Putting the Citizen First

User Co-Creation in Norwegian Municipalities

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Putting the Citizen First

*User Co-Creation in Norwegian Municipalities*
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Abstract

The welfare state is facing massive changes. An increasingly aging and diverse population and higher expectations of public services will put pressure on the public sector in the future. This will force the government and the municipalities to find new, innovative ways to produce and deliver public services. As society is becoming more diverse, public sector innovations must be adapted to fit the needs of the individual citizens. This can be done by involving citizens as partners in the innovation process. This is called co-creation, an innovation process where the aim is to develop new products and services with people, not just for them. The traditional role of the citizen is changing, from being a recipient of products and services, to being part of the development process. Involving citizens in the innovation process will create stronger bonds between the public sector and the civil society, which will give a better basis to deal with complex issues. Co-creation in Norwegian municipalities is still a fairly new concept. While many municipalities are taking measures to improve and promote co-creation, there are many barriers preventing it. Thus, the municipalities must build a culture for co-creation. This thesis will uncover some of these barriers in four Norwegian municipalities and examine how the municipalities can create a culture for co-creation. The thesis applies a management perspective, and looks at how innovation and co-creation is and can be managed and organised within the municipalities. The thesis also applies a systemic perspective in order to understand the systemic changes needed to promote a culture for co-creation, seen in the light of three governance paradigms in the Norwegian public sector.

The barriers found in this study can be divided into four categories – consciousness (awareness), capacity (structure), co-creation (processes) and courage (leadership). The barriers within the consciousness category include uncertainties of what co-creation involves. The study shows that there is a need for a common terminology that accounts for the various nuances and differences that co-creation involves. Barriers within the capacity category are related to the context, strategy, organisation and people and culture of the organisation. These include time and budget restrictions, and lack of political will, processes, networks, and competences. Barriers within the co-creation category are that the citizens are not as involved and engaged as the municipalities would like them to be, and that the municipalities do not
have sufficient platforms and methods for co-creation. The barriers within the final category, courage, involve fear and unwillingness of giving up control, risk aversion, and fear of failure.

Five systemic changes required to create a culture for co-creation are outlined. These include a shift towards increased bottom-up innovation, long-term focus, more use of information and communication technology (ICT), a transformation of the culture of the organisation, and more focus on input and output from outside the organisation. Previous governance models do not provide an institutional design that supports co-creation, and thus there is a need for a new governance paradigm, called community governance. We can see a shift towards community governance in Norwegian municipalities today. Most of the barriers found in the empirical data can be connected to a move towards the new governance paradigm. In order to create a culture for co-creation, there is a need for a shift in traditional roles, attitudes, relationships and structures. However, there is an increased focus on user involvement, co-creation and innovation by politicians and public managers, which shows that there is an awareness and will to overcome the barriers.

Having a separate, cross-sectoral innovation unit within the municipalities that supports the services with competences, tools and methods was found to be very beneficial when creating a culture for co-creation. The innovation units of the municipalities in the study work to create a culture for innovation and co-creation within all services, and to make innovation a core value of the municipality. Other essential ways the municipalities can create a culture for co-creation is by spreading competences, methods and experiences through intermunicipal networks, employing in-house competences, and having proactive political and municipal leaders who encourage innovation and co-creation, and provide funds.
Preface

This thesis concludes my master’s degree in Society, Science and Technology (ESST) at the University of Oslo. It has been an interesting, challenging, and fascinating process, and I have learned a lot from it.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Markus Bugge, for his invaluable feedback, guidance and motivation.

Thanks to all the informants who have taken time to participate in this study. You have provided valuable information that has made me more interested in this topic. I would also like to thank Olai Bendik Erdal and Hanne-Stine Hallingby from Telenor, for inspiration to the topic of the thesis.

Finally, I would like to thank my friends and family for the support and encouragement you have given me. I could not have done this without you. I would especially like to thank my mother, who spent hours proofreading and giving feedback, and encouraging me when I needed it, and Ingvild and Julie, who have supported me throughout the entire process.

Oslo, October 2019

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1 Introduction

1.1 Relevance and purpose of the thesis

The welfare state is facing massive changes. An increasingly aging and diverse population and higher expectations of public services will put pressure on the public sector in Norway in the future (Holmøy et al., 2014). This will force the government and the municipalities to think differently and find new, innovative ways to produce and deliver public services. Public documents point to innovative collaboration with citizens, also known as co-creation, as a necessary priority in future welfare politics (Meld. St. nr. 26, 2015; Meld. St. nr. 29, 2013; NOU, 2011a; NOU, 2011b). Citizens are valuable resources who can contribute with highly relevant and important ideas, as they exist outside the public sector, and directly experience the effects of new policies and services (Commonwealth of Australia, 2010; Lee et al., 2012). This collaboration will affect the quality of life of the citizens, as well as have an impact on the welfare state (Jenhaug, 2018).

According to Schumpeter (1934), innovation has a major impact on economic growth and development. Innovation is a complex concept, and does not have a simple definition. Crossan and Apaydin (2010: 1155) created this definition:

production or adoption, assimilation, and exploitation of a value-added novelty in economic and social spheres; renewal and enlargement of products, services, and markets; development of new methods of production; and establishment of new management systems. It is both a process and an outcome.

An innovation is different from an invention in that it must generate value (Garud et al., 2013). Innovation in the public sector is important in order to improve economic growth, social welfare and environmental sustainability. It can advance efficiency within the organisation, create services that are better suited to citizens’ needs, reduce costs and create new ways to operate (Alves, 2013). Empirical studies show that innovation in the public sector can improve citizen satisfaction, create better outcomes, improve the image of the state, and increase innovation in the private sector (Alves, 2013, Bason, 2010, Bloch et al., 2009). The municipality is the part of the public sector that is closest to the citizens, and thus can more easily identify their challenges and needs. Thus, the need for innovative solutions is more evident within the municipalities (Teigen, 2013).
As our society is becoming increasingly more heterogeneous and diverse, the ‘one size fits all’ services will not suffice (Albury, 2005). Public service innovations need to be adapted to the needs and goals of the individual citizens and communities. One major way to ensure this would be through collaborative innovation, in which citizens and users would be able to provide their input, opinions, needs and personal expertise. Academics argue that the public sector needs to find new, radical ways to innovate, as the current innovation processes in the public sector are not sufficient in order to confront many of today’s challenges such as climate change, an aging population, health issues such as obesity and dementia, and the financial crisis (Harris & Albury, 2009; Bommert, 2010). Public sector organisations should adopt a form of innovation which “utilises the innovation assets of a diverse base of organisations and individuals to discover, develop, and implement ideas within and outside organisational boundaries“ (Eggers & Singh, 2009: 98). Involving actors from the private sector, volunteer organisations, and citizens will create stronger bonds between the municipality and the civil society. This will improve the understanding of challenges, provide more input to possible solutions, and the execution of political decisions will become easier and improved. This will give a better basis to deal with complex issues (Sørensen & Torfing, 2005).

Von Hippel (2005: 3) defines ‘users’ as “firms or individual consumers that expect to benefit from using a product or a service”. For the purposes of this thesis, I will use the term users to refer to those who benefit from the use of public services. As citizens in general are users of municipal services, ‘citizens’ will be used interchangeably with ‘users’. The traditional role of the user is changing, from being only a recipient of a finished product or service, to being a part of the development process. The Ministry of Health Care Services states that a living welfare society should help citizens exploit their own resources in the best possible way, rather than making them passive service recipients (Meld. St. nr. 29, 2013). The largest care resource lies with the users. Through activisation and help to becoming more self-sufficient, users may gain better results and are more able to exploit the collective resources of society. Today, the development within public services has not had enough focus on discovering the possibilities users have to contribute to the planning and production of services and their active contribution to improve their own daily lives. Thus, the government states that there will be an emphasis on activity, participation and mastering as central elements in the
development of future health care services. It is important to promote and strengthen users’ citizen responsibilities and their individual possibilities and resources to affect own life and health (ibid.).

Innovation and co-creation within Norwegian municipalities are still fairly new concepts, and the municipalities are now in a development phase. However, some municipalities are now taking measures to improve their innovation and co-creation efforts. Still, there is a long way to go, and many barriers stand in the way of user co-creation in Norwegian municipalities. My aim with this thesis is to uncover some of these barriers and to outline solutions and methods for creating a culture for co-creation. I will focus on user co-creation. The empirical findings will be understood through an innovation management perspective, as one vital way to ensure an innovative culture for co-creation within an organisation is through management and the organisation of innovation and co-creation. I will also use a systemic perspective in order to understand the systemic changes needed to promote a culture for co-creation, seen in the light of three governance paradigms in the public sector in Norway.

1.2 Research questions

In order to guide my research I have selected the following two research questions:

1. What are the barriers to user co-creation in public innovation?
2. How can municipalities create a culture for user co-creation?

In order to answer these questions, I will look at how innovation is organised within the municipalities, what their strategies for innovation and co-creation are, and how the municipalities work with user co-creation. I will look into what the barriers for user co-creation are and which measures they are taking to create a culture for user co-creation.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is divided into six chapters. The first chapter has covered the topic and relevance of the thesis, as well as the research questions. In chapter two I will present the theoretical framework. The concepts and theories discussed in this chapter will be used to analyse the research questions and to provide context. In this chapter I will explain how the theories will
be used to analyse the empirical findings. In chapter three I will account for the research method chosen in order to strengthen the reliability and validity of the thesis. Chapter four will present the empirical data gathered in the study. In chapter five, the empirical data will be analysed in the light of the theoretical framework. Chapter six involves concluding remarks and propositions for future studies.
2 Theoretical framework

2.1 Public sector innovation

According to Mulgan (2007: 6), the simple definition of public sector innovation is that it is a new idea that creates public value; it must be at least partly new, rather than an improvement; it must be implemented; and it must be useful. The public sector is not usually thought of as particularly innovative. Public sector innovation is commonly seen as very different from private sector innovation (Bloch & Bugge, 2013). The standard perception has been that the public sector provides a regulatory framework for innovation in the private sector, and in return passively receives innovations from the private sector. Public sector organisations are traditionally seen as bureaucratic and conservative. However there is now a growing awareness of public innovation (ibid.). The public sector has come up with many important and pervasive innovations such as the internet, GPS, cellular technology, and even railroads (Mazzucato, 2013). Public sector innovation can be classified as either incremental, with small changes to already existing services and processes; or radical, involving new services or products that involve entirely new human resource structures, or new types of organisations (Mulgan & Albury, 2003). The problem with innovation in the public sector is not that innovation never happens, but rather that most public innovations are sporadic and driven by accidental events, which does not leave public sector organisations with a lasting capacity for innovation (Eggers & Singh, 2009).

Innovation in the public sector typically comes from governments’ need to create better and more responsive services better suited to meet the needs of the citizens (Alves, 2013). This involves improving and personalising services, reaching out and meeting public expectations, lowering costs and improving efficiency levels, and developing information and communication technologies (ICT) (Bason, 2010; Mulgan & Albury, 2003; Pinto, 1998). The innovation process involves many different actors that share and develop new knowledge which can lead to new products, services or processes. Being able to utilise new knowledge is essential. Public sector organisations that are better at creating networks providing access to different partners, knowledge and competences are more likely to be successful in their innovative processes (NOU, 2011a).
What separates public organisations from private organisations is that public organisations are led by elected leaders, are multi-functional and do not operate within a free economic market (Christensen et al., 2009). Other elements that separate the public sector from the private sector is that the surrounding environment involves less autonomy, less flexibility and the presence of political influences; and its organisational structures involve continuous interactions with citizens (Alves, 2013). There is also a difference in what drives innovation. Private sector organisations are driven by economic gain and competitive advantage. This tends to restrict the sharing of good practices to strategic partners (Hartley, 2005). Public sector organisations are driven by societal challenges or citizens’ demand for improved services (Bason, 2010; Ringholm et al., 2011). They aim for improvements in governance and service performance in order to increase public value (Moore, 1995). These goals can be achieved through collaboration to create, share, transfer, adapt and embed good practice. This suggests that the sharing of competences and experiences, and the adoption and adaption of innovations in a new context is an important element of public sector innovation (Hartley, 2005).

Teigen et al. (2013) outlines three characteristics of municipal innovation. These are:

- **Collective entrepreneurship** – the municipality acts as one collective entrepreneur, based within the local democracy. Its main aim is to develop better solutions for the community. Incentive to innovate comes from social engagement and involvement, or from the collective social capital.

- **Links between spheres and levels of government** – innovative processes within municipalities operate across links between different spheres. This can mean innovation across sectoral boundaries, across levels of government, and across the boundaries between the public organisation, businesses and the civil society. The structure of the municipality is foundationally cross-sectoral, which provides a continuous space for innovation through the information flow across sectoral boundaries.

- **Distinctive diffusion process** – Municipal innovations have a distinctive diffusion process. Innovations are typically first implemented into one municipality. The innovation is first spread through the region or other municipalities with similar challenges. The innovation is then picked up by the political system and/or by research
institutions, and then, through state funded programmes, policies or KS (Kommunenes Sentralforbund, a public organisation for Norwegian municipalities), the innovation is redistributed back to the collective municipal sector, and adapted to other municipalities (ibid.).

These three characteristics are based on the distinctive characteristics of the municipality as an organisation. The municipality focuses on solutions that solve the needs and challenges of its citizens. Compared to other public institutions, the municipality has a unique possibility to think and act across sectors and spheres, and can use resources from the entirety of the political administrative collectiveness. The municipality has open channels towards relevant collaborative partners, and the innovative work of the individual municipality can be useful to municipalities throughout the country (Teigen et al., 2013). As the municipalities do not compete with each other, it is reasonable to assume that they can more easily share knowledge and innovative solutions across the organisational boundaries than private organisations.

2.2 The innovation process

Garud et al. define the innovation process as “the sequence of events that unfold as ideas emerge, are developed, and are implemented within firms, across multi-party networks, and within communities” (2013: 776). The innovation process involves ideas and opinions from many different actors. These ideas and opinions need to be expressed, but must also be selected, collected and prioritised (Fuglsang, 2008). The following phases of the innovation process are identified:

- invention (the emergence of an idea),
- development (the elaboration of the idea) and
- implementation (the widespread acceptance of the innovation) (Garud et al. 2013).

Traditionally, the innovation process was seen as a linear model, consisting of research, development, production, and finally marketing, in chronological and sequential order (Kline & Rosenberg, 1986). This, however, is not a suitable description of the innovation process in practice. Instead, the process is complex and involving several different paths and setbacks (Garud et al., 2013). It is affected by both external and internal factors, including money, people, ideas, resource limitations, institutional rules, among others. Kline and Rosenberg
(1986) propose a different, more interactive model, named the chain-linked model. In this model, feedback links go between each stage of the innovation process, and there are side links to research and knowledge in all stages. This shows that research and feedback from users happen throughout the entire innovation process.

![Figure 1 The conventional 'linear model' (Adapted from Kline & Rosenberg, 1986)](image)

In recent years, the innovative resources have become much more widely distributed throughout society than they were just a few decades ago (Chesbrough, 2003). Innovation is an interactive process, involving many changing actors over time, concerning many issues and many different users. This makes it challenging for people to combine different ideas and thoughts on innovation, to balance goals and means, and to create frameworks of mutual communication, collaboration and understanding (Fuglsang, 2008). Thus, it is critical to analyse how this variety of actors can be managed in different ways, and in different social and strategic arenas. That innovation has become more heterogeneous today means that
innovative activities cannot be easily planned and controlled, but must continually be evaluated, in order to change or adjust the process when needed (ibid.).

### 2.3 Innovation management

How an organisation is organised can be critical for its innovative capacity. The organisation should create a framework for learning and for the possibilities to connect internal competences with external competences. At the same time, municipality is not simply an administrative body, but a local community. By systematically connecting users, businesses, and volunteer organisations, the municipality can make use of external knowledge and competences to find new solutions (NOU, 2011a).

Public innovation typically happens in one of two ways. The first is that innovation comes in response to a crisis or event, and the other is that either an individual or a small group fight for a specific innovation (Eggers & Singh, 2009). Common to both is that once the crisis or event has passed or the individuals who have fought for the innovation have moved on, the public sector is left without a lasting capability for innovation. Rather than waiting for a crisis or an engaged individual to initiate innovation, public sector organisations should create a culture that is continuously innovative. A study conducted by the United Kingdom’s National Audit Office (NAO) found that public institutions tend to view innovation as a “one-off” change rather than a continuous process (ibid.). Public innovation is often seen as the responsibility of special innovation units, rather than as being a core value of the organisation (ibid.).

#### 2.3.1 Innovation strategy

In order to maintain a culture for innovation instead of losing momentum after the implementation of an innovation, an innovation strategy is needed. This will allow the municipality to utilise the creative sources of employees, citizens and external and internal partners (Bason, 2010). Innovation strategies involve the focus of innovation activities, innovation drivers and goals, how the innovation process should be organised, which innovation activities should be performed, and which competences, skills and tools are needed. The innovation strategy should include how the organisation will build a capacity for innovation, what the possible barriers are and how to overcome those barriers using innovative solutions (ibid.; Mulgan, 2012).
2.3.2 Top-down and bottom-up innovation

There is a distinction between top-down and bottom-up innovation. Top-down innovation is initiated by politicians or the leaders of an organisation (Osborne & Brown, 2005). This type of innovation often comes from the resource constraints of a public service organisation. Its aim is to more efficiently meet a pre-defined need, either by more precisely targeting existing services, by sharpening the boundaries between different services in order to utilise the most cost-efficient, or by developing new cost-efficient service forms. Bottom-up innovation, on the other hand, involves an innovation developed by the community or employees of the organisation, often as a local response to a social or demographic change (ibid.). An example of such a change would be the growing elderly population.

