Can we talk climate?

Building agency, trust and action towards climate
change mitigation through Timeout Day dialogue

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Abstract

The latest IPCC report on climate change from October 2018 highlights an urgent need for climate change mitigation on all sectors of the society, including that of an individual citizen. This research looks at how participation in a constructed facilitated dialogue can affect in creating understanding of the societal changes needed to mitigate climate change, whether this can influence individuals' willingness and perceived ability in taking action and hence provide a possible tool for bridging the value-action gap between environmental values and pro-environmental behaviour. The study builds on qualitative material from 10 semi-structured interviews from a case study studying the Timeout Day dialogue on climate change organized in Finland in January 2019 by the Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra.

In the context of this study the concept of dialogue is understood as a form of collaborative communication, creating understanding and thinking together. Whether participation in a facilitated public dialogue such as that of Timeout Day can strengthen one's self-confidence as an active citizen and trust towards the system is in this study analysed through the concepts of agency, locus of control and trust.

Results show that dialogue as a tool awakened curiosity and excitement and the demand for a more constructive discussion culture was clearly present. There was a strong will and need to discuss climate change, to do something and find solutions together. Dialogue was experienced to strenghten one's agency through a mutual feeling of empowerment, hence strengthening the individuals' willingness in changing behaviour through trust towards collective action. However, for dialogue to have full potential in bridging the value-action gap, there needs to be a continuum for the process. Mutual experience sharing and "peer-support" could be used more and become a successful tool in overcoming the gap. This refers to high levels of trust towards collective action strengthening one's own agency and ability to take action.

Keywords: public engagement, dialogue, empowerment, climate change, value-action gap, trust, agency, participatory democracy, environmental democracy.

Preface

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1. Introduction

According to IPCCs (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) latest report on climate change published in October 2018 we only have a decade upon us to completely change the course of development of our societies to avoid global warming beyond 1,5 degrees since pre-industrial times. 1,5 degrees is seen as a critical threshold for keeping the warming from escalating beyond human control and holding its consequences to our natural environment and societies on a possibly manageable level (IPCC, 2018). We need to urgently and critically review our actions on all sectors, including our individual behavioural patterns (IPCC, 2018). Technical solutions and political tools to shift the development towards a more sustainable direction already exist, but to make the transition successful sustainable transformation requires the people to understand the changes needed and the implications this has on an individual's way of life, and to be willing to adjust their own behaviour patterns and take in new habits and routines (Lorenzoni et al. 2007).

During the recent years environmental awareness and concern about the state of our natural world has become a mainstream phenomenon. In Finland the latest survey on the matter showed that over 80% of Finns consider climate change mitigation to require urgent action, while around 40% report having already made changes in their own behaviour towards a more environmentally friendly direction (Climate Barometer 2019).

Despite of both the awareness on climate change and the acknowledged need for behavioural changes being high, the average carbon footprint of a Finn remains on a profoundly unsustainable level, with consumption-based emissions still on the rise (Nissinen and Savolainen, 2019). This highlights the gap between values and behaviour that is within environmental psychology known as the value-action gap. This gap has been identified and studied at least since the 1990s without a major breakthrough in bridging it and getting from environmental concern to large-scale shift towards sustainable behaviour (Blake, 1999: 257).

The aim of this study is to explore whether a constructed and facilitated *dialogue* can provide one way towards bridging this gap, by increasing understanding on the societal changes needed to mitigate climate change, shred light on the experienced individual and collective barriers, and increase support for the changes needed through a feeling of collective action. This is done through a case study interviewing the participants of Timeout Day, a dialogue day on climate change arranged in Finland in January 2019.

The pre-assumption that dialogue could have potential to increase cooperation between actors finds support in Elinor Ostroms studies on collective action, according to which face-to-face communication is proven to lead to substantially increasing cooperation in social dilemmas. Ostrom also emphasizes the role of believing in the willingness for cooperation among other people, stating "*those who believe others will cooperate in social dilemmas are more likely to cooperate themselves*" (Ostrom, 2000: 140). This refers to trust towards collective action increasing individuals own agency. Cooperation can address many of the reasons behind the value-action gap identified in previous studies, such as distrust, perceived inaction of others, feelings of disempowerment and social norms (Whitmarsh et al. 2009: 58).

The aim of the interviews has been to gather personal thoughts and experiences that the interviewees had considering their participation in the Timeout Day dialogue on climate change. The interview data is studied through theoretical concepts of dialogue, trust, agency and locus of control, to analyse how or whether participation affected the individuals' trust towards the system and other people, self-confidence as an active citizen, and willingness to act and change one's own behaviour for collective action.

The scientific context of this study is found in participatory processes aiming to include people in societal changes, and in the communicational challenge of getting from informing

people about environmental issues towards building real engagement and ownership on the issue that leads to a shift towards pro-environmental behaviour.

The following part of this study introduces the research aim and research questions. After that the context in which the case study takes place is presented under *Thematic background,* introducing the current state of public discourse and opinions on climate change in Finland. This is to gain understanding in how the case and the interview data reflects on and connects with the general public atmosphere around these issues. Under *Theoretical framework* both the scientific context and the theoretical concepts chosen for this study are introduced, giving background to the relevance of the study and defining the concepts through which the analysis is done. In the *Methodology* part choosing the case and interviews as a method are explained and motivated and the limitations of the study are elaborated. After this the results are introduced and analysed by first presenting the case and going through the main findings from the interviews, and then connecting these to the theoretical concepts of dialogue, trust, agency and locus of control, ending with a conclusion on the overall findings.

1.1. Research problem and aim

This research focuses on whether dialogue, which is in the case studied here understood as a constructed facilitated discussion between individuals, can provide a communication tool that can help us to understand the societal changes needed for climate change mitigation and the collective and individual barriers keeping us from action. In environmental communication dialogue is mostly studied as a part of a political process or conflict resolution process, and studying the potential of a facilitative dialogue as a way of creating acceptance towards societal changes and bridging the value-action gap provides a rather new way of looking at the concept.

The aim of the study is to look into facilitative dialogue as a form of citizen engagement and a tool for citizen to create understanding on climate change mitigation and its implications to our society and lifestyles. Further, the research looks into how participation in a constructed facilitated dialogue affects the participants understanding on climate change mitigation, one's own role in the process, and perceived barriers and constrains in taking action. The analysis looks at whether participation can strengthen one's self-confidence as an active citizen able to bring about change and trust towards the system and towards other people. This is done with the help of theoretical concepts of agency, locus of control and trust.

I study this subject through a case study located in Finland, interviewing the participants and organizers of a climate change themed Timeout Day organized by the Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra (later Sitra). The day was a part of their Timeout project that aims to encourage dialogue in public discussion. Through Sitra's initiative both public and private actors around the country arranged almost a hundred facilitative dialogue events on climate change during this day, with an aim to bring people together and encourage discussion on the subject.

From Sitra's perspective the main motivation for organizing the Timeout dialogue day was to encourage constructive public discussion and work against further polarization in the public space. My angle in this study is mainly building on how we communicate about climate change mitigation, and whether dialogue can prove functional in this context. The case will be presented in more detail further along the study.

The headline and theme of the Climate Dialogue day was "What's stopping us", with an aim to discuss the individual and collective barriers we encounter that keep us from changing our behaviour and lifestyle towards a more sustainable direction. This study looks into how these dialogues affected the interviewees, their thoughts, perspectives and feeling of agency. The research questions introduced below are studied through primary data

collected through interviews with the dialogue participants and facilitators about how they experienced the dialogue and what thoughts the participation provoked in them.

1.1.1 Research questions

- What meanings do the participants construct to the Timeout Day dialogue on climate change?
- How did participation in the dialogue, according to the participants themselves, contribute to their understanding of the societal changes needed to mitigate climate change, and their own will and perceived ability in bringing about change?
- What role can a facilitated dialogue have in increasing the level of trust in public discussion on climate change, and can this in turn encourage collective action?

These research questions are studied through asking the interviewees on their personal thoughts and experiences on the participation in the dialogue. The formulating of questions and the interview themes are further introduced in the Methodology section of this study.

