with IKEA’s three focus areas to the major challenges to the business (Table 4). As a business, IKEA can only create value from its products and services based on users’
experiences. Inviting participants as a development approach showcases how CSR activities may be viewed as C4D when it is treated as a form of strategic communication.

Table 4.

**IKEA at H22 as a Product Development Approach**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IKEA’s People and Planet Positive Focus Areas</th>
<th>IKEA’s community engagement initiative, H22</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Healthy &amp; sustainable living</td>
<td>“Accessible and inclusive” to show philanthropic responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circular &amp; climate positive</td>
<td>“Data for the environment” to show environmental protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair &amp; equal</td>
<td>“Ground-breaking inventions” to show ethics and social inclusion</td>
</tr>
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**A corporate social innovation strategy**

As a corporate firm and private development player, IKEA plays an integral role in understanding the similarities and differences of social innovation approaches in the context of smart city-making. The living laboratory of Helsingborg has engaged IKEA and other stakeholders to participate in its innovation system, thereby contributing to its other forms and showcasing collective spaces turned into experimental facilities for display during the H22 City Expo. Additionally, IKEA’s business goals are retained through its product development approach to sustainability by learning from its customers, stakeholders and communities (Figure 5).

**Figure 5.**

IKEA’s social innovation strategy at H22
In ‘The Oracle’, guests narrate their utopian visions of the future in various timelines to contextualize their sustainability desires for the cities they call their home. Whether it is 2030 or 2050, the illustrated futures mention industries, technology, and objects that would either be further developed or cease to exist. Although the concept of sustainability is multi-disciplinary, the narratives portray an overall communicative approach using the “oracle” who prophesies the future of development solutions to global challenges. For example, how can food and togetherness help in decongesting the city? Rapid urbanization has affected the health and wellbeing of populations with its car-centric roads and high-rise buildings, resulting in poor air quality and the absence of cooling winds to reduce the city’s temperatures. Tonnes of concrete, asphalt, and stone walls in the built environment increase warming. Uncontrolled capitalism has been blamed for exploiting natural resources, that has led to a worsening climate crisis. The cycle of production and consumption exceeded its normal threshold in
pursuit of capital, conditioning the majority of modern society to stay in the loop of spending for spending’s sake.

The gap between knowledge and action is communication. Academics are catching up to contemporary media that can connect to larger audiences. Universities and learning institutions will play a substantial role in communicating a sustainable future. Cities are looking toward their most influential stakeholders to combat pressing challenges while taking advantage of their resources for collaboration and making an impact through social change. A social innovation strategy is neither complete without its communication focus nor its developmental goals.
Businesses cannot succeed in societies that fail. IKEA’s commitment to sustainability has long since considered their investments as decisions that benefit their stakeholders, the planet, and larger society. Unlike NGOs and development organizations, public companies with their CEOs and board members answer to shareholders so regardless of how mission-driven these corporations claim to be, they will always be underscored by its profit numbers. Relying on social innovations to be implemented through CSR is problematic in this way because whoever steers the ship will also be the one distributing the resources. Corporate citizenship can only demand so much. Participating in H22 is foremost a business opportunity to explore the concept of home while testing solutions in a city-wide laboratory. We argued that exhibitions are staged narratives of how the city wants to showcase itself to residents and the rest of the world, but it also invites critiques and collaborations about sustainable development in Europe. To answer our first research question, we should apply practical and descriptive storytelling tools to communicate social change through public-private partnerships.

In the context of IKEA at H22, showcasing social innovation through story development is seen as a feasible approach to the extent that CSR strategies reinforce the potential impact of C4D methods. Public-private partnerships are promoted as one of the Sustainable Development Goals, but factors related to ground-breaking innovation are mostly initiated by companies where knowledge, ideas, and stakeholder participation come together to experience change. As we steadily embrace the power of storytelling, we don’t just need to construct and tell better stories, we need better dialog across different actors and more effective partnerships. IKEA at H22 attempts this through their locations around Helsingborg which will be actively participated in during the H22 City Expo in June. To answer our second research question, we explored IKEA’s storytelling podcast series and found that public-private partnerships can take advantage of storytelling and new media to achieve the shared
sustainable development priorities between the city of Helsingborg and IKEA, but there are limitations.

Participatory narratives can take many forms. The Oracle podcast signifies an inclusive and innovative community engagement initiative to demonstrate stories of innovation. However, as far as C4D methods are concerned, podcast storytelling requires deeper investigation and poses a risk for confirmation bias. What makes The Oracle different from common forms of podcast is its one-person narration and the structured delivery courtesy of IKEA’s prompts. However, whether we stand from the shoes of the producer or the audience member will also make a difference in how the storytelling function is received. While the stories identified overlapping issues and solutions, each of the narrators are unique and able to illustrate their vision of a sustainable future. Aside from the theme of IKEA at H22, IKEA’s sustainability strategy also reflects the choices for stories and participants by staying aligned to their major focus areas in health, sustainable living, circularity, and equal opportunities. Further research can be done in analyzing the narratives of the other participants in the podcast and how they contribute to the shared goals. An audience research can also be conducted to determine the impact of The Oracle as a CSR initiative. Since this thesis was conducted prior to the opening of the H22 City Expo, more information could be collected during and after the event to form a more holistic view of the social learning system intended by IKEA and the City of Helsingborg.