2.3.3 Developing an innovative culture

Public managers need to develop a stronger capacity for innovation (Harris & Albury, 2009). Users, consumers and citizens need to be put at the centre of the innovation, as a way of driving change, and as partners in organising service delivery (ibid.). Many public sector organisations make sporadic innovation efforts, but few implement the formal changes needed to maintain an innovative culture. Without changing traditional roles, processes, and organisational structures, initiatives to innovation become hindered by bureaucracy and fail to provide fundamental change (Eggers & Singh, 2009). Schein (1985) suggests that culture forms from the collective meaning of organisational members about organisational life. He argues that culture can be analysed on three different levels. The first level includes the visible objects such as office layout, public documents and how people dress, which indicates the culture of an organisation. The second level involves the values that cause members of the organisation to act the way they do. The third level is where the underlying assumptions are learned responses that originate in adopted values (ibid.). Many organisations do not address the third level when attempting to change the culture, but instead focus on the more superficial levels by changing the visible aspects of the organisation. Instead, in order to develop a more advanced approach to organisational change, there needs to be a focus on changing the values and basic assumptions of the members of the organisation (Osborne & Brown, 2005).

Borins (2001) found that half of innovations were not initiated from the top of the organisations, but from managers, staff and professionals at all levels, as well as users and clients. An organisation’s innovative capacity can be built by employing people of diverse
backgrounds and with different ways of thinking. Some innovative organisations have employed anthropologists, writers and artists as a way to improve their ability to think differently (Albury, 2005). This brings a creative tension. Creativity is not just a natural skill, but can be developed by providing tools and techniques of ‘creative thinking’ to employees. Some governments, including Denmark and Singapore, have established programmes in which these skills can be developed among public employees. In addition, many public service organisations have designed their buildings and layouts to provide a space that is fostering innovation. One example of this is UK’s Royal Mail’s Innovation Lab, a creative space with a layout and tools to stimulate new ideas, group work and unusual thinking (ibid.). In addition to providing the tools and spaces, the organisation must also provide a “license to break the rules”, allowing staff to work using untraditional methods in order to develop innovative ideas (ibid.).

All innovation involves risk. In public services these risks are increased by two factors:

- Public sector innovations are more exposed to public scrutiny, this often while they are still in the development phase, than for the private sector.
- Public sector innovations have a larger and more significant effect on citizens’ quality of life (Albury, 2005).

These factors can lead to risk aversion. Thus, public sector organisations must find a way to develop methods to manage these risks. Albury (2005) mentions pathfinders and pilots as ways to create “safe spaces”, including e-voting, patient choice etc., and simulations, both “closed”, rule-based and “open behavioural”, with key actors, exploring how the innovations would function in different contexts. These solutions help to test possibilities and new policy initiatives. In many cases, controlled experimentation with possible solutions could be helpful (ibid.).

One way to encourage innovation is to focus more on learning and the analysing of existing innovations (Hamel & Getz, 2004). Learning is an essential element in the process of innovation. Analysing what works and what does not generates new possibilities. Evaluations are often limited to whether or not an innovation is successful, and if not, organisations are too focused on where to put the blame rather than learning from failure. Innovation is
unpredictable, and not all innovations, however well developed and planned, will be successful. Managers need to find a balance between intolerance of underperformance and tolerance of risk (Albury, 2005).

2.3.4 The innovative ecosystem

An organisation can be seen as an ecosystem, in which all parts are mutually dependent on each other. According to Bason (2010) there are four dimensions of an innovative ecosystem in the public sector, which he refers to as the four Cs: consciousness (awareness), capacity (structure), co-creation (processes) and courage (leadership). Public management must address all four dimensions in order to both facilitate and sustain an innovative culture. For each dimension, Bason outlines both barriers and potential for innovation.

Consciousness

In order to create a culture for innovation in public sector organisations it is necessary to create, share and maintain a common language and create awareness of main innovative practices. Without shared concepts and ideas about what it means to engage in innovation, there is no common understanding. This makes it difficult to manage innovation, and innovative efforts are weakened (Bason, 2010).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consciousness (Awareness)</th>
<th>Key factors</th>
<th>Potential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No awareness of innovation as a concept</td>
<td>Educate in innovation terminology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No recognition of what innovation means in practice to the organisation</td>
<td>Communicate examples of own innovations and innovators</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No reflection over own practices</td>
<td>Establish dialogue and reflection about the value of own practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1 Consciousness (Bason, 2010: 24)*

Capacity

Building a capacity for innovation increases the ability of an organisation to effectively develop and implement the innovative ideas it needs to solve future problems (Bason, 2010). Innovative capacity in public organisations is a combination of organisational characteristics, internal culture, external environment and institutional framework (Osborne & Brown, 2005).
Thus, capacity is concerned with the structure of the ecosystem, and how it can evolve or be restructured. Bason (2010) describe four levels of the capacity dimension: political-structural context, strategy, organisation, and people and culture.

- *The political-structural context* addresses the degree to which fundamental democratic values, administrative frameworks, regulation and financing are barriers or potentials for the innovative capacity of an organisation.

- The *strategy* level deals with how strategy can drive innovation. It focuses on how an innovation strategy can be formulated, and what the difference between internally and externally focused strategies for innovation are.

- *Organisation* deals with how organisations can approach innovation. This domain looks at the potential in open, systematic collaboration with external actors, and how to maintain a balance between innovation activities and the providing of services. It looks at which methods and tools are available.

- *People and culture* focuses on the people who have a responsibility to make innovation happen. This level considers the degree to which competences, culture, incentives, among other things, support innovation (ibid.). In order to create an innovative culture, there is a need for managers and staff who take responsibility for embracing new ideas, and who dare to take risks (Borins, 2001; Osborne & Brown, 2005).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Key factors</th>
<th>Potential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inflexible regulation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Establish innovation legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of competition</td>
<td></td>
<td>Create innovation incubators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No risk capital</td>
<td><strong>Context</strong></td>
<td>Make risk capital available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political climate</td>
<td></td>
<td>Explore the innovation envelope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Capacity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task-oriented; no overall strategy</td>
<td><strong>Strategy</strong></td>
<td>Establish overall strategy for the organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No strategy for what innovation means to the</td>
<td></td>
<td>Innovation strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organisation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Strategic innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic planning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational silos</td>
<td><strong>Organisation</strong></td>
<td>Organise to power collaborative innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No place for innovation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Create innovation labs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Random e-gov efforts</td>
<td></td>
<td>Build new digital business models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of network thinking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top management driven</td>
<td><strong>People and Culture</strong></td>
<td>Active employee involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zero-error culture</td>
<td></td>
<td>Innovation culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mono-professional skill profiles</td>
<td></td>
<td>Increased diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No strategic competence development</td>
<td></td>
<td>Strategic competence development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of incentives</td>
<td></td>
<td>Innovation incentives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Table 2 Capacity</strong> (Bason, 2010: 26)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Co-creation

A third dimension of innovation in the public sector is to lead the co-creation process (Bason, 2010). People, including citizens, private businesses and voluntary actors, are no longer simply recipients of public services and regulations, but also part of the innovation process. People no longer relate to the public sector as simply customers or users, but as citizens who
have certain expectations, rights, competences, benefits and responsibilities. Citizens are increasingly seen as sources of inspiration and a driving force for innovation. New technologies and social media provide platforms in which citizens can engage and participate in the innovation process and the co-production of services. According to Bason, physical spaces may function as creative encouragement. When people step out of their daily offices with their daily routines, and entering a space dedicated to a creative process, motivation, concentration and creativity may improve (ibid.).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Key factors</th>
<th>Potential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No recognition of design thinking as approach</td>
<td><strong>Design thinking</strong></td>
<td>Educate in design thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of design skills</td>
<td></td>
<td>Institutionalise design principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Recruit and source design skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No involvement of citizens or businesses</td>
<td><strong>Citizen involvement</strong></td>
<td>Involving citizens and businesses in the innovation process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few experiences and methods for involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td>New tools and methods for citizen-centred innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No knowledge or tools</td>
<td><strong>Orchestrating co-creation</strong></td>
<td>Methods and tools to drive innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of platforms</td>
<td></td>
<td>Innovation labs as platforms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No overview of potential</td>
<td><strong>Measuring and learning</strong></td>
<td>Know your innovation metrics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of feedback from innovation processes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Continually improve innovation processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No data on value creation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Measure four bottom lines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of learning from performance</td>
<td></td>
<td>Driving organisational performance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 Co-creation (Bason, 2010: 28)

**Courage**

Public managers and employees need the courage to lead innovation at all levels despite risk, limitations and pressures. One major challenge managers of public organisations face is giving up some of their power and control by involving external actors. Bason outlines four different leadership roles:
- The visionary, the political leader whose responsibility is to formulate the strategy and ambition level without interfering with ongoing projects
- The enabler, the top manager who must protect the innovation process while encouraging the innovation capacities of the organisation
- The 360-degree innovator, the mid-level manager, and according to Bason possibly the greatest barrier to innovative thinking and development within the organisation, but may also be a 360-degree facilitator of innovation
- The knowledge engineer, the leader of institutions that provide services and enforce regulation, and the one that ultimately decides how the public sector provides for the citizens and private businesses daily

Often, new kinds of knowledge that come from qualitative, in-depth research is not used as a serious part of the decision-making process, because the management becomes nervous or afraid of the risks involved (Bason, 2010). Balancing the use of citizen input with quantitative data can be a real challenge.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Key factors</th>
<th>Potentials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Courage</strong></td>
<td>Internal recruitment</td>
<td><strong>Inspiration and execution</strong></td>
<td>Visionary leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diffuse relationship with political level</td>
<td></td>
<td>Clarifying the innovation space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No tolerance for divergence</td>
<td></td>
<td>Encouraging and managing divergence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Four leadership roles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4 Courage (Bason, 2010: 29)*

### 2.4 Collaborative innovation

In order to tackle the complex problems that public sector organisations will face in the future, there is a need for new ways to innovate. One way to do this is through collaborative innovation. Nambisan (2008: 11) defines collaborative innovation as a

...
A main feature of collaborative innovation is that the innovation process is open, including actors from within the organisation, as well as other actors including from private and public organisations, citizens and users in all stages of the innovation process (Bommert, 2010). Chesbrough (2003) argues that when the innovation process is viewed as a closed and internal activity, the process is hindered. By involving external actors in the process, a greater variance of ideas and knowledge is gained, which results in better outcomes (Hilgers & Ihl, 2010). Collaborative innovation means that other actors can contribute to the innovation process with their assets, whether tangible (money, tools, equipment) or intangible (knowledge, skills, creativity, etc.), in order to increase the quantity and quality of innovations (Bommert, 2010). According to Kooiman (2003: 11):

No single actor, public or private, has the knowledge and information required to solve complex, dynamic and diversified societal challenges; no governing actor has an overview sufficient to make the necessary instruments effective; no single actor has sufficient action potential to dominate unilaterally.

The emergence of new and better technologies, including ICT (Information and Communication Technology), has played an important role in collaborative innovation, in that it has made it possible for public organisations to create networks that promote the flow of ideas and information that go across organisational boundaries. These networks can also help in finding ideas for and implementing new innovations (Eggers & Singh, 2009).

### 2.4.1 Networks

Much of the literature on networks and partnerships argue that interdependent actors form networks to solve complex problems and provide better services (Torfing et al., 2016). The purpose of networks is to utilise the innovation resources, both tangible and intangible, of a variety of actors and organisations to invent, develop and implement ideas within and outside the boundaries of the organisation. Networks help organisations better capture users response to services, and can be used to create learning organisations (Eggers & Singh, 2009).

Networks can have a positive effect on innovation, wellbeing and growth. Important elements of networks are institutional capacity, trust, local leadership, previous history, and an awareness of the connection between social, economic, human and natural capital (Hess & Adams, 2007).
2.5 Co-creation

Co-creation is a form of collaborative innovation. Co-creation is “the explicit involvement over time of people to identify, define and describe a new solution” (Sanders & Stappers, in Bason, 2010: 173). This involves seeing citizens as equal partners in design and delivery rather than as subjects. It means recognising people as assets (Bason, 2010). This method activates resources across all of society, rather than just municipal organisations. User co-creation is not simply about customer focus or that the customer is always right. It is about joint creation of value by the organisation and the user, rather than about the organisation trying to please the user. It is about joint problem definition and problem solving, and about allowing the user to co-construct the product or service to suit their context and needs (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).

Co-creation does not have a simple definition, but is a concept that entails many different processes. However, all forms of co-creation have in common that they are a process in which different actors develop something, for example a new product or service, together (Ulrich, 2016). The concept refers to a process where a public actor develops and/or produces an innovation with one or more non-public actors. These can be private organisations, users, individual citizens or groups of citizens, associations or other forms of citizen organisations. In processes where a public actor develops and/or produces an innovation with another public actor, such as a different department, this is simply seen as cooperation, rather than co-creation (ibid.). Co-creation demands interaction, participation and joint problem solving between users, next of kin, professionals and experts. In order to co-create services, municipal employees need an interdisciplinary approach and should search for new ways to collaborate with external actors. This type of competence should be learned and developed within the municipalities (Meld. St. nr. 29, 2013).

Consumers and users are becoming increasingly more connected, informed, empowered and active (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Because of new tools and greater ability to express their dissatisfaction, users are now able to influence the development of products and services in a way that was not possible before. The term co-creation is used to characterise a creation process where new products and services are designed with people, not just for them (Bason, 2010). This new way to innovate changes the way public managers handle development, going beyond traditional methods such as committee meetings, stakeholder hearings and
customer research. Co-creation involves a different creative process, different ways to involve people, and a different type of knowledge to public sector innovation and decision making. The process involves both internal and external creative contribution. There is a recognition that anyone can be creative, and the engagement can range from private actors, social innovators and users such as communities, families, individual citizens and businesses (ibid.).

Bason (2010) outlines two advantages to co-creation: divergence and execution. Divergence means a greater variation of different ideas and suggestions providing inspiration and giving more options to choose from before continuing the innovation process. Divergence is increased when the innovation process is opened up to new types of knowledge, one of which is how citizens and businesses experience their reality. This type of knowledge can enable new possible interpretations of problems, challenges and opportunities.

The second advantage, execution, means that co-creation embeds the creative process with the people it concerns. For example, co-creating citizens who will end up using the product or service can help innovators understand how the solution would work in their daily lives. This type of anchoring greatly increases the possibility of success once the innovation is implemented (ibid.). The involvement of users and stakeholders to the entire innovation process, rather than just the implementation phase, is a vital factor in public sector innovation, and can lead to an increase in productivity, enhanced service experiences for citizens and businesses, stronger outcomes and increased ownership (Gillinson et al., 2010).

Co-creation in the public sector is often used in service design. Dervojeda et al. (2014: 3) define service design as “the activity of planning and organizing people, infrastructure, communication and material components of a service in order to improve its quality and the interaction between service provider and customers”. Service design is used by organisations as a user-centred, creative and practical process that creates value for their users (ibid.).

2.5.1 Barriers to co-creation

Baptista et al. (2019) outline several barriers to co-creation. Structural barriers are barriers related to the external environment that limit the organisations’ ability to engage in co-creation activities. These include governmental and local policies, the political setting, government priorities, administrative tradition, and the culture of the society.
There may also be organisational barriers, specific to public sector organisations, including barriers related to the culture of the organisation, lack of engaging organisational structures and processes within the organisation, lack of incentives, struggle to manage tensions between the need to generate social value, organisational value, and individual value, budget restrictions, and the lack of technology, knowledge or capability (ibid.; Voorberg et al., 2014; Alves, 2013). Co-creation may be expensive and resource demanding. It requires effort to organise collaborative interaction between actors with different expectations and commitments (Torfing et al., 2016). Users may have limited experience and biased perceptions of co-creation in public services, which may limit their contributions (Magno & Cassia, 2014). Another barrier is that in democratic organisations where people from different political parties hold the power for a short period at a time, strategic plans are often short-term. This may make it difficult to implement long-term plans for co-creation (Baptista et al. 2019).

Behavioural barriers include barriers that affect the behaviours of the actors involved in co-creation, including politicians, public managers, municipal employees, citizens and users. These barriers include risk aversion, resistance to change (Voorberg et al., 2014), lack of interest or willingness to participate, lack of experience, time, or competence, bureaucratic routines, and emotional involvement in issues (Dutu & Diaconu, 2017; Magno & Cassia, 2014; Baptista et al., 2019).

Other possible barriers mentioned by Baptista et al. include disproportionate knowledge, skills, power, expertise and capacity, either within the organisations or between public managers and citizens (Baptista et al., 2019; Hardyman et al., 2015).

It can be difficult to ensure that politicians, administrators, private organisations and citizens are engaged and actively participating. This requires that all actors, both public and private, fully understand the process, its purpose and its underlying premises (Wenger, 1998). Co-creation requires active involvement and decision-making by the user, and the approach is ‘relational’ rather than ‘transactional’. The innovative solution is achieved through a person-centred relationship rather than a mechanical service-centred delivery to a user who can express their opinion only after the process is completed (Needham & Carr, 2009).
According to Ulrich (2016), there is not a mutual agreement on what the term ‘co-creation’ actually involves. There are frequently disagreements, misconceptions and misunderstandings about the term. Do different actors engaging in co-creation activities agree on what process they are actually a part of? Is there a common understanding of what the term includes internally within an organisation? Typically, there is no common understanding of what the term ‘co-creation’ covers. Thus, there is a need for a common language, which also includes the nuances and differences that the field of co-creation involves (ibid.).

