The role of storytelling within deliberation

- A narrative and qualitative content analysis of a citizen dialogue concerning vulnerable EU-citizens begging in Uppsala, Sweden

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Abstract

This thesis studies the role of storytelling within deliberation. It examines a citizen dialogue concerning the issue of vulnerable EU-citizens begging in Uppsala, Sweden, held in March 2016. Storytelling has been the focus of a normative debate with arguments both for and against its role in deliberation. However, within empirical research, stories’ role within deliberative discussions has not gained equal attention. In this thesis some of the findings of existing empirical research are tested in a Swedish context, as are some of the assumptions of the normative debate. The study examines whether stories are told and if they have an effect to the extent that they are further engaged in the discussions. It furthermore studies what type of effects stories may be seen to have on deliberation, whether widening and/or limiting. In relation to prior research, the definition of a story is discussed and clarified for this study. The findings show that stories are shared in deliberation and engage other deliberators, thus having an effect on the discussions. The nuanced findings concerning stories’ potential widening and/or limiting effects on deliberation are reported on and discussed in relation to prior empirical and theoretical research. Parts of these results are that the concept of unconventional claims is problematized, and that a tendency of stories creating “experts” in deliberation is identified.
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1. Introduction

Deliberation within democracy has gained increasing interest both among scholars and practitioners over the past few decades (Gutmann and Thompson 2004, Dryzek 2000:1, Miller 2000:142, Polletta and Lee 2006, Ryfe 2006). It has been argued to be a form of decision-making that increases legitimacy to the decisions made due to the possibility for participants to gain knowledge of, discuss, and influence matters of concern in a public setting. In this sense deliberation is seen as an inclusive form of decision making since it enables equal formal participation where neither political nor economic interests are to determine the outcome, but where every participant has the same right to speak and affect the decision-making process (Cohen 1989:22, Miller 2000:142, Dryzek 2000:1 ff, Gutmann and Thompson 2004:10 ff). In the normative debate regarding deliberative democracy, however, disagreement exists among scholars concerning how inclusive this democratic form really is. The disagreement has, among other things, concerned the type of communication promoted by scholars of deliberative theory. These scholars have advocated passionless speech with rational, reasoned arguments as the legitimate form of presenting preferences (Cohen 1989:22 ff, Miller 2000:152).

Critics of deliberative theory have questioned this preferred type of speech and reasoning, arguing that it is exclusive since it benefits certain groups who have greater experience and skill in formulating their preferences in this manner. Other, more marginalized groups in the society, will be at a disadvantage in the deliberative setting to begin with, being less experienced with this specific way of communication. Instead, the critics propose including other communicative forms such as storytelling to create a more equal dialogue (Young 1996, 2000, Sanders 1997, Smith 1998). They have pointed to storytelling’s ability to create inclusiveness due to its egalitarian qualities where everyone has a story and the ability to share it with the same level of authority. At the same time, scholars of deliberative theory have pointed to problems with including storytelling as a legitimate form of communication within deliberation, such as inability to know how generalizable a story is, and stories’ potential to limit deliberative discussions (Gutmann and Thompson 1996, Dryzek 2000, Miller 2000).

This debate has to a large extent remained within a normative framework, and less empirical research has been made regarding storytelling’s role within deliberation. The few empirical studies previously made have taken place in the United States and have had different foci where some have shown storytelling’s potential to open up and widen
deliberative discussions, while others have also seen stories’ potential to limit them (e.g. Polletta and Lee 2006, Ryfe 2006, Black 2009, Sprain and Hughes 2015).