1.1.2 Research design

The research follows a qualitative design; it is a case study following and doing an in-depth analysis of a certain case of the Timeout Climate Dialogue in Finland. However, connecting the case into broader aspects of public engagement also gives it implications of phenomenological research (Creswell 2014: 14). The approach of the study has characteristics from both a Transformative worldview, but also a Pragmatic worldview - focusing on governance, power and change, at the same time seeking solution to a meaningful participation process (Creswell 2014: 11).

Connecting the case to the theoretical concepts can give new insight into creating meaningful participation processes for sustainable development of our democracies and public climate governance. Even if the case study is carried out in one country, the issue of climate governance is global, and the results will provide insights that can be valid in other countries as well, and in other representative democracies in particular. Research findings such as identified patterns and trends can also support other similar studies made and strengthen the ideas of the development of the public discussion deliberative democracy and the role of engaging individual citizens in climate change mitigation. (Creswell 2014: 202)

The study is conducted during spring 2019, starting mid-January and ending in mid-June 2019.

2 Case context: public discussion and opinions about climate change in Finland

To be able to understand the context within which the case study in question is taking place we need to understand the current state of public discourse and climate discussion atmosphere in Finland. This is to gain understanding towards the general publics attitudes towards public discussion and the issue in question, since these outline the starting point for any public discussion concerning climate change - even that of Timeout Day dialogue. Being aware of the general context within which the Timeout Day is taking place helps to see and elaborate upon the role of the Timeout Day dialogue and identify the interview findings relevant for the societal context. To shred light into this the latest opinion polls on climate change are introduced - first the Climate Barometer from March 2019, and then, Eurobarometer from 2017, to briefly show the EU level view on the climate discourse.

2.1 Public discourse in Finland

In 2016, according to a survey published by think tank e2, over 90% of Finns experienced that intentional provocation has gotten more common in public discussion. Half of the respondents told they were so tired of this atmosphere in the discussion that they did not feel motivated to participate in public discourse at all. At the same time however, over 70% of the respondents were eager to discuss with people who do not share the same opinions as they do (e2, 2016).

The political and public discussion atmosphere in western countries, Finland included, has been getting more and more polarized during the recent years, with populist ideologies on the rise. This is seen to connect to the rapid globalization during the latest decades, where certain people feel left out and that the direction the society is developing is not serving their interests (Antonio and Brulle, 2011; McCright and Dunlap, 2011). This is causing the whole system to suffer from a lack of trust (Offe 1999: 77) and has led to a deepening polarization of our societies, which poses challenges for a constructive public discussion and to how we as a society are able to collectively act upon mutual challenges, such as the huge sustainability crisis ahead of us.

2.2 The Climate Barometer 2019

The latest Climate Barometer survey in Finland was published in March 2019, shredding light to the Finns' views on climate change and whether these views have changed since the previous Climate Barometer in 2015. Compared to the previous climate barometer survey in 2015 awareness about climate change, support for ambitious climate policies, and the willingness to make changes in personal behaviour to mitigate climate change are all on the rise.

The survey was commissioned by the Steering Group for Central Government Climate Communications, to get an overview on the general publics opinions on the issue, what kind of climate policies people could support and whether they have already made behavioural changes to combat climate change. The survey had 1013 participants from different parts of Finland, and was conducted shortly before Finlands parliamentary elections in April 2019.

The survey results clearly show a shifting paradigm towards increased awareness in climate change and the need for action, seeing climate solutions as one of the most important political priorities for the coming years. Over 80% of the respondents replied that urgent action in climate change mitigation is needed. Three out of four participants

prioritize climate action on EU level higher than economic competitiveness, and over 60% think that Finland should make efforts in being a leader in climate action.

Of the participants, 40% also replied that they had already made changes in their own daily routines and behaviour to mitigate climate change, and 60% felt a need for more information and guidance for more climate friendly solutions. Almost half of the participants are ready for a moderate rise in living costs through for example setting higher taxes on carbon-intensive products. Around 75% on the participants support higher taxes for products with high emissions, while lowering the taxes on more climate friendly choices. The demand for municipalities to make it easier for the residents to live more climate-smart by providing them with solutions was high, with 75% of the respondents finding it important.

Even though climate change is seen as a serious threat and the support for climate policies is strong, only 58% of Finns agree to the scientific consensus on the causes of the warming. However, in 2015 the share was only a third of the participants, so there is a significant raise in this as well, possibly due to the IPCC report published in October 2018.

The survey results show clear areal differences in terms of where people support climate change mitigation policies and behavioural changes. Climate action reaches most support in urban areas, especially in the capital region. Also other factors such as age, gender, education, household's economical situation and political orientation affect on how much weight is given to the issue. The ones that are most likely to support ambitious policies for climate change mitigation are young, highly educated women living in bigger urban areas.

2.3   Eurobarometer 2017

In a Special Eurobarometer study from 2017 74% of Finnish people considered climate change as a serious threat, and 42% considered to be at least to some extent personally responsible in taking action (Special Eurobarometer 459, 2017). Climate change was also considered as greater threat than economic instability. 20% of the Finns considered climate change to be the most urgent global challenge, which was the 4th highest percentage in all of Europe.

3 Theoretical framework

3.1 Previous research

Since the area of study in this research project crosses over several disciplinary boundaries, the previous research should be looked at from several directions as well.
The previous research relevant for this study is both sociological research on dialogue, and on the other hand, research on engaging people for pro-environmental behaviour and in taking action to mitigate climate change. The background and frame for all of this is given through the concept of participatory democracy, within which both the dialogue itself, the engagement and the possible behavioural changes occur. Participatory democracy is therefore given its own chapter here below.

Previous research on dialogue relevant for this study studies dialogue through the contexts of encouraging citizen participation and deepening understanding between people. These studies most often refer to political processes of participation, the public sphere, and conflict resolution (e. g. Jezierska, 2015; Hallgren and Ljung, 2005). The concept of dialogue as it is understood in this study is further introduced later in it's own chapter.

The relevant research for this study in terms of how people talk about climate change and understand their role in the mitigation process looks at how we should talk about large-scale environmental risks to encourage pro-environmental behaviour, through the concept of value-action gap. Previous studies referring to this are introduced in the next chapter.

In the context of public engagement in environmental issues this study falls between what has previously been studied; the use of dialogue in the type of context as in Timeout Day, without a direct connection to a political process or conflict resolution, is rather new to research. Analysing the interviewees' individual thoughts on dialogue through concepts of trust, agency and locus of control will give implications on the potential of dialogue in promoting public engagement towards environmental issues.

3.1.1 Value-action gap

"Various barriers exist to increasing public knowledge, interest, concern, and – above all – action in relation to climate change. These barriers occur at two interrelated levels – individual and social – and include lack of knowledge, skepticism and distrust of information, feeling disempowered, competing priorities and values, perceived inaction by others, social norms (to consume) and physical/ infrastructural impediments"

Lorenzoni et al., 2007 in Whitmarsh, Seyfang and O'Neill (2009): 58

What creates pro-environmental behaviour? If this question would have one clear answer, it would have been taken into use already. No simple explanation has been found, but what studies do show is that despite of the general idea of "show them facts and they must listen", awareness alone does not necessarily lead to changes in one's behaviour. While getting accurate information on the state of the environment is crucially important, in changing behaviour this seems to be merely the beginning of the process (Blake, 1999).

This widely acknowledged notion on environmental awareness and values contradicting with one's own behaviour is in environmental psychology known as the value-action gap (e.g. Blake, 1999). The value-action gap highlights behaviour as a product of complex interactions between psychological, environmental and social factors, instead of a direct outcome of conscious deliberation (Whitmarsh, Seyfang and O'Neill (2009): 58).

In the early 2000s, the focus on public engagement on climate change was on changing the behaviour of the individual towards a pro-environmental direction, with "everyone doing their bit" in reducing one's carbon footprint. Policies were planned and implemented

based on environmental education, trusting that education would lead to changes in behaviour (Eden, in Blake 1999: 261). Since then however, the framing of the message has shifted due to awareness raising campaigns alone proving inefficient for reaching a change on a bigger scale (Corner and Clarke, 2017: 72).

What the studies on value-action gap have been able to identify is that two sets of variables highlight the relationship between attitude and behaviour; *the structure of personal attitudes themselves; and external or situational constraints*" (O'Riordan, 1981; Guagnano et ah, 1995; Hallin, 1995; Baron & Byrne, 1997 in Blake, 1999: 264). Of these, awareness-raising campaigns only acknowledge the first variable, leaving the external or situational factors unaddressed.

