

Gaming Regional Development in Sweden

...using tourism as a tool

Public sector

1
knowledge
area

18
processes

Private sector

7
knowledge
areas

16
processes

Private sector

8
knowledge
areas

22
processes

Public sector

1
knowledge
area

15
processes

Private sector

5
knowledge
areas

12
processes

Public sector

4
knowledge
areas

25
processes

Naming it and gaming it

Navigating multi stakeholder multi layered complex governance through co-creation and collaborative gameplay.

Why – what – how

And some key takeaways

TILLSAMMANS



Samskapad platsutveckling

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Complex systems

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Framtidsstrateg

Future forecasting

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Place development

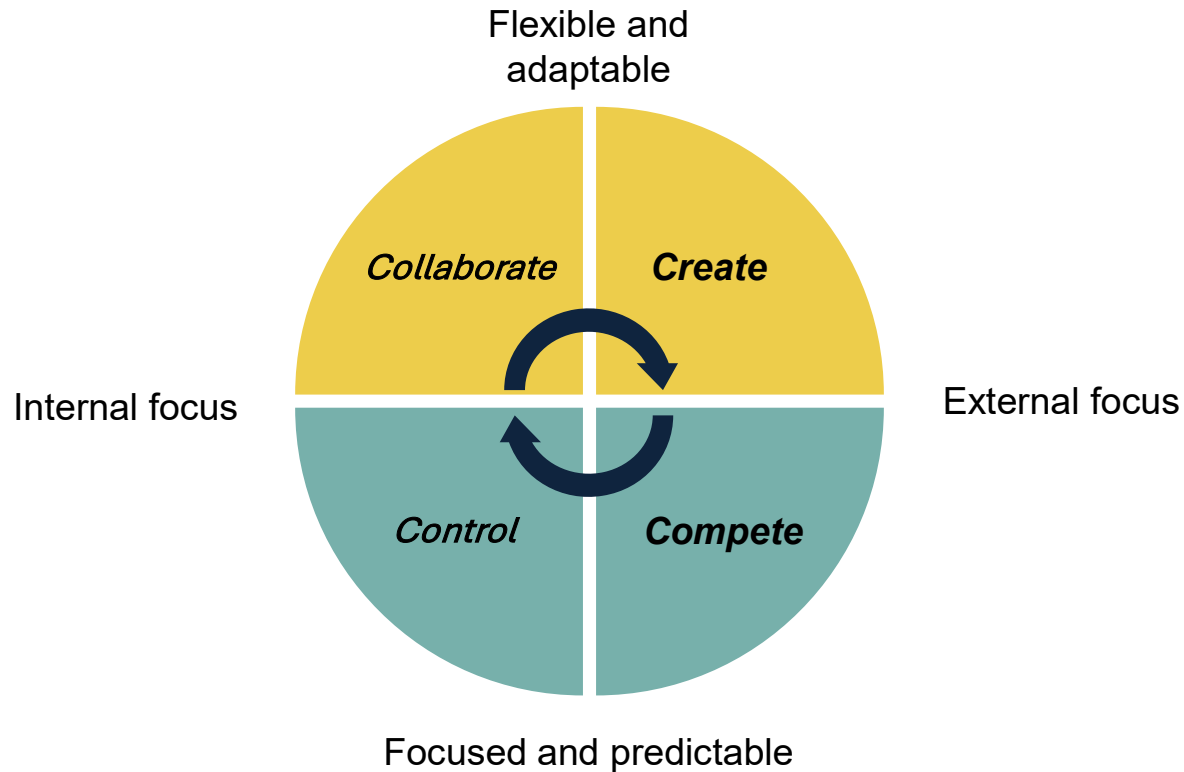
Why

A place is governed by state actors,
regional actors and municipal actors

while

local public and private stakeholders
turn the resources of the place into value.

Long term development and breakthroughs only appear when we can leave incremental improvement and short-term performance behind



A broad definition of a game



Negotiation and dialogue
(sometimes competition
and conflict) around
individual and collective
goals

Roles, goals
and resources

What

The place

The resources

The governance actors

The stakeholders

The system

The objectives

A prompt



Capital

Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capital explains how power and class differences are produced and reproduced through four distinct forms of assets: economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital. These resources can be converted into one another and determine an individual's position within society.

The concept of capital also offers a framework for understanding and engaging in place-based development.

PIERRE
BOURDIEU



Forms of Capital

GENERAL SOCIOLOGY, VOLUME 3
LECTURES AT THE COLLÈGE DE FRANCE,
1983–84

Place

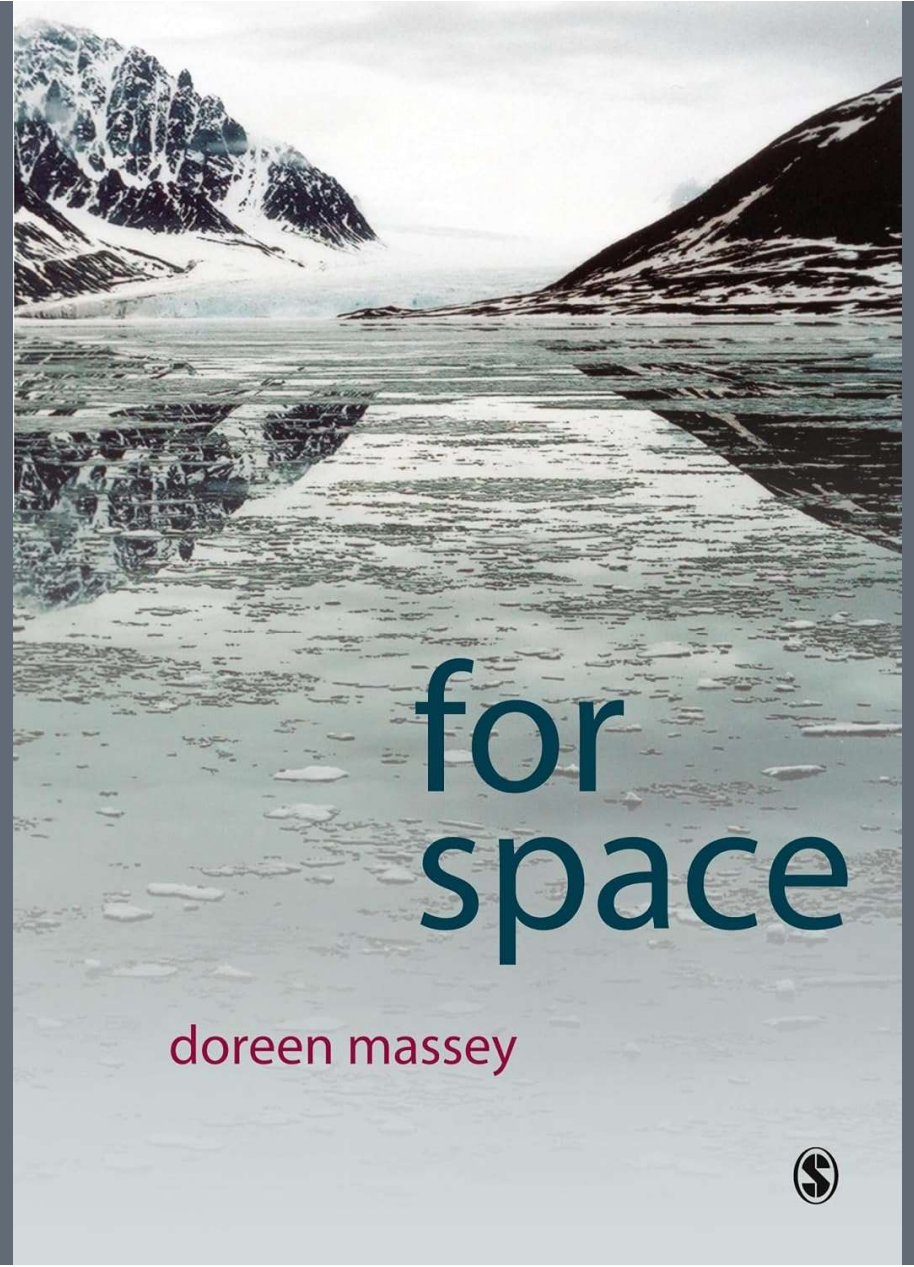
A geographic area.

Relational – places are created through networks, collaboration, and relationships.

Multidimensional – places encompass multiple meanings and interests simultaneously.

Dynamic – places are constantly changing.

Place development is a continuous balancing act and dialogue between these dimensions.



for
space

doreen massey



Capital =
resources
that can
create new
value

A place consists of different forms of capital.

These forms of capital help us understand what a place is—its strengths, sustainability, and development opportunities.

Capital can be interchangeable and combined with one another.

An event or intervention affects capital in various ways.

Collaboration

The capital perspective makes it possible to view place development as a process in which existing resources are identified, mobilized, combined, and transformed into new values for the place.

At the same time, the theory directs attention to the need for collaboration: who has access to the place's resources, who gets to define what is valuable, and which groups benefit from the values created by development?

The role of resources in the game

When we play TILLSAMMANS, the forms of capital represent the place, based on reality (mapping that underpins the game) and what we want to emphasize during play.

Thus, the distribution of capital does not reflect an exact reality, but a sharpened or exaggerated one.



Why can it be so
frustrating or hard to
play this game?

(And why is that part of the point?)



Focus on collaboration makes the game harder

1.

The importance of collaboration is well-established in research on societal development. Strong collaboration can contribute to innovative solutions for complex societal challenges, more efficient resource utilization, and improved quality, while also laying the foundation for more resilient societal systems.