Transforming institutions and organisations can be relatively easy, at least formally. However, the established roles and identities of public and private actors can be difficult to change. Redefining one’s identity and adopting a new role is demanding, and thus social actors often cling to their initial roles (Torfing et al., 2016). This makes it difficult for them to adapt to a different environment based on another governance paradigm (Jæger & Sørensen, 2003). Thus, politicians who are used to being the only decision-makers who hold all the power and responsibility tend to find it challenging to share power through the co-creation process (Torfing et al., 2016). Public managers who have traditionally been efficient managers in charge of a stable, high-performing organisation will be worried about losing control when collaborating with outside actors. Public employees who see themselves as professionals and experts in providing care may have difficulties identifying and mobilising citizens and users, which is an essential part of their new role as ‘enablers’ (Bovaird, 2007). Citizens who feel that by simply paying their taxes, they can relax and take use of the service they are entitled to will object to the role of an active collaborator in public service production. Finally, private organisations that see each other as competitors of public contracts may not want to collaborate with each other. Thus, in order for the various public and private actors to embrace co-creation as a method, some significant mental shifts are required (Torfing et al., 2016).

2.5.2 Promoting a culture for co-creation
Ringhom et al. (2011) argue that in order to promote co-creation in the municipality, an infrastructure promoting communication between involved actors is necessary. This may be in the form of online platforms or physical arenas. An innovative culture should be built through a change in the attitudes and views of politicians and municipal employees, and learning how to assess and manage risk is essential. In order to engage citizens, they must be seen as equal partners, and they need to feel that their contribution is relevant. One of the most essential
ways to create a culture for co-creation is by creating awareness and educating both citizens and municipal employees (ibid.).

Creating trust within and between organisations and actors is an important success factor for innovation and co-creation. Trust promotes openness, reduces the fear of failure and increases the will to take risks (Ringholm et al., 2011). Nambisan (2008) argues that open communication and quick feedback on citizens’ ideas are important in order to build trust.

Torfing et al. (2016) propose that at least five systemic changes are needed in order to promote a culture for co-creation. These are presented below.

**Bottom-up innovation**
The first systemic change is from top-down control of each of the public services to bottom-up innovation based on trust. The organisations must learn from self-evaluations and the interorganisational networks it is a part of. Co-creation and sharing of resources will be limited if there is a focus on measurement of the performance of the organisation, and if control is emphasised over learning (Torfing et al., 2016). Thus, there is a need for a shift in balance between legal, administrative, and vertical accountability to professional and horizontal information exchange (Bovens, 2007).

**Long-term focus**
The second systemic change aims to shift the current focus on short-term efficiency, stability, and risk aversion, to a more long-term focus on efficiency, experimentation and risk management (Torfing et al., 2016). A short-term focus can often lead to a culture that does not allow for errors, and in which innovation and co-creation is viewed as a risk rather than an opportunity. Thus, a shift towards a long-term focus on efficient problem solving will enhance co-creation and innovation. A culture for risk aversion must be replaced with a model for risk management that suggests both how risk can be managed and how the potential benefits of innovation weigh up to the potential risks (ibid.).

**Information and Communication Technology (ICT)**
The third systemic change involves the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The use of ICT in the public sector has escalated since the 1970s, but mainly as a way
to improve the efficiency of administrative tasks. In addition, ICT can and should be used to facilitate and support co-creation and innovation. In order to gather input from citizens and facilitating online debates between actors, the public organisation should develop digital systems and platforms (ibid.).

**Culture**
The fourth systemic change involves a transformation of the culture of the organisation. There needs to be a shift in the public managers’ and employees’ view of the organisation, from being an organisation that holds all the knowledge and competences, to emphasising openness, curiosity and dialogue between the public and the private sector. Professionals should be seen as mediators between administrators and citizens, facilitating a dialogue that encourages co-creation (ibid.).

**Input and output**
The fifth and final systemic change proposed by Torfing et al. involves a shift from the emphasis on resources and ideas from within the organisation to a stronger focus on input and output from outside the organisation. This involves opening the organisation to outside influences, allowing users to voice their opinions and demand better outputs, and this emphasis on output will stimulate co-creation that aims to improve the quality of public services. A larger focus on input will highlight the benefits of the participation of active citizens in the creation of public solutions (ibid.). This will provide organisations with more flexibility rather than specified problems and procedures.

### 2.6 Public administration theory

#### 2.6.1 Bureaucracy
The traditional public administration, which was especially common after World War II and up until the early 1980s, is mainly based on a bureaucratic, legislative and rule-based approach to public service provision (Hartley, 2005). This approach is based on the assumption that the population is fairly homogenous. The state is in charge of defining the needs and problems of the population, and the services provided are standardised. The traditional structure of bureaucratic departments resemble silos in which input and output is limited and processes are separated from outside influences (Hess & Adams, 2007). Policy-makers act as commanders, creating legislation and support for major changes, while the
implementation is carried out by public managers. The role of the public managers is either ‘clerks’, impassive officials implementing political will, or ‘martyrs’, holding private views but implementing political decisions without objection. The role of the population is that of clients, who have little say in how services are developed. This period is characterised by large-scale, often national and universal, innovation (ibid.). According to Wilson (1989), bureaucratic organisations’ central role is to maintain stability and routine by reducing uncertainties. Thus, he argues that bureaucratic organisations are fundamentally resistant to innovation.

2.6.2 New Public Management
In the 1980s, a new paradigm followed bureaucracy in governments across the world, including in Norway. The government reform of the 1980s, New Public Management (NPM), had three aims: attempting to reduce the role of the state and make the bureaucracy more responsive to political leaders; using private sector management techniques to increase efficiency; and focusing on the citizen as a customer and service recipient (Hess & Adams, 2007). Within this paradigm there is a larger emphasis on service and user friendliness. The new public sector activities included commercialisation, corporatisation, privatisation and competition (ibid.). A common element in this paradigm is a purchaser-provider split seen in health, education and local government (Hartley, 2005). Within this paradigm, the role of the policy-makers is that of ‘commissioners’ of services or ‘announcers’ of change. Public managers act as efficiency maximisers, seeking innovations to improve the quality of service delivery. The public take on the role of customers, which gives them a voice in service range and content (ibid.). However, NPM has some flaws: it builds on the claim that the main driver of innovation comes from the imitation of the competitive nature of private sector innovation; and it places the responsibility for public sector innovation on the public managers alone (Sørensen & Torfing, 2011). Viewing users as customers has led to improvements in some services, but has also lead to complications in others (Hartley, 2005).

2.6.3 Community governance
Neither the bureaucratic model based on hierarchy and centralised control, nor NPM with public purchaser-private provider relationships and a strong focus on performance and efficiency provide an institutional design that supports co-creation (Torfing et al., 2016). Both paradigms have reinforced the separation of politics from administration, the construction of administrative silos, and the separation of the public sector from the community. Thus, a new
paradigm is needed to support the advancement of co-creation (ibid.). Several academics propose that there may be a new paradigm within public management – community governance, also called governance networks (Sørensen & Torfing, 2011; Hess & Adams, 2007; Hartley, 2005). The new governance theories were a response to the growing complexity of modern society, and claim that public innovation can be enhanced through collaboration as well as competition. Hence, there are several actors including public managers, private stakeholders, and users who are able to provide important input to public innovation processes (Hess & Adams, 2007). Thus, the role of the public manager is not to singlehandedly produce public sector innovations, but to facilitate, create, institutionalise, and manage open and flexible arenas for collaborative interaction with other relevant and affected actors (Nambisan, 2008). Community governance stems from deliberative democracy and its aim is to improve social outcomes. This paradigm values the participation of citizens in the innovation process (Hess & Adams, 2007). This brings local knowledge with a focus on local outcomes. The theories of this new management form have a focus on the significance of local area networks and their effect on innovation, wellbeing and prosperity (ibid.). Within community governance, the role of the state is to guide innovative activities through complex social systems rather than control these activities exclusively through hierarchy or market mechanisms. There has been a shift to more networked forms of governance. The role of policy-makers is to convert new ideas into new forms of action. Innovation is supported through enabling legislation or providing resources for experiments and collaboration, and organising the interests of different stakeholders (Hartley, 2005). The role of public managers is to nurture innovations, becoming “explorers commissioned by society to search for public value” (Moore, 1995: 299). During this search, managers are expected to use initiative and imagination, but are also expected to be responsive to constant political guidance and feedback (ibid.). The role of the public is that of co-producers of services and innovation (Hartley, 2005).

Although each paradigm may be linked to a particular ideology and historical period, they may also be seen as competing, co-existing, with certain contexts calling for a behaviour or decision related to one or the other paradigm (Hartley, 2005). The different conceptions of governance and public management have implications for the role of policy-makers, managers and citizens. These are presented in the table below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bureaucracy</th>
<th>NPM</th>
<th>Community Governance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theory</strong></td>
<td>Legal rational authority</td>
<td>Public choice</td>
<td>Deliberative democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Orientation</strong></td>
<td>Procedures</td>
<td>Market</td>
<td>Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organisational structure</strong></td>
<td>Silo</td>
<td>Hub and spokes</td>
<td>Networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aim</strong></td>
<td>Status quo</td>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td>Co-production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Needs/problems</strong></td>
<td>Straightforward, defined by professionals</td>
<td>Wants, expressed through the market</td>
<td>Complex, volatile and prone to risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge type</strong></td>
<td>Centralised authoritative</td>
<td>Expert positivist</td>
<td>Local constructivist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language</strong></td>
<td>Rules</td>
<td>Numbers</td>
<td>Histories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Capital</strong></td>
<td>Political</td>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategy</strong></td>
<td>State and producer centred</td>
<td>Market and customer centred</td>
<td>Shaped by civil society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Governance through actors</strong></td>
<td>Hierarchies</td>
<td>Markets</td>
<td>Networks and partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Population</strong></td>
<td>Homogenous</td>
<td>Atomised</td>
<td>Diverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role of policy-makers</strong></td>
<td>Commanders</td>
<td>Announcers/commissioners</td>
<td>Leaders and interpreters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role of public managers</strong></td>
<td>‘Clerks’ and ‘martyrs’</td>
<td>Efficiency and market maximisers</td>
<td>‘Explorers’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role of the population</strong></td>
<td>Clients</td>
<td>Customers</td>
<td>Co-producers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taxpayers</td>
<td>Consumers</td>
<td>Participants in communities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5 Characteristics of three governance paradigms (Adapted from Hess & Adams, 2007: 14; Hartley, 2005: 29)*

### 2.7 Analytical framework

In order to understand the barriers to user co-creation and how municipalities can create a culture for user co-creation, it is useful to look at co-creation both from a management perspective and from a systemic perspective. In order to answer the two research questions, ‘What are the barriers to user co-creation in public innovation?’ and ‘How can municipalities create a culture for user co-creation?’, I will apply an analytical framework consisting of building blocks from both the management literature and from public administration theory.

The first part of the analytical framework is based on Bason’s (2010) four c’s of the innovative ecosystem to understand the barriers and potential for co-creation found in the empirical findings. The barriers and potential will be divided into the four categories of *Consciousness* (awareness), *Capacity* (structure), *Co-creation* (process) and *Courage*
(leadership). I will use Bason’s four tables to analyse and categorise the findings. Whereas Bason uses this framework to describe the facilitation and sustaining of innovation in general, I will adapt this framework to be about co-creation specifically. How innovation and co-creation is managed and organised by the municipal leaders and which strategies they have implemented has a major impact on the success of co-creation and innovation as a whole. Hence, it is important to look at co-creation from a management perspective in order to understand the barriers and how to overcome them.

In the second part of the analytical framework I will use theories on systemic changes and governance paradigms. In order to discuss how municipalities can create a culture for user co-creation I will use Torfing et al.’s (2016) five systemic changes needed to promote a culture for co-creation. Additionally, these dimensions and requirements will be discussed in relation to public administration theory, which outlines how the three governance paradigms of traditional bureaucracy, NPM and community governance represent strengths and weaknesses in terms of building a culture for co-creation. The figure below illustrates the second part of the analytical framework.

![Figure 3 Creating a culture for co-creation](image-url)
3 Methodology

In this section of the thesis I will account for the research methods used in the study. This is a qualitative study, and the research methods used in the study include five semi-structured interviews with six municipal employees, and document analysis of various innovation strategies.

At the beginning of the study, I conducted a pilot interview with an employee of the Strategy and Development unit of Bærum municipality, in order to determine an approach and a research question for the project. Before this interview, I had already decided on a topic and had a fairly good idea of what I wanted to do, but this interview helped me narrow it down and be sure that my idea was relevant and useful. During this interview, I was informed that co-creation with users was not as widely used as preferred, both by politicians and municipality leaders. There were several barriers preventing user co-creation. After this pilot interview, I decided that uncovering these barriers and discovering how to create a culture in which co-creation was facilitated and supported was what I wanted to focus on in my master thesis. This interview also made me realise that in order to best find the data I needed, I would need to look at multiple municipalities. Looking at more than one municipality would provide more nuanced answers, more variance, and the ability to see what some municipalities struggle with that other municipalities have figured out. Due to the time restrictions and size of the project, I have limited the number of interviews to representatives from four municipalities. This has allowed me to go more in depth in each interview than if I had chosen to include more municipalities.

3.1 Qualitative research

In this thesis I will be using a qualitative approach. Qualitative research involves explaining human environments and human experiences within various contexts. The fundamental questions tackled by qualitative research methods are concerned with either social structures or with individual experiences (Winchester & Rofe, 2010). In qualitative research, the researcher’s goal is to look through the eyes of the people being studied (Bryman, 2012). Qualitative research involves more nuanced and detailed data, which goes more in depth, than quantitative research, which involves numbers and statistics. It involves finding out the motivation behind actions, and allows the researcher to understand human experience
(Silverman, 2010). To answer my research questions I wanted to capture the thoughts and experiences of municipality employees. Through the use of a qualitative research method, the respondents would be better able to share their insights on complex issues where quantitative methods would not show the complexity of their answers. Thus, a qualitative method would be the method best suited to fit my project.

### 3.2 Sampling

Due to the size of the project with its time and space limits, I will only look at four municipalities. Thus, this will not be representative for all the municipalities in the country, but will give an insight to what some of the barriers may be. The municipalities included in the study are Asker, Bærum, Lørenskog and Alna, which is a borough of Oslo. These municipalities were chosen both due to their geographical location and because they are relatively innovative and have a clear focus on innovative activities. I chose to include Alna rather than Oslo as a whole, as the boroughs within Oslo are more comparable to municipalities in the way innovation activities are organised. When looking at innovation and co-creation in Alna, it is also necessary to look at the organisation of innovation within Oslo municipality, as this effects how innovation and co-creation is organised within each borough. Thus, in addition to the Alna interview, I had an interview with a representative from The Agency for Health in Oslo in order to gain additional information.

The focus of the thesis was originally on the health care sector. However, it was found that for three of the municipalities, the unit in charge of innovation works across all sectors and services. In the final municipality, Lørenskog, the unit was organised under the health care sector, but still worked on projects across sectors. Thus, in these municipalities, innovative activities and methods are similar for most of the sectors of the municipality. Because innovation activities are organised differently within the municipalities, it was difficult to find people with the same job role. Thus, I have chosen to interview those who work within the innovative units of the municipalities.

The point of the study is not to directly compare the municipalities. It is also not meant to show every possible barrier in Norwegian municipalities, as the size of the project does not allow it. This will not be a comparative study, instead the aim is to reveal possible barriers to user co-creation and methods for creating a culture for co-creation. Thus, it is relevant to look
at four different organisations in order to uncover different barriers rather than just looking at the barriers experienced by a single municipality. This will give a broader picture of the potential barriers and methods.

3.3 Interviews

The main source of data collection in this thesis is through interviews. Qualitative interviews allow the researcher to gain insights into how the respondents view the world. According to Bryman (2012), there are three types of interviews – structured, semi-structured and non-structured. For my thesis, I have conducted semi-structured interviews with respondents from the chosen municipalities. A semi-structured interview includes an interview guide, but this guide must not be followed rigidly, and the interviewer is free to change the sequence of the questions (ibid.). This type of interview is more flexible, allowing the conversation to flow more organically, allowing for follow-up questions and for the interviewee to go off on tangents. The interview questions will be open-ended, allowing for rich, detailed answers in which the interviewee is encouraged to share their experiences and talk about what is most important to them. I wanted to use semi-structured interviews in order to gain insight into how the municipalities organise co-creation, what their experiences are, and what their attitudes and views of innovation and co-creation are. This also allowed me to understand the barriers to co-creation from the perspectives of those who work closely with co-creation processes. The interviews will be conducted in Norwegian. A disadvantage is that some of the meaning may be lost when translating the responses into English.

The study has resulted in five interviews with six respondents. The interview with Asker municipality included two respondents. The respondents have been coded into letters, shown in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Municipality / Organisation</th>
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<td>A</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>Lørenskog</td>
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<td>E</td>
<td>Oslo, Agency for Health</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>Oslo, Alna</td>
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Table 6 List of respondents
3.4 Document analysis

Documents are found in a wide variety, including newspapers, letters, magazines and official reports. According to Bryman (2012), documents include materials that can be read (or looked at, as photographs and other visual materials are included in this category); has not been created specifically to be used in social research; are preserved in order to be available for analysis; and are relevant to the research. Document analysis was chosen as a method in order to be able to understand to which degree co-creation is envisioned, both on a national plan and within the municipalities. In my thesis, I will focus on official reports, including municipal innovation strategies and government reports.

The documents analysed in the study are: two government reports: ‘The government’s strategy for innovation in the municipal sector’ (Regjeringens strategi for innovasjon i kommunesektoren) and ‘Parliament Message 29 – Future care’ (St. Meld. Nr. 29 – Morgendagens omsorg); and the innovation strategies and municipal strategies of the municipalities involved in the study (Asker, Bærum, Lørenskog and Oslo/Alna).