Information campaigns are sure important, but according to Corner and Clarke means for engagement should be brought to a next, more engaging, collective and inclusive level; the level that indeed embraces the need for dialogue. Corner and Clarke describe this a 'climate citizenship';

> "Robust foundation of public engagement and dialogue can ensure something more important than quick wins: a level of 'climate citizenship' that locks in the stuttering technological, economic, and political progress where the 'big wins' are to be found. From the uptake of energy-saving technologies, to the mandate offered to national leaders, to the social momentum behind new initiatives like fossil fuel 'divestment', public engagement underpins it all. "
>
> > Corner and Clarke, 2017: 73

They go on highlighting the importance acknowledging that there is no "one size fits them all" -solution to a low-carbon lifestyle, but that the extent of how much these choices matter varies between different people (Corner and Clarke 2017: 74). In her studies on collective action Elinor Ostrom has emphasized the same issue - that there are different kind of individuals in the word, *"some more willing than others to initiate reciprocity to achieve the benefits of collective action*." (Ostrom, 2000: 138)

This study looks into whether dialogue as a method, as it is used in the Timeout concept, can help the participants to better overcome this gap by endorsing a participatory approach where the participants get to share their own views, experiences and challenges while hearing others talk about theirs.

3.1.2   Participatory democracy

> "- A participatory structure is a key component in large-scale social change efforts. Through participation in collective decision-making processes, citizens acquire the necessary technical and cultural knowledge to make a meaningful contribution."
>
> > Barry, 2002 and Light, 2002 in Brulle, 2010

Citizen participation is a built-in core value of a democratic system, and the need for strengthening the involvement of the general public in policy making has been acknowledged for decades already. Indeed, it has often been emphasized that we need to chance to system from a purely *representative* model towards a *participatory democracy*. One key theorist arguing on behalf of participatory and deliberative democracy is the German philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas. At the same time as democracy and autonomy are seen as key concepts of the modern age, decision-making processes have been, according to Habermas, dominated by experts, institutions and the market - actors that are seen as the powerful elites. In a complex and globalized system, citizen participation level in the public decision-making has been reduced (Habermas 1962 in

Hansen et al. 2016, p. 3). It has also been acknowledged that policies that rely on nation-states as the ratifying parties are insufficient to tackle the transnational and even global environmental hazards that our societies are facing. (Lindskog and Elander (2007): 78)

In the IPCC 1,5 report's *Summary for Policy Makers*, there are several points that refer to enhanced focus on educating and engaging the general public to understand the different views and create support for the political actions needed, such as the following note:

> **"**Education, information, and community approaches, including those that are informed by indigenous knowledge and local knowledge, can accelerate the wide-scale behaviour changes consistent with adapting to and limiting global warming to 1.5°C. -- Public acceptability can enable or inhibit the implementation of policies and measures to limit global warming to 1.5°C and to adapt to the consequences. Public acceptability depends on jdistribution of these consequences, and perceived fairness of decision procedures (high confidence)."

> IPCC, 2018

Transformation towards a carbon-free society requires rethinking of our societal structures, our economic system, and changes from everyone – but individuals easily feel powerless faced with this kind of a massive challenge of a global and complex nature. Aiming to build and reclaim public support and trust towards the democratic system and the sustainable transformation, numerous forms and initiatives for public participation have been introduced and studied by scholars and policy makers during the latest decades (Brulle 2010; Cox 2012; Höppner 2009). Aims for a more sound and inclusive democratic system have led to more and more initiatives, methods and tools for enhanced citizen participation in policy making on different levels. During the recent decades it has became a norm for development strategies on both local and international level to include a note on participation, to reach more coherent decisions that have good potential for successful implementation (Höppner 2009; Cox 2012).

It is however still up to the actors responsible for the implementation to make sure that meaningful participation procedures are carried through - not just top-down information sharing but discussion and collaborative dialogue were the information flows both ways. Many scholars in social science argue indeed for a more dialogue-based participation approach; according to Richard Sennett we need a dialogue that is "*1) informal, 2) conditioned by a willingness to listen;* and finally*, 3) committed to collaboration*." (Sennett (2012) in Hansen et al. (2016): 22)

In studies and cases talking about stakeholder participation, even where "general public" or "civil society" are included, these are often represented by NGOs. Involving the general public in terms of having open discussions or dialogues were anyone can take part are taking place mainly under political decision making processes, in form of a public hearing or another kind of participatory process that has the aim to produce more inclusive political decisions.

These citizen participation initiatives, such as platforms, workshops and dialogue processes, aim to give voice to the general public, engage public in the on-going political processes and gather perspectives and ideas for more sustainable and inclusive decision-making. It is about letting the people *have a say* in issues that concern them, and by doing so, strenghtening their feeling of *agency* towards the decisions taken. This is to increase the public acceptance and support for the changes needed and the political decisions taken to bring about that change. (Peeters et al. 2014).

When promoting public participation from a sustainability perspective the arguments include increased consent and trust by the public towards decisions they've been able to take part on, and that this engagement has potential to contribute to attitude and behavior change (Höppner, C: 2009: 1).

In their article *Representation, Participation or Deliberation? Democratic Responses to the Environmental Challenge* Rolf Lindskog and Ingemar Elander discuss the different forms of democratic development from the perspective of environmental sustainability. They describe the effects of participatory democracy to environmental policy making as follows;

> "- direct participation is assumed to increase the citizens' political self-confidence, their trust in the political system and their understanding of the common good. Many proponents of this perspective on democracy believe that broad public participation in politics will favour an ecologically positive development, since ultimately it is a question of people's own health, quality of life and even survival."
>
> Lindskog and Elander (2007): 82

Whether participation in a facilitated public dialogue such as that of Timeout Day can lead to the kind of changes described above by Lindskog and Elander is in this study analysed through the concepts of agency, locus of control and trust. What is interesting in Timeout Day is that it was purely about the dialogue itself, without a direct connection to a decision making process, which meant the focus of the dialogue was on the process itself rather than a certain aim or outcome. Through interviewing the participants and facilitators of the Timeout Day, the aim is to look at whether the participation in this kind of dialogue event can have similar effects as those usually connected to public participation in political decision-making, as described above.

3.2 Theoretical concepts applied in the study

3.2.1 Agency and Locus of Control

The goal of deepening public participation processes is to bring democracy closer to the citizens and engage a wider group of people in the decision-making processes through more inclusive policy making. Attitudes towards ability to influence and willingness to change own behaviour require the feel of agency – that this affects me, is about me, but that on the other hand I can affect the development of my society as well. Regaining agency towards an issue will both help the individuals to cope and address it, but also accept the political changes needed to change the course towards a more sustainable society (Peeters et al. 2014).

While agency is a commonly used sociological concept for studying the perceived role of an individual, another concept within agency is *Locus of control,* which can be either internal or external. A person with a strong internal locus of control sees that his/her choices matter; that he/she can affect a situation or a process, and bring about change. A person with external locus of control then again suffers from lack of agency and feels unable to affect a process, feeling that this belongs to "powerful others". (Kollmus and Agyeman, 2010: 243)

The feeling of agency is a crucial factor in a functional democratic society - without agency, people feel left out and lose their motivation to constructively contribute into building, shaping and developing the society. When people feel lack of inclusion and agency they will start to see the societal system as something that is far away, governed by "the elite", and has little to do with oneself - hence, one has no personal responsibility in contributing or living by the norms of the system. Anthony Giddens describes this as follows; "*the feeling of responsibility is connected to our feeling of agency. Agency also portrays power, resources and freedom of choice and ability to make change happen.* " (Giddens, 1984). Lack of agency, or external locus of control, then again works the opposite way by causing a feeling of not being able to affect a process, which results in lack of engagement and responsibility to act upon an issue.

Strong internal locus of control or self-perception of agency leads to feelings of empowerment, which in turn leads to a strengthened performance. This is highlighted in a recent study by Harriet Thew about youth participation in international climate change politics that states the following about agency;

> "[The study] finds that young people's selection of participatory strategies and power sources is shaped by the level of agency which they perceive to be available to them. When self-perception of agency is high, young participants offer constructive policy amendments which can lead to recognition and agency.
>
> Thew, 2018

Through the interviews the perceived level of agency and locus of control of the individual is studied by asking the interviewees on their motivation for participation, thoughts and feelings during and after the dialogue, and whether they could identify changes in their ability to influence and make a difference in the context of climate change mitigation. Possible feelings such as empowerment or increased control refer to increased agency, whereas expressions such as "the impact of an individual is too small to matter" or "it's up to the politicians to make changes happen" on the other hand refer to lack of agency and external locus of control.