This opens up for further empirical studies where findings of earlier empirical research as well as theoretical claims are tested on new material. This will be done in this thesis, looking at a different context compared to prior empirical research, namely a Swedish. The citizen dialogue examined here took place in the Swedish city of Uppsala in March 2016 and concerned the issue of vulnerable EU-citizens\(^1\) begging in Uppsala. The dialogue can be seen as a representative and common form of public deliberation, with small groups of citizens meeting face-to-face to discuss a matter of mutual concern with the purpose of giving recommendations to local politicians on how to solve the issue (Ryfe 2006:72). As such, it is a suitable case to study in order to further empirically examine the role of storytelling within deliberation and to compare findings in this study with prior empirical research. A problem with this relatively unexplored topic of storytelling within deliberation is that the definition of a story has lacked in clarity within prior research. A part of this thesis will therefore be devoted to discussing and clarifying how this concept can be defined, partly to make it evident how the concept is examined in this thesis, but also to make a theoretical and methodological contribution to future research regarding storytelling and deliberation. The findings of this study can be seen as a contribution to the theoretical debate regarding storytelling’s role within deliberation in the sense that normative assumptions and claims will be able to be better rooted in what can be seen empirically. Furthermore, the results of this study can within the practice of public deliberation contribute to gaining a better understanding of storytelling as a form of communication to better evaluate how storytelling should be viewed among practitioners of deliberative discussions.

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\(^1\) The term “vulnerable EU-citizens” should in this thesis be understood to mean people utilizing the possibility of free movement within the EU to find means to survive through for instance begging in countries like Sweden. These people mainly come from countries with great economic difficulties and mass unemployment such as Romania and Bulgaria. Another term commonly used is “EU-migrants”. However, this term has been criticized for being a politicized concept used to negatively denote and frame these groups of people as a problem (Ramel & Szoppe, 2014). Therefore, the only term used in this thesis (apart for terms used in quotes from the citizen dialogue) will be “vulnerable EU-citizens” or “EU-citizens” in short.
2. Aim of thesis

As described above, within theoretical debates and to a lesser extent in empirical research, storytelling has on the one hand been argued to be an important tool for creating more inclusive deliberation. On the other hand, stories have been argued to induce potential risks of stalling and limiting deliberative discussions. The aim of this thesis is therefore to empirically examine the role of storytelling within deliberation, and more specifically what potential effects stories might have on deliberative discussions, as well as develop a definition of in what a story consists.

The two overall research questions are:

1) *How often are stories told in deliberation?*
2) *How do stories function in deliberation?*

The first question will be answered by identifying stories and describing the amount of them found in the material. In order to answer the second quite broad question, the following more specified questions will be examined against the background of theoretical discussions and earlier research:

2 a) *Can we see that stories have an effect on the deliberative discussions, do they engage?*
And if so,
2 b) *Are there certain characteristics of stories that better enable engagement of them in the deliberative discussions?*
2 c) *To what extent do stories have a widening and/or limiting effect on the deliberative discussions?*

2.1 Outline

This thesis will be structured as follows: in the theoretical background the normative debate about storytelling and deliberation, and prior empirical research of relevance for this study will first be described. Thereafter, theoretical aspects of stories’ potential effect on deliberation will be discussed. In the succeeding methodological section the research design, material and methods used will be presented. As a part of this, a critical discussion and
operationalization of the concept of a story in regards to earlier research is developed. Thereafter the results of the study will be presented, followed by a discussion concerning the definition of storytelling and its implications on the study. The thesis ends with conclusions.
3. Theoretical background

3.1 A normative debate regarding storytelling and deliberation

As described above, deliberative democracy has gained increasing interest among both scholars and practitioners over the past few decades (Gutmann and Thompson 2004, Dryzek 2000:1, Miller 2000:142, Polletta and Lee 2006, Ryfe 2006). Simply put, deliberative democracy is a theory in which public decisions are made through open and public reasoning among citizens and their representatives. As opposed to aggregative democracy, where preferences are seen as given, deliberative democracy asks for justification of preferences and the consideration of other perspectives before a decision is made (Gutmann and Thompson 2004:3, 13). It has been argued that deliberation is a useful tool for achieving public conceptions of issues at stake, and mutual respect and equality among participants (Miller 2000:142, Cohen 1989:21). Furthermore, deliberation is believed to increase the legitimacy of decisions made through the participation of citizens and the need for deliberators to motivate their preferences in a manner acceptable to other deliberators (Miller 2000: 142 f, Dryzek 2000:1 f). A precondition for these desired outcomes is that deliberation is carried out in a manner free from manipulation and coercion (Dryzek 2000:68).