Our conceptualization of social innovation in cities corresponds to the issues discussed in The Oracle, such as solutions to resource-intensive infrastructure, health epidemics, unemployment and loneliness. PPP projects are effective tools to address this, but so are the less formal initiatives taken by civil society and the private sector through social enterprises and ICT-driven business models. Furthermore, audio podcasts can be re-tooled by both community and institutional users to demonstrate participatory and persuasive forms of storytelling. When implemented by a private development player, CSR becomes a dynamic process that enables trust and deliberation among its networks of stakeholders due to its acknowledgement of multiple discourses and interpretations. On
the other hand, when development practitioners begin to broaden their field of research, C4D becomes a possible avenue to break echo chambers where multidisciplinary actors interact and encourage a new development paradigm that includes sustainability, participation, ownership and civil society. The cultural turn in global development practice has put people at the core of innovation, while corporations speak in governance, environmental and social factors to quantify the quality of their work. Perhaps that is the biggest difference between C4D and CSR: the former is concerned with inputs while the latter is focused on outputs. Two ends of a shared spectrum that exists in the same universe linking organizations and individuals through processes of social innovation. One can argue that once we find that comfortable arena, then CSR and C4D can become powerful tools and compatible solutions to address the world’s development problems.


http://www.theguardian.com/media/2004/feb/12/broadcasting.digitalmedia


Profiles of The Oracle narrators

- **Oracles for the Future of the Affordable Home**

Lisa Renander is an innovator and entrepreneur who started Scandinavia’s first co-living. She also led the research project Tech Farm about the space-efficient housing of the future where they looked at how people’s wellbeing was affected by co-living. She talks about how the growing co-living movement can be a tool to battle loneliness as well as a step towards a more sustainable way of living.

Zeynep Erdal is a sustainable development strategist currently running a multidimensional city and community planning program between the city of Malmö and Malmö University. Her ambition is to make Malmo the best student city for young people seeking education and higher studies.

Neel Tamhane is the solar strategy lead at SPACE10, a research and design lab working on improving and simplifying everyday life for people all around the world. Ever since a young age, he has been interested in sustainable solutions that empower people to build an energy transition bottom up and bring back control of energy systems into their own hands.

Peter Ullstad is an architect, teacher and founder of a research studio, who has investigated the gap between commercial and academic interests in architecture. He is focusing on climate change and on architectural solutions on how to lower CO2 emissions when building new houses, such as the reuse of concrete as a way to build a better future.
Oracles for the Future of Food and Togetherness in the Home

Saba Nazarian is a culinary farmer, educator, and sustainable food advocate. He is on a mission to help build resilient and self-reliant communities by multiplying small ecological farms around the world and putting fresh, nutrient dense and sustainably grown produce on the tables.

Claus Meyer is a culinary entrepreneur, cookbook author and food activist. As the founder of Melting Pot Foundation and the famous restaurant Noma in Copenhagen, his mission is to bring delicious nutritional meals into every home kitchen and from that basis, raise the quality of life for the individual, building sustainable communities around food and help save the planet.

Mustafa Sharif is an urban planner who has specialized in cocreating future cities with children to make them part of the future story where every city and space has to be child friendly. He has a podcast about smart and lovable cities.

Josephine Forsman is a well known drummer and songwriter who achieved great success with her band, Sahara Hotnights. She is the founder and developer of Loud Sweden, an international music program that offers music education to schools and municipalities as a way to foster creativity and social sustainability for individuals and communities.

Gitanjali Rao is a young scientist who invented a cheap device that checks water quality for lead when she was in 7th grade. In 2020, she was named Time Magazine’s first ever “Kid of the Year”. Through her innovation workshops, she introduces early STEM education to other young scientists and inventors like her who can inspire both older and younger people to solve environmental problems.

Harry McNeil is the head of Sustainability and Marketing and spends his days working on developing concepts of sustainable living and interacting with the future. His former career in research focused on sustainable urban development.
Micael Dahlen is a professor at the Stockholm School of Economics with a particular interest in people’s behaviours and welfare. He is also an author and researcher who thinks we will live more sustainable lives due to the lessons we have learned during the pandemic.

- Oracles for the Future of Health, Sustainability and Wellbeing in the Home

Oskar Kihlborg is an adventurer who’s involved in several different organizations dedicated to raising awareness about climate change and helping ordinary people to be a part of the solution moving forward. He was one of the first Swedes ever to reach the summit of Mount Everest and has helped bring others to the mountain tops, and has seen first-hand how nature has been affected by humanity’s way of living.

Johan Kuylenstierna is a geographer, climate expert, and the chair of the Swedish Climate Policy Council. He has worked on climate related issues for the past 30 years, and it’s taken him from giving lectures at the university, to boardrooms at major companies helping them make sustainable choices, and to the UN working towards a fossil free future.

Elisabet Lindgren is a physician and associate professor in sustainability science who is a pioneer within research on climate change and health. Early in her career she got deeply concerned about how our modern societies were having negative effects on the planet, and therefore works towards promoting nature-based solutions to create both sustainable and healthy cities.

Ida Hallgren is a philosophical practitioner, researcher and psychologist who works with philosophy for individuals and organizations. She proposes that pessimistic thinking can lead the way to a more sustainable future, rather than an optimistic view 100% of the time.
• Oracles for the Future of Shopping in the City and at Home

Josie Stoker is a green-tech entrepreneur who wants to empower people to turn eco-anxiety into eco-action. She is the co-founder of Capture, an app and platform dedicated to providing users with the data to make sustainable choices from how we travel to who we work for.

Melissa Wijngaarden is one of the co-founders of Project Cece, a platform that started out of a necessity to find fashion that matched both her style, and her values of sustainability and equality. Since establishment, they have gathered hundreds of ethical and sustainable fashion brands on their platform for people to find them easier and change the way people consume clothes.