3.5 Reliability and validity

Reliability is referred to as the consistency and reliability of a study. This concerns whether a result can be repeated at different times and by other researchers (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). It is the ethical responsibility of the researcher to ensure that the knowledge reported is as accurate and verified as possible (ibid.). Research can be made more reliable by making detailed descriptions of the data gathering and analysis methods; being open about which theoretical approaches are used; and maintaining a transparent research process (Silverman, 2006). In order to increase the reliability of the study, I have disclosed the number of interviews and which documents are analysed. I have provided openness on the methods used, the municipalities involved and the number of informants. In the empirical data section, it is clearly indicated which municipality the respective information comes from, in order to maintain a transparency that can be verified by later studies.

Validity involves how accurately the findings represents the truth. To increase the validity of a project, a researcher may use different methods to see if the results are similar. This is
referred to as triangulation (Silverman, 2006). I have used two different research methods, semi-structured interviews and document analysis, which increases the validity of the study.

Recording interviews enables the researcher to more accurately present what was said (Riessman, in Silverman, 2006). During the data collection processes, interviews were recorded in order to ensure that everything that was said is included and can be analysed. All the interviews were transcribed by me as soon as possible after they were conducted. Excerpts of the interview in the form of quotes are included in the empirical findings. Seale (in Silverman, 2006) argues that recording interviews as concretely as possible is highly preferable to the researcher’s reconstruction of what is said, as reconstruction enables the researchers personal perspectives to influence the result. People interpret in different ways, which may be considered a challenge in qualitative projects.

A qualitative approach involves fewer informants than a quantitative approach. The municipalities involved in this study are not representative for all the municipalities in Norway. This can be considered a weakness in relation to the reliability and validity of the thesis. I have chosen municipalities that are close in geographic context, and who have an increased focus on innovation. Many municipalities are not necessarily as focused on innovation and co-creation. Thus, the study will not be able to outline every barrier to co-creation or every method for creating a culture for co-creation. Still, the results of the study may be useful to many municipalities by providing an overview of what some of these barriers may be and how to create a culture for co-creation.

3.6 Ethical considerations

When conducting interviews, there are a few ethical considerations the researcher must keep in mind. The human interactions in an interview affect the people involved, and the knowledge produced in the interview affect their view on a situation (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

An informed consent means that the research participants are informed of the main purpose and content of the study (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). The term is based on the principle of “individual autonomy”, and involves the insurance that the respondents are voluntarily participating (Marzano, in Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). All the respondents in the study were
given and signed an informed consent form. The form included information about the theme and research questions of the study, about the interviews being recorded, that all personal information would be made anonymous, and that the data would be safely deleted after the project’s completion in October, 2019. Respondents were made aware that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

The respondents were made aware that they could request access to the personal data gathered from them or ask to have it removed at any time. Respondents have been made anonymous in the study by coding their names into letters. However, for the purpose of the study it was necessary to reveal in which municipality and in which department the respondent worked. The respondents were made aware of this in the informed consent form. Personal information has been stored on a secure storage solution approved by the University of Oslo.
4 Empirical findings

4.1 Governmental reports and strategies

4.1.1 The government’s strategy for innovation in the municipal sector

The government’s strategy for innovation in the municipal sector was created to contribute to new ways of thinking, promote an innovation culture and stimulate innovative activities within the municipal sector (Kommunal- og Forvaltningskomiteen, 2013). It is part of the ‘Recommendation from the municipal and administrative committee on the municipal proposal 2014’. The strategy explains that innovation in the municipal sector should be new, useful and utilised (‘nytt – nyttig – nyttiggjort’). It encourages the municipalities to continuously assess their innovative processes and to adjust or change them if they are not sufficient. It states that:

One should to a greater extent look at the citizens as resources to the society. This applies not least to the elderly. The municipalities will be even better at involving the citizens and volunteers in their efforts to find new and good solutions (ibid.: 31).

The strategy points to the citizens as the most important resource for innovation in the municipal sector. Involving many citizens and developing methods for how they can be involved is named one of the solutions to the societal challenges of the future, including an increasing elderly population. The strategy does not specifically mention user co-creation as a concept, but rather user involvement.

ICT solutions are named as something that can free municipal resources, improve existing methods and utilise new forms of communication. The government’s goal is that every service that can be digitalised, should be digitalised. Support is given to the municipalities to develop and coordinate common ICT solutions.

4.1.2 Parliament message 29 – Future care

‘Parliament message 29 – Future care’ is an “opportunity message for the care field” (Meld. St. nr. 29, 2013: 11). The purpose of the message is to aid and inspire municipal innovation in the health care sector. The message states that “the care crisis is not created by the aging population, but by the assumption that care cannot be done in a different way than it is today” (Hagen, in Meld. St. nr. 29, 2013: 11). This implies that the health care sector must find new,
innovative solutions and work methods in order to deal with the demographic changes of the future.

The message states that a solid welfare society must be created in collaboration with its citizens. Trust must be built so that people will want to take responsibility and actively contribute to the community in their daily lives. The message further states that it is necessary for citizens to take part in the development of public services rather than maintaining a role as consumers. An active role in the development of services will give the citizens more realistic expectations of the quality and the extent of the services. It will also strengthen individuals’ abilities to take care of themselves and others, rather than being tended to by professionals. Hence, stronger user involvement and citizenship are important prerequisites to the welfare services of the future.

Co-creation is pointed out in the message as an important method of innovation. It is seen as a method that can change the limitations of today’s organisation and production of services. Co-creation has the potential to renew structures and change the quality and content of services.

4.2 Askern

4.2.1 Organisation of innovation

Innovation and development in Asker is organised through a separate, independent department called The Knowledge Centre (Kunnskapssenteret). The department works as a support organisation for all sectors and services within the municipality, and its main function is to assist municipal organisations with innovation and renewal. It acts as a meeting place and training arena for the municipality. The department works to ensure that development and innovation is not as sectoral as it used to be. Now, there is more focus on cross-sectoral projects and networks between departments. The municipality has established a new service department called ‘Medborgerskap’ (Citizenship). This is a cross-sectoral and cross-departmental department, facilitating community involvement throughout the municipality. This shows that now there is more focus on citizenship and community involvement within the municipality. In addition to the Knowledge Centre, innovation also happens in a more local context within the individual services, independent from the Centre. There is room for initiative and risk taking within the services. If needed, the services can seek support from the Centre in the form of seed money, guidance, project competences or advice.
Innovation used to happen mostly within the health sector, due to scarce resources and increasing challenges related to health in the municipality. However, over the past 10 years, this has changed. Now, there is an increased focus on innovation and development in all sectors in the municipality. There is an increased expectation that is felt throughout the sectors. The education sector has traditionally had strict, government policies that has given less room for innovative processes. However, this has changed as both the municipality and the government has realised that the traditional ways that education has been provided is not quite the correct fit due to increased focus on mental health in the school as well as other challenges. Thus, the national curriculum is changing, becoming more open to the school being a community actor to a much larger degree than it used to. New policies such as these are quickly picked up in Asker.

The respondents from Asker claim that the municipality has both the political and administrative will to be the first to create new innovations. As a municipality with a strong economy and high competences, Asker experiences a certain responsibility to create new innovations, models or solutions, that can be shared with other municipalities who are less capable of innovating entirely new solutions. “That’s what is nice about working in a municipality, we can share, and we can steal!” (Respondent A).

Although there are many different innovative projects in the municipality and many methods are used in these projects, all projects are run with a common thread. Every project is closely related to the municipal strategy, which is politically ratified. This municipal strategy is based on the UN Sustainable Development Goals. It is the municipality’s job to ensure that the innovation projects follow this strategy.

The municipality has had an increased focus on innovation since 2015, and since then the process has become more structured. A significant time has been spent on developing skills of the managers to support the digital transition processes and innovation within the municipality. Innovation, digital transformation, co-creation and citizenship are important modules within Asker’s leadership programme. There is a strong positivity towards innovation among the municipal employees. Asker has administrative and political leaders who drive innovation by encouraging it, having a desire to develop the municipality through
innovative solutions, and daring and wanting to go in new directions. These leaders ensure that innovation and everyday operations are closely linked. Incentives are given to the services in the form of seed money, which encourages bottom-up innovation.

Openness is one of Asker’s core values, and there is a large focus on having open innovation processes. This is evident in the municipality’s innovation strategy:

Openness is the starting point for innovative work. Openness to input from citizens and service recipients provide real insight into real needs. Openness towards an expanded network of partners provides a broader perspective on possible solutions. Openness in employees’ daily interactions with citizens shorten the path from trial and error to good solutions (Asker Kommune, 2015: 8).

The municipality visits and are visited by other municipalities, and in these processes they learn from each other and share knowledge, experiences and innovations. The municipality also strives to be seen as an open municipality to its citizens.

4.2.2 Co-creation in Asker
Ambitions for co-creation in the municipality are high, both for politicians and public managers. Co-creation, citizen involvement and working together to reach goals are important points in the municipal strategy. The Knowledge Centre facilitates sharing and spreading of knowledge, as well as network building and development of partnerships (Asker Kommune, 2015). Co-creation is not a new method in the municipality, but has not been used much during the NPM phase during the past 30 years. However, in the past five years, co-creation has come much more into focus. The municipality’s innovation strategy states that:

Co-creation and sharing are very important to innovative processes, and experience shows that it is not that easy to achieve in individual initiatives and projects. This demands new forms of cooperation and reorganised work practices (Asker Kommune, 2015: 7).

The municipality has not yet had many actual co-creation projects. Most of the projects in which users have been involved have not involved them to such a degree that it can be called co-creation. Although co-creation in its true form does not happen frequently in Asker, the municipality is very aware of it, and is working to create methods and tools that will make it easier. All services are working consciously to put the user in the centre. However, the
respondents from Asker point to some projects in which co-creation has been used, including the ‘Velferds.lab’ (Welfare lab).

The Welfare Lab is a new model for the coordination of services to people in difficult life situations (Asker Kommune, 2018). In the model, all public, private and volunteer actors who work to improve the life situation of the user work together to find solutions, so that the user does not have to relate to many separate service providers. The Welfare Lab is developed using co-creation with users. The concept is based on and developed with the needs of the user, and there is a fundamental idea that “no decisions about me are taken without me” (ibid.). The project demands that the citizen must take an active responsibility for their own life situation.

4.2.3 Barriers to co-creation

The respondents from Asker list power and political will as a major barrier to co-creation. Some politicians and public managers are unwilling to give up too much power, both in the form of knowledge and decision-making, and are concerned with being the only ones in charge. In addition, they are worried about not living up to their democratic responsibility.

Another barrier to co-creation listed by respondents A and B is its unpredictable nature. Co-creating processes do not have the same pipelines as other processes, and it is unclear how the process will unfold before it is started. There is not much precedence for how the process should unfold in the municipality. Instead, the different actors must get together, start somewhere and decide together. This unpredictability can be discouraging, leading the municipality to lean towards more secure, tried and tested methods.

The informants expressed that there is some uncertainty regarding the term co-creation. Most of the activities in which the municipality involves users in the innovation process may not actually meet the co-creation definition. Most of the citizen involvement in Asker includes working with citizens to find solutions to an already defined problem. This is not necessarily defined as co-creation, but collaboration or user involvement.

We have recommended that we use the term [co-creation] as little as possible, because the experience says that it generates very divergent understanding and expectations (Respondent A).
The informants pointed to the expectations of the citizens as one barrier to co-creation. On one hand, the citizens want more ability and power to innovate, but on the other hand they have high expectations that the municipality will deliver high quality services. Many citizens expect the municipality to solve every issue without wanting to participate themselves.

4.2.4 Creating a culture for innovation and co-creation

Many citizen groups are not reached when the municipality utilise the typical channels, like a notice in the paper or on the municipality’s webpage, for reaching out to citizens. You need different methods for reaching out to people in order to meet different groups of people. People work at different times of the day, have different interests, are of different age groups, socio-economic backgrounds and in various states of health. Asker has realised this, and are instead working consciously and actively to find new ways to reach out to citizens. These methods include ‘gjestebud’, an initiative where citizens can invite acquaintances to dinner, in order to discuss an information package provided by the municipality, with an ensuing brief summary; interviews conducted at various services such as health clinics; citizen conferences; youth conferences; innovation youth camps, in which all high schools in the municipality are involved, and get an assignment from the municipality that they will work to find solutions to; and an innovation camp directed towards other citizens. The municipality has also come up with a new spin on the traditional citizen panel, in which participants are chosen randomly through a ‘lottery’. This ensures a diverse, more representative participant group, rather than having the same people participate every time. The respondents say that the response to these initiatives have been well received, and that the citizens are interested in participating.

Asker works to create an innovative culture and a culture for co-creation in many ways: through political strategies, and commitments and expectations linked to this; management training, development of tools and methods; the Knowledge Centre which contributes to an culture for innovation and facilitates projects; and project methods adapted through DIFI (The Agency for Public Management and eGovernment). The public managers focus on calling attention to innovation in all contexts. The municipality participates in several networks and partnerships in order to share knowledge, gain inspiration and stay updated on relevant developments. There is also a focus on ensuring that services within the municipality are sharing with each other, and the municipality facilitates contact between those who have already developed or implemented a new solution and those who need it. Innovation is a theme in the training of new employees. Asker has an arrangement in which services can
apply for seed money for innovation projects. Projects that use co-creation as a method are more likely to be given money. This has been an important driver for co-creation to be used in more projects. It has caused co-creation methods to “spread like a wildfire” (Respondent B).

The respondents expressed that the citizens of Asker are fairly engaged when it comes to innovation and development in the municipality. This was also found in a survey conducted by the municipality. When asked about the reasons for this, the respondents emphasise on the municipality’s role in reaching out to the citizens. “I think the most important role we have is to facilitate [dialogue between the municipality and the citizens], and not be such a high castle that no one can get contact with” (Respondent A). The municipality aims to be an open organisation with open processes and showing their engagement to the citizens. The municipality is in the process of creating seven citizen centres (innbyggertorg) that will be placed around Asker. These will act as local arenas for co-creation in which citizens can easily start a dialogue with the municipality about their needs and ideas.

It is about staying the course and being accountable in the co-creation processes, show that there are real processes where you have a real opportunity to be involved, and I think that makes most people find it exiting (Respondent A).

The municipality realises that innovation involves risk, but that this risk is necessary in order to reap the possible benefits of innovation. However, the innovation strategy names involving citizens as one way to decrease this risk.

An innovative organisation must dare to create new paths, dare to let itself be challenged by others’ views of both needs and solution choices, as well as have the ability to follow through, even when the risk is uncomfortable. To succeed in this, the municipality’s leaders and employees must involve the citizens in their efforts to find the good methods to develop the Asker community (Asker Kommune, 2015: 7).

4.3 Bærum

4.3.1 Organisation of innovation

Similar to Asker, Bærum municipality has its own consulting unit for innovation and development, The Unit of Strategy and Development (Strategi- og utviklingsenheten). The unit functions as a counselling organ to the leaders of the municipality, whose main responsibilities are implementation of the municipality’s innovation strategy, being a support
for the municipal services, developing new methods, and facilitating arenas for innovation. This unit is working to create an innovative culture within the municipality, and works with all sectors. The unit uses its tools, methods and competences to strengthen the role of the municipality as a community developer, service provider, government agency and arena for democracy (Bærum Kommune, 2019b). The unit collaborates with citizens, private businesses, research institutions and volunteer organisations in order to create better services.

Innovation in the municipality is increasing as the needs of the population change, the resources decrease, and there is an increasing demand for digitalisation across the municipality. Municipal employees are becoming more aware of what is going on in terms of innovative solutions outside the municipality, while at the same time becoming more aware of the need for innovation within the municipality. Most of the municipality’s innovative activities are involved with welfare technology and the health care sector, but the other services work extensively with digitalisation as well.

Bærum has one innovation strategy from 2014-2017, and an updated, additional strategy from 2018-2020. The latest innovation strategy outlines five main priorities: increasing the innovative competences of municipal leaders and employees; finding a balance between creating entirely new solutions and adapting innovations from others; strengthen communication and collaboration internally and across sectors; involving external actors including citizens, private organisations and academic institutions through open innovation; and realise the potential gains from new solutions (Bærum Kommune, 2018). The strategy from 2014-2017 states that as Bærum is a wealthy municipality with many resources, there is more room for trial and error (Bærum Kommune, 2014).

4.3.2 Co-creation in Bærum

Co-creation is not very frequent in Bærum, but it is something the municipality is working towards. According to respondent C, for something to be co-creation, users need to be involved in the testing of the new service or product. It needs to be more than simply involving the user. The user needs to be more involved in the creation process, and be involved in the testing phase. However, citizen involvement happens all the time. People are much more aware of it now. The bar for talking to users and having them involved in projects is much lower than it used to be. User focus has been worked on consciously over the past three years through LUP – ‘Ledelsesutviklingsprogrammet i innovasjon og ledelse’ (The
municipality’s development programme for innovation and leadership). It has now become engrained in the culture of the organisation. Through LUP, the municipality employees were urged to test innovations with the users. This programme has put more focus on involving users in the testing phase.

Bærum municipality adapts most innovations they use from other municipalities or countries, but uses methods of co-creation with users in order to adapt the innovations to best fit the community. One example is the Carpe Diem dementia village, which was first developed and implemented in the Netherlands. The dementia village, opening in 2020, will be a community for people with dementia, and will consist of several living units, shops, restaurants, arenas for various activities and social and cultural meeting places (Bærum Kommune, 2019a). It will be built as a village, but will remain within a safe and defined space. The idea is that the users will be able to continue to live their lives the way they are used to (ibid.). Bærum uses co-creation and service design to adapt the dementia village to the culture, citizens and context of Bærum.