3.2.2   Trust

Trust and distrust are key features in all interaction and relationships, whether individual or organizational, personal or professional. They also occur on different levels that all affect the understanding and resolving of conflicts and communicational errors. The level of trust towards other parties and the communication situation itself determinate the ability to create understanding through dialogue. Without trust, the participants in a dialogue have no reason to believe in the legitimacy or honesty of the others experiences or statements, and are likely to go deeper into their own pre-assumptions and views about the matter (Watson 2009; Hallgren and Ljung 2005). As pointed already in the introduction of this study, trust is indeed essential for the whole democratic system, and lack of it deepens polarization (Offe, 1999). In the end, lack of trust towards the political system eventually leads to the system itself loosing its legitimacy.

Trust as a scientific concept has many definitions, mostly depending on the context of its use; here, for the purpose of this study, I focus on both on the sociological and the socio-psychological view on trust as an institutional phenomenon, as explained by Worchel in Lewicki (2006) as "*the belief that future interactions will continue, based on explicit or implicit rules and norms"* (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, and Camerer, 1998 in Lewicki 2006: 93).

According to Worchel, institutional trust as a concept can cover both the trust that individuals hold on institutions and the trust among and within these institutions. Another angle is to look at the socio-psychological views on trust, in which individual communication either builds or destroys trust. Here, trust can according to Worchel be defined as "*expectations of the other party in a transaction, risks associated with assuming and acting on such expectations, and contextual factors that either enhance or inhibit development and maintenance of the relationship.*" (Worchel, 1979 in Lewicki 2006: 93)

In the context of dialogue, institutional trust refers to trust towards the process and facilitation; whereas the socio-psychological view refers to the other participants in the dialogue. In his article about trust, Lewicki further divides different kinds of trusts depending on which kind of relationships the achieved trust is based on into Calculation based trust (CBT) and Identification-based trust (IDT). Calculation based trust is something that is built when people "1) *behave the same appropriate way consistently at different*

times and in different situations, 2) meet stated deadlines, and 3) perform tasks and follow through with planned activities as promised" (Lewicki 2006).

Identification-based trust then again is based on sharing goals, interests and objectives and being a part of the same group, as well as our reactions on things and situations.

In the context of this study, both CBT and IDT are present. Notions of trust towards the dialogue itself - the Timeout concept and other participants -, are relevant to understand how individuals experienced the situation, whereas reflections on trust towards institutions and other participants connect to locus of control and seeing one's own role in the process of climate action. These are both relevant when analysing the interview data and are both discussed in the analysis.

3.2.3   Dialogue

Dialogue,

> "A discussion between two or more people or groups, especially one directed towards exploration of a particular subject or resolution of a problem."

<div align="right">Oxford Dictionary</div>

The core of this study and case in question is the concept of *dialogue.* The term is used in many fields of research, of which relevant for this study is the sociological and communicational meaning to it. Dialogue is in the very core of democracy, and of society in general, and being so there are many scientific definitions to it even within the context of sociological research (Jezierska, 2015).

Dialogue as a concept has its roots in ancient Greece, with the word origin tracing back Greek word *dialogos,* meaning conversation. Dialogue is a core part of democracy, and being so, there is a variety of scientific concepts and research on the use of dialogue, especially within sociological research. The most known researchers on dialogue within sociological research include names such as Habermas, Buber, Bakhtin, Bohm and Freire (Jezierska, 2015; Hallgren and Ljung, 2005; Bohm, 1996) all of whom have developed their own definitions for dialogue.

Dialogue has indeed many definitions, but at the same time it is seen as such a profound condition of a democratic society that it often does not get defined, but is taken for granted (Koczanowicz 2015: 21). In the contexts of environmental communication dialogue is often used in different participation processes and in conflict resolution (Hallgren and Ljung, 2005; Jezierska, 2015). Within these studies definitions of dialogue, and the use of it, differs, and quite often the concept itself does not get defined.

The main difference between the different definitions of dialogue is drawn between Habermas consensus-oriented approach and the latter approaches, such as Bohms, leaving the consensus-aimed thinking and instead emphasizing deepening understanding as the core of the dialogue in itself (Jezierska, 2015; Bohm, 1996). Another differing factor is how power outplays in dialogue - the collaborative approaches such as that of Bohm often build on the idea that power relations are not present in dialogue but must be set aside before entering the dialogue (Ganesh and Zoller (2012):69), critical approaches argue that leaving out power relations is difficult or even impossible (Ganesh and Zoller (2012):74; Phillips 2011).

The definition through which dialogue is understood and analysed in this study refers to the Bohmian approach of dialogue as a form of collaborative communication, where dialogue is understood as creating understanding, thinking together, and *emphasizing the creation of new meaning through connection and relationship building between individuals* (Black, 2005 in Ganesh and Zoller (2012): 70). This is studied by analyzing the interview findings on the participants' reflections upon the experienced dialogue, connecting their sayings to the concept of trust.

4 Methodology

4.1 Choosing the case

The starting point for this research process was a personal observation that public discourse on climate change, as with many other societal challenges, seemed to be polarized and lack a will to understand each other. This together with the fact that traditional awareness raising campaigns on climate change have not been enough in provoking large-scale behavioural changes suggested that alternative ways for talking about climate change were needed to get from talking to acting. One motivating factor to study this issue was the urgency for these changes embraced in the IPCCs report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C published in October 2018 (IPCC, 2018).

I got interested in the concept of dialogue in the context of climate action through a dialogue process that was implemented as a part of the UN climate negotiations last year, the Talanoa Dialogue. This was a global dialogue process initiated in the Paris Agreement with an aim to gather collective efforts and gain higher ambition for climate action, and citizen engagement is a part of this process. When then looking more into the concept, connected to the note on the state of the public discourse, I found that dialogue could have potential also in engaging the general public in climate discourse. The implementation of the Talanoa Dialogue in Finland did not include discussions involving the general public, but while looking deeper into the use of dialogue in public discourse in Finland I came across Sitras Timeout project and the Timeout Day on climate change and found it to fit well into the purpose of my study. I then got in contact with Sitra and got help in getting in contact with the Timeout Day participants.

4.2 Interviews

Since the aim of the research is indeed to bring forward personal reflections, perceptions and thoughts, these kinds of questions are best studied through a *qualitative approach* rather than *quantitative* (Creswell, 2014). The most common qualitative methods are interviews, observations and focus groups. The choice of methods and how they will be used depends on the aim of the research and framing of the issue in question. Interviews, for example, can be structured, with clear specific questions, or non-structured with open questions, where the informant gets to choose which things are found relevant for the subject (Valentine 2005; 121).

For this study semi-structured interviews are used as the method for collecting primary data. Interviews allow for the participants to explain and express their feelings and expressions in detail, which would not be possible through for example a survey questionnaire (Valentine 2005: 110). Through a semi-structured interview the interviewee has space to bring forward personally important and relevant thoughts on the issue in question, which can lead to unexpected reflections and findings. When studying individual thoughts and perceptions, the theoretical concepts used in this study - trust, agency and locus of control - are often hidden behind other more easily identified expressions about the interviewee's reflections on the participation experience.

Another alternative for studying these concepts in dialogue would be through observation studies, which would have meant for the researcher to participate in the dialogue in question. In this case this was not possible due to the dialogue day taking place already before the start of this research process.

Conducting interviews is a common way of studying the thoughts and experiences of an individual. In this thesis project, the interviews are conducted as semi-structured with open-ended questions. Interview questions are kept rather open to let the interviewees themselves lead the discussion and point out personally important views. This method is chosen to

have a clear frame and some pre-set questions while being able to give room for the informant to bring up what was considered important, and go in depth in certain issues in more detail.