Despite its increasing popularity, deliberative theory has not remained free of criticism. One such criticism has focused on the idea that deliberation would guarantee the democratic ideals of equality and inclusion. Critics such as Iris M. Young (1996, 2000) and Lynn M. Sanders (1997) have argued that deliberation is in fact not a guarantee for inclusion and equality among the participants of deliberative discussions. The focus within deliberative theory on participants’ need to present rational, reasoned arguments, along with deliberative scholars’ preference for passionless expression, have an excluding effect among participants of deliberation according to the critics. These conditions cause some groups, such as white privileged men, to be seen as having more legitimate claims than others simply due to their prior experience and greater ability to use this type of communication. Other demographic groups such as women, ethnic minorities and people living in poverty, who might not be as used to voicing their claims in this manner, are thus to begin with disadvantaged in deliberative settings (Young 1996:124 f, 2000:56 f, Sanders 1997:349, 369 ff).
Storytelling is a form of communication that has been argued by critics of deliberative theory to be an important tool to even the field. Sanders (1997:372) argue that storytelling is radically egalitarian since everyone has a story and the ability to share it. Furthermore, Young (1996, 2000) argues that stories have several important communicative functions which can address the problem of diverse premises not shared between different groups, and which can speak across the differences. In situations of great diversity, the particularity of one group is needed to be recognized by members of other groups. Storytelling can be used to share this perspective. Additionally, values, which are seldom justified by rational arguments, can be shared and understood. Stories further help listeners of a different group become aware of how their own positions in the society is viewed from the perspective of the narrator’s group. This creates a larger collective social wisdom and enables a more inclusive view on issues so that both narrator and listeners can move beyond their own self-interested opinion, toward an opinion that also includes the perspective of other groups (Young 1996:131 ff, 2000:75 ff). In this manner, storytelling has the ability to break dominant discourses of the majority and work as a tool to enable unfamiliar perspectives to be considered in deliberative settings (Sanders 1997:372 f, Smith 1998:375 ff).

Proponents of deliberation have remained somewhat critical to the arguments about the importance of storytelling within deliberation. David Miller (2000) has questioned the reliability of stories as legitimate perspectives in deliberative settings since there is no way of knowing how representative a story is. He has further questioned the assumption by Young that stories have the ability to create a larger collective social wisdom. He writes that stories with highly differing perspectives might not create a wholesome picture, but only more division due to conflicting accounts (2000:156). Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson (1996:137) write that stories alone do not have the power to move a political process forward since they are in need of deliberation in order to resolve differences brought up through storytelling. John S. Dryzek (2000) finds that storytelling can be part of deliberation as long as two criteria are met. Similar to Miller’s critique, Dryzek argues that a story need to concern more people than the narrator in order for it to be useful in political deliberation. A story needs to connect the particular to the general, or else its function is lost. He further writes that a requirement of storytelling, as all other forms of communication, is the need for it to remain

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2 The terms “story” and “narrative” are used by Young (1996, 2000) and Polletta and Lee (2006), while “testimony” is used by Sanders (1997) to denote the same type of communication. Others, such as Boswell (2013), might distinguish between the terms “story” and “narrative” where stories are seen as components that create broader narratives. However, in this thesis the terms “story” and “narrative” will be used most frequently and interchangeably. The term “testimony” is also perceived as having the same meaning, but it will not be used here.

3.2 Prior empirical research

When looking at prior empirical research performed within this field, it becomes evident that few empirical studies have focused on storytelling’s role within deliberation (Polletta and Lee 2006:700, Ryfe 2006:72 f, Polletta 2009:83, Bächtiger et al. 2010:32). However, some researchers have examined this issue. In an extensive and influential study of online deliberation about the development of lower Manhattan after 9/11, Francesca Polletta and John Lee (2006) report several findings regarding the role of stories in public deliberation. They find that stories are used to help deliberators identify their own preferences, show appreciation of competing views, reach unanticipated agreement, and finally (similar to the theoretical claims by Young 1996, 2000 and Sanders 1996), bring in unfamiliar or unconventional claims into the discussions.