There are many different ways of working with co-creation with users, depending on what is being created and who the users are. It can be difficult to know which methods best fit each context. Examples of methods used in Bærum include ‘user journeys’ – a timeline where all the activities of the user are put in chronological order in order to gain insight into their experiences and contact points; interviews; ‘service safaris’, an observation method that involves visiting different services in order to observe, speak to the employees, and get inspiration; idea development; and innovation sprints – five days where an idea is defined, developed, a story board and a prototype are created, before the users test the prototype on the final day. Thus, municipal employees need to not be afraid to try and fail, and combine methods. The methods for co-creation are still being developed.

4.3.3 Barriers to co-creation
In Bærum, it seems as though there are some different understandings of what constitutes as co-creation. Some view simply looking at user suggestions as co-creation, while others disagree. Respondent C argues that in order for something to be called co-creation, the user must be a part of the planning phase as well as the testing phase, and possibly also the development phase. They need to be seen as equal partners rather than simply someone who makes suggestions.
When asked why co-creation did not happen as much as it should, the respondent from Bærum explained that it is because it is such a new way to work, and it requires an adjustment. Many are too busy trying to define what co-creation is, how it works, and creating systems. The process is being over-complicated. Instead, the bar for co-creation needs to be lowered. In the developing phase, one should not be afraid to try and fail, and instead create systems and processes for co-creation once one knows what works and what does not. This is what the developers of Carpe Diem dementia village are trying to do. The methods used have not been previously used by the municipality, and thus it is uncertain whether they will work or not. Instead, they experiment, attempt the unexpected and are not afraid to fail and learn from their mistakes. The respondent states that it can be difficult to know which methods to use in the co-creation process. It is not always enough to use just one method, but one must instead combine different methods depending on what one is after. It is an adjustment process, as the municipality is not used to letting citizens close to the process, taking charge and deciding what should be done.

Another barrier is that citizens are not used to the fact that they can be able to contribute. There is no strong culture for citizen participation within the community. It is difficult for municipalities to get the citizens involved, and when they do, it is usually the same citizens who attend. This does not make for a representative selection. The municipality does not have sufficient arenas for reaching out to different citizen groups.

The respondent argued that there is no real reason why bureaucracy should be a significant barrier to co-creation, but that it might be easy to subconsciously hide behind it. Co-creation is unfamiliar to everyone involved, and adjustments must be made. When working on the dementia village, politicians and public managers wanted to create a milestone plan where everything was planned. However, those in charge of innovation argued that the process should instead be flexible, allowing for changes and adjustments, and that rather than specific milestones, the plans should be more open-ended.

4.3.4 Creating a culture for innovation and co-creation

One of the most important factors for overcoming barriers to co-creation is, according to the respondent, not being afraid to try, test and fail. Innovations that have been developed over a long time period are not necessarily more successful. Sometimes it can be more beneficial to
work faster and test faster, and either make the necessary adjustments or be aware of when an idea might not work after all. Becoming better at co-creation is about adjusting, finding new methods and new processes. The management needs to create an innovative culture in which employees are encouraged to try and fail. The municipality has a fund for research and innovation. 20 percent of this fund goes to internal projects. This fund is an incentive meant to encourage bottom-up innovation.

Through Bærum’s leadership development programme (LUP) an innovation culture is being developed. This has made municipal employees more conscious about innovation and innovative developments. LUP is designed to encourage municipal employees to test innovations with users. Bærum’s councilman says this about innovation and ‘LUP’:

We must be aware of the needs of the users and citizens. It is easy to go directly to the solutions. But innovation is also about uncovering needs that can be met in new and better ways. If we put a user who needs help from more services in the centre we will get different answers than if each of the services is in focus. Tools you get from LUP, and experiences from the tool ‘user travels’, among others, useful competences and skills. Many of us have had a real aha-moment when the focus changes. LUP is about awareness. Seeing out own practice with new eyes. (Kjeldstadli, 2017).

4.4 Lørenskog

4.4.1 Organisation of innovation

Lørenskog municipality differs from Asker and Bærum in that the Unit for Knowledge and Innovation (Enhet for fag og innovasjon) is not a cross-sectoral, independent unit, but a staff unit to the municipal director for health care, and works on assignments from the director and the management team (Lørenskog Kommune, 2018). The unit works with projects within the health care sector that go across services and across sectors. The respondent explains that sectors are collaborating to a higher degree now than before, and that there are less silo structures within the municipality.

Initiative to innovation in Lørenskog mostly comes from politicians. The municipality has a proactive chief municipal executive (rådmann) who wants to think innovatively. It is rarely the citizens or the private sector who are the drivers of innovation. The municipality is struggling to find ways to get these actors more involved.
Lørenskog municipality has recently begun to focus on uncovering the needs of the health sector and the users before developing and implementing a new innovation. This saves time and money, and ensures that the innovation becomes more successful. Previously, the municipality would find a solution without doing a needs assessment. This would lead to unsuccessful solutions that would not be utilised. Now, they are looking at the future needs of the sector. In order to do this, users need to be involved.

Previously we would often skip straight to a solution without actively figuring out the need first. So now we have turned around and are spending a lot of time defining the needs of the health service in the future, specifically to avoid the acquisition of a product we don’t need (Respondent D).

Lørenskog has entered into several intermunicipal networks where needs are mapped and acquisitions are made together. The respondent argues that most municipalities are in the same situation, with similar challenges and needs, and it is not financially viable to conduct these processes separately.

It is still demanding, because there are different types of organisations and different budgets within the municipalities, which can make it demanding to collaborate across the municipalities. But I still think everyone sees that it is absolutely necessary. I don’t think Lørenskog municipality is special enough that we should find our own solutions. I think it is important to put out feelers, and see what is going on outside the municipality (Respondent D).

Lørenskog was early to put innovation and co-creation on the agenda. These are important parts of the municipal strategy as well as the health care strategy. The municipality is creating strategies to mobilise and engage the citizens. Lørenskog does not have a common innovation strategy for the entire municipality, but a separate innovation strategy for the health sector. The strategy emphasises citizen involvement, and states that the citizen should be in focus at all times. Co-creation is one of six main strategies of the innovation plan. The municipality will develop a culture for co-creation through the development of attitudes and good procedures for how to execute the dialogue with citizens. The result will be, according to the plan, that individuals and organisations will take greater responsibility for their own lives and health, and will create a better and more sustainable society along with the public sector, based on the resources and contributions of the individual. Individuals will volunteer more and the municipality can better facilitate and support activities. “The line between those who give and those who receive will be erased – everyone participates in a more giving
community” (Lørenskog Kommune, 2014: 14). The strategy points to Lørenskog municipality’s three main values: openness, credibility and engagement, which are all important elements in creating a culture for co-creation.

4.4.2 Co-creation in Lørenskog

Respondent D explains that co-creation as a method is not used enough in the municipality. The municipality is still in the early stages, but there is a lot of focus on co-creation and user involvement in the municipal strategy. Although user co-creation does not happen very frequently, user involvement does. The municipality is aware that they do not have all the answers, but that someone else do, and that they need to get in touch with them.

Co-creation in all phases can be crucial for a product or service to be successful. Respondent D explains that an electronic medical dispenser was successful in Lørenskog despite its failure in several other municipalities as they took their time with the co-creation process in both the idea and needs phase as well as the implementation phase. This was something that other municipalities had failed to do. Thus, in Lørenskog there are 80 medical dispensers in use in the home health care service, while other municipalities struggle with two or three. “If new welfare technology solutions are going to work with users or citizens, they need to be a part of the whole process. If you skip a stage, you will struggle with the implementation” (Respondent D).

The respondent from Lørenskog is, along with a few co-workers, now involved in a scientific research group with the aim of finding out what needs to be facilitated in order to successfully co-create with users. They have created a group of eight citizens from Lørenskog, whom they ask what they think of co-creation and what needs to be facilitated for them to participate. The respondent describes the study as a useful way to understand what is needed for co-creation to work in practice. The goal of the research was to create a process model of how to work with co-creation. However, the group concluded that such a model was not sufficient. There were other factors that needed to be involved, such as management and the skills of the manager; knowledge on co-creation and how to work with people; and the knowledge and competences of the citizens.
Two things are important: That we should let go and dare to give up responsibility, and that there is someone there ready to accept that responsibility. It is a big readjustment. I don’t think it is strange that we are still stumbling a little. A new culture needs to be built, and it takes time. There is no quick-fix (Respondent D).

When asked whether the municipality is working on any user co-creation projects, the respondent mentioned ‘Age-friendly municipality’ (Aldersvennlig kommune). This project includes using co-creative methods to find solutions on how to make the municipality more facilitated for the older population.

4.4.3 Barriers to co-creation

The terms ‘innovation’ and ‘co-creation’ are fairly new and unknown in Lørenskog. There is some uncertainty of what these terms mean for the municipality, the employees and the citizens.

Innovation and co-creation are kind of temporary terms that are a little unclear for many. What does it mean to us, what does it mean to the individual employee, to citizens? I think we are in a sort of maturing phase (Respondent D).

Even though co-creation is defined in the health care strategy, it is still understood differently by many employees. It is easy to use methods that can be defined as user involvement rather than co-creation. There are no established methods for co-creation, and thus the municipality employees are unsure of how to work with it. The municipality does not have any designated arenas or platforms for co-creation, making it difficult to reach out to citizens and for citizens to reach the municipality. Respondent D argues that in order for co-creation to be more used within the municipality, it is important to normalise the term. The municipality must also develop co-creation methods and create arenas where citizens feel that they are involved.

The citizens and private businesses in Lørenskog are not usually taking initiative to innovation. The municipality would like for their citizens to be engaged to a much higher degree. The municipality’s experience is that many citizens are sceptical to the concept of co-creation. They have never been involved before, so why should they be now? Will they be taken seriously? Will their input be heard and used? “We are slowly but surely moving in the right direction. But for now, everyone is waiting for each other. For someone to take initiative” (Respondent D).
Lørenskog municipality does not possess all the skills and competences necessary for success. These competences need to be built. As of now, Lørenskog hires many external consultants for the competences they need. In order to build an innovative culture, these competences need to be built within the municipality. New roles need to be employed.

A competence is needed that we do not have yet. It is a new way to work – from having the answer to wanting to get the answer from the citizens. This makes us lose some of the control we have always had, but I believe the answer will be better, and that the solution will be better (Respondent D).

Time and low budgets were also mentioned as barriers. In order to make as many citizens as possible participate, co-creation activities must often take place in the evening, after traditional work hours. Thus, there may be a need to either reorganise the work day or to find other solutions. These factors may make municipal employees feel that they have to be quick to find solutions. However, skipping important steps may lead to unsuccessful innovations, which may end up costing more and taking longer.

4.4.4 Creating a culture for innovation and co-creation

Through the research study the respondent is a part of, one important success factor for co-creation was that citizens need to feel that they are heard in order to engage themselves. They need to feel that they are taken seriously, and that their input is used. The municipality must be sincere in their intentions, and not just checking a box by speaking to the citizens. The citizens in the research group were clear that they were aware they would not get their way on every issue, but they needed to feel that it was possible for them to influence the process. Overall, the citizens in the study were positive to the co-creation process.

The aim of the Lørenskog study was to create a process model to make health care employees more comfortable in working with co-creation. However, the conclusion was that a process model was not enough, but a few other factors were relevant for success. These were leadership skills; knowledge on co-creation and on working with people; and on the knowledge and competences of the citizen. As for leadership skills, respondent D believes that it is about daring to give up control. The public organisation managers are used to having control and working towards a goal. Now they are supposed to work towards a need, without knowing the solution or the answer. Many find it uncomfortable to give up this control. He
argues that there is also a need for the citizens to mobilise and take more responsibility for the development in the municipality and in Norwegian municipalities in general.

There is not really much of a culture for co-creation in Lørenskog yet, but the public managers are working on building one. A culture for innovation and culture is something that is built over time. It is a learning process, and Lørenskog is still developing the methods and the competences needed. The respondent says that building a culture for co-creation is about experience and patience, continuous practice, competence building, and daring to make mistakes. It is not enough to define what co-creation is to the municipality, but one must work with it in practice, gain experiences and find out what works by experimenting. The municipality needs leaders who are not afraid to be frontrunners and express that this is something they want to do. Leaders who dare to fail and dare to try. You need to continuously learn and do it better next time. It is not just about creating a culture among the municipality employees, but also mobilising the citizens and the businesses. In order to mobilise the citizens, the municipality needs more platforms where citizens can give their input and share their needs. These platforms need to be varied in order to reach different citizen groups. The respondent believes that in a couple of years, co-creation will be a more natural part of the organisation.

4.5 Alna

4.5.1 Organisation of innovation

Alna is one of fifteen boroughs of Oslo. While Oslo runs some innovative projects centrally that are implemented in the boroughs, innovation within the individual boroughs is organised more like innovation in other municipalities. The boroughs are autonomous, and work on many innovative projects independently or in collaboration with other boroughs. The municipality has more of a counsellor role, providing the boroughs with competences and working to ensure that the services are similar within the boroughs. However, the boroughs make many local initiatives, meaning that even though the municipality works to coordinate the services within the 15 boroughs, they may end up with different services and innovative solutions. However, when the boroughs purchase new innovative solutions together, it is easier to push down the prices by buying in larger quantities.
Oslo has a long tradition for innovation. This has led to the fact that it is not unusual that municipality employees and employees within the boroughs take initiative to innovation. The municipality focuses on openness towards the market, both in order to gain insight into what exists, and to be able to express the needs of the municipality to suppliers and entrepreneurs, which will ensure solutions that are better suited to the needs of the municipality. Needs analysis is the base of any innovation process within the municipality, in order to understand the needs and challenges of the municipality and find the best possible solutions.

The municipality has employed change agents (endringsagenter) in all fifteen boroughs in order to promote innovation and digitalisation within the municipality. This was done through a digitalisation project named Origo. The respondent from Alna works within a unit named ‘Section for innovation and change management’ (Seksjon for innovasjon og endringsledelse). This unit is part of the leader group of the borough director (bydelsdirektør), and works across the services within the borough. The unit supports the various services with their competences and tools. The two main departments the unit works with are ‘health and managing’ (helse og mestring) and ‘upbringing and local society’ (oppvekst og lokalsamfunn). The unit employs a change manager, two innovation consultants, one service designer and one project manager.

Respondent F says that innovation in Alna is about reflecting on and challenging what the municipality needs to solve when it comes to welfare services in the future. Finding new ways to involve and mobilise citizens, volunteers and the local community, so that the municipality is not necessarily the coordinating intermediary, but that instead the activities happen for example from citizen to citizen.

Oslo municipality does not have a common innovation strategy for the entire municipality, but innovation is part of both the municipal strategies of the municipality (Oslo Kommune, 2016; Oslo Kommune, 2019) and the Agency for Health (Helseetaten, 2013). Oslo has also developed a regional innovation strategy in collaboration with Akershus county (Akershus Fylkeskommune & Oslo Kommune, 2015).

Alna has developed an innovation strategy specifically for the borough. In this strategy, six principles for innovation are outlined. These are: ‘User oriented’; ‘Openness’; ‘Strategic’;
‘Technology and digitalisation’; ‘Ability to carry out’; and ‘Innovation support’ (Bydel Alna, 2017). Innovation and service production in the borough should be directed towards the needs and possibilities of the users, and the innovation process should be characterised by openness. The leaders of the borough should have an overview of the need for innovation and previous projects so that innovation processes will be influenced by knowledge and experience to a larger degree. Technology should be used as a useful and cost efficient tool for service production wherever possible. The leaders of the borough are responsible for project organisation and quality assurance, but are not alone in the process. The borough is responsible for providing support in the form of competences, methods and meeting places (ibid.).

Alna’s innovation strategy also outlines three strategies to support innovative processes. These are increasing the competence, consciousness and capability of innovation within the municipality; co-creation with citizens, private organisations, and volunteer organisations; and increasing competences and focus on digitalisation and technology (Bydel Alna, 2017).

4.5.2 Co-creation in Alna

According to Alna’s innovation strategy, a successful co-creation process demands open dialogue, full sharing of information and other resources, and co-responsibility (Bydel Alna, 2017). The strategy states that user co-creation will increase the understanding of user focus in the organisation that delivers the service, while the user gains an increased understanding of the challenges of the service provider. Four points on co-creation are outlined:

- The borough bases the development of new services on the needs of the users
- The borough involves the users and other stakeholders in the development of new services
- The borough focuses on creating value for the users
- The borough and the users share information and learn from each other (ibid.).

Respondent E expresses that co-creation with citizens has been limited compared to co-creation with private companies and organisations. This is because the municipality is unsure of which channels to use in order to reach out to the citizens. Similar to the other municipalities, employees in Alna and Oslo in general are unsure of what constitutes as co-creation.
Co-creating entirely new innovations is not common in Alna, but citizens are sometimes used in the testing phase of new innovative acquisitions. Although user co-creation has been limited, user involvement is not. Respondent F argues that if the needs of the citizens are not attended to, the municipality is not doing its job. Respondent E says that user involvement has been used for a long time, but to various degrees. Previously it has not been very structured. Respondent F wishes there was even more co-creation in the borough, but claims that the focus on it has increased a lot during the past few years. Alna is realising that it alone is not able to solve all challenges of the borough, and thus is dependent on mobilising resources within the local community. The borough must stand with the citizens in the creation of the welfare solutions of the future. Co-creation enables the borough to verify that what they are doing is based on a need.

