AI and participatory democracy

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City of Sundsvall

Sundsvall

- A municipality in Västernorrland County, northern Sweden

- Population (31/12 2024), 99 048, Sweden's 21st largest city.

- The city's historic center, *Stenstan* (meaning "Stone City"), is famous for its grand stone buildings, constructed after a major fire in the late 19th century

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Mission – develop the center square

- Conduct a dialogue with Sundsvall residents and businesses on how to develop meeting places in Sundsvall in general and Stora Torget (center square) specifically

- Develop proposals for measures for the square based on the results of the dialogue process

- Testing the citizen dialogue strategy

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Sundsvall's model for systematic citizen dialogue

A process in three phases:

- **Initiation phase** – Start and planning

- **Implementation phase** – Dialogue and analysis
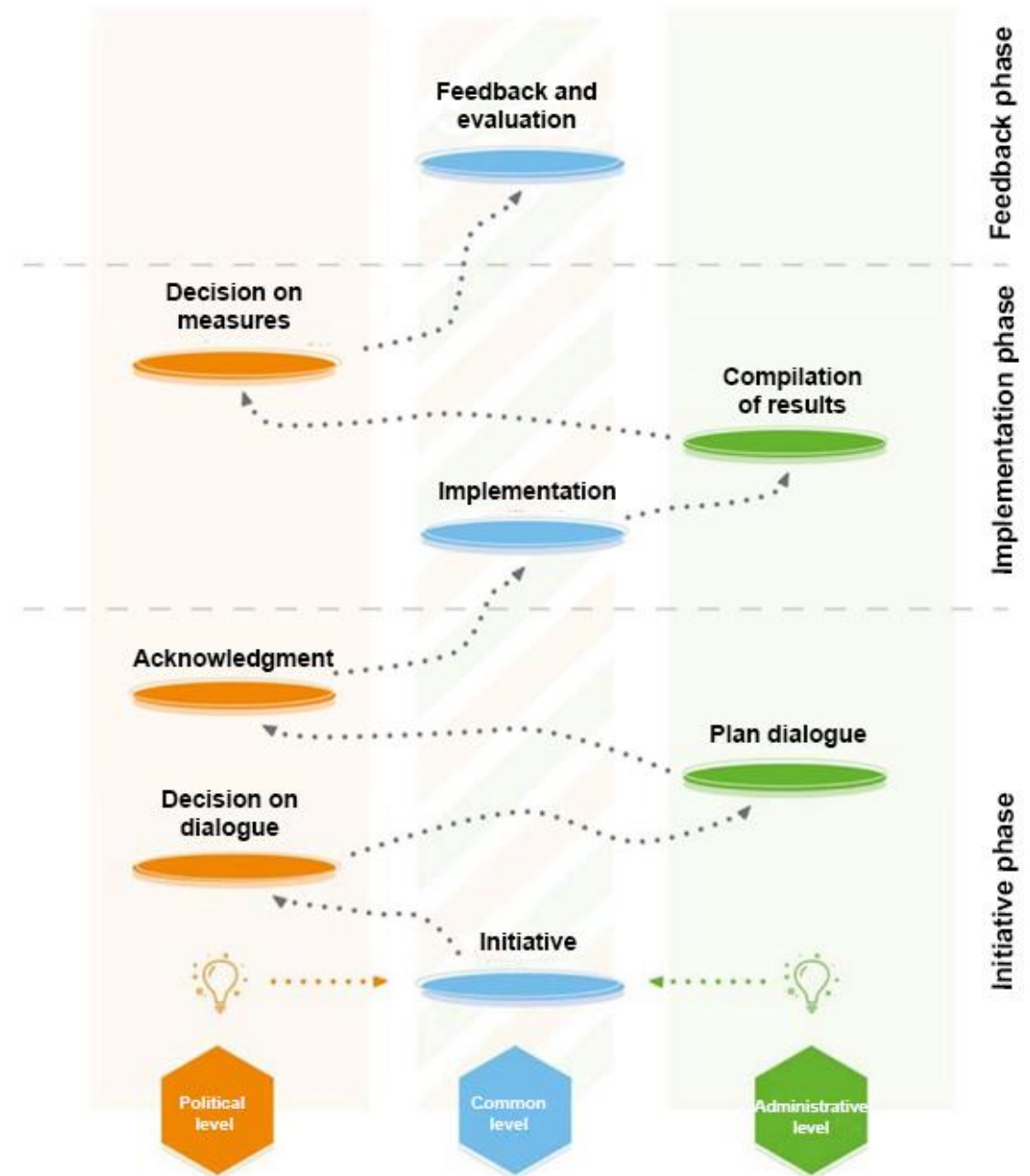
- **Feedback phase** – Results and evaluation