Focus on
collaboration
makes the
game harder

2.

From a place development perspective, collaboration can help build relationships and networks, strengthen local anchoring, and create conditions for shared ownership and long-term development processes.

Focus on
collaboration
makes the
game harder

3.

For this reason, collaboration is often emphasized in publicly funded development projects and is seen as a critical prerequisite for achieving project goals and creating lasting effects that endure even after the project or event has concluded.

Path dependence and lock-in are useful concepts for understanding how place development is not only about the available resources and opportunities, but also about the ability to imagine and choose alternative development paths beyond the established ones in order to enable collaboration.

Path dependence

1.

Path dependence simplifies the idea that past decisions, experiences, and ways of organizing activities influence which alternatives appear possible and reasonable today.

Path dependence

2.

Individuals and organizations, then, do not start with a blank slate. They carry established ways of working, knowledge, relationships, and assumptions about "how we usually do things here." The longer a particular development path is followed, the more knowledge, resources, and institutions are built around it, making it easier to continue on the same path than to choose a new one.

Path dependence

3.

This does not have to be negative. It can create expertise, specialization, efficiency, and strong networks. The challenge arises when the established path also begins to limit what actors perceive as possible solutions.

Lock-in can be described as a more entrenched state where actors become so tied to established perspectives, relationships, and solutions that alternative ways of understanding problems or developing the place struggle to emerge.

Examples include:

1.

Cognitive lock-in:

Actors have grown accustomed to understanding the place or problem in a specific way—e.g., "This is an industrial city," "Tourists come here for the nature," or "This is how we've always done it."

Lock-in can be described as a more entrenched state where actors become so tied to established perspectives, relationships, and solutions that alternative ways of understanding problems or developing the place struggle to emerge.

Examples include:

2.

Organizational/institutional lock-in:

Rules, routines, funding systems, and divisions of responsibility make certain solutions easier than others.

Lock-in can be described as a more entrenched state where actors become so tied to established perspectives, relationships, and solutions that alternative ways of understanding problems or developing the place struggle to emerge.

Examples include:

3.

Relational lock-in:

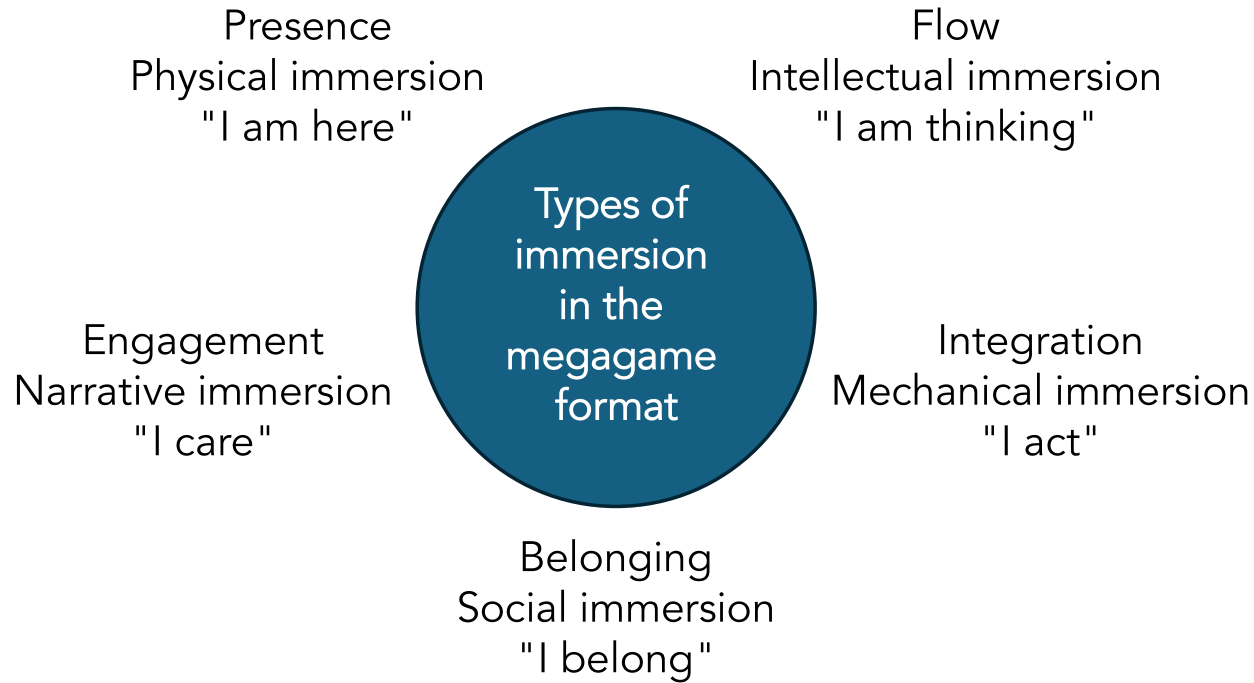
The same organizations and individuals collaborate repeatedly. Networks become strong, but new actors and perspectives find it difficult to break in.

Making it a game is a concrete way to try to reveal (and potentially break) the mechanisms described by path dependence and lock-in.

If the challenge is that individuals and organizations tend to interpret a place's challenges based on their established roles, experiences, and interests...

...the game creates a temporary arena where these ingrained structures can be disrupted.

Important aspects of immersion for this type of game



Småland Highland

27 November 2026

The game's setup was carefully designed to reflect reality:

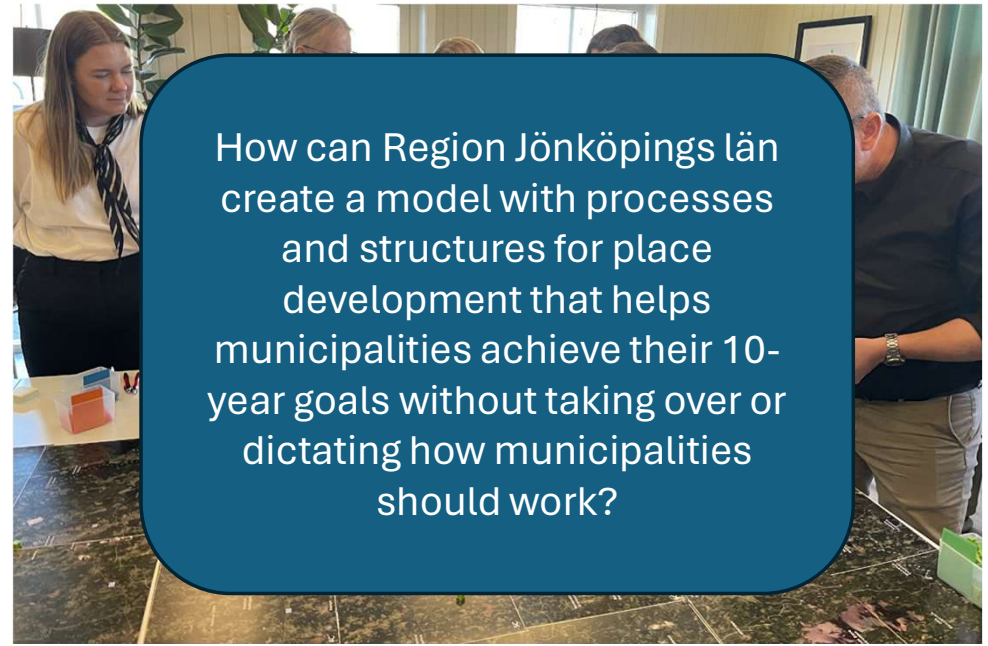
Each municipality had its own 10-year goals, drawn from the real RUS dialogue (RUS = Regional Development Strategy).

The municipalities' comprehensive plans (ÖP) were added, including real designated locations for future development.

A few of the County Administrative Board's most important priorities (national interests and protected areas) were overlaid as a "thin layer."

Some of the business sector's agendas were included based on the RUS mapping: industry, education, green industries, services, and the visitor economy.

The regional organization did not have a clear role or mandate linked to the above but had its own internal regional priorities from the RUS.