4.3   Forming questions

The interview questions were formed based on a few broader themes:

1. The motivation behind the decision to take part on the Timeout Day event
2. Experiences of the dialogue dynamics and possible patterns
3. Feelings during and after the dialogue
4. Did the dialogue answer to the expectations of the individual or whether it resulted in something unexpected
5. Whether participation lead into new findings, changes in one's own thinking or behavior
6. Views on the meaning and purpose of dialogue in public discourse in general

The theoretical concepts of trust, locus of control, agency or value-action gap are not put directly into the interview questions, but can be identified and analysed through the experiences, feelings and thoughts of the interviewees. The motivating factor for participation can bring forward thoughts that imply lack of agency in taking action, feelings of external locus of control, or a need for building trust towards the process of change or towards other people; that others, too, share the worry, or want to make changes happen. This affects both the trust towards the community and one's own internal locus of control. Feelings during and after the dialogue tell about whether there were changes in trust or agency. One possible feeling that could come up is indeed the feeling of control over a situation, or lack of that control. If that feeling has changed since the participation, one can draw conclusions on the participation affecting the interviewee's agency. The questions about whether the participation led to new findings or changes in one's own thinking then again refer not only to agency and trust, but to measures for bringing the value-action gap, if the discussion led to changes in behaviour.

4.4   Choosing the interviewees

Informants represent both people who have been involved in organizing these dialogues and participants of these discussions. For background context two persons from Sitra were interviewed - Janne Kareinen who works with the Timeout concept, and Tuuli Hietaniemi from the working group for climate solutions. The main focus of the study lies on the participant perspective while the organizers views are used more as background material together with the expert interviews setting the context and connecting the dialogue process to a broader perspective of the role of dialogue in our society.

The interviewees represent a small fraction of the over 1000 people that participated in the national Timeout Day event. While the individual motivation for participation can vary, since the discussion was titled "What's Stopping Us" the assumption was that the participants mainly represent people who already value pro-environmental action and therefore want to discuss on the experienced barriers and challenges in taking action.

In total, 10 semi-stuctured in-depth interwiews were carried out. Of these interviews five were with dialogue participants; three with discussion organizers or facilitators; and two with experts behind the Timeout concept and the national Timeout Day on climate change. The interviewees were contacted through Sitra and participation in the study was based on voluntarily terms. When establishing contact with Sitra, I received a listing on the

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organized dialogues, and chose a few that when then contacted. The choice was made based on the event being open to public and having had a group of at least 10 participants. The participants of those discussions then received an email explaining my study, to which they could themselves reply to take part.

Of the interviewees, 7 were woman and one was man, aged between 30 and 66, all from Helsinki area. Even if the interviewees represented only four different dialogues, all of the events and the organizers behind them were quite different from each other. One was held in a public library, two at village community centres, and one was organized by an association.

4.5   Working with the data

The empirical data collected through the interviews is complemented with the summarized results and feedback from 77 dialogue events arranged on the same day around Finland. The organizers were asked to summarize the results of the event and also ask the participants for specific insights.

The informants were asked for permission to record the interviews. All the interviewees agreed to the recording, and on top of this notes were taken during the interviews. These recordings and their transcriptions were then used for further analyzing, identifying possible themes and patterns.

The analysis in this study is carried through with help from colour coding; repeated points, thoughts and wordings will be marked with same colour to identify patterns and trends in the collected data. (Creswell 2014: 197). These findings are then further analysed and discussed through a theoretical lense and put into wider context of participatory processes.

4.5.1   Limitations of the study

The research is a case study representing the perceptions of the individuals interviewed. Being so, it should not be considered as the general view of a population or conclude in any broad generalizations, but being descriptive, as is the nature of a qualitative study (Creswell 2014: 206). What the results do give is a valid analysis on how these individuals experienced the participation and perceived their role in this specific dialogue process, and whether they found it meaningful.

Some of the discussions were open to public without a specific target group, whereas others were organized by companies or public institutes for their own staff. The participant profiles varied from those who participated as a part of their workday duties, to those who participated voluntarily, out of personal interest. In the interest of this study was to focus on the ones that took part in the Timeout Day on their own initiative and as private persons, and who did not identify as experts in climate change.

The people who voluntarily participated in the Timeout Day discussions do not mirror all of the Finnish society, and their answers should not be considered to represent the broad public in general. The interviewees represent those who are motivated to participate in public discussion in general, and of climate change in particular, and felt a personal need to participate. The interviews were carried out approximately two months after the Timeout Day, which might affect on how the interviewees remembered the day.

5 Results, discussion and analysis

This part of the study introduces the case and goes through the findings from the data collected from the interviews. First the concept of Timeout and Timeout Day is presented to give an overview about the case in question and set the context for the analysis. Then the interview findings are presented following the original structure of the interview guide and the themes identified when going through the data. In the analysis part these findings are studied with the help of the theoretical concepts of trust, agency, locus of control and dialogue, to see if the participation in the Timeout dialogue has had an effect on the individual or possibly lead to changes in own thinking and behaviour.

5.1 The case: Timeout - a toolbox for dialogue

"The purpose of the Timeout is to strengthen people's participation in society, mutual trust, the understanding of future developments and their connection to decision-making."

Sitra, 2018

Timeout is a concept created by Sitra, "the Future House" of Finland, in 2017 to encourage constructive discussion in public discourse. The concept provides a "*new way of doing dialogue or holding a constructive discussion*" (Timeout website, 2019). The concept has been tested in cooperation with different actors and public institutions, with an aim to create a toolbox for constructive discussion that anyone can use freely. Within the project Sitra has arranged facilitation trainings for organizations and people interested in the concept, to help them gain knowledge in how to create a successfull dialogue. According to Sitra the concept can be used in any context that is found relevant for the organization arranging the discussion - from developing a more inclusive workplace environment to talking about big societal challenges such as climate change. By March 2019 the method had been used by more than 130 actors around the country arranging dialogues about matters important to them.

The goal of the concept is not to change anyone's mind about the issue in question, but to build understanding between different perspectives and work against polarization, "*creating a more far-reaching culture of constructive public discourse in Finland and, at the same time, developing society and democracy"* (Timeout website, 2018) In Sitras Timeout - concept dialogue is defined as follows:

"A dialogue is **a constructive and equal way of having a discussion.** It is aimed at understanding others, but not at reaching unanimity. At best, a dialogue generates unpredictable insights and new thinking.

A dialogue creates a trusting atmosphere and deepens the participants' understanding of almost any topic. With the help of a dialogue, you can bring together people from different backgrounds to an encounter in which they are on an equal footing. For example, use a dialogue as part of the preparation or before developing solutions and decision-making."

-Timeout Facilitation cards, Sitra

5.1.1 Timeout Day on climate change

On January 29th 2019 the first national Timeout Day was held, with the discussion theme being climate change. The aim of the day was to have climate change themed dialogue events organized all around Finland. More precisely the theme and title of the day was, freely translated, "*What's stopping us" ("Mikä meitä estää?"),* with the aim to discuss the experienced individual and societal barriers in taking climate action and changing behaviour. As we know that solutions to effectively mitigate climate change do exist, why

are we not taking them to use? The aim was to find individual and collective barriers to behavioural change, with more specific focus areas left for the discussion organizers to decide. It was considered important that the framing of this subject is done in a way that relates to the ones invited to participate the discussion.

The theme of the day was chosen to be climate change, because this theme was identified as an issue that had gained a lot of interest in the public discourse since the IPCC report was published in October 2018. At the same time it is indeed an issue that raises a wide scale of opinions and where more understanding about the societal changes needed and between different perspectives is important. Climate solutions and policy recommendations are also Sitra's core expertise, as they have a team working specifically on these issues, so the framing and planning of the day was done with the help of the people from this team.

During the day over a hundred dialogue events were organized in 26 different municipalities around the country. The actors behind the events were diverse, from small community associations, NGOs, schools and municipalities to private businesses and private persons. Together these discussions collected over a thousand participants, out of which over 40% had not been involved in public discourse before.

5.2   Visions and experiences of the interviewees

This part goes through the data from the interviews of the facilitators and participants of Timeout Day dialogue. The structure of this chapter follows the one of the interview themes; starting from motivation behind participation, going to thoughts and reflections about the dialogue to those after the dialogue.

The headline of the dialogue day was, freely translated, "*What's Stopping us?" (Mikä Meitä Estää?)*, and the explicitly expressed aim was to discuss what boundaries people experience that prevent them from changing their own behaviour and habits towards a more sustainable direction.