Förslag till modell för medborgardialog i Sundsvalls kommun

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Sundsvalls kommun

Who does what?

- **Initiative phase** – Who decides that a dialogue should be conducted?

- **Implementation phase** – Who carries it out, and how do we proceed? Target groups, methods, communication, etc.?

- **Feedback phase** – Who is responsible for feedback? How do participants, decision-makers, and other stakeholders receive the results, and how are they used?

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Ten principles for citizen dialogue

1. Better decision-making basis

2. All issues are equally important

3. Opportunity to influence

4. Mandate in the dialogue

5. Knowledge before the dialogue

6. Participation

7. Feedback and transparency

8. Elected representatives participate

9. Representing the municipality

10. Continuous development

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Testing dialogue methods – analog, digital, AI

Dialogue with more than 1 000 people

Sundsvall in one room (to discuss polarizing issues)

Mobile office on the square (meeting with politicians)

3D digital twin (to attract gaming youth group)

Workshops with key stakeholders

In-depth discussions with groups, external/internal

Collaboration with students

School method kit (Jamboard for schools and preschools)

Simplified survey for some groups

Digital survey

AI – compilation of:
previous dialogue results
investigations
reports
survey responses

AI – transcription of:
interviews with key stakeholders

AI – compilation of interview results

AI – comparison of all materials

Advantages and disadvantages of AI

Advantages:

1. Time-saving

2. Efficient data collection
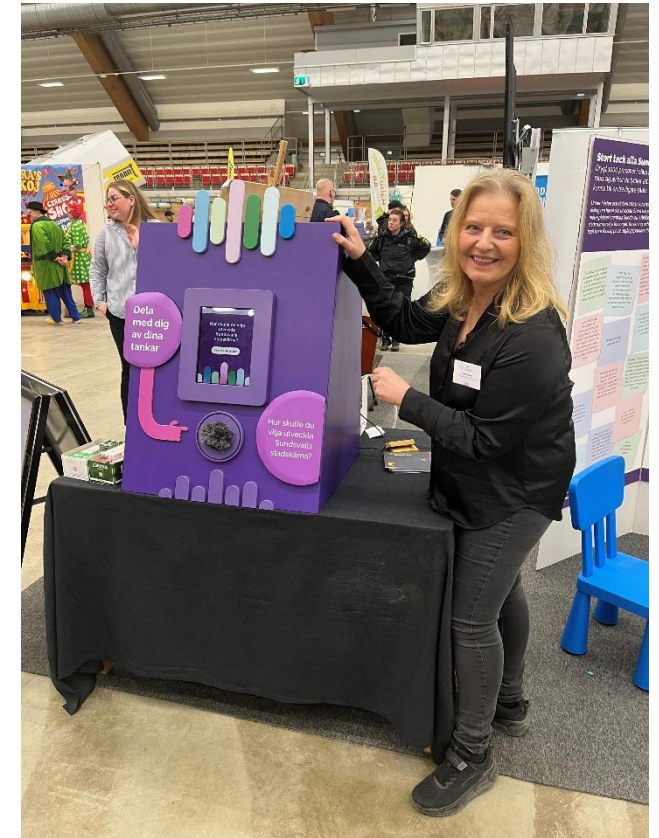
3. Quick retrieval of answers

Disadvantages:

1. Lacks "human" signals

2. Generative AI can be overly creative

3. Requires well-formulated questions

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Intric - open platform solution for generative AI in the public sector

- An innovative generative artificial intelligence (AI) platform developed by Sundsvall Municipality in collaboration with the startup Inoo Labs.

- This platform aims to facilitate broad and effective use of AI technology, like many modern software solutions, it is released as open-source on GitHub.