Insights

The simulation of reality in Region Jönköpings län offered by the method was so true-to-life that the players felt they were:

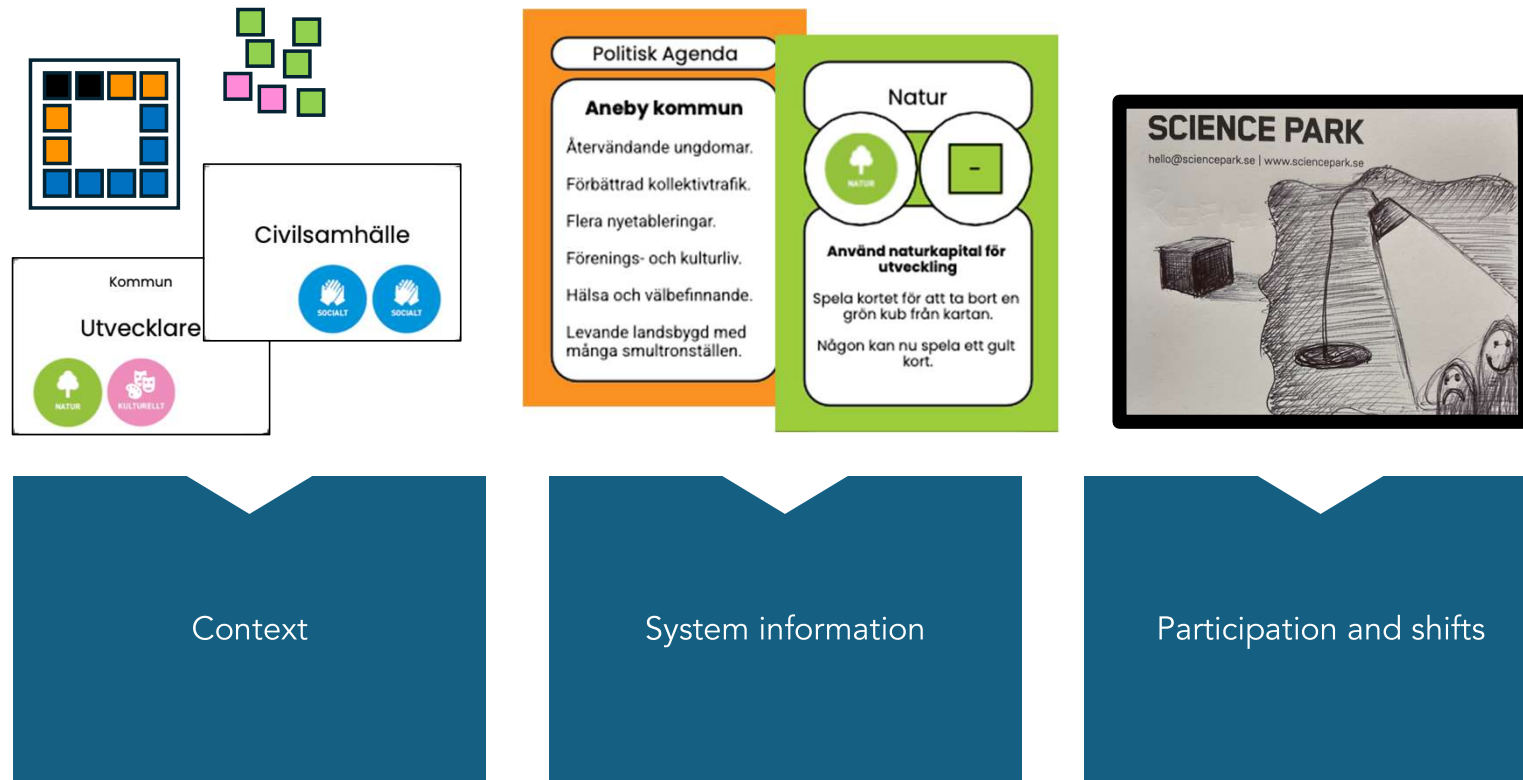
Working with real challenges (e.g., balancing political will, citizen engagement, and business needs),

Experiencing the same frustrations as in their actual work (e.g., lack of clear decision-making paths or the difficulty of aligning different agendas).

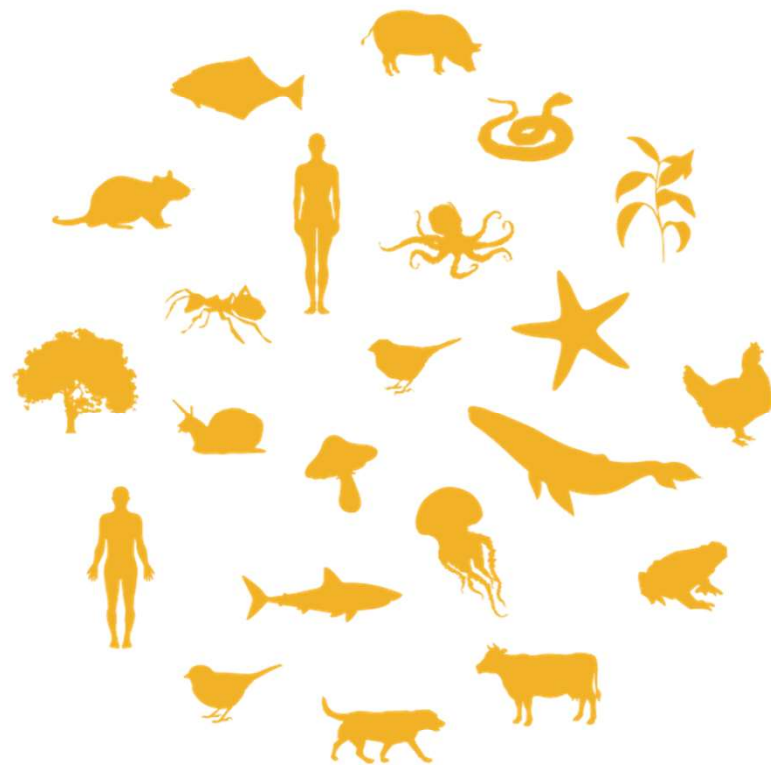
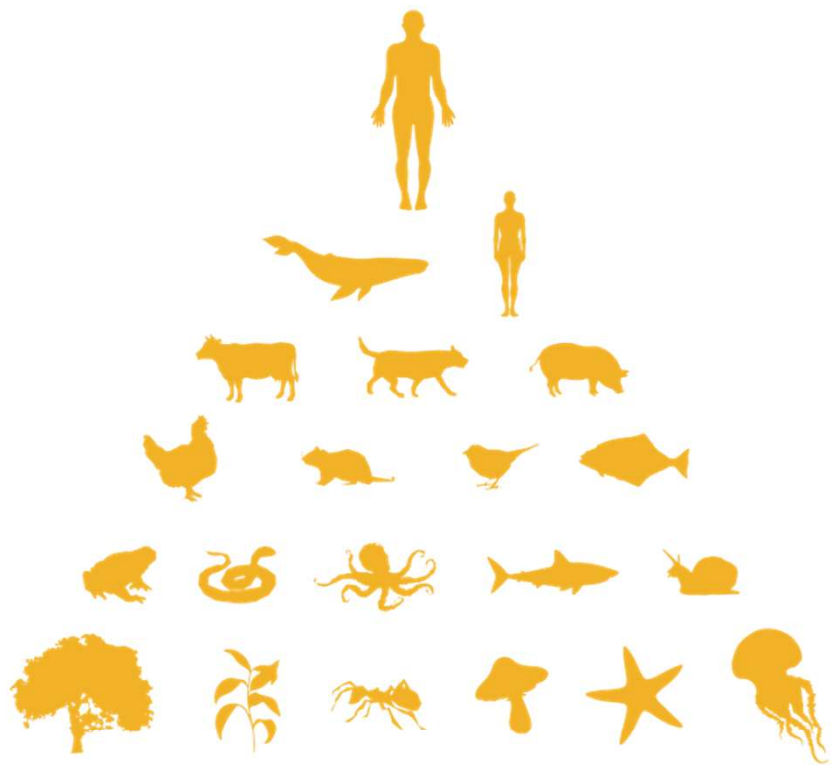
Insight: Systems thinking is the key—but it's hard to grasp. Promoting multi-level collaboration involves (1) understanding and (2) influencing systems, not just individual projects. However, this is very difficult to communicate and understand, as many actors are accustomed to working within their own silos. This places a significant responsibility on the region, both in the game and in reality.



Key learnings and insights



Alltid en avvägning: Grad av skärpa?



Summing up

Prerequisites:

A place in a clearly defined development phase, with a distinct "before" and "after" the game.

Political mandate for place development.

Collaboration ambition: "Everyone is important."

Mapping



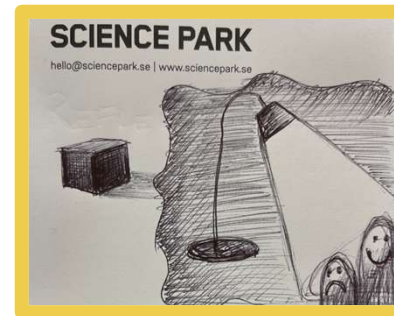
1. Stories at the map: resources and places
2. Regional development dialogue
3. Comprehensive plans
4. Strategy documents

Gameplay



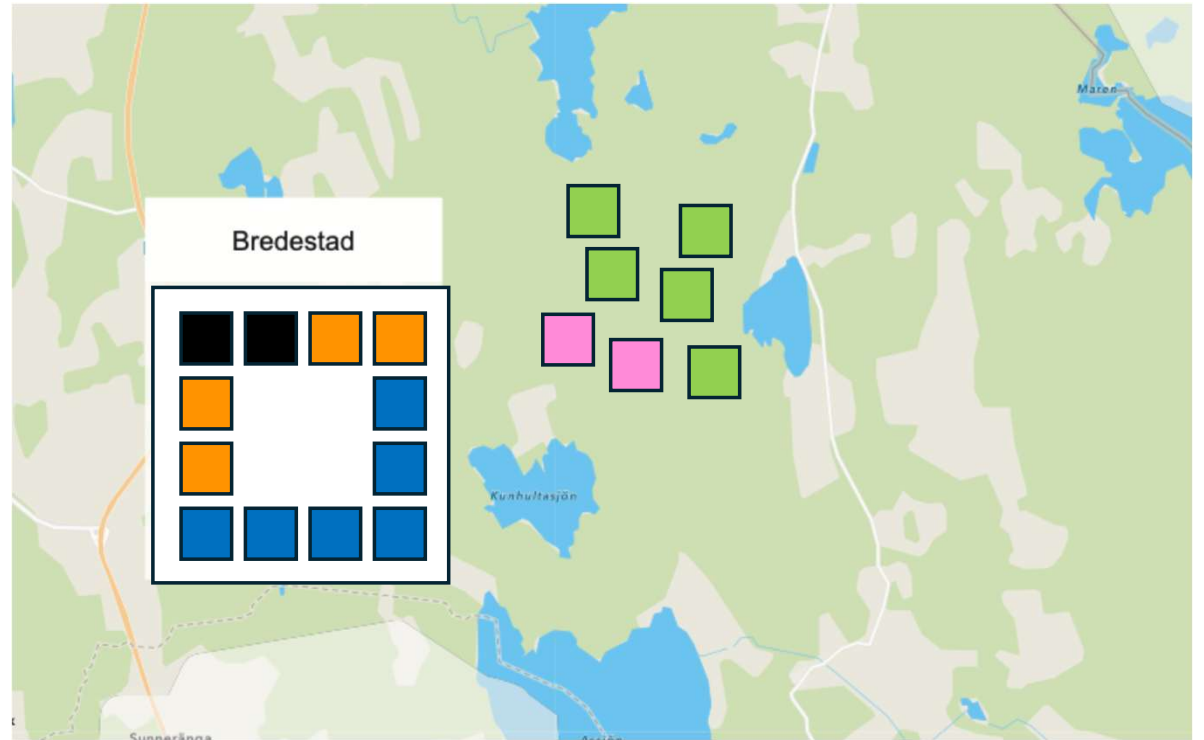
1. Large-scale scenario work
2. Safe testing environment
3. Simulated place development 10 years into the future
4. Up to 100 participants