David Ryfe (2006), studying National Issues Forums in the United States, finds that storytelling is a very common form of communication in deliberative settings. He further states that storytelling help participants overcome obstacles to deliberation such as fear of loosing one’s face or lack of knowledge. Additionally, Ryfe (2006) reports that stories enable the creation of a moral community among deliberators without much explicit conflict. This creation either cause several competing perspectives to be brought up and remain in deliberative discussions, enabling a vibrant deliberative environment but also frustration due to lack of consensus. Alternatively, narrative cohesion is created where a story with a certain perspective gain moral force causing following comments, arguments and stories to mainly be voiced in agreement with this perspective (2006:86).

Laura W. Black (2009) looks further at how stories function within areas of disagreement during deliberation. She finds that stories are used as adversarial arguments, unitary arguments, and as a transformation process for both the narrator and the group identity. Also looking at stories’ relation to identity creation, Leah Sprain and Jessica M. F. Hughes (2015) report that stories help create interactional identities within deliberative groups, mainly through the identification of participants as “experts” in the group. The perspectives of these “experts” came to dominate and limit deliberative discussions due to their perceived superiority and greater authority compared to other perspectives (2015:545).
To summarize, when studying prior empirical research concerning storytelling and deliberation, it becomes evident that findings concerning the effects of stories in deliberation vary. While Polletta and Lee (2006) find that stories are used to widen the perspectives in deliberation by bringing in unconventional perspectives, other researchers such as Ryfe (2006) and Sprain and Hughes (2015) find that stories also have a limiting effect on deliberation by the creation of dominant narratives where only certain social categories are accepted. As already stated, these findings will be further examined in this thesis.

3.3 Stories’ potential effect on deliberation – to engage or not

As formulated in research question 2 a), one can begin with asking whether or not stories have an effect on deliberation at all. If not, then the skeptics of storytelling’s role in deliberation might be right in arguing that allowing storytelling to be considered a legitimate type of communication within deliberative theory and practice is in fact a mistake. If stories do not manage to influence and move deliberation forward but instead remain individual statements not connected to the listening crowd, then stories run the risk of stalling deliberative discussions and as such making them directionless and in extension pointless (Dryzek 2000:69, Bächtiger et al. 2010:48 f). A way of seeing that a story connects to the listeners is through the response given by them after the story is shared. If a story is responded to by other deliberators, for instance by building on the point of the story or by arguing against it in a give-and-take manner, the story could be considered engaged (Polletta and Lee 2006:708), and as such having an effect on deliberation. How stories can be seen to be engaged through responses by other deliberators will be further operationalized in the methodological section.

It can also be noted that stories might be told and not responded to. This could be described as a silencing of a story and its perspective since the point of it is not further discussed in the deliberation. Not giving any indications of having listened to a story is by Dryzek (2000:149) and Bickford (1996:3) seen as an effective and powerful way of silencing it. This is an interesting perspective, and examining the reasons why stories are not responded to is in itself an interesting research task. However, the focus of this thesis is on whether stories are engaged, studying more closely the ones that are.

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3 A story might influence the thoughts and opinions of other deliberators even though they do not express this verbally. This will not, however, be examined in this thesis. It could be interesting to study in future research as a complement, for instance by the use of interviews with participants of deliberation regarding their preferences and opinions after deliberation.
3.3.1 Characteristics of stories and engagement

A rather unexplored aspect of storytelling’s potential effect on deliberation is whether some characteristics of stories better enable engagement of them, here mirrored in research question 2 b). Black (2009) examined and categorized different types of stories used in areas of disagreement within deliberation. Sprain and Hughes (2015) found that stories told in first-person were more likely to position the narrator as an “expert” within the deliberative group compared to second-hand accounts. These stories were not, however, in themselves enough to make a person be seen as an expert since the message of the story also played an important role for this positioning (2015:544). A particular focus on whether different types of stories receive more or less engagement by other deliberators, however, has not been found within prior empirical research. Because of this, to examine the research question 2 b), two classifications are developed in this study in an explorative manner looking at different characteristics of stories evident in the material examined. The two types of classifications are a story’s **proximity to the narrator** and the **level of particularity**.