4.5.3 Barriers to co-creation

One major challenge within the co-creation process in Alna is to reach out to the citizens. According to one of the respondents, it is challenging to connect with those who are not active in the community, and thus belongs to a different citizen group. The municipality has several organisations in which there are active members, such as the senior citizens’ council. It takes time and resources to establish a good contact network that is representative of the citizens, and this is not necessarily always prioritised.

One barrier to co-creation mentioned by one of the respondents is the resistance to change within the services. Co-creation processes involve different ways to work, and the work tasks are changed. In larger municipalities, the challenge is that many people need training in order to understand the technologies and the processes. Some of these people may not be positive to the changes. According to one respondent, the municipality needs to work on the culture for changes (endringskultur) in order to solve this. The services are traditionally involved with operations, and adjusting to entirely new work tasks while at the same time finding time and space for the original tasks is challenging. Co-creation can be time consuming, and thus stand in conflict with the usual work responsibilities of the employees. The borough must find a good way to solve these conflicts in a way that will give value to both employees and citizens without taking up too much time. Today, co-creation is often not prioritised so as to not downgrade other tasks.
Alna does not have any designated platforms for co-creation and user involvement. However, the borough is now mapping the needs of new platforms, in order to assess what types of platforms the citizens need before implementing them. One planned platform is the new borough centre, which will be developed and designed to encourage citizen involvement.

4.5.4 Creating a culture for innovation and co-creation

Alna has worked with innovation for a long time, and the borough director has innovation high on the agenda. The borough creates a culture for innovation by employing people with innovative capabilities, and by providing funds. The borough put emphasis on creating a ‘try-and-fail’ culture, based on experience, experimentation and testing. Innovation is one of the two main commitments of the strategic plan. Therefore, the borough provides resources and supports the services in their innovative activities. However, the municipal employees must still adjust to the trial and error culture, and learn when to terminate the projects that are shown to be unsuccessful.

The respondent from the Agency for Health says that the municipality has many successful innovation processes because of the many networks it is part of. One of these networks includes all the fifteen boroughs of Oslo. Representatives from the boroughs meet once a month to share experiences with challenges, opportunities, and implementation of new innovations. In these gatherings participants can share ideas and hear from boroughs that have tested methods or innovations that they need. This is also a platform for municipal employees to influence the innovation processes by bringing up ideas and needs, which encourages bottom-up innovation. Other networks include intermunicipal networks, networks based on job roles (e.g. a network including all the change agents within the boroughs), and networks with private organisations.

Oslo municipality has employed change agents in all the fifteen boroughs. These work to change the culture within the organisation. This is done through manager workshops, where managers work to understand what innovation and digitalisation means to the borough; strategic plans; development of competences, knowledge and project methodology; training and skill building; project manager courses; and the development of a collection of methods for co-creation and user involvement. The aim is for all the services and departments within the boroughs to develop an innovative culture, rather than just designated innovation units.
The innovation unit in Alna has employed two innovation consultants and one service designer. This has increased the in-house competences of the borough, not just within the innovation unit but also throughout the services. The respondent from Alna says that their service designer has taken initiative to start many co-creation and user involvement projects in the borough. The unit is also noticing that the services are requesting its competences to a larger degree than before. This is due to increased awareness around innovation and co-creation within the borough. The borough uses different methods for co-creation, including workshops, innovation sprints, interviews, and other methods of service design. The borough’s co-creation competences has increased during the past few years, and there is an increased focus on the need for user involvement.

Oslo has established a mentoring programme in which four boroughs (St. Hanshaugen, Grünerløkka, Gamle Oslo and Sagene) who have a more established innovation culture each mentor three other boroughs, sharing experiences and knowledge and giving tips on how to create an innovative culture. Citizens in Oslo are often updated on what happens in other Oslo boroughs, and are thus putting pressure on their own borough to adapt the innovation. The boroughs have a unique opportunity to share with and learn from each other, and often collaborate on innovative projects. One example is the collaboration between Alna, Gamle Oslo and Stovner, on the robot technology program ‘RPA’ – Robotic Process Automation.

Oslo municipality has a project called Origo, which is the central environment for innovation and digitalisation. This project is not directed towards one individual sector, but focuses on every aspect of the citizens’ lives. The project helps municipal employees build competences in innovation, technology and development. Origo has also established a diffusion network between the boroughs. This network emphasises the spreading of competences and experiences.

One way Alna reaches out to citizens that are hard to reach is through a network called ‘the borough mothers’ (bydelsmødrene). This is a volunteer network that works to spread information between the municipality and various citizen groups, including immigrant groups that have a different network, understanding of culture and position in the community than the municipal employees have. This network enables the municipality to reach citizens it normally would not.
4.6 Summary of empirical findings

The municipalities in the study all have user co-creation is high on the agenda, but in reality it does not happen as often as the municipalities would like. All the municipalities’ innovation strategies state that co-creation should be increasingly used, and politicians and municipal leaders are working to increase innovation and co-creation within the services. The national strategies for innovation point to the citizens as the most important resource for innovation in the municipal sector. User involvement has increased in the past years, and is now in some form used in every project and service within the municipalities. However, there are differing views on what constitutes as co-creation. What some refer to as co-creation is seen by others as user involvement. This is a major barrier to co-creation, as it creates misunderstandings and misconceptions, which could lead to less co-creation. There are no standard processes or methods for co-creation across the municipalities. While some municipalities have developed many different methods, others have not. The co-creation process is unpredictable, and it can be challenging for public managers to give up control to the users.

Three of the municipalities have separate innovation units that work across all sectors. The fourth, Lørenskog, has an innovation unit connected to the municipal director for health care. These innovation units work to support the services with competences, methods and tools for innovation. Their function is to create an innovative culture within the municipalities. The structures of all the municipalities are less sectoral and silo-structured today than before, and the different sectors and services are collaborating to a higher degree. All the municipalities in the study are involved in intermunicipal networks, where competences and experiences are shared.

The table below shows a summary of the empirical findings.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation of innovation</th>
<th>Co-creation</th>
<th>Barriers to co-creation</th>
<th>Creating a culture for innovation and co-creation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asker</strong></td>
<td>Increasing, on the agenda</td>
<td>Political will Uncertainty of what co-creation is No established processes Unpredictable process and results Fear of failure Unwillingness to give up power and control Users are not representative Democratic responsibility Expectations of citizens</td>
<td>Separate innovation unit Citizen centres Focus on user involvement Leadership development programmes and management training Building competences Intermunicipal networks Seed money Allowing flexibility and a trial and error culture Many different co-creation methods and tools Political strategies Public managers encourage and call attention to innovation Sharing between services Focus on openness and actively reaching out to citizens Encouraging bottom-up innovation Developing an innovative culture within all services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bærum</strong></td>
<td>Increasing, on the agenda</td>
<td>No established processes Uncertainty of what co-creation is Unpredictable process and results Difficulty knowing which methods to use Requires an adjustment Processes are over-complicated Fear of failure Users are not representative</td>
<td>Separate innovation unit Focus on user involvement Leadership development programmes Accelerator programmes Building competences Intermunicipal networks Allowing flexibility and a trial and error culture Many different co-creation methods and tools Open innovation processes Research and innovation fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation of innovation</td>
<td>Co-creation</td>
<td>Barriers to co-creation</td>
<td>Creating a culture for innovation and co-creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Lørenskog**              | In a learning phase, on the agenda | Difficulty reaching out to citizens  
Citizens not engaged  
Lack of platforms | Encouraging bottom-up innovation |
|                           |             | Time and budget restrictions  
Lack of platforms, arenas, competences and established processes  
Uncertainty of what co-creation is  
Difficulty knowing which methods to use  
Requires an adjustment  
Citizens are sceptical, not engaged  
Unpredictable process and results  
Fear of failure  
Unwillingness to give up control  
Difficulty reaching out to citizens  
Users are not representative | Building competences  
Focus on user involvement  
Intermunicipal networks  
Allowing flexibility and a trial and error culture  
Proactive chief municipal executive  
Focus on needs assessments  
Strategies to mobilise and engage the citizens  
Development of attitudes and citizen dialogue  
Encouraging bottom-up innovation  
Focus on openness |
| **Alna**                   | Increasing, on the agenda | Time restrictions  
Lack of platforms and arenas  
Uncertainty of what co-creation is  
No established processes  
Difficulty knowing which methods and channels to use | Leadership development programmes and manager workshops  
Focus on user involvement  
Building competences  
Intermunicipal networks  
Sharing between boroughs  
Allowing flexibility and a trial and error culture  
Mentoring programme  
Focus on openness |
By looking at the table it is evident that many of the findings are similar for the municipalities. Barriers that can be seen in many or all of the municipalities are uncertainty of what co-creation is, lack of platforms and arenas for co-creation, difficulties reaching out to citizens and that the users involved are not representative for the whole population. Things that all the municipalities do to create a culture for co-creation include participating in intermunicipal networks, encouraging bottom-up innovation, and focusing on openness and user involvement.
5 Analysis

For the purpose of the analysis, the municipalities will be coded the following way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asker</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bærum</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lørenskog</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alna</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 8 Coding of the municipalities*

5.1 Barriers to co-creation in the innovative ecosystem

Bason (2010) argues that in order to lead public sector innovation, public managers and employees must develop four dimensions: consciousness (awareness); capacity (structure); co-creation (process); and courage (leadership). Bason has categorised his findings, dividing them into barriers and potential for innovation (ibid.). I have adapted this model to account for co-creation rather than just innovation, as I have found that the four categories are appropriate when categorising co-creation as well. In the tables below, I have categorised my own empirical findings into barriers and potential for co-creation. Coded versions of the municipalities will be placed behind the data to indicate where the findings come from.

5.1.1 Consciousness

Bason (2010) argues that in order to create a culture for innovation in the public sector, a common language and awareness of innovation practices are needed. This can also be applied to the building of a culture for co-creation. One major barrier found in the study is that there is no consensus on the definition of co-creation. Within the municipalities, co-creation is seen as different things. Although co-creation cannot be defined as just one method or process, there is a need for a common set of definitions, which includes the various nuances and differences that co-creation involves (Ulrich, 2016). This will ensure less misunderstandings and more co-creative processes. Even though co-creation is on the political agenda, it does not happen frequently as there are misunderstandings and misconceptions surrounding the concept. There needs to be a clearer distinction between co-creation and user involvement. According to some of the respondents, many municipal employees would say that user co-creation is frequently happening, while others call those same processes user involvement,
arguing that it is not enough to be called co-creation. This was also something I found during the interviews. When asked about methods for co-creation, some respondents would include examples that other respondents argued did not constitute as co-creation. An example of this was citizen panels where citizens could voice their needs and ideas. Others argue that co-creation means that the user must be involved in all phases of the innovation process, including the testing phase. While co-creation is a form of user involvement, Sanders and Stappers (in Bason, 2010) distinguish the terms by explaining that user involvement sees the user as a subject, while co-creation considers the user as a partner. Some respondents admitted that they were unsure whether some of their processes could be called co-creation or not. “We have recommended that we use the term [co-creation] as little as possible, because our experience is that it generates very divergent understanding and expectations” (Respondent A).

Several respondents mentioned that it is difficult to know which methods to use in different contexts. Because there is often no precedence, it is challenging knowing what will be most efficient or successful when starting a new co-creation process. It can then be useful to look towards past projects or other municipalities to gain insight into what they have previously done.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Key factors</th>
<th>Potential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consciousness</strong></td>
<td>No common language or terminology (ABLO)</td>
<td>The innovation landscape</td>
<td>Create a common terminology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uncertainty of what co-creation is (ABLO)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Learn from other countries/municipalities/organisations (ABLO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No clarity of which methods are best suited for different contexts (BLO)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Shed light on what has already been done (AB)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 9 Consciousness*
5.1.2 Capacity

Public sector organisations need to build a capacity for innovation in order to increase their ability to innovate (Bason, 2010). Following the same thought, a capacity for co-creation is needed in order to effectively and successfully organise co-creation processes. This dimension is concerned with the context, strategy, organisation and people and culture surrounding the co-creation process.

Time and budget restrictions are mentioned as barriers to co-creation. In Alna, the services are finding it difficult to combine innovative activities with their traditional tasks. The respondent from Lørenskog mentioned that co-creation activities often take place in the evening, after traditional work hours, in order for most citizens to participate. However, if time restrictions and budgets stop the municipalities from co-creating with users, they may end up with unsuccessful innovations that end up costing more than the co-creation process would. In the words of the UK Customs and Revenue’s (HMRC) customer insight, “if you think knowing your customers is expensive, how expensive do you think it is not to know them?” (in Bason, 2010). Thus, co-creation and user involvement are necessary priorities when developing new innovations. However, traditional work tasks must not be neglected either, and thus a balance must be found, or the services must come up with new, innovative ways to work.

For all the municipalities in the study, push from the government and local politicians is a strong factor for innovation and co-creation. The innovation strategies of the municipalities provide a direction to go in and goals to achieve. Co-creation is becoming increasingly in focus within the municipalities partly because it was put forward by the government in documents such as ‘Parliament message 29 – Future care’ (Meld. St. nr. 29, 2013). Municipalities base their municipal strategies on governmental reports and strategies. This shows the importance of innovation strategies and its effect on co-creation in the municipalities.

Eggers and Singh (2009) explain that public innovation is often seen as the responsibility of separate innovation units rather than being a core value of the organisation. For Asker, Bærum, and Alna, who all have separate innovation units, there is also a focus on creating a culture for innovation within all the services of the organisation. Rather than having the sole
responsibility for innovation activities, the innovation units are instead seen as supporting units to the other services and departments, and are able to assist with competences, methods and tools. The chief municipal executive in the municipalities are working to encourage innovation throughout the municipality. Thus, the municipalities are working to make innovation a core value of the organisation even though there are separate innovation units.

The better a municipality is at creating networks the more likely it is to succeed in innovative activities (NOU, 2011a). Networks with outside actors allow for municipals to reach out to citizens they would not normally reach, and convey their needs to suppliers, among other things. Oslo municipality is involved in many networks, both with internal and external actors, and this was listed by one respondent as one reason why the municipality did not appear to have as many barriers to innovation and co-creation as other municipalities. As found in the empiricism, intermunicipal networks enable the sharing of knowledge, competences and experiences, allowing municipals to learn from each other. The municipalities in the study are involved in many types of networks, including networks through KS, networks based on job roles within the municipalities, and intermunicipal networks. Lørenskog is involved in networks with other similar and geographically close municipalities to establish needs, acquire solutions and create innovations. The municipalities should use inter-municipal networks to a larger degree to share co-creation competences and experiences in order to learn from each other and develop their own methods and competences. The municipalities need to build new competences and skills, and gain more knowledge of innovation and co-creation, and one way to do this is by learning from others. The empirical findings show that co-creation methods vary greatly in the different municipalities. Many have developed or adapted innovative and successful methods, while others are unsure of what methods or platforms to use. It would be beneficial to share these methods with other municipalities. Hartley (2005) argues that the spreading of good practice and the adoption and adaption of innovations are fundamental elements of public sector innovation. The ability to spread innovations, competences and experiences across municipal borders is what separates the municipalities from private organisations.

Osborne and Brown (2005) argue that when attempting to change the culture of an organisation, many focus on the superficial levels including the visible representations. However, in order to maintain a lasting change in culture, there needs to also be a focus on
changing the values and norms of the employees of the organisation (ibid.). There must be a shift in their attitude and views. One of the respondents mentioned that one barrier to co-creation was employees’ negativity towards change in the way they work. Innovation and co-creation has not been a part of the traditional work tasks of the employees, and thus a shift towards more innovation and co-creation within the services involves working in different ways than before. The employees need to find ways to combine innovative and co-creative activities with their traditional work tasks. The municipalities are attempting to create a shift in the attitudes of the employees in many different ways. The innovation units are working to create an innovative culture throughout the organisation by shedding light on it, spreading competences and knowledge, and providing incentives in the form of seed money. Local politicians such as the chief municipal executive are encouraging bottom-up innovation and co-creation within the services. Through Bærum’s leadership development programme (LUP), municipal employees become more conscious about innovation and user involvement. Change agents in the boroughs of Oslo work to change the attitudes of the employees through training and skill building, and development of knowledge and competences among public managers. On the other hand, Lørenskog hires external consultants when there is a need for innovative competences. This can be seen as a barrier to co-creation, as the competences are not learnt within the organisation.

Mulgan’s (2007) assertion that innovative cultures are self-reinforcing is evident within the four Oslo boroughs of St. Hanshaugen, Grünerløkka, Gamle Oslo and Sagene. These boroughs were early in establishing an innovative culture, and hence have accumulated knowledge and competences from the process. Today, as part of a diffusion project, these boroughs are in the forefront teaching other boroughs about their experiences and competences. This has enabled other boroughs to develop methods and platforms for innovation. Within this mentoring programme there should be more focus on the spreading of competences for co-creation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Key factors</th>
<th>Potential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time restrictions (LO) Budget restrictions (BLO) Political will (A) Democratic responsibility (A) Legal responsibility (A)</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>New policies New ways to think Find ways to innovate within the legal framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No established processes (ABLO) Processes are over-complicated (B) No precedence (ABLO) Not enough effort to understand needs (LO) Co-creation is not prioritised (O)</td>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Create a clear innovation strategy with a clear co-creation section Encourage bottom-up innovation (ABLO) Learn from others (ABLO) Focus on citizens’ needs and user involvement (ABLO) Research and innovation fund (BO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough networks with external actors (L) No balance between innovative activities and traditional work tasks (O) Silo structures (L)</td>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Establish and participate in networks (ABLO) Create own separate innovation department (ABO) The municipality must take on new roles Find balance between innovation and other tasks (A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough competence within the municipality (ABLO) No room for failure Managers are not encouraging innovation Resistance to change (ABLO) Requires an adjustment (ABLO)</td>
<td>People and Culture</td>
<td>Employ different roles, create new positions (ABO) Build competences (ABLO) Employee training Share competences between municipalities (ABLO) Incentives in the form of seed money, etc (AB) Shift in attitude and views (ABLO) Allow flexibility and a trial and error culture (ABLO) Develop an innovative culture in all services (ABLO) Mentoring programme (O) Increase awareness among employees (ABLO)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 10 Capacity*
5.1.3 Co-creation

The third dimension of the innovative ecosystem is concerned with the organisation of co-creation processes (Bason, 2010). This part of the analysis will be concerned with how citizens are involved, their attitudes towards the co-creation process, and which methods and platforms the municipalities are using to involve the citizens in the co-creation process.