Reflection



1. Conclusions and lessons are built into place-specific solutions, such as collaboration.
2. Lessons learned are incorporated into future games about the place.

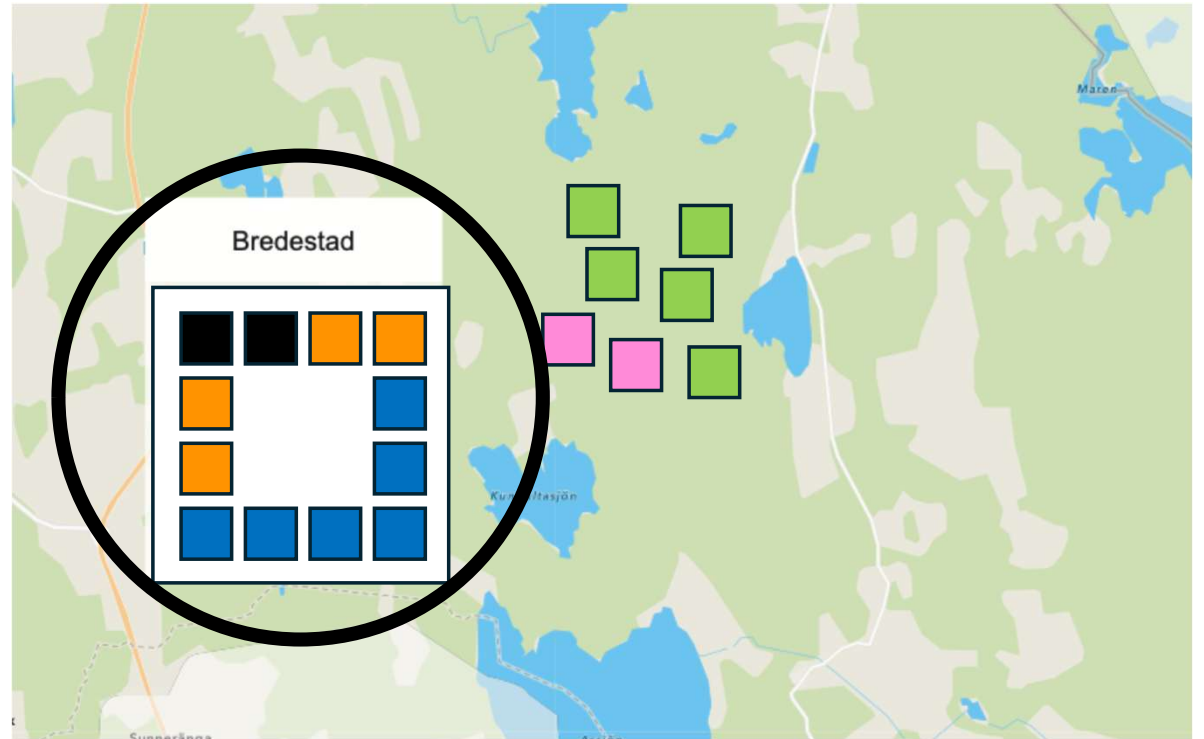
Quick run through of the actual game



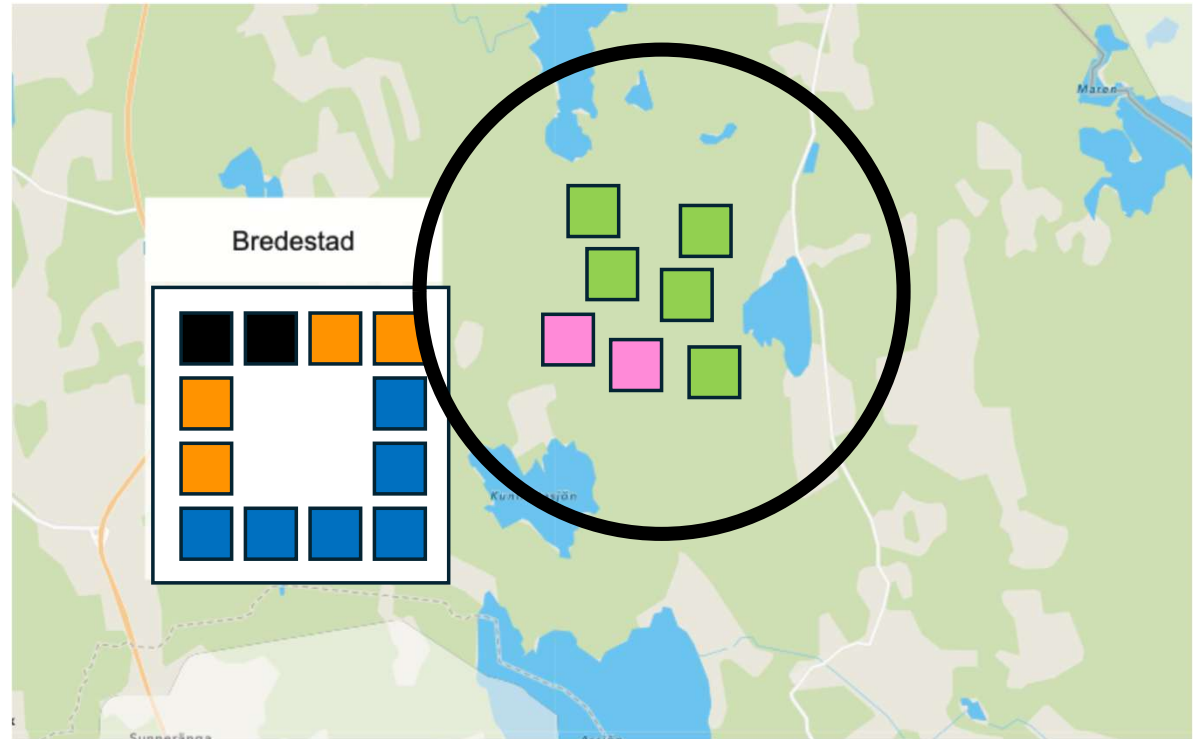
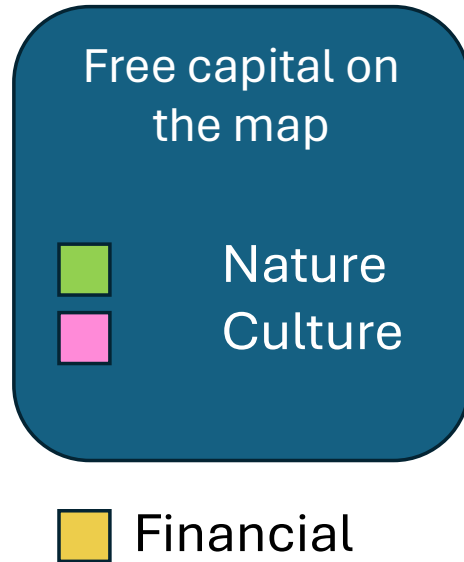
On the map in front of the players

A place with
fixed capital

Orange square	Political
Blue square	Social
Black square	Physical



On the map in front of the players



Game roles (simplified)

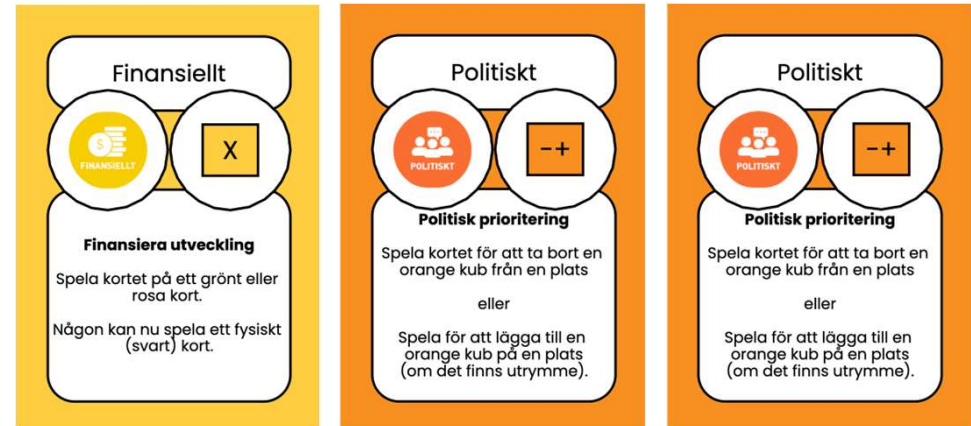
You always start each round with the number of cards indicated on your tile.