The first type of classification (similar to the distinction made by Sprain and Hughes 2015) differentiate between stories told in **first-person**, i.e. stories in which the narrator him- or herself takes part; **second-hand** stories, i.e. stories with character(s) that the narrator explicitly refers to as someone he/she knows or have come in contact with; and **other**, stories which do not give evidence of either the narrator or someone acquainted taking part. It its possible to think that as a story moves away from the narrator’s own experiences, the level of credibility and legitimacy decreases among the listeners. This due to, for instance, inability for listeners to know how reliable persons and their experiences are if they have never met them. Credibility might also lessen since retelling a story increases the risk of information being lost, misinterpreted, or exaggerated. If not at all referring to either own experiences or those of someone acquainted, the credibility of a story might thus be expected to be the lowest among the three categories. This could result in stories in the category **other** receiving less engagement from other deliberators since they might question the reliability and legitimacy of the claim shared in this type of narrative.

The second type of classification instead concerns whether a story is on an **individual** level, focusing on individuals as characters; a **group** level, focusing on groups of people such as Romani people or Swedes; and a third category, which moves even further away from the individual level, focusing on a **non-human** level with actors such as municipalities, states, and the EU. The further away a story moves from concerning single individuals, the more diffuse the characters might be perceived to be, making it more difficult
for listeners to identify with them. Greater difficulty in identifying with a story would likely decrease level of engagement from listeners since a story needs to connect with the listeners to engage them (Polletta and Lee 2006:704, see further elaboration on connection and engagement in 3.4).

Based on the discussion above regarding the research question 2 b) *Are there certain characteristics of stories that better enable engagement of them in the deliberative discussions?* the following two statements indicate what characteristics will be examined and what outcomes can be expected:

- *First-person stories are engaged to a larger extent than stories categorized as second-hand and other.*
- *Stories focusing on actors on an individual level are engaged to a larger extent than stories focusing on group or non-human levels.*

To further discuss the function of stories within deliberation, the potential widening and limiting effect of stories, as formulated in research question 2 c), will now be elaborated on in 3.4 (widening effect) and 3.5 (limiting effect).

**3.4 Stories’ widening effect: a tool for expressions of unconventional claims**

As described above, critics of deliberative theory have questioned the inclusiveness of the type of speech and communication privileged within deliberative models (Young 1996, 2000, Sanders 1997). Young describes this as a power inequality called “social power”, meaning that while deliberative models manage to remove economic and political power by enabling anyone to formally participate, the social power remains within these discussions. Those who are better equipped to articulate their preferences through rational arguments will come to dominate discussions and be evaluated based on their speaking style rather than the perspectives and opinions they have. This creates an internal exclusion of some members who are less able to articulate their perspectives in the manner privileged within deliberative theory (Young 2000:55 ff). Storytelling is thus proposed as one form of communication that can help solve this social inequality. It is egalitarian in the sense that everyone has a story to share, which can be shared in different styles and with different meanings, and can be done so with the same level of authority no matter who the narrator is (Sanders 1997:372, Young 1996:132). Storytelling can as such allow more *unconventional claims*, presented by marginalized groups and perhaps previously unheard, to be communicated and potentially
also be better responded to. This would create a *widening* of the deliberative discussions where more perspectives are shared and considered. In enabling this type of communication, proponents of storytelling thus expect mainly members of marginalized groups (such as women; ethnic minorities; and people with lower education and income) to use stories to advance their claims (Polletta and Lee, 2006:709). Polletta and Lee (2006) have empirically examined this assumption. They found that stories were indeed shared by members of these groups, but equally as much by members of the majority. The only difference they found was between women and men, where women were slightly more likely to use stories to advance their claims compared to men (2006:710 f).