The translations are my own, and with the sentences or words that do not translate directly, interpretation is used to deliver the same message as has been the core of the original quotation.

5.2.1   Reasons for participation

The first interview questions were about the interviewees' own background, previous experiences on public discourse and climate discussion, and motivating factors for participating in this particular event. The motivating factors expressed here can give an idea on the experienced locus of control and whether gaining agency was an underlying factor for participation, or whether willingness to build trust towards other people or the system is identified as a reason.

From the interviews, several reasons for participation and personal aims for the dialogue could be identified. One main motivating factor was connected to the Timeout dialogue method itself; most of the interviewees were to some extent familiar with the concept since before, and were curious to get the experience of the dialogue. The concept awakened curiosity and excitement, and the demand for more constructive discussion culture was clearly present.

> "I believe in the "power of dialogue", in the Timeout website they say that "this society is shouting for dialogue", so I felt that participating in that kind of discussion was one step on learning about the subject and having an influence".
>
> Participant

> "I've been thinking about polarization, which is such a mega trend in this day and age, there needs to be a counterforce for it, I think dialogue is one. "
>
> Participant

Another major reason for participation was connected to the discussion title: there was a strong will and need to discuss climate change. It was found important as well to do something, to find solutions together. Several of the interviewees expressed that this was due to worry or anxiety about the climate crisis. There was an interest to hear how other people perceive climate change, and whether they have ideas on how to handle it or what to do, and develop activity around the subject. Hearing others was seen to broaden one's perspective and understanding on how different people perceive the issue and the challenges that people face in taking action.

> "One reason [for participation] was that in my work, a colleague, a young woman, said she wont have kids, mostly due to climate change and not believing the kid would have a good future, she thought it was irresponsible to have kids. I found this shocking, and thought that maybe here I could hear more about how threatening or dark others see this, and especially what ways we've got to prevent this or slow this down."
>
> Participant

> "Hear other people's perspectives on what is stopping us from acting. Broadening the discussion on these human barriers.. I think that it was interesting to hear what people had to say, it broadened my perspective.
>
> Thinking afterwards, also getting to test my own thoughts in relation to other people. Tell and share own stories."
>
> Participant

One motivating factor for both the facilitators and the participants was to be a part of a bigger, national scale event. This increased the momentum of the day, as the participants got to be a part of a bigger process than the particular discussion event they were themselves taking part at. Trying out a well-structured concept by a credible actor as Sitra provoked interest.

> "In getting people to come, it was good to have Sitra behind the concept, brought credibility for the event and increased interest. Being a part of a national event was seen as a motivating thing."
>
> Facilitator

For the facilitators, the main motivator behind organizing or joining the event was to gain experience in this kind of a process. Two of the three facilitators also experienced a strong worry for climate being an equally powerful motivator. All of them emphasized the need for a more dialogic culture and the need for a safe space to come together and discuss, and encouraging people to talk more. Especially meeting people outside of one's own "social bubble" was seen to be beneficial for understanding other perspectives. Also encouraging community activity was a strong driver for one facilitator.

According to one of the facilitators, dialogue is needed to "explode bubbles" in which we live to understand how different kind of realities people spent their daily lives in. In the context of climate action this can build understanding on the perceived barriers and solutions that people outside of one's usual social circle experience, which in turn can lead to new thoughts and learning experiences.

"Meetings with real or authentic discussion are rare between people from different "bubbles"".

<div align="right">Facilitator</div>

5.2.2   Discussion theme

As climate change is such a broad topic to discuss, the Timeout team at Sitra felt a need to narrow it down to make it easier for the organizing bodies and the participants to grasp (Kareinen, 2019). The theme of the discussion was defined through setting the title "What's Stopping Us" and describing the aim of the Timeout day as discussing the experienced barriers to taking action to mitigate climate change. This framing was chosen with a purpose to guide the discussion to a problem-solution-oriented path right from the start.

Sitra also decided to produce a 10-minute introduction video on the subject, for the organizers to show at the start of the event. This was done to make it easier of the discussion organizers to introduce the participants to the subject, and also to create a common ground for the discussion. Being such a huge global issue, climate change is often found hard for an individual to grasp, and the aim with the video was indeed to show the big picture but also bring the local level aspect into it - *"showing the huge global problem, putting it to pieces about how this connects to politics, to municipalities, or to individuals lifestyles, and bring it from the big picture closer to peoples everyday life"* (Hietaniemi, 2019).

One motivation behind the introduction was also to put down the facts, to give correct information to people that is in line with the latest scientific messages, and by doing so avoid going into discussions about the causes of climate change. The aim was to paint a picture of "where are we now", to then get further into the discussion about "what should be done". Hietaniemi, 2019). Since the time for the dialogue is always limited, it was considered important to get into the manageable sized, smaller issues right from the start.

The video was shown in the beginning of each discussion, and was experienced in different ways; for others, it provoked strong feelings, whereas for some it did not leave a strong memory. Most of the interviewees thought it served it's purpose really well.

"Video was a really good wake-up call. After the video I thought "NOW I feel anxiety"..
Provoked anxiety with all the information load."

"Really good, a lot of information. Even things I hadn't thought about myself. I did not
experience it as distressing, but some did think it was dark."

"Really good, insanely good, the material, really made you stop and think. I think everyone
should see it. -- I had not previously understood the scale of the problem, how huge the
changes that we need to make are. "

<div align="right">Participants</div>

In addition to being thought-provoking, the video was seen to serve it's purpose in creating a mutual starting point for the discussion, and laying out the facts;

"I think it was good with the introduction, with the video, that is was same for everyone, or
that there was a clear start that everybody saw and heard. And that it was fact-based, and
not emotion."

<div align="right">Participant</div>

Setting a clear title for the discussion and showing the same introduction video for everyone helped in identifying a starting point for the discussion. This was seen as important for creating trust towards the dialogue process. The information in the video had a potential to cause changes in the participants' agency - the feelings of anxiety and doubts on one's own ability to do anything about the issue refer to lack of agency, but other comments on how the information was good seem to implicate strengthened agency through embracing new information about the changes needed.

5.2.3   The dialogue

The facilitators and participants were asked about their views on the meaning of *dialogue* as a concept and how it is used in Timeout. Most of the interviewees were to some extent familiar with the Timeout concept since before. The facilitators all had participated in Sitras facilitation training, as was one of the participants too. Of the other participants, some had read into the concept before coming to the event, whereas for two the concept was completely new.

> "Discussion that is constructive but not searching for a result, solution, conclusion. That there is a genuine will to widen understanding."

> "Dialogue is a discussion opener, to increase understanding, on what kind of premises and theme we work with, and how we think. So that people are there to hear and listen, so we could get rid of assumptions. "
>
> Facilitators

Overall the method was experienced as a really good and welcomed tool. A discussion with clear guidelines and a facilitator was something rather new for many of the participants.

> "A method that does not evaluate, gives an experience that if you are heard, you could come back again"

> "When there's no must in finding a solution, but what is relevant is developing understanding, that's a big thing".
>
> Participants

> "Having a framework, that now this subject is discussed in these frames, brings muscle to the facilitator. It makes it efficient and allowing, and frees the participants to this "now I can think and the facilitator will take care of this""
>
> Facilitator

All of the four dialogues followed the structure and instructions of Timeout that had been laid out by Sitra and introduced to the facilitators in a facilitation training. In the beginning of each Timeout Day dialogue the rules of the dialogue were explained to all of the participants, to get everyone on the same level and aware of the characteristics of the discussion and avoid possible false expectations. This was something that all the interviewees noted to be really important.

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"The facilitation and rules "made the situation more "holy" in a way.. more than just talking. -
- It was like, "here is the subject, this is how we discuss it, settling down with the subject in
a completely different way, ritual-like, there was some positive "holiness" in listening to the
others and giving space".

<div align="right">Participant</div>

The beginning of the event was described in similar terms in all but one of the cases,
where the rules caused a minor conflict to occur.

"In the invitation letter, certain expectations were not specifically pointed out.. -- So there
was a bit of a conflict after which one participant left the room. "

<div align="right">Facilitator</div>

When hearing the rules, one participant reacted strongly to them and chose to
"dramatically" leave the situation. This was due to not being able to follow a principle
considering the prohibited use of electronic devices during the discussion. In this particular
event this caused hassle and created confusion, after which it took some time to reach a
calm, good and trusting atmosphere.