Cards are removed when used but are replenished at the start of the next round.

You cannot save cards between rounds.

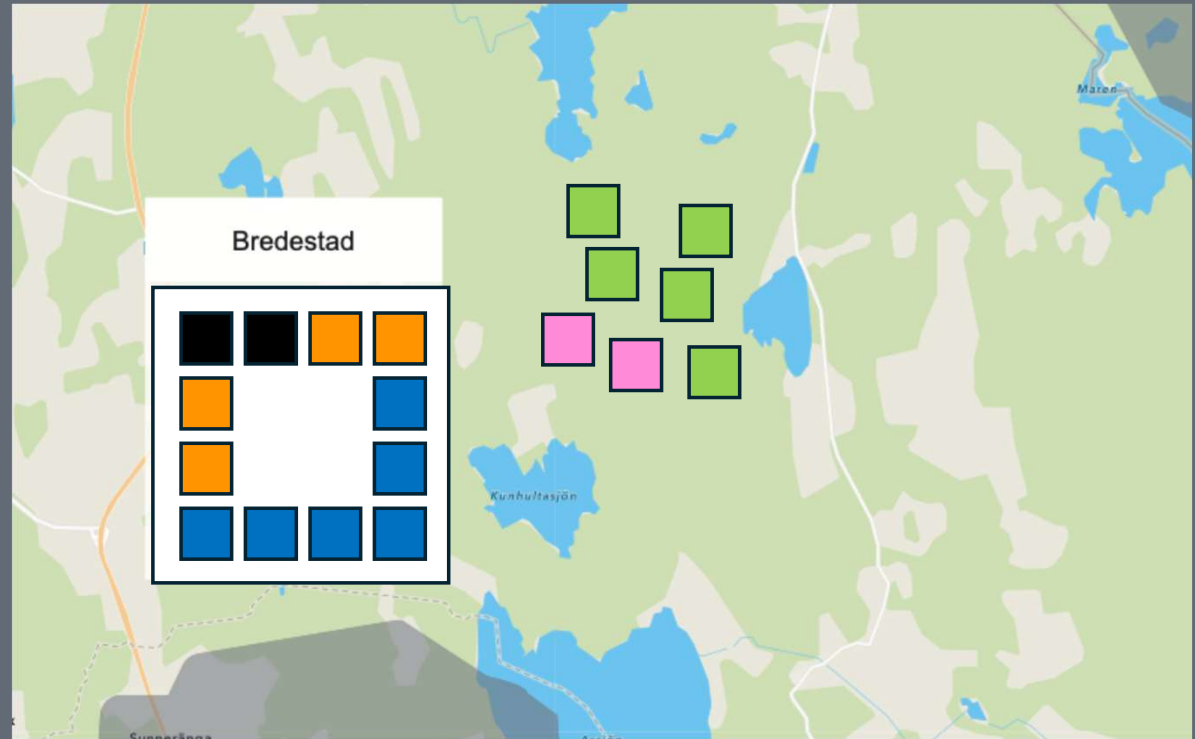


=



First action: Political initiative to develop a place

1. A local politician

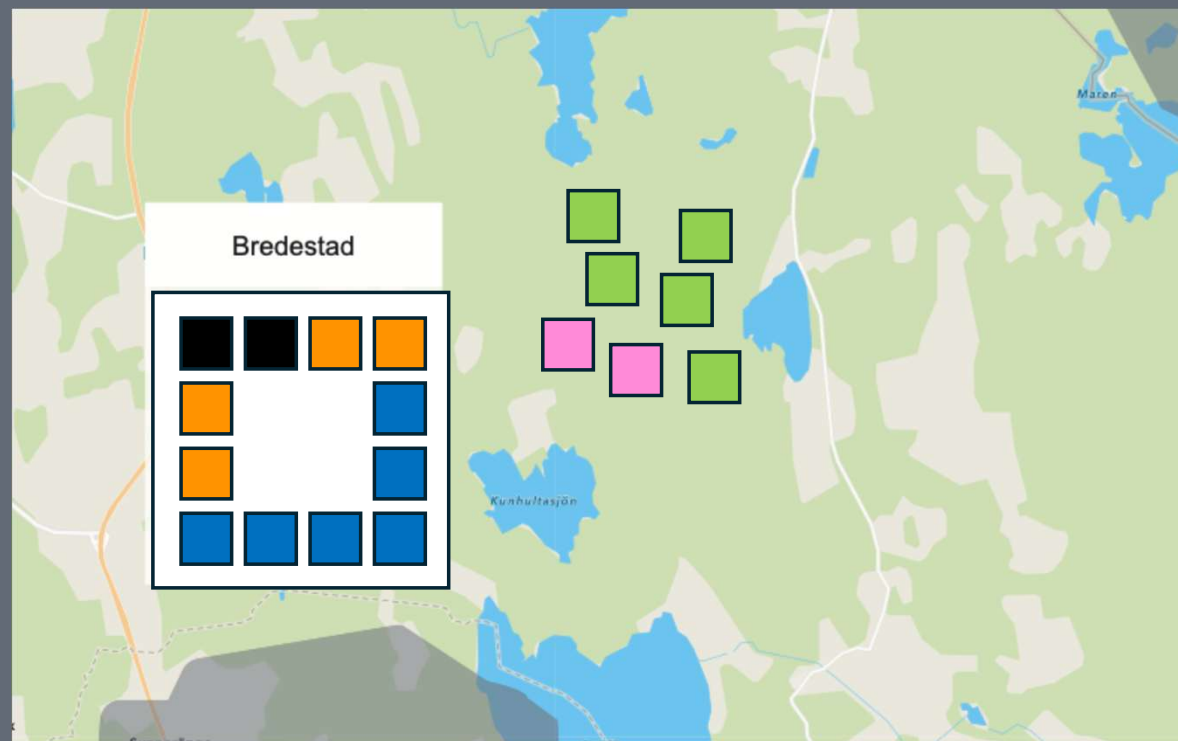


First action: Political initiative to develop a place

1. A local politician



2. Plays an orange card



First action: Political initiative to develop a place

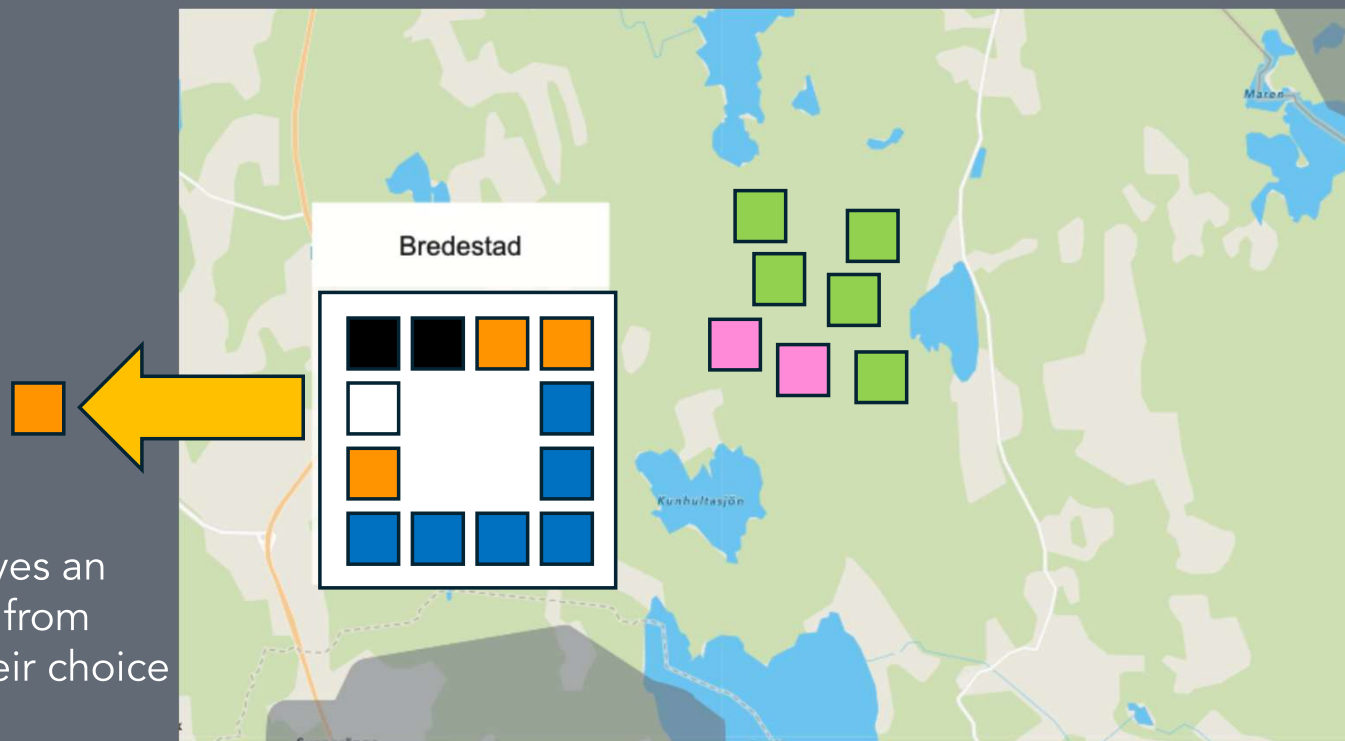