To examine this theoretical assumption and to compare the findings of Polletta and Lee, I will also examine whether or not storytelling is a tool used proportionately more by members of marginalized groups in order to advance their claims. The marginalized groups that will be examined are women (versus men) and individuals with lower levels of education (versus those with higher levels). The following statement expresses what outcome that can be expected:

- *Stories are used proportionately more by members of marginalized groups such as women and individuals with lower levels of education.*

As Polletta and Lee (2006) did not find support for the theoretical assumption that storytelling foremost is a tool for members of disadvantaged groups, they shifted the view of what could be seen as an unconventional claim in deliberative discussions. While Young (1996, 2000) and Sanders (1997) discussed the perspectives of marginalized groups as being unconventional because they were presented by members of this group, Polletta and Lee (2006) instead defined unconventional perspectives as claims that the claimholder him- or herself perceived and expressed as being unconventional (called “minority perspectives”, 2006:708 f). Looking at unconventional claims from this perspective, they found that deliberators tended to use storytelling to present what they themselves perceived as unconventional claims to a larger extent compared to claims they perceived as conventional (2006:711). Polletta and Lee therefore argued that the use of stories depends on the type of claim that is being advanced, rather than the social status of the person making the claim.

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4 Two other categories of marginalized groups were examined by Polletta and Lee (2006): non-whites and people with lower levels of income. This type of data was not available in this study and is therefore not examined, but could be an interesting complement to this study in future research.
They described that the reason why members of all types of demographic groups use stories to advance unconventional claims is due to the character and functions of stories, which differ from non-narrative claims in several ways. Storytelling makes audiences listen more empathetically to the speaker. When evaluating a non-narrative claim, listeners evaluate the argument by examining the consistency between the claim, the justificatory principle and the available evidence. With a story however, listeners know they are entering a world separate from the one they are in, which helps them suspend their initial skepticism about the credibility of the story, and instead try to interpret what is told (Polletta and Lee 2006:703, Polletta 2009: 87 f). Furthermore, Polletta and Lee argue that stories are particularly useful at integrating new perspectives into familiar frameworks since stories need to be able to connect to the listeners’ framework on some level, if they are to be communicated at all. Listeners are also prepared to do more of an interpretation of the meaning of a story, than of an argument advanced in a non-narrative form. A reasoned argument may invite agreement or disagreement from the audience, but stories instead invite listeners to participate in the interpretation and also continuation of the story. Because of this, sharing stories is perceived as less threatening to both the narrator and the audience. Polletta and Lee also write that because of the implicit character of the point of a story, it is difficult to reject it as outright wrong or irrelevant which can also help speakers feel comfortable advancing more unconventional or unpopular views (Polletta and Lee 2006:704, Polletta 2009:88).

Due to these arguments and findings by Polletta and Lee (2006) concerning what an unconventional claim might be and how it is used, I will also in relation to research question 2 c) examine whether their findings are evident in this study. A second statement expressing an expected outcome regarding stories’ potential widening effect is:

• Deliberators use stories to bring in what they themselves perceive and express as unconventional claims.

In the methodological section I will elaborate on how this will be examined. Furthermore, it could be argued that merely presenting an unconventional claim in a deliberative discussion is not enough to widen deliberation. These more unfamiliar perspectives also need to be engaged if they are to be seen as having a widening effect. It will therefore in this study be necessary for unconventional claims, presented through stories, to engage other deliberators if they are to be seen as having a widening effect on deliberation.
3.5 Stories’ limiting effect: personal stories and expert role

Apart from discussing and examining stories’ potential to widen deliberation through their function of bringing in unconventional claims, researchers have also, as already mentioned, argued that storytelling has a potential to limit deliberative discussions. Dryzek (2000) describes that storytelling can cause certain participants to identify very strongly with the message of a story and find kinship in the narrator’s perspective so that only this type of narrative and perspective is seen as acceptable in the subsequent deliberation. Other perspectives could then be seen as incorrect, causing the range of perspectives to become limited (2000:68).

This risk brought up by Dryzek is also discussed in a similar manner by Ryfe (2006). He finds that storytelling can cause narrative cohesion through the creation of a moral community among participants of deliberation. This occurs when a certain narrative gains such moral force that following stories and other claims shared conform to the moral commitments of the dominant story and its ontological perspective. Reaching narrative cohesion and in extension consensus does not in itself mean that the deliberation has been negatively limited, it could merely be the result of an open deliberation where a perspective has been recognized by the participants as the superior one. However, Ryfe describes that consensus may come at the cost of producing biased judgments and make the group less open to alternative accounts (2006:84 ff, 89), similar to the risk described by Dryzek (2000). Black (2009) further describes this risk when she writes about functions of unitary arguments or transformational stories. These types of stories may spread a false sense of consensus among participants, a situation in which collective identities are overemphasized and actual differences among group members are concealed (2009:27).