- Central to the project's philosophy is the transition to open source, which minimizes dependency on specific vendors and encourages collaboration and resource sharing among municipalities.

- This approach is part of Sundsvall Municipality's strategy to build a sustainable digital infrastructure, where openness and accessibility are fundamental principles.
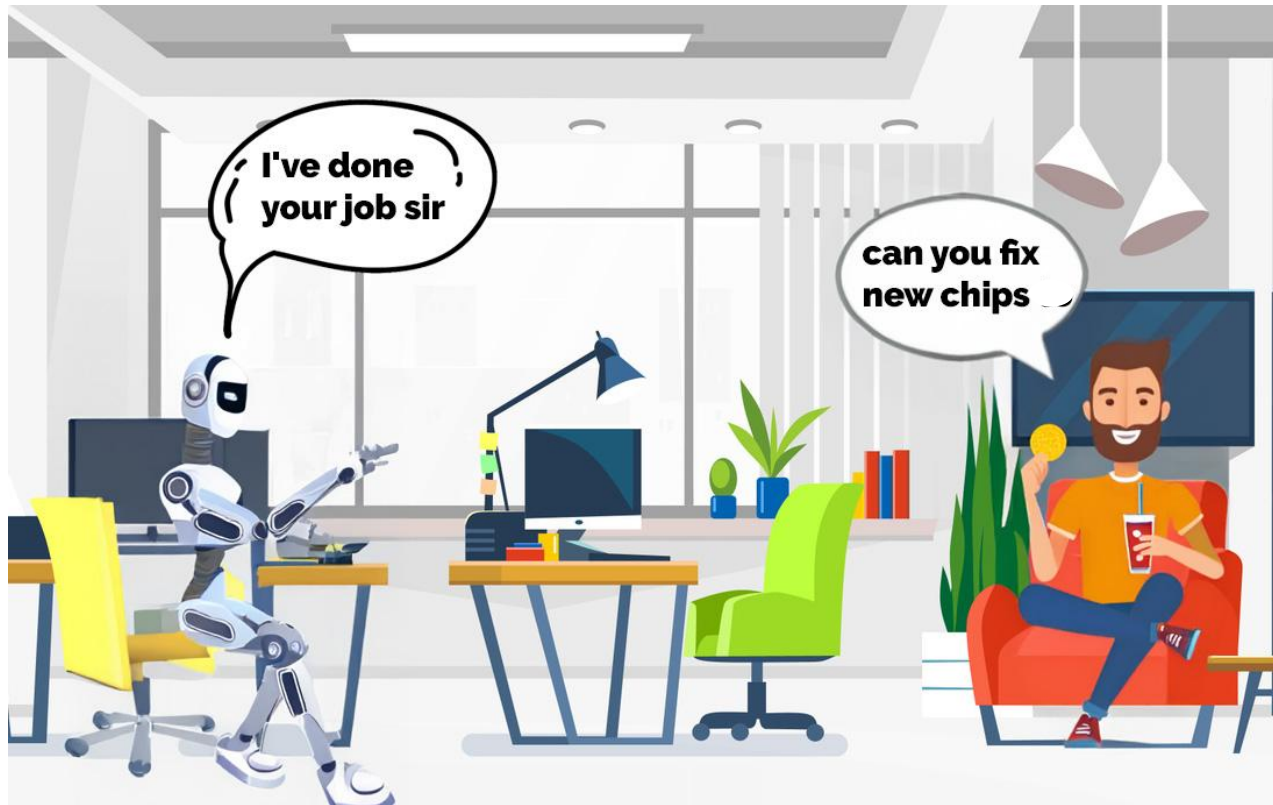

Citizens can provide feedback, which is transcribed by AI in a so-called "pratomat" (speech automaton).

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Key features and benefits

- Centralized Administration: active governance of AI models and settings, ensuring secure operation of AI applications.

- Collaboration Functions: teamwork to co-develop AI applications, conduct testing and verification.

- Integration of AI Models: supports a wide array of AI models, including the capability to run models in the municipality's own local environment, thereby enhancing the capacity for handling personal data.

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We are not there yet…..

….but of course the image is generated by AI….

Thank you for listening!

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