1. A local politician



2. Plays an orange card

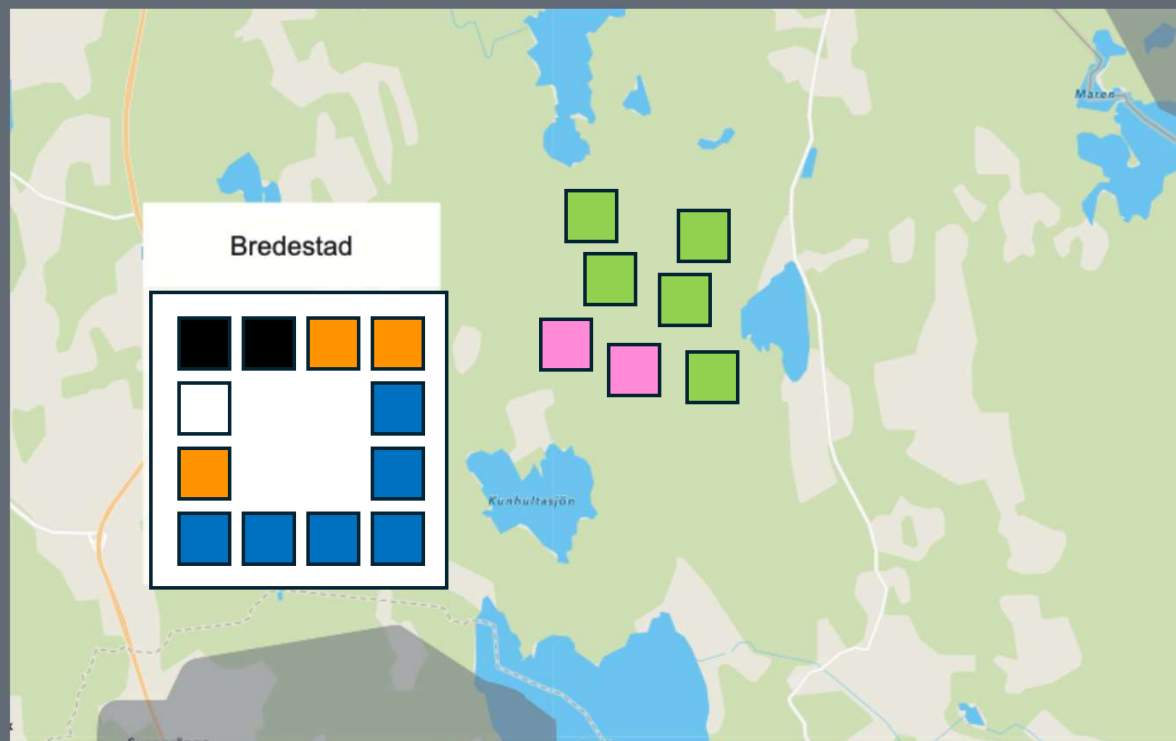


3. And removes an orange cube from a place of their choice



Second action: A Place Developer refines a resource

1. A place developer

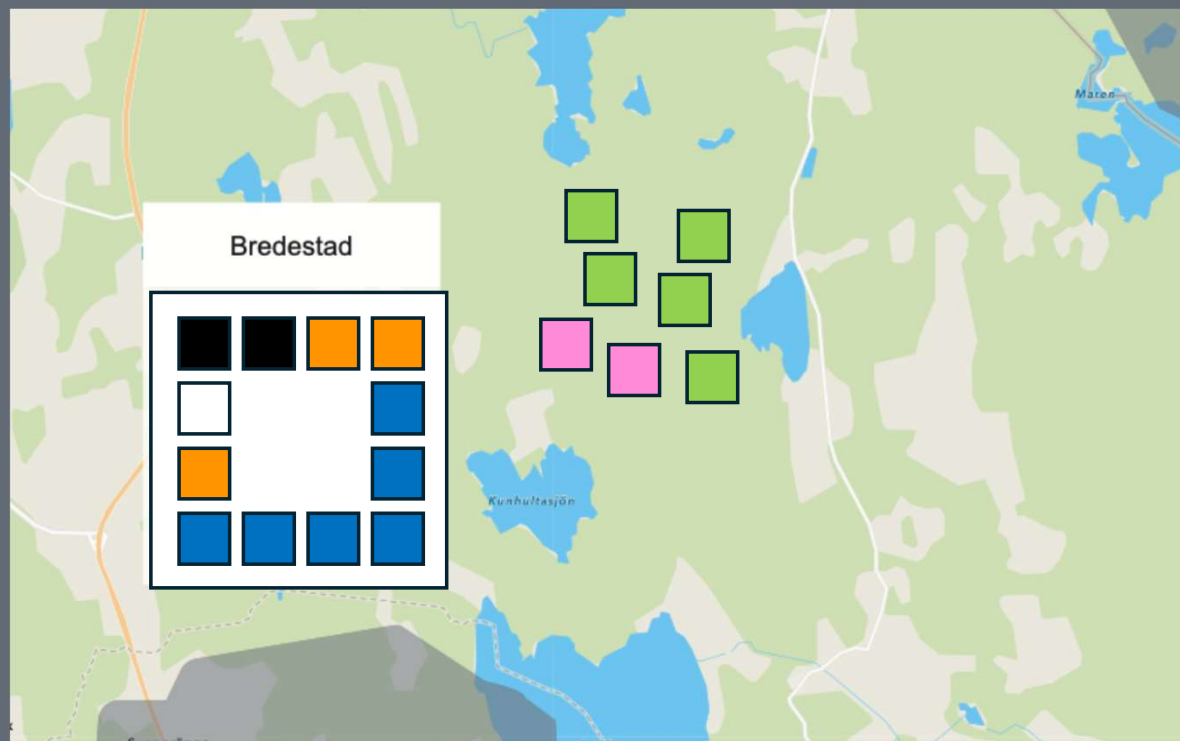


Second action: A Place Developer refines a resource

1. A place developer



2. Plays a green card



Second action: A Place Developer uses a resource for refinement

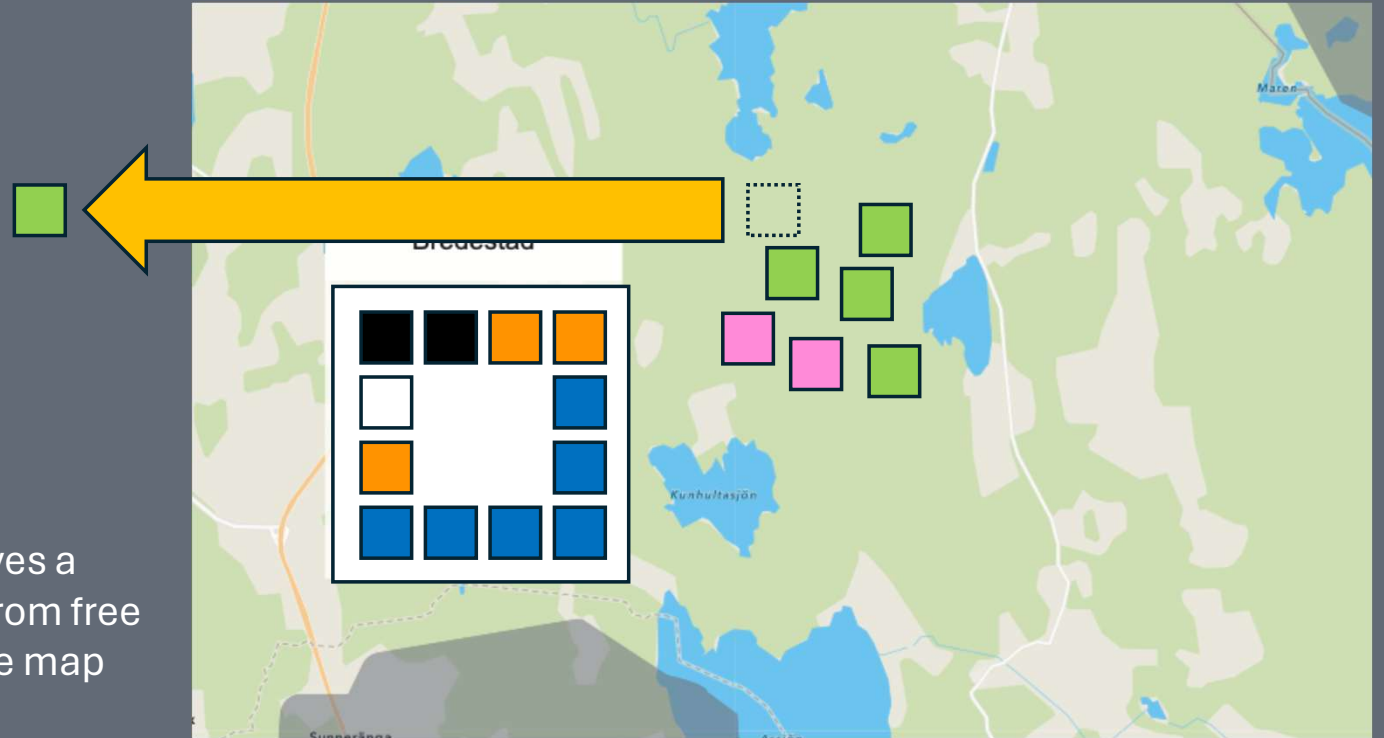