Another possible limiting effect of storytelling not previously focused on within empirical research is that certain stories could be found to be so personal that there is a large perceived risk of offending or embarrassing the narrator by disagreeing with or sharing a different perspective. This could potentially create a limiting effect on deliberation since participants might be unwilling to go against a claim made through a personal story due to this risk, thus decreasing the number of different perspectives shared. An additional limiting tendency of stories is found by Sprain and Hughes (2015) when looking at how storytelling can create interactional identities. In a study of deliberation concerning immigration, they find that first-person-accounts of experiences of being an immigrant to the United States had a powerful effect on the deliberative group, causing the participants to identify the narrator of
such accounts as the “expert” in the group. The role of “expert” was assigned based on experiential knowledge and identification with a perceived important social category for the issue at hand, rather than professional position or scientific knowledge of the topic. This labeling of a certain participant as an “expert” (though perhaps not explicitly stated) can, according to Sprain and Hughes, cause inequality among the participants. The “expert’s” experiences and stories are seen as more legitimate and valuable compared to stories with differing perspectives. In their study, stories shared by the “expert” had the ability to create dominant narratives and affect the succeeding discussions so that mainly conforming stories and claims were shared and seen as legitimate (Sprain and Hughes 2015:545 ff).

These different theories and findings concerning stories’ potential to limit deliberation are tendencies that might be quite difficult to detect when examining discussions. They describe situations where the range of perspectives shared narrows as the discussions develop. It might be difficult, however, to estimate whether a situation with narrowing of perspectives is the result of a domination of certain perspectives causing others to be seen as less legitimate. The narrowing of perspectives might equally be due to a natural development of a discussion where some claims are found more convincing than others. Examining whether or not stories may have a limiting effect on deliberation could thus in itself be the focus of a study with an in-depth reading and mapping of the introduction and disappearance of different perspectives. However, due to the limited scope of this thesis, the focus here concerning stories’ potential limiting effect will be on two of the tendencies described above: whether personal stories cause other deliberators to refrain from disagreeing with the perspective shared through the story, and whether stories cause certain persons to be seen as “experts” with more legitimate claims than others. Based on the discussion regarding these tendencies, in relation to research question 2 c), the following two statements indicate what outcomes can be expected:

- **Personal stories limit deliberation by preventing other perspectives from being voiced.**
- **Stories create “experts” whose perspectives come to dominate the deliberative discussions.**

How this is to be examined will be further elaborated on in the methodological section below.
4. Methodology

In this section the research design with case selection and material used in this thesis will first be described. Then, in 4.2, the methods used are presented: a narrative and qualitative content analysis. In 4.3 the definition of a story is discussed and defined, and in 4.4-4.6 elaborations will be made on how the qualitative content analysis will be performed.

4.1 Design: case selection and material

The research design of this thesis is a case study. The case examined is a citizen dialogue concerning the issue of vulnerable EU-citizens begging in Uppsala. In charge of the project “Citizen Dialogue: Uppsala speaks” were researchers Julia Jennstål and Simon Niemeyer. Its purpose was twofold: to serve as empirical data for research regarding public deliberation; and to deliver recommendations to the local politicians of the city of Uppsala on how to solve the issue debated (Jennstål, Niemeyer and Fred 2016). It was carried out in March 2016 over the course of three days. The first two days consisted of lectures with people working with the issue such as politicians, NGO:s, researchers and the police. During these days the participants met in smaller groups to prepare questions for the lecturers. The same groups met on day three in several deliberative sessions, each between 47 to 90 minutes long. 54 individuals participated, divided into 8 groups of 6-7 persons in each. Half of the groups (number 1-4) were at the beginning of the sessions given a treatment consisting of additional time to reflect on and discuss deliberative group norms to create more conducive conditions for deliberation (Jennstål 2016). Only half of the 8 groups (groups 1-4) will be examined due to the limited scope of this thesis and since there is no intention here to compare the treated groups with the non-treated groups. In total, groups 1-4 had 8 deliberative sessions that are examined here. The material examined consists of transcriptions made by a transcription firm. In these transcriptions the individuals have been given a number instead of names to maintain anonymity for the purpose of other research using the transcriptions.