Overall the participants described their pre-dialogue feelings as nervous, curious and
excited. In several events the rules were printed out and put forward for everyone to see,
which at first provoked some tension and nervousness in some of the participants.

"I found it confusing, because you would think that we can discuss, but on the other hand it
was good, when looking at how for example politicians talk it's not always that clear [that
we can].."

<div align="right">Participant</div>

At first the rules were experienced to be somewhat strict and made the situation feel less
spontaneous. However, as soon as the facilitator explained the dialogue principles, the need
for the rules was better understood. According to the interviewees, good and allowing
atmosphere was reached rather fast. When discussion started to flow, the rules and
facilitation were seen as nothing but a good thing, creating safety in the space and trust
towards the process.

In terms of discussion framing and staying at the given subject, most of the discussions
seemed to succeed. In one of the cases there were differing opinions among the
interviewees whether the discussion had escaped too far from the original title, or whether
there is anything to do about this.

"I would have wanted to hear more discussion on individual concrete acts, but there was
nothing you could do about it when these experts happened to be there"

<div align="right">Facilitator</div>

"From substance point of view, the discussion went on a side-track, quite much actually, and
the facilitator could have brought it back. The original theme was not yet talked through,
that's the impression I got. That we could have retuned to that, or matters closer to that."

<div align="right">Participant</div>

5.2.4 Discussion dynamics

One of the interview questions was about the experienced discussion dynamics during the dialogue - the interviewees were asked to identify if they noted any changes in the flow and dynamics of the discussion, whether everyone got to speak or someone was dominating. The term "dynamics" was in this case used in an everyday context, as the interviewees themselves understood it, without more precisely specifying what was meant with the concept.

The experiences on dialogue dynamics differed between the events but also within participants in the same event. This shows how we are in the situation as ourselves, with each of us paying attention and giving weight on different things, some being more cautious about small fractions in the discussion dynamics between people than others.

> "There were some experts present that talked a lot with themselves, and others who knew nothing about the subject, but this did not cause harm because in the end they [the participants] were pleased, saying "what a place, so much I didn't know, this increased my level of knowledge substantially."
>
> Facilitator

> "The discussion flow was natural, and surprisingly easy to facilitate. The only thing to facilitate was to encourage some that were not speaking as much. But it's ok not to say much, too. "
>
> Facilitator

Several of the interviewees also noted that the facilitating was really important and all in all well managed in the different events, and succeeded in creating a trusting atmosphere.

> "Everyone got to talk and the others listened, no need to be afraid. The most important task for the facilitator is to make sure the space is safe. "

> "Following the Timeout structure, listen and build upon what the others are saying; it led to many feelings and perspectives to come through. "
>
> Participants

In some of the discussions there were some participants with more expertise on the subject, and this affected the discussion flow and dynamics. Most of the interviewees did not experience that they would have had dominated the discussion.

> "The experts knew how to discuss, not dominating, but calm and fact-based. The others took more role of a listener and asking questions."
>
> Facilitator

This differed slightly between the different events and also between the participants. The negative feelings were mostly connected to certain participants experiencing that all the solutions available were ineffective.

> "What I was a bit disappointed at was when some were pointing out things, others seemed to want to believe them"

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"Some experienced quite strongly that individual actions wont be sufficient at all"

"When the point is for the talk to be experience-based, one has to leave the expert role, that can be a challenge. Here I think one man stayed in the expert role. -- He was like, "yea, yea", didn't really understand what I mean, I did not feel heard, and then he left for another meeting."

<div align="right">Participants</div>

One participant talked for really long, which was experienced as slightly dominant by one of the interviewees. At some point the facilitator reacted to this however and reminded about the mutual rules.

"He had a lot of expertise that he wanted to share. And that would have been more of a lecture than a discussion, then."

<div align="right">Participant</div>

The role of the dialogue as a discussion opener was clearly understood by the interviewees, and no-one expressed frustration over not coming to a consensus by the end.

"My conclusion: increasing understanding and handling climate issues is a process. I was pleased, this answered to my expectations, I was not expecting to reach a "result" as such. The value is in the being and discussing itself."

<div align="right">Participant</div>

5.2.5   After the dialogue

From the reasons to participate it could be clearly seen that there is demand for both dialogue in itself, independent from the subject, and at the same time more inclusive discussion on climate change. Several of the participants experienced that dialogue helped them in dealing with anxiety, to better know what they can do and what not to get anxieted over.

"That it is possible, that we will change, that we can change."

"I wasn't expecting to feel so deeply about this process. I was really touched and inspired, on a deep level."

"It made me really understand the seriousness of the situation, understand how existential this is. "

"After the dialogue I've been talking more about climate in different social groups where I'm active. "

"Personally, it did affect; easier to confront things when I know more, understand more. "

"Opened my eyes to how little things can make a difference"

When asking the interviewees to describe the overall feelings after the process, they were all having a positive tone, describing the experience with words as "open", "rich", "inspiring", "rewarding", "a good start", "therapeutic" and "hopeful".

"Really happy about others sharing that feeling of anxiety, I'm not alone. It turned into a sense of collective belonging."

"Rewarding, not finished yet as a process, but still a way forward. Trusting."

Participants

"People left the situation feeling good, after a mutual experience of sharing. Discussion and participation, every voice was heard. "

"Awakened own thoughts, opened own "locks", shared tips and reflections, peer-support to the participants"

Facilitators

"Many comments about how at home you think and worry about these things, without discussing with anyone on their social circle about these issues. Being alone with these thoughts causes powerlessness."

Facilitator

Almost all of the interviewees brought up the need for a continuum - either in terms of more discussion, or other kind of more concrete action.

"I would hope that the next time would be scheduled beforehand already."

"It would be good to have this as a part of a process, so that this wouldn't just stay as one event, or remain on the individuals to do something. A bigger plan. I would rather take part o that kind of a discussion. Now it was about the inspiration in the moment, that might lead into something.."

"I don't know if this leads to anything, people were excited about experiencing together, we got to talk, there was a strong request for positive action. -- Maybe there should be more meetings."

Participants

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5.3   Analysis

Trust

In this case the different forms of trust are studied through Lewickis definitions on calculus-based trust (CBT) and identification-based trust (IBT) (Lewicki, 2006). For the best-case scenario in terms of a successful dialogue, both calculus-based trust towards the dialogue as a process and identification-based trust towards the other participants are present.

According to Lewicki, calculus-based trust occurs when trust is based on sharing the same expectations on the purpose of the action and the rules that apply (Lewicki, 104)

In the case of Timeout Day, the concept and the material gave a ready framework for the process. This was seen as a thing that made organizing an event a lot easier, bringing courage for the organizer and "credibility" for the entire process - compared to arranging something like this on your own without a larger context.

Facilitation is a lot about building trust - in the space, towards the process, and between the participants. Both the facilitators and participants expressed the concept guidelines as something that created *safety* in the discussion situation. Building a safe discussion environment is a lot about *trust* - towards the facilitator, the situation, the space, the process, and most of all, between the participants. Several interviewees emphasized the difference of a clearly constructed and facilitated discussion compared to a "coffee table discussion". The rules and guidance were seen as a good thing in building a safe space to express thoughts and opinions, which shows that the level on CBT in the situation was high.

A clear situation that decreased the trust towards the dialogue process was the case where there was interruption in the start by one person leaving the event. This incident affected the atmosphere and caused calculus-based distrust towards the process by bringing confusion. The facilitator was however able to create a safe atmosphere after the incident, and by doing so regain the participants trust towards the process. This can be partly due to the participants having a pre-set shared need to talk, which strengthens the IBT towards the group.

Building identification-based trust in a situation where the participants are new to each other is something a bit more complex. This is also one main goals of a successful dialogue, as trust is built by sharing personal perceptions, values, and goals (Gabarro, 1978 in Lewicki, 2006). IBT is created through finding common interests, goals and objectives, and "*situations in which they stand for the same values and principles, thereby demonstrating integrity*" (Lewicki and Stevenson, 3998 in Lewicki, 105). In case of Timeout Day, the goals of the day were pre-set; there was a shared expectation from the beginning that the participants were there to share experiences and create understanding about the issue in question. Out of the reflections of the interviewees, this helped to gain high levels of IBT in the beginning.