The citizens need to be seen as partners in order to want to participate. Some of the respondents stated that when co-creation activities were initiated, the municipal employees arranging the activity were either not prepared, or simply asking the citizens in order to ‘check a box’, without really intending to use the information and input acquired from the process. This behaviour would then result in the citizens being uninterested in participating next time. The citizens need to feel that their input is valued and meaningful, and that the municipality has the intention of using their input. This involves building trust. One of the respondents stated that the citizens did not necessarily expect to get their way on every issue, but that they were able to influence the process. User co-creation is not about the ‘customer’ always being right, but about defining and solving problems as equal partners (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).

In the co-creation process, the municipality will always have the final say. They stand free to pick and choose which ideas to go forward with, develop and implement. This is necessary as the municipality needs to ensure the innovation upholds a certain standard and budget and stays within the boundaries of the municipal strategy and the law. However, if the users feel as if they have not been heard or taken seriously, this will weaken the trust between user and municipality, leaving the user unwilling to participate in later co-creation activities. The municipality is not willing to give up too much control. One respondent said that the municipality leaders are afraid to let the citizens decide too much and then not be able to uphold their political responsibilities. Thus, it is difficult to allow citizens to be equal to the municipality within the co-creation partnership. The question is then to what extent the citizens must be seen as equal partners within the co-creation process.

The empirical data showed that those municipalities and boroughs that were early in creating an innovative culture and working with user co-creation have developed the culture faster and are more successful. They have built up a trust with citizens, and citizens know that they are
heard when participating. User participation may be limited by the users’ limited experience and biased perceptions of co-creation in public services (Magno & Cassia, 2014). In municipalities where co-creation is new and not as developed, citizens are more sceptic, not feeling that they are heard, and maybe not seeing the point in participating because they have not been heard in the past. It is about readjusting expectations and building trust. Nambisan (2008) argues that the best way to build trust with citizens is to establish an open communication and to provide quick feedback on their ideas. Asker found that by creating a reputation as an open municipality that wanted the input of the citizens, more citizens wanted to participate. Although some platforms and methods for user involvement will not directly lead to co-creation, they are methods for engaging citizens and creating trust. They show the citizens that the municipality wants to hear what they have to say.

Several of the respondents stated that there is a lack of platforms and methods for co-creation in the municipalities. This makes it difficult to reach out to citizens that are willing to participate and that are representative to the population. When the municipalities do not have sufficient platforms and methods, there is a risk that either no one will participate, or that the same citizens come every time. However, those that do not have sufficient platforms or methods stated that they were working on creating and developing new ones. Alna is currently working on mapping the needs for platforms in order to find the best solutions. Municipalities are different in organisation, demographics, budgets, and culture, and thus a method that works for one municipality may not be as effective for another. In order to understand which platforms and methods to use to best reach out to citizens, the municipalities should look towards other municipalities, while still ensuring that the platforms and methods are adapted and best suited for the citizens of that particular municipality.

Albury (2005) states that buildings can be designed so that they foster a culture for innovation. When Alna are building their new borough centre for their citizens, much thought goes into designing a space that encourages citizens and employees to work and think differently. The space will encourage innovation and co-creation through carefully planned structures and layouts. Asker’s current and planned citizen centres will also be designed in a way that will foster innovation and a culture for citizen involvement. These centres will act as local arenas for co-creation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Key factors</th>
<th>Potential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Citizens are not engaged (LO)</td>
<td>Citizen involvement</td>
<td>Strategies to mobilise and engage citizens (L)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens do not feel heard (LO)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Create a reputation for the municipality as open and innovative (A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sceptical citizens (ABLO)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Make citizens feel heard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants not representative of the population (ABLO)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reach out to citizens (ABLO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations of citizens (A)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Build trust with citizens (A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of platforms and arenas (BLO)</td>
<td>Orchestrating co-creation</td>
<td>Create platforms (citizen centres, online platforms) (ABO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of methods (BLO)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Develop methods and tools (interviews, workshops, sprints, ‘gjestebud’, conferences, ‘service safaris’ etc. (ABLO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time challenges (citizens can only come in the evening, etc) (L)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Come to the users (visit schools, nursing homes) (AB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to know which citizens to reach out to and how (ABLO)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Different methods in order to meet different groups of people (AB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to know which methods to use (B)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of preparedness (O)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough coordination between municipalities/boroughs (ABLO)</td>
<td>Measuring and learning</td>
<td>Coordinate data and findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough learning from previous projects (ABLO)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluate and learn from previous projects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11 Co-creation
5.1.4 Courage

The final dimension of the innovative ecosystem involves the skills and abilities of public managers to lead the innovation process (Bason, 2010), and in this case the co-creation process, through its unpredictable nature. Albury (2005) argues that in the building of an innovative capacity, it is not enough to provide the right tools and spaces. The organisation must also establish a culture in which it is accepted to “break the rules”, and use untraditional methods in the innovation process. According to the respondents, there is more room for experimentation and a trial and error culture today than it was before. However, because municipalities are led by elected leaders (Christensen et al., 2009), there is a higher pressure to perform, and make sure citizens are happy with the services provided. Albury (2005) argues that the risks in public sector innovation are intensified by the fact that they are more exposed to public scrutiny than private sector innovation, and that there are higher risks to the citizens’ quality of life. These pressures to perform are evident in Asker, where one of the barriers mentioned was the politicians being afraid of failing their political responsibilities. Thus, the municipalities must find a balance between a culture for “rule-breaking” and untraditional methods, and staying within the context of the law, while at the same time creating services that better the lives of the citizens. Involving users in the innovation process may be one important way to find this balance.

In order to create a culture for co-creation, municipal leaders need to overcome the fear of losing control (Bason, 2010). There is a shift from municipalities wanting to come up with all the answers to wanting to get those answers from the citizens. This leads to loss of control, but also to better answers, which in turn will lead to better services. The municipalities are realising that they do not sit on all the knowledge. Citizens know best how their world looks, what their daily life looks like, and thus what they need. Municipal leaders in Asker, Bærum and Alna attend leadership development programmes, in which the skills and capacities of the managers are developed. In these programmes there is a focus on innovation and co-creation, and the benefits of involving users in the process.

The study found that the unpredictable nature of the co-creation process can be a major barrier to co-creation. This leads to uncertainty and the temptation to maintain traditional, established processes. As there is not much precedence for how the co-creation process should unfold, public managers must be able to test methods, adjust them if they do not work,
and not be afraid to experiment and potentially fail. The process should be continuously assessed, and public managers should learn to know when to dismiss or adjust methods that prove to be unsuccessful (Fuglsang, 2008; Albury, 2005). This is how new established processes will be found. When there is no precedence, the municipalities need to gain experience in order to see what works and what does not work in the context of the municipality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Key factors</th>
<th>Potentials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Courage</td>
<td>Inspiration and execution</td>
<td>Developing management skills (ABLO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear or unwillingness to give up/share control (ABLO)</td>
<td>Learn how to manage risk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of failure (ABLO)</td>
<td>Continuously assess the situation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk aversion</td>
<td>Learn from others (ABLO)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of failing political responsibilities (A)</td>
<td>Call attention to innovation and co-creation (ABLO)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpredictable process and results (AL)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 12 Courage*

5.2 **Systemic changes required to create a culture for co-creation**

Torfing et al. (2016) argue that five systemic changes are needed in order to promote co-creation. These five systemic changes will lead the public sector towards the community governance paradigm, in which bottom-up innovation and co-creation are fundamental elements. The innovation strategies of all the municipalities involved in the study are pointing to co-creation and user involvement as important methods for innovation and the development of the community. This shows that the municipalities are making a conscious move towards community governance. However, there are still many elements of the old governance paradigms embedded in the municipalities. Elements from all three paradigms can be found within each of the municipalities in the study.
5.2.1 Bottom-up innovation

The first systemic change involves a move towards increased bottom-up innovation (Torfing et al., 2016). Most of the respondents say that innovation is often initiated from the top. The government or local politicians drive innovation within the municipality, and all projects are closely related to the municipal innovation strategy. Even though this is typical within the bureaucratic paradigm, there is a shift towards more focus on bottom-up innovation. Recently, there is more room for initiative to innovation and co-creation, and risk taking in the individual services. The government and local politicians are encouraging bottom-up innovation and flexibility within the services, while at the same time demanding a certain quality and tie to the municipal strategy and national policies. Still, many politicians and municipal leaders are finding it difficult to give up control of the innovation process. Although user involvement and co-creation happens to a much larger degree today than it did before, the municipality will always have the final say in what is developed, how it is developed, and if something is developed. Users may be seen as ‘partners’, but they are not
equal to the municipality. The municipality holds the power. While this is somewhat necessary in order to ensure that what is innovated maintains a certain standard and is closely related to the municipal and national strategies, it can lead to a less successful or effective co-creation process. This has a bureaucratic element, in that the policy makers can in a way be seen as ‘commanders’ even though there is more flexibility and freedom in the innovative process than before.

There is an element of the NPM paradigm within all the municipalities in that many innovative solutions are bought from external companies. This is what Hartley (2005) refers to as purchaser-provider relationships. Purchaser-provider relationships can be useful as it would not be economically viable to develop all solutions through co-creation. However, the difference today from before is that municipalities are conducting thorough needs assessments before acquiring new solutions, and that the user is often involved in the testing phase and the implementation phase. Involving the user in these phases has led to a more successful implementation, which can be seen in the example of the electronic medicine dispensers in Lørenskog. Thus, this can be seen as a mix between NPM and community governance.

All the municipalities named a proactive chief municipal executive as a main driver for innovation. Several of the respondents stated that this was due to the personal engagement of the chief municipal executive, and not just a political engagement. This shows that the politicians are more open to their role as encouragers of innovation. They are realising that innovation and co-creation is important for the development of the municipalities, and interested in increasing the levels of innovative and co-creative activities throughout the services.

A move towards community governance involves more intersectoral collaboration (Hartley, 2005; Hess & Adams, 2007). There are less silo structures within the municipalities, and the many services and sectors are increasingly working together to develop new solutions. The independent innovation departments act as bridges between the ‘silos’. They ensure that the different sectors and services are working together, and provide links between a service that has a solution and another services that needs that solution. Bovens (2007) argues that there is a need for a shift in balance between the legal, administrative, and vertical accountability to professional and horizontal information exchange. Bridging the silos and ensuring
intersectoral collaboration is a way to do this. While the respondent from Lørenskog argues that there are less silo structures in the municipality than before, the structures are still evident when compared to the other municipalities in the study. While the other municipalities have separate innovation units that support all the sectors and services, Lørenskog has a separate unit for the health sector. In addition, Lørenskog does not have an innovation strategy for the entire municipality, while the other municipalities do.

5.2.2 Long-term focus

The second systemic change involves a shift towards a long-term focus (Torfing et al., 2016). Baptista et al. (2019) explain that political parties that are in power for a limited amount of time make short-term plans. In order to create a culture for co-creation, the municipalities must instead adopt a long-term focus. This involves risk management and seeing innovation and co-creation as benefits that are worth the risks involved. It involves allowing for errors and more flexibility rather than rushing to find solutions (ibid.). The empiricism shows that there is now more flexibility to innovate within the municipalities, and that there is more room to try and fail. The municipalities show that they have a long-term focus by focusing on building in-house capacities for innovation and co-creation. The innovation strategies of the municipalities also show a tendency towards more long-term focus. The public managers in Asker realise that taking risk is a part of the innovation process, and thus allow room for risk taking within the services. The municipality’s innovation strategy names citizen involvement as an important way to decrease risk (Asker Kommune, 2015). Involving users in the innovation process can decrease risks and lead to more successful innovations, as the users can give insight to what they need and what they will want to use.

However, it was also found that there is still a focus on efficiency, an element central to the NPM paradigm. Barriers to co-creation found in the study include tight budgets and time restrictions, which can be seen as elements of both NPM and bureaucracy. When developing the Carpe Diem dementia village in Bærum, the respondent felt pressure from the municipal leaders and politicians to maintain a schedule. It was expected that certain milestones were hit at particular, set times. However those involved with innovation in the project argued that the plans should be more open-ended, allowing for flexibility and adjustments. The innovation process is not linear, but consists of different paths, setbacks and stages of feedback, and it should be flexible and adaptable (Garud et al., 2013; Kline & Rosenberg, 1986). However, with decreasing budgets and citizens demanding to see efficiency and change, it is still
important to maintain budgets and deadlines. It is important to find new solutions within the framework that is given. Still, co-creation processes demand more flexibility and room for adjustments. The respondent from Bærum solved this when working on the dementia village by developing a time schedule that included the overall phases of the development and the final deadline, but still allowing for flexibility, adjustments and changes along the way.

5.2.3 Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
Torfing et al. (2016) argue that ICT should be increasingly used to create platforms. I will however also argue that the municipalities need to create more platforms that are not online. As one respondent pointed out, several citizen groups are not as active online as others, especially within the health care sector where many users are either of old age or not in good health. While ICT can help the municipality reach out to many more citizens, there is also a need for physical platforms and arenas. In some instances, it is also beneficial to come to where the users are, for example in nursing homes or other institutions.

Several of the respondents said that they struggled with reaching out to citizens, or that it was challenging to find users that were representative for the population. Social media was not brought up by the respondents as platforms for citizen involvement. According to Bason (2010), social media holds a great potential as a platform for co-creation. The government’s strategy for innovation in the municipal sector points to ICT solutions as something that can free municipal resources, improve existing methods and utilise new forms of communication. This is something the municipalities should take advantage of to a larger degree. According to SSB (2018), 80 percent of Norwegians between the ages of 16 and 79 use social media, which means that this could be a valuable method to reach out to potential participants of co-creation processes.

5.2.4 Culture
The fourth systemic change involves changing the culture of the organisation, including the attitudes of the public managers and employees. There also needs to be a shift in the attitudes of the politicians and the citizens (Torfing et al., 2016). The discoveries found in the empirical findings suggest that most barriers to co-creation stem from either a difficulty or an aversion to change. The actors involved, whether they are policy makers, public managers, municipal employees or citizens are either struggling to take on their new roles within the new paradigm, or rejecting them. Torfing et al. (2016) argue that adapting to new roles and
redefining one’s identity is demanding, and thus the actors involved will instead try to hold on to their initial roles. Several respondents listed politicians not wanting to give up their political power and being afraid to not fulfil their political responsibilities as major barriers to co-creation. It is still mainly politicians who decide what the focus of innovation should be, and every project must have some connection to the municipal strategy, which is written by politicians. This stems from the bureaucratic paradigm, where initiative to innovation comes from the political sphere (Hartley, 2005). Public managers are not used to sharing the power and the control of how the innovation process should go with citizens. Admitting that the municipality does not have all the capabilities, and that other actors are needed to find solutions is not something that always comes naturally to the public managers. This is due to the traditional bureaucratic way of thinking that the public sector holds all the knowledge and capacity (Hess & Adams, 2007). One respondent named one barrier being that the services’ main function is administrative and operational activities, and that there was not enough time for innovative, co-creation activities, or that the employees objected to taking on a new role as an innovator. Citizens do not engage or attend co-creation activities as they are not used to taking on a collaborating role. Several of the respondents argued that traditionally, citizens have not had the opportunity to participate actively in the innovation process or provide their input the way they have now. Some citizens might not want to engage as they see themselves simply as service recipients. They expect the municipality to provide what they need without contributing. At the same time, the citizens have high expectations that the municipality must deliver. This stems from NPM and citizens seeing themselves as ‘customers’ (Hartley, 2005). Torfing et al. (2016) explain that readjusting to new roles is challenging, takes time and requires a change in attitudes. This is evident from the empirical data. However, Eggers and Singh (2009) argue that in order to achieve the fundamental changes needed to maintain an innovative culture, traditional roles, processes and organisational structures must be changed from their traditional bureaucratic nature.

There is an increasing focus on creating a lasting innovative culture within the municipalities, rather than developing sporadic, large-scale innovations. Innovative activities, in both large-scale and small-scale projects, have increased in all sectors and services. As one respondent claimed: “Innovation should be in everyone’s DNA” (Respondent A). The innovation units and change agents are working to ensure that innovation and user involvement is a part of
every service and everything the municipality does. More resources are given to innovative and co-creative activities, for instance in the form of seed money and innovation ‘prizes’.

The respondent from Lørenskog named the lack of in-house competences as one barrier to co-creation. Instead, they hire external consultants when needed. Earlier, when the municipalities worked sporadically with larger innovation projects, they would often hire external innovation consultants. This is typical for NPM governments (Hartley, 2005). Now, when the focus is on building an innovative culture within the organisation, it can be more beneficial to employ an innovation role in-house. Alna has employed a service designer, which allows them to possess this knowledge within the organisation. Albury (2005) argues that an innovative capacity can be built by employing people who think differently and by developing creative thinking skills within the organisation. By employing a service designer, the borough gains new ways to think and work, which will consequently spread through the innovation. An in-house service designer is also more beneficial when working on smaller projects, where there is no budget to hire external consultants. Employing these competences in-house also allows more people within the organisation to learn from this.

