

## Collaboration as a governance approach in itself: Prototyping outdoor arenas for work, study & creativity through processes of co-creation<sup>1</sup>

In the last Governance talk, Nina and Märit shared the main scope of the project “Innovation arenas Markaryd<sup>2</sup>”, which has the purpose of developing and testing different prototypes that facilitate studying and working outdoors and the requirements for planning and design to promote different types of outdoors working practices.

The prototypes that will be developed and tested concern the following different spaces:

- **Makerspaces** - arenas for creativity and co-creation
  - Which can foster co-production in exchanges between local communities, businesses, local knowledge producers among others.
  - Where learning and networking can be fostered through organized activities.
- **Outdoor working places** - a flexible infrastructure
  - Which explores the infrastructure with various types of places, comfort, privacy, flexibility, etc.; to which follow-up activities and adjustments throughout the project period will be applied.
- **Walking environments** - development of paths for work and studies
  - Which aim to integrate elements of physical activity, green and recreational environment, for e.g. walking meetings in small groups.
  - Thematic routes can also be developed to promote different walking forms for work and study, such as "walk and talk", "think walk" and "outdoor reading".



### Project goals

The project's goal is to develop scalable prototypes for outdoor working spaces that can be part of a dynamic (urban) planning and local site development and which can contribute to a positive societal development.

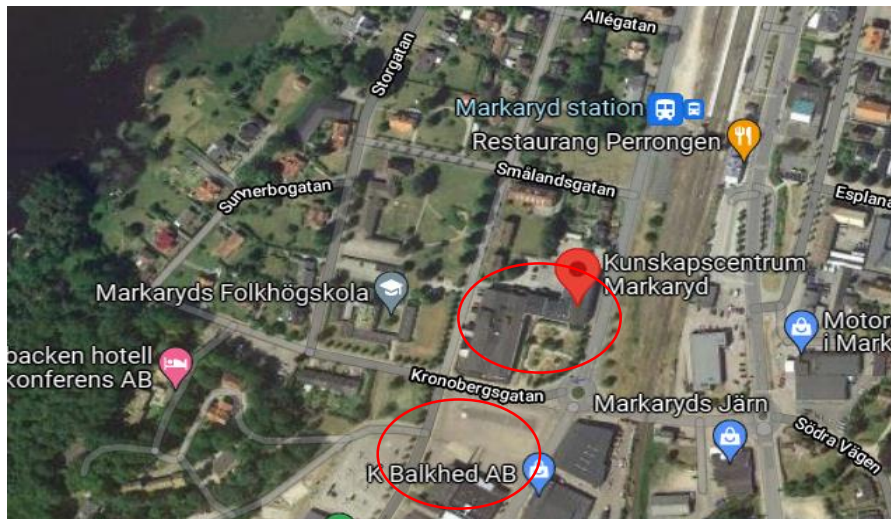
### Research questions

- What are the effects of the different prototypes for students' and employees' wellbeing, motivation, collaboration, learning and creativity?
- How can outdoor workplaces contribute to enhancing work life quality and business development?

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<sup>2</sup> “Innovationsarenor Markaryd” in Swedish.

To govern the project, a collaboration network between local actors from Markaryd Municipality and SLU researchers has been established, building on previous collaborations which have included also SLU students.



Project area in Markaryd's Municipality, the development areas are shown in red.

During the talk and discussion, very relevant questions about the roles of researchers in governance structures emerged. Is the university an actual part of the governance structure? Or just a facilitator?

The engagement of different actors, as described in this project, calls for more specific analysis of how the different actors contribute and interact in co-creation processes and what kind of governance structure facilitates these processes. The role of the researcher as part of the consortium needs to be reflected upon, especially in action research type of projects where researchers are not solely evaluating or monitoring, but are also participating and engaged in promoting development and change.

More generally speaking, when doing *action research* and aiming for change it is important to ask: What has a normative character? Which roles and mandate have the different actors involved? How is power distributed? Researchers may add a level of authority, which can influence the relationships and dynamics as well as dependencies. In the Swedish context there is the term and practice of "följeforskare" or "följeforskning" in projects, which could be roughly translated as a "following researcher". It would be interesting to define this role more in detail, identify the researcher's level of engagement and/or observation, and relate this to the field of action research.

It is of relevance to relate to/investigate models where researchers have differing/new roles in undertaking research practices or development, such as the *connoisseur method*<sup>3</sup>, where the university is balancing different interests such as i.e.: acting as facilitator and as stakeholder at the same time. Can researchers be more neutral to do the follow up than i.e.: a municipality, despite being part of the project?

*The project started in October 2021 and will have a duration of three years. Funded by Vinnova, this project aims to test, develop and examine the requirements for planning and design different types of working outdoors practices.*

<sup>3</sup> Mellqvist, H. (2017). The connoisseur method—a study on long-term participation in landscape planning. Swedish Agriculture University.