Situations were participants experienced domination by another participant or that the discussion partner was not listening to what they were saying refer to levels of distrust being present, lowering the level of IBT. The reflections while asking about feelings after the dialogue suggest that despite of this, by the end of the dialogue session high levels of IBT were reached in most of the cases.

Agency and locus of control

In most of the discussions, the feeling that individual acts wont matter in the bigger picture was clearly present, and brought up by several interviewees. As the title of the day was "What's Stopping Us", individual barriers were indeed one of the main issues discussed, and here the lack of agency and feelings of external locus of control were clearly present, if not the main barrier keeping the individual from making changes.

Several interviewees expressed how this feeling of not being able to affect the issue went back and forth during the discussion. First the introduction that brought forward the scale of the issue provoked strong feelings of external locus of control - that this is out of the hands of an individual. After that when during the dialogue itself the participants got to talk this out and share this feeling of helplessness, levels of agency started to rise, even if moments of doubt were experienced during the discussion as well.

In the end, as can be seen from the "After the dialogue" -part, dialogue was experienced to inspire, strenghten one's agency through a feeling of empowerment by seeing that "little things can make a difference", that other people also felt a need for discussion and experience similar problems in taking action, and sharing positive examples in what changes to do in one's everyday life.

Dialogue in practice

As mentioned before, dialogue was by many of the interviewees seen as a welcomed tool and way to address different thoughts and feelings about climate change, or with other big societal issues. The need for more dialogue, as pointed out by Sitra, is clearly present in todays' public discourse, and the interviews confirmed this view. Through dialogue we can better understand the views that differ from our own perspectives the most. To see the experiences behind a certain stand helps us to see why we think different (Kareinen 2019). This helps us to see that others too experience

However, in how dialogue plays out in the real life situation can be different from the theoretical, often rather ideological approach. Even if the interviewees only represented participants and facilitators of four dialogue events, already here one could clearly see differences in how the dialogue outplayed in practice. A successful dialogue is always dependent on not only the facilitator, but the participants. The participants often have different level of experience on dialogue - or as one of the interviewees expressed this, "different entry-level to the dialogic approach".

The interviewees had different levels of previous experience in participating in public discourse. Most of the interviewees had little to no previous experience in activities or public discourse around climate change mitigation. The participants rely on the facilitation and on each other, which again highlights the need for trust. Trust however, if built on expectations on dialogue being dominance-free form of communication that brings everyone on the same ground, can be misleading. This has been pointed out by Phillips as follows:

> "--the ideal of dominance-free communication through dialogue, implied in many approaches to dialogic communication theory and practice and action research, is not only an impossible ideal but also a dangerous one: by creating an illusion of a dominance-free space, it can work to mask power relations and diverging knowledge interests. Participants may be seduced by a sense of belonging to the community which forms around a "we" revolving around the project of mutual learning and the co-production of knowledge.
>
> Phillips, 2011:53-54

Creating trust takes time. Trying to reach high levels of trust within a short amount of time can lead to trust being built on an illusion. What Phillips means that the ideological approach to dialogue does not take in consideration the underlying power relations that are always present. As one of the points of dialogue is getting rid of titles or statuses, and discussing as yourself, this is in my opinion a valid point to consider when looking at what is being said. As long as what is brought up is indeed individual experiences dialogue works, but when taking a more expert role it is important for the participants to be aware of who, in fact, is represented, and from which angle they make their statements. In several occasions during the Timeout Day discussions, the interviewees pointed out that someone

has much knowledge on something, and got into sharing that knowledge with other participants. This creates a risk for misuse of the trust that has been created, if the non-expert participants feel unsure about their ability to evaluate what is being said (Hallgren and Ljung, 2005: 6). In the best case scenario this sharing of knowledge is of course a good learning experience - but it is important to be aware of the risk of spreading false information under the impression of a trusting atmosphere.

By looking at the perceptions of the interviewees, the value-action gap can be clearly identified; indeed, that was one of the main underlying reasons in participating the dialogue. As the aim of the Timeout Day was to discuss the barriers that prevent action, and highlight the experiences of an individual, value-action gap was clearly present already in creating the event (Blake 1999:265).

All of the interviewees expressed a clear wish for a continuum for the process.

As the point of the dialogue was to be a discussion opener, level the playground, and bring people together - once the event was over, there was a feeling of " Now we've started something, and then what?"

To overcome the value-action gap, continuum is indeed important. As Smith and Blanc state, *"empowerment of individuals to act does not of itself guarantee action without an appropriate institutional location within which action is located"(*Smith & Blanc, 1997, p. 282; in Blake 1999: 270)

For the type of continuum the needs were different; several of the interviewees expressed a need for more discussion, as this one dialogue did not fully fulfil the participants' need for dialogue and discussion on climate change. Others expressed a strong request for ways to get active or learn more, and get from talking to concrete action. What was mutual to these was that people felt a strong need for more organized and guided environments and activities through which to communicate with others, continue the dialogue and do something concrete and practical at the same time.

6 Conclusions

The results from both the empirical data collected through the interviews as well as summaries from all the discussion suggest that through creating understanding on the societal implications of climate change mitigation and giving people an experience of "peer support" dialogue can indeed help people in shifting mindsets in becoming more adjustable for the transformation towards a sustainable lifestyle.

This is due to several factors; for one, the comments suggest that after participating in the Timeout dialogue participants felt a stronger internal locus of control and a sense of empowerment, by stating things as "my actions matter", "everyone has to do something". Another thing was in understanding the scope of the issue, which has a lot to do with the introduction provided by Sitra. The information provided in the introduction video together with a chance to talk about it with others in a safe space helped to scale the issue and understand the changes needed.

Clear rules and facilitation were seen as an important thing for creating a trusting and safe space for the dialogue. As elaborated before, good dialogue requires trust, and building trust takes time. Dialogue is therefore not seen as a time-efficient tool, and takes resources. In terms of climate action and behavioural change, the dialogue was merely a start of the process, and would need a clear continuum to gain more widespread and sustainable results.

The participants expressed two equally important reasons for participation; the issue in question, climate change, and curiosity about the Timeout method and participation in a dialogue. Both facilitators and participants saw climate change as an issue that does not get discussed enough, and the need to understand each other and how others experience this question and the barriers to action was clear. The fact that the aim of the discussion was

not on following a process plan, but in sharing the worry and identifying obstacles was seen as a good thing. They recognized a societal need for dialogue on climate change and the chance to participate in one was seen as an interesting, motivating and exciting opportunity.

In tackling climate change, in addition to empowering for action, dialogue can also help in identifying and correcting some false understandings on other peoples' behaviour and help put things into perspective. In the interviews a lot of perceptions on the issue of climate change itself were present, instead of just focusing on the dialogue situation and outcomes. I do not see this necessarily as a bad thing though. Participants experienced to have gained more courage to talk about climate, normalize the subject. At the same time it was clear that the need to talk more remained there - both in the interview situation and in general.

Almost all of the interviewees shared a feeling that more needs to be done, but the level to which they had made changes in their own behaviour differed. Some had made more changes already, whereas others clearly identified a need to do more. The barriers were mostly connected to lack of practical information and guidance - at the same time, other participants experienced that sharing information had in previous cases not caused a change in behaviour. Whether providing information would really cause a change remains unclear, and again highlights the presence of the value-action gap. What the participants seemed to agree on was that mutual experience sharing and "peer-support" could be used more and become a successful tool in overcoming the gap. This refers to high levels of trust towards collective action strengthening one's own agency and ability to take action.

6.1 Future studies

In this study dialogue was studied through a few concepts that have to do with how we communicate about environmental changes and encourage for behavioural change. Several factors were left out of this study, of which especially the more psychological aspects would give an interesting angle for future studies. Also the framing and participant profile of the Timeout Day would give means to additional research - who was reached, who chose to participate. It would be interesting to look into the experiences of those who participated in other Timeout Day dialogues not directly on voluntarily terms or out of own initiative, but as a part of their workday, and whether their experiences would differ from the ones presented in this study.

This study was based on interviews conducted two months after the event. Doing interviews both before and after participation could have provided additional insights, as well as participating in the dialogue myself as an observer. These kind of approaches could be beneficial for future studies.

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