1. A place developer



2. Plays a green card

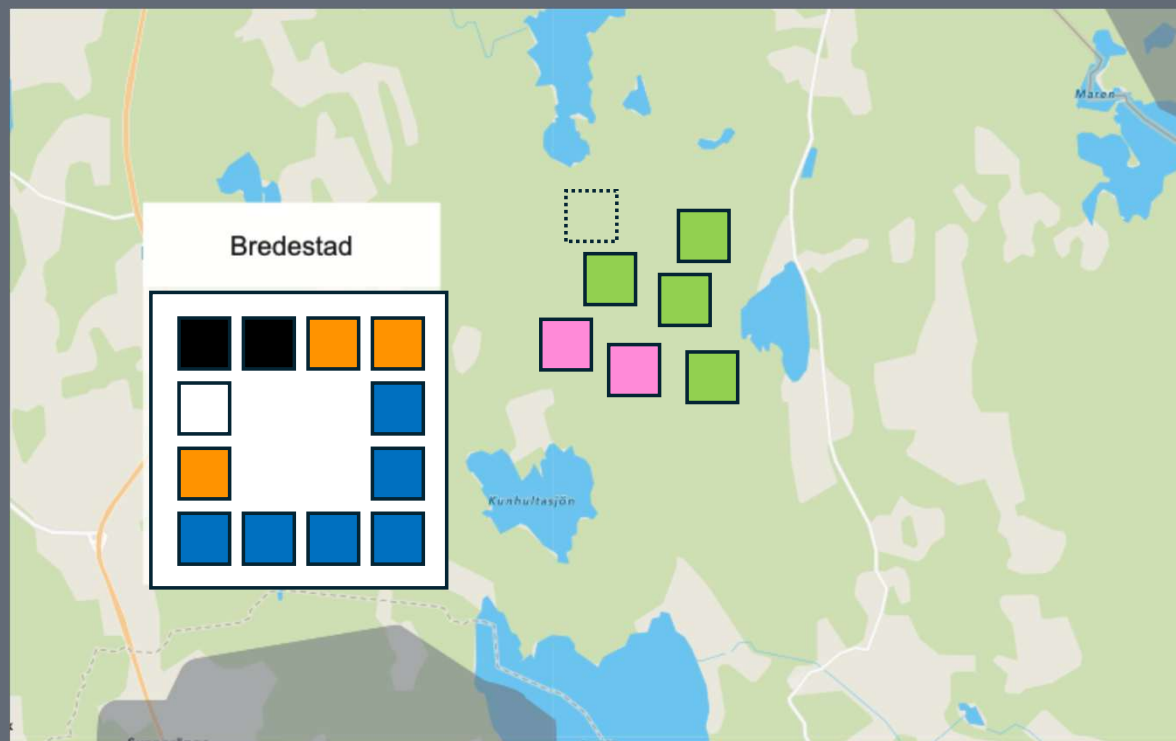


3. And removes a green cube from free capital on the map



Third action: A Politician finances the refinement to create value

1. A Politician

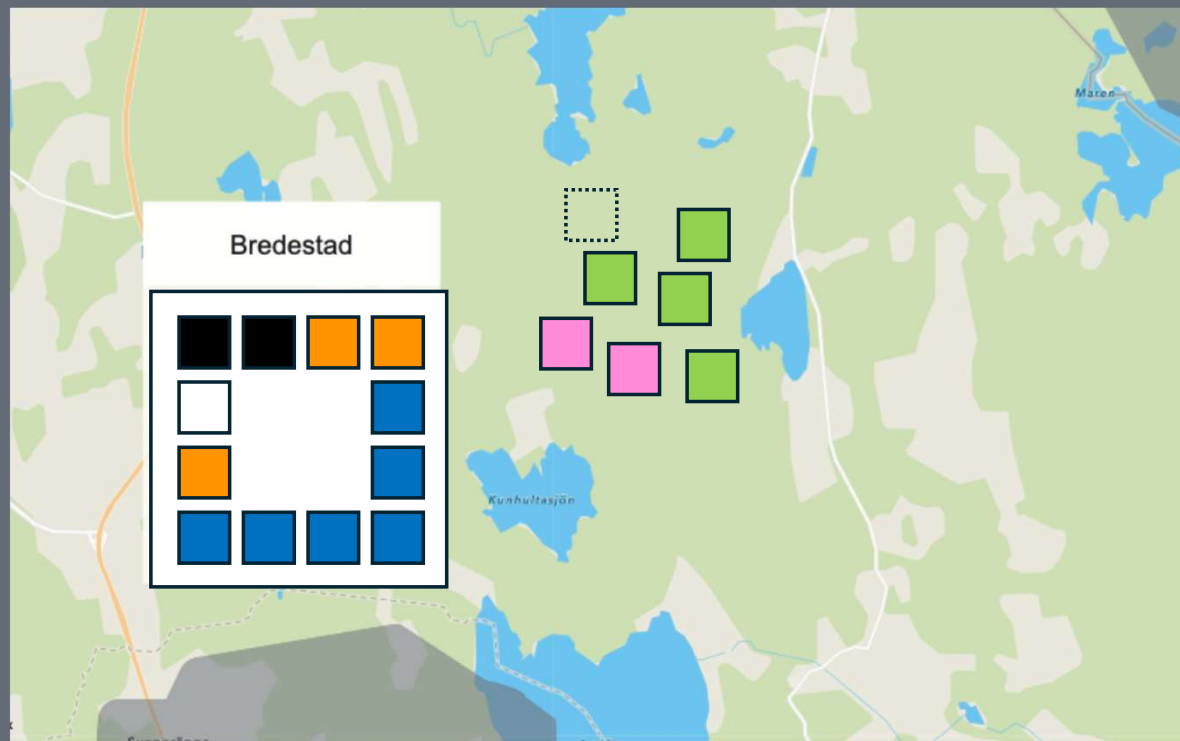
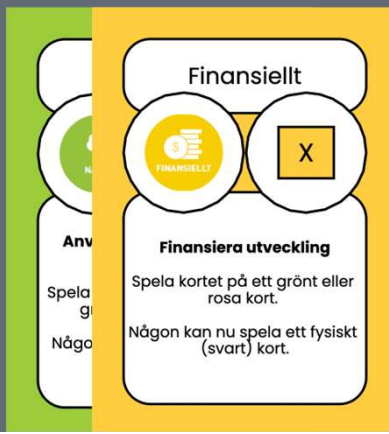


Third action: A Politician finances the refinement to create value

1. A Politician

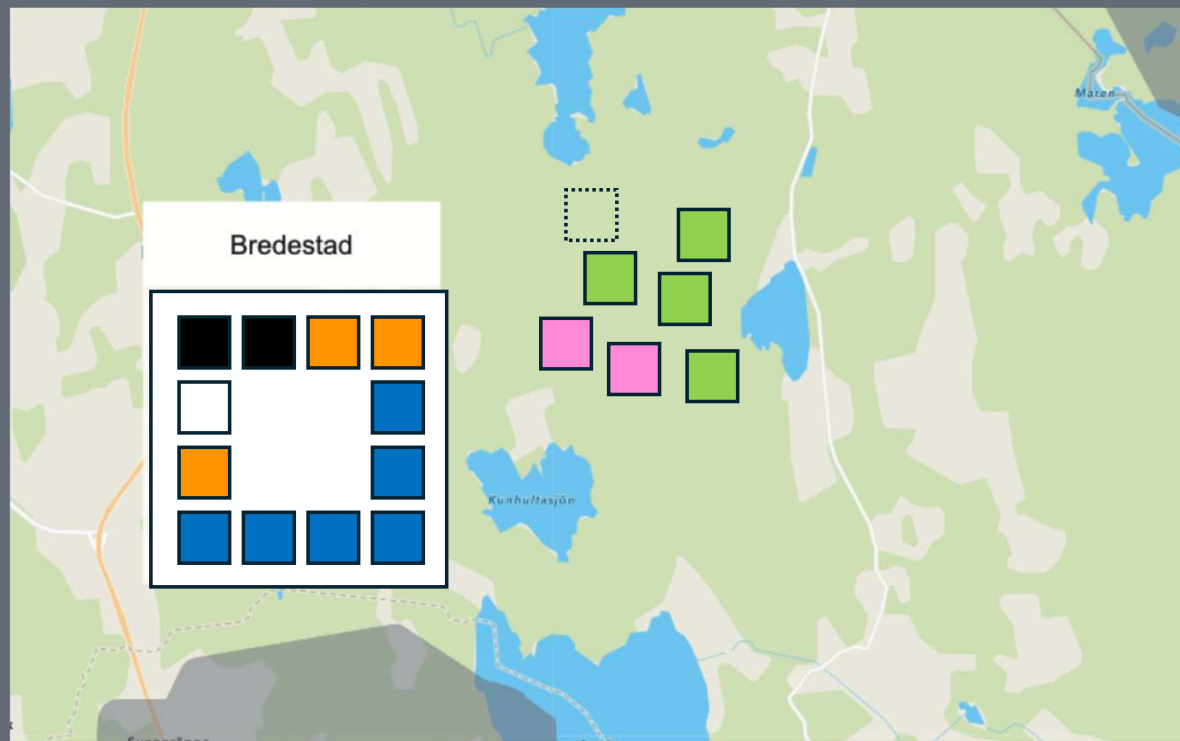
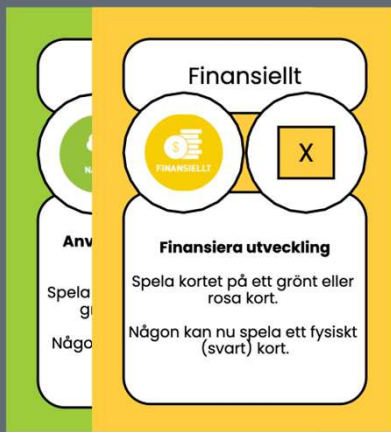