Several of the municipality employees interviewed expressed a desire for citizens to take on a more active role in society, not just within innovative activities, but also within other contexts. For citizens not to expect the municipality to do everything, but instead contribute and create a more community-oriented society. There needs to be a shift in attitude not just within the municipality but also in society among citizens. Citizens need to become more engaged and aware that they can contribute. While NPM sees citizens as consumers and customers, the community governance paradigm sees citizens as co-producers and participants in communities (Hartley, 2005; Hess & Adams, 2007). Thus, it is important when building a culture for co-creation that the citizens also see themselves this way.

5.2.5 Input and output

The fifth and final systemic change involves an increased use of external input and output by opening the innovation process (Torfing et al., 2016). In all four municipalities, the initiative to innovation comes first and foremost from the state and local politicians through innovation strategies and municipal plans. All of the respondents listed the municipal councilman as the main driver for innovation. Although the state and politicians are listed as main drivers for innovation, they also work to encourage innovation within the organisations and to
increasingly involve the citizens in the process. Ringholm et al. (2011) name actors with the power to act and drive change as a prerequisite for a progressive innovation process, including mayors, chief municipal executives, leaders within the sectors and others in managing positions.

Both when looking at the national and municipal innovation strategies and when talking to the respondents, it is evident that the municipalities are increasingly realising that the population is heterogeneous, and that citizens’ needs will be many and varied in the future. The ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution is no longer viable, and thus solutions must be developed in collaboration with citizens and users. This supports Albury’s (2005) argument. Now, user involvement is part of every project in the municipalities. Nothing is done without at least talking to someone or performing a needs assessment. There is a focus on creating innovations adapted to the local community. Bason (2010) explains that gaining input from a wide variety of actors means that there will be many more varied ideas and suggestions on how to solve complex issues. Opening up to new types of knowledge including how citizens experience society and live their daily lives can help the municipalities understand which solutions are needed.

The respondent from Lørenskog mentioned an innovative acquirement that had failed because the municipality did not do a needs assessment to determine whether the acquisition was needed or not. The municipality did not gather the necessary input from the citizens. However, when Lørenskog was acquiring a new type of electronic medical dispenser, the users were involved in the implementation phase. They were able to influence the process based on how they experienced the product, which resulted in a very successful implementation. At the time of the interview, around 80 users in Lørenskog were using the dispenser, while other municipalities who had not involved the users in the process had only implemented around two or three. Bason (2010) explains this type of success by arguing that co-creation ‘anchors’ the innovation with the people it concerns, by having the user explain how the innovation would function in their daily lives. This process greatly enhances the possibility of success.

As the citizens are not yet used to being involved, the municipalities must take on an active role, show that they are an open municipality and that there is a desire for citizens to
participate. The municipalities cannot sit and wait for the citizens. It appears from the empiricism that Asker, which has taken on a more active role in seeking out citizens, has more engaged citizens than Lørenskog, who are unsure on how to engage the them. Lørenskog is waiting for the citizens to take initiative, but this will not necessarily happen on its own. The respondents from Asker argue that their citizens are interested in participating because the municipality has created a reputation for being open, and that previous co-creation partnerships have proven that the citizens have a chance to make a difference.
6 Conclusions

The aim of this thesis has been to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the barriers to user co-creation in public innovation?
2. How can municipalities create a culture for user co-creation?

These questions have been answered by adapting an analytical framework consisting of two parts. In the first part I have used Bason’s (2010) theory of the four c’s of the innovative ecosystem (consciousness, capacity, co-creation and courage). In this part, the barriers to and potential for co-creation found in the empiricism were analysed and placed in tables based on the four categories.

The first category, consciousness, involves awareness of co-creation. The main barriers in this dimension are the uncertainties surrounding the term co-creation, and that the municipalities are unsure of which methods to use when conducting co-creation processes. Co-creation is a relatively new term in the Norwegian public sector, and many are not sure of what it involves. Thus, it would be beneficial to create a common terminology that accounts for the various nuances and differences that co-creation involves. The municipalities should also look towards past projects, other municipalities or countries in order to understand which methods to use in the co-creation process.

The second category, capacity, involves the structure of the organisation. This category is divided into four parts: context; strategy; organisation; and people and culture. The barriers within this category include time and budget restrictions; political will and responsibilities; no established processes and precedence in the municipality; not enough effort put into understanding the needs of the citizens; co-creation is not prioritised; not enough networks with outside actors; no balance between innovative activities and traditional tasks; silo structures within the municipality; not enough competences; no room for failure; unencouraging managers; and resistance to change among municipal employees. Potentials in this category include creating new policies that support innovation and co-creation; finding new ways to think and innovate within the legal framework; create clear innovation strategies with clear co-creation sections; encourage bottom-up innovation; focus on citizens’ needs; create and participate in networks and share competences and experience with other
municipalities; have a separate innovation department that supports the services with competences, tools and knowledge; finding ways to balance innovation and co-creation with other tasks; employing new people, for example change agents and service designers; increase competences through employee training and sharing; provide incentives and funds; increasing awareness; allowing flexibility; and adjusting the attitudes and views of employees.

The third category, co-creation, deals with the process of co-creation. This category has three sub-categories: citizen involvement; orchestrating co-creation; and measuring and learning. Barriers found in this category involve the attitudes, expectations and experiences of citizens; difficulties in finding citizens who are representative of the population; lack of platforms and methods for co-creation; challenges connected to the co-creation process including time challenges, challenges in reaching out to citizens, and lack of preparedness; and not enough learning from previous projects. Potentials within this category include encouraging citizens and making them feel heard and taken seriously so that they will want to participate; opening the innovation process and maintaining a dialogue with citizens; actively reaching out to citizens; creating platforms and developing a set of different methods where different citizen groups are reached; and learning from previous projects.

The fourth and final category, courage, deals with the leadership of co-creation. Barriers in this category include fear of failure and giving up control; risk aversion; fear of failing political responsibilities; and the unpredictable nature of the co-creation process. Potentials for leadership include developing management skills; participating in leadership development programmes; learning how to manage risk; continuously assessing the process; and learning from others.

In the second part of the analytical framework I have used Torfing et al.’s (2016) five systemic changes needed for co-creation seen in the light of the three governance paradigms. Torfing et al. argues that there is need for a change towards more bottom-up innovation, long-term focus, use of information and communication technology, a transformation of the culture of public organisations, and more focus on input and output. The findings support that there is a need for these changes, and show that the municipalities are working to implement them. The new governance paradigm, community governance, values citizen involvement, co-creation, networks, and the creation of social value. In this paradigm, the citizens go from
being ‘taxpayers’ and ‘customers’ to being participants in communities. Most of the barriers found in the empirical data can be connected to a move towards the new governance paradigm. The innovation strategies of the municipalities aim to put more focus on citizens as innovative resources and partners in the innovation process, more focus on user involvement in general, and a move towards a new form of governance. Barriers including lack of competences, methods, platforms and a culture for co-creation suggest that adopting elements from the community governance paradigm would contribute to overcoming these barriers. This shift in governance requires an adjustment from traditional roles, attitudes, relationships and structures. Many actors, including politicians, public managers, employees and citizens are either resisting this change or having difficulties readjusting. Torfing et al. (2016) argue that redefining one’s identity is demanding, and that it is easier to maintain one’s initial role. The increased focus on citizen involvement and co-creation is fairly new in Norwegian municipalities, and thus it is natural to see these barriers in the early stages. According to one respondent, the municipality is in its early stages. The increased focus on user involvement, co-creation and innovation by politicians and public managers show that there is an awareness and will to overcome these barriers.

Elements from all three governance paradigms can be found within the municipalities. Although community governance is the paradigm best suited for co-creation, elements from the other two paradigms are needed to some degree. The municipalities must ensure that new innovations uphold a certain standard and relevance to the innovation strategies, which means that the municipal leaders must maintain some control over the process. There is a need for innovative strategies created by municipal leaders and the maintaining of democratic responsibilities. Politicians guide innovation in the right direction and make sure it is relevant to the strategy while at the same time allowing for flexibility, co-creation and bottom-up innovation within the services. There is also a need to purchase some innovative solutions from external actors in order to be more financially viable. Many municipalities have relatively similar needs, and thus all services and solutions do not need to be developed within each of the municipalities. However, the difference today is that there is a much larger focus on involving the users in the acquisition process. The municipality conducts needs analyses before acquiring any new solutions, and users are often involved in the testing phase and the implementation phase. Community governance is still a fairly new concept, and is in its developing phase within Norwegian municipalities. Based on the empirical data it is
reasonable to assume that community governance will be more embedded in the culture of the municipalities in the future. It is the direction the public sector is moving towards. However, it is not unlikely that elements of the other paradigms will remain.

The municipalities have an increased focus on the improvement of social outcomes. The aim is to create better services for the citizens, with the citizens, rather than a focus to improve efficiency or financial outcomes. The happiness and welfare of citizens is in the centre. The citizens are involved in every innovative decision, whether it is through co-creation or other forms of user involvement. Thus, the municipalities are moving towards community governance.

The empirical data shows that having a separate innovation unit with in-house competences, methods and strategies is very beneficial to creating a culture for innovation. However, this unit should be seen as a support to the services while at the same time encouraging innovation in every service. The unit should not have the sole responsibility for innovation and co-creation. Instead, a culture for innovation and co-creation must be fostered in all services of the municipality. Other essential ways the municipalities can create a culture for co-creation is by spreading competences, methods and experiences through intermunicipal networks, employing in-house competences, and having proactive political and municipal leaders who encourage innovation and co-creation and provide funds.

There is a lot that suggests that there will be more innovation and co-creation within Norwegian municipalities in the future. The innovation strategies are increasingly focusing on user involvement and user co-creation. Organisational changes indicate that the municipalities are moving towards community governance, but much of the culture and attitudes of the employees and the citizens are still fixed in the bureaucracy and NPM paradigms. However, as the system changes and organisational changes are being increasingly put in place, it is likely that the attitudes will follow. The municipalities are in the process of building competences and platforms, establishing methods and changing organisations. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that there will be more user co-creation in the future, and that innovation will be a natural part of the daily operations of the municipalities. In order to build a culture for co-creation, there is a need for more change culture, open processes, proactive leaders, more sharing across the municipalities, more experience and precedence, building of
platforms and developing of different methods. This will take time, and is not something that will come on its own. The municipalities need proactive managers, who dare to drive innovation and co-creation, encourage the employees and actively reaches out to citizens.

6.1 Future research

In this thesis I have looked at the organisation of co-creation from the perspective of innovation managers within the municipalities. In order to gain a more comprehensive and holistic perspective on the barriers and potentials for co-creation, it would be relevant to look at co-creation from other perspectives. One barrier found in this study is that many citizens are not engaged, and uninterested in participating in co-creation activities. Future research could therefore include the perspective of the citizens. In a study like this, it could be beneficial to interview citizens in order to find out what is needed for them to be engaged and participate in the co-creation process. This would be similar to the study conducted by the research group from Lørenskog.

Another possible aim for future research would be to look at the barriers for co-creation from the perspective of the employees within the municipality services. In this study, I have only talked to people whose main job is to work with innovation. The perspectives of other employees on the barriers to co-creation and how to create a culture for co-creation might be very different to the perspectives found in this study. One barrier found in the study was the resistance to change within the services. It would be interesting to gain insight to why this is from those who work within the services.

A third possible way to study these processes is through comparative studies. For example, it could be interesting to examine the difference between municipalities who have a separate innovation unit to those who do not, and understand the effect of the innovation units. It could also be interesting to compare Norwegian municipalities to municipalities in other countries. During the data collection phase, it was found that Denmark has come further than Norway in the use of co-creation. It would be interesting to see the differences between the two countries, in order to understand which factors have led to more use of co-creation in Denmark.
Reference List


Appendices

Appendix 1 Interview guide

Questions in Norwegian:

INNLEDNING
  - Hva er din rolle i kommunen?
  - Hva er hovedoppgavene dine?
  - Jobber du over flere sektorer?
  - Hvilke prosjekter jobber du med?

INNOVASJON
  - Hvor kommer initiativ til innovasjon fra?
  - Er det vanlig at innbyggere kommer med forslag eller behov som fører til innovasjon?
  - Hvordan bestemmes det hva det skal fokuseres på?
  - Fokuseres det mer på innovasjon i visse sektorer?
    - Hvilke?
    - Hvorfor?
  - Fokuseres det mest på å skape helt nye innovasjoner, eller på å adaptere innnovasjoner fra andre kommuner/land/sektorer? En blanding?
  - Hvordan foregår spredning mellom bydelene/andre kommuner?
  - Hva gjør ledelsen i kommunen/bydelen for å skape en kultur for innovasjon?
    - Fokuseres det på å utvikle lederes egenskaper i forhold til innovasjon?

SAMSKAPING
  - Til hvilken grad jobbes det med samskaping med brukere/innbyggere i kommunen?
  - Syns du samskaping skjer i stor nok grad, eller er det noe du skulle ønske var vanligere?
  - Jobbes det med samskaping i forskjellige sektorer? Typisk mer i en enn en annen?
  - Jobber dere med samskaping med brukere i flere prosjekter? Kan du fortelle litt om hvilke/hvordan?
  - Hva er utfordringene?
  - Hva er fordelen?
  - Hvordan foregår samskapingsprosessen? Brukes forskjellige metoder i forskjellige prosjekter?
  - Foregår samskaping i alle faser av innovasjonsprosessen?
  - Er dette en ny måte å jobbe på, eller en metode som har blitt brukt lenge?
    - Skjer det oftere nå?
    - Har metodene for samskaping utviklet seg? Hvordan? Har kommunen utviklet seg når det kommer til samskaping?
  - Finnes det egne plattformer der innbyggere/brukere kan komme med innspill/behov?
  - Syns du samskaping med brukere stort sett har gitt gode resultatet? Kommer det gode ideer ut av slike samarbeid?
    - Har du noen eksempler?
- Har du noen eksempler på prosjekter hvor samskaping har blitt tatt i bruk, men ikke vært så effektivt?
- Hva slags barrierer mener du står i veien for samskaping?
- Hvordan kan disse barrierene overkommes?
- Hva tror du må endres for at det skal bli mer samskaping?
- Tror du det trengs en endring i kultur for at samskaping skal skje i større grad?
- Deles det innovasjonsstrategier/metoder for samskaping på tvers av kommunene? Hva er de største utfordringene dere ser når det gjelder å involvere brukere?
- Merkes det noe til etiske problemstillinger rundt samskaping med mer sårbare grupper?
- Hva slags holdninger har brukerne til samskapingsprosessen? Har de vært positive/negative? Er de engasjerte?
Appendix 2 Informed consent form

Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet

"User Co-creation in Public Innovation"?

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å undersøke til hvilken grad samskaping med brukere foregår i norske kommuner, og hva mulige barrierer, løsninger og metoder kan være. I dette skrivet gis informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltaking vil innebære for deg.

Formål

Jeg er masterstudent ved Universitetet i Oslo på et studium som heter Society, Science and Technology in Europe. Her spesialiserer jeg meg innen innovasjonsstudier. Jeg jobber nå med masteroppgaven, og har valgt å skrive om temaet ‘samskaping i offentlig innovasjon’. Innenfor dette temaet har jeg valgt å fokusere på helse og omsorgssektoren. Jeg er interessert i å finne ut til hvilken grad kommuner jobber med samskaping med brukere, hvilke utfordringer og barrierer som står i veien for dette, og hvordan dette kan løsnes på best mulig måte ved å ta i bruk metoder for samskaping. For å svare på dette ønsker jeg å snakke med ansatte i norske kommuner som jobber med innovasjon og samskaping med brukere.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

Senter for Teknologi, Innovasjon og Kultur (TIK) ved Universitetet i Oslo er ansvarlig for prosjektet.

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

Du får spørsmål om å delta da jeg ønsker å intervjue ansatte som jobber med innovasjon og samskaping innenfor helse og omsorgssektoren i norske kommuner. Jeg ønsker å se på 4-5 norske kommuner som jobber aktivt med innovasjon.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?


Det er frivillig å delta


Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

Jeg vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene jeg har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Jeg behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket. De som vil
ha tilgang til disse er meg, Synne Boberg, og min veileder, Markus Bugge. Jeg vil ikke bruke ditt navn eller dine kontaktopplysninger i oppgaven, kun navn på kommunen du jobber i samt hvilken avdeling i kommunen.

**Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når forskningsprosjektet avsluttes?**

**Dine rettigheter**
Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:
- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg,
- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg,
- få slettet personopplysninger om deg,
- få utlevert en kopi av dine personopplysninger (dataportabilitet), og
- å sende klage til personvernombudet eller Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

**Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?**
Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra Senter for Teknologi, Innovasjon og Kultur (TIK) ved Universitetet i Oslo har NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

**Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?**
Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:
- Senter for Teknologi, Innovasjon og Kultur (TIK) ved Universitetet i Oslo ved prosjektansvarlig: Markus Bugge, epost: markus.bugge@tik.uio.no, eller student: Synne Boberg, epost: synnebob@student.sv.uio.no.
- Vårt personvernombud: Maren Magnus Voll, epost: personvernombud@uio.no.
- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS, på epost (personverntjenester@nsd.no) eller telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen

Markus Bugge

Synne Boberg

Prosjektansvarlig

Student

(Forsker/veileder)
Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet «User Co-Creation in Public Innovation», og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

☐ å delta i intervju

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet, ca. 28. oktober 2019.

Signert av: prosjektdeltaker, dato