2. Plays a yellow card on the green



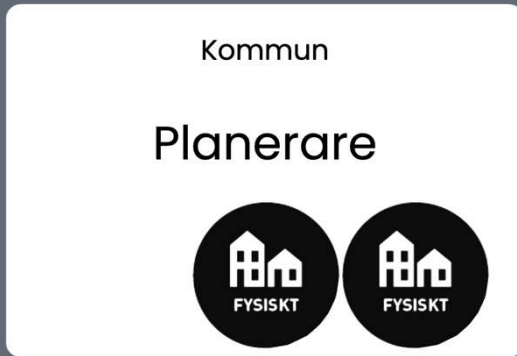
Fourth action: A Municipal Planner makes it persistent

1. A Municipal Planner

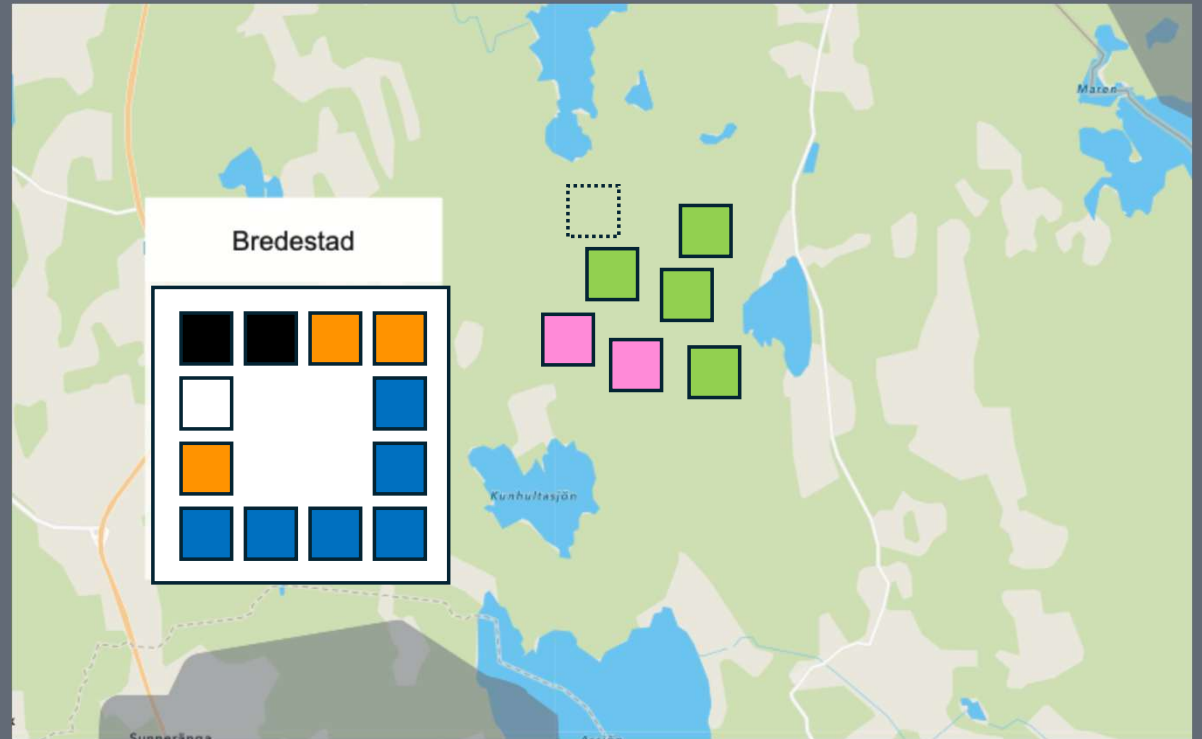
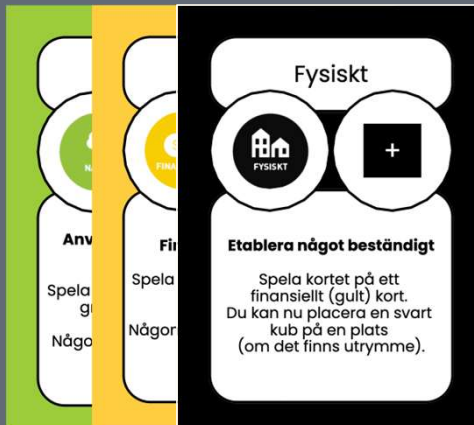


Fourth action: A Municipal Planner makes it persistent

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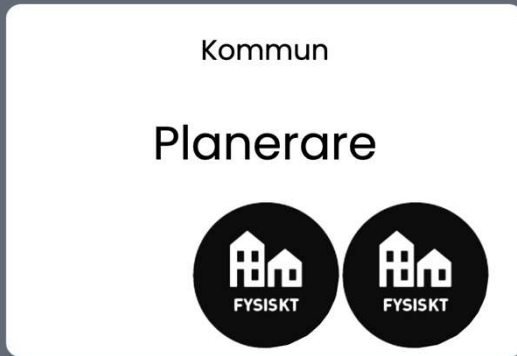


2. Plays a black card on the yellow

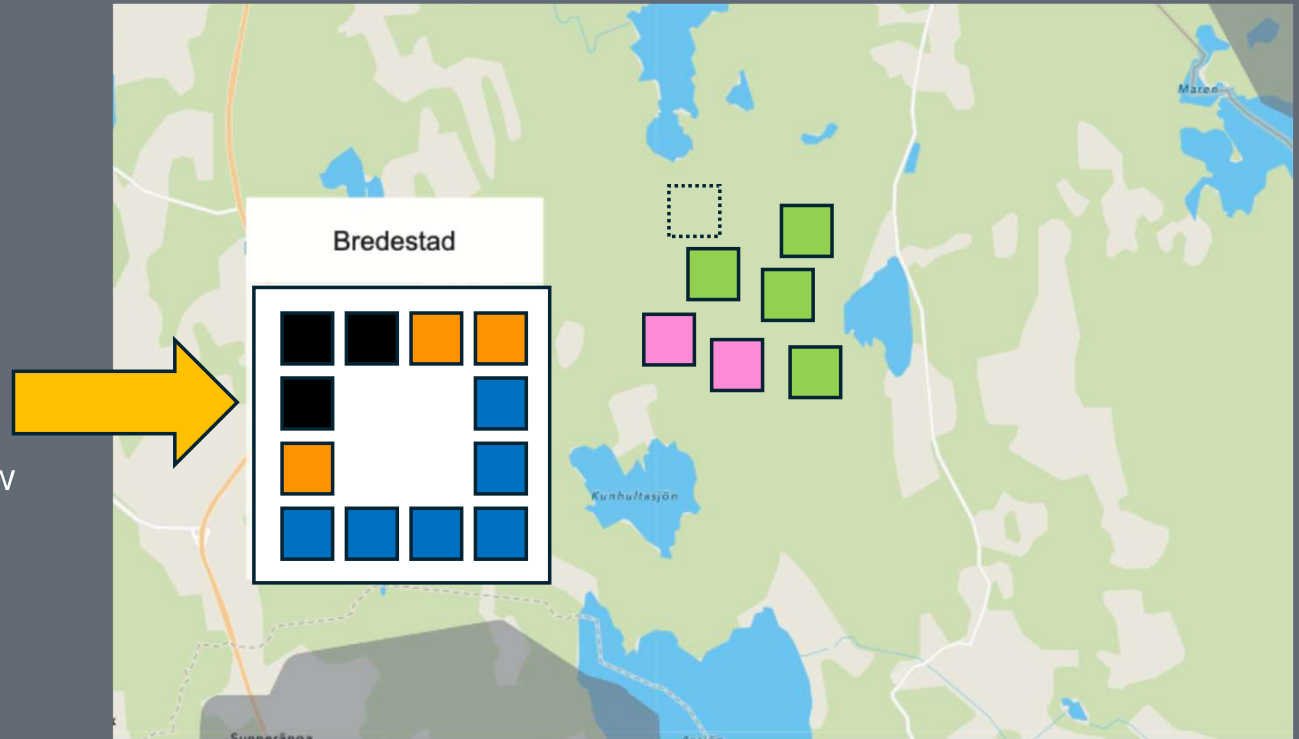
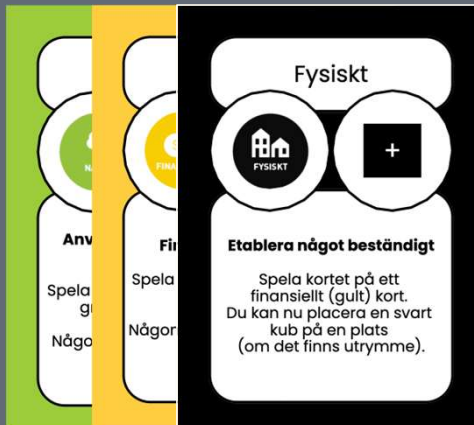


Fourth action: A Municipal Planner makes it persistent

1. A Municipal Planner



2. Plays a black card on the yellow



3. And places a black cube on in the empty slot

More roles are added to show the complexity of the system,
like a private initiative to start an action for a local business

A civil society actor

Civilsamhälle



A local business

Näringsliv