This case can be seen as a representative form of public citizen deliberation since many face-to-face deliberative projects take the form of small-group discussions between strangers concerning an issue of shared concern (Ryfe 2006:72). Furthermore, the participants of the citizen dialogue were selected to represent a heterogenic group in terms of opinion. The case is also interesting to examine for comparison reasons since it is taking

5 4000 invitations were sent out to randomly selected citizens of Uppsala and 200 persons accepted. From these, 54 individuals were strategically selected to participate based on age, sex, education and opinions on the matter to be debated. All participants were given 2000 SEK plus food and travel compensation for participating.
place in Sweden and as such differs from other empirical studies concerning storytelling and
deliberation that have taken place in an American context. It further differs from several of
the empirical studies mentioned above, as it is a face-to-face public citizen deliberation. This
form of deliberation has not been very commonly examined in prior empirical research about
storytelling and deliberation. Instead online deliberation and deliberation with less
representative groups, such as university students, have been alternative forms examined (e.g.

4.2 Methods

The methods used in this thesis are firstly a narrative analysis and secondly a qualitative
content analysis. Narrative analysis as a method has been used in different ways, for different
reasons by scholars from many different research fields (Robertson 2005:221 f). In this thesis
narrative analysis will be used to identify stories in the material examined. Central to this type
of study is the definition of a story. However, several questions can be asked and difficulties
found when determining what a story is: for instance concerning length, necessary
components, and time aspects. Below these difficulties will be elaborated on quite extensively
in an ambition to reflect on, discuss and clarify the concept in relation to prior research
regarding storytelling and deliberation. This is done to improve validity so as to avoid
defining statements that are unclear, or not stories, to be seen as such. It is also done to
increase reliability; better enabling others examining stories to do so in a similar manner and
to enable better comparison between studies. After having identified stories, I will continue
with a qualitative content analysis. Qualitative content analyses can include analysis in which
the material examined is quantified to some extent, but can also be done only with more
complex, in-depth interpretations of the material (Bergström and Boréus 2005:44). In this
study, qualitative content analysis will include some quantification but also more in-depth
readings and interpretations of the material to examine the research questions and expected
outcomes posed above. How this examination will be performed will be more closely
specified in 4.4-4.6 after the definition of a story has been determined.

4.3 The definition of a story

In order to distinguish stories from other types of statements such as general descriptions and
rational arguments, a definition of the central components of a story is necessary to establish.
The definition I delineate below is originally based on work by William Labov and Joshua
Waletzky (1967), and Labov (1972). Their work has been used by several scholars studying
storytelling within deliberation such as Polletta and Lee (2006), Ryfe (2006), and Black (2009). However, these scholars differ in their focus on Labov and Waletzky’s six components of stories. Three of these components have been more commonly used in prior empirical research, namely: orientation, complicating action and evaluation.6 These will therefore be part of the definition given below. Additionally, Labov and Waletzky (1967, Labov 1972) describe sequencing of events as an important part of a story, however not being one of the six components. This part has also been discussed in prior empirical research and will therefore also be a part of my definition. Below, I will first discuss and present these criteria for the identification of stories (in 4.3.1), and in 4.3.2. I discuss critical aspects thereof.

4.3.1 Necessary criteria for the definition of a story

A key part of a story is that it consists of a beginning, middle and an end. While these parts may not be clearly distinguishable in all stories, some kind of sequencing of events is necessary for a statement to be defined as a story (i.e. first something happened, and then something else). These recounts are usually made in the same order as they occurred (Labov and Waletzky 1967:20 ff, Labov 1972:362 ff, Ryfe 2006:74, Black 2009:10, Polletta 2009:9), and according to Labov, there needs to be at least two events evident for a statement to be defined as a story (Labov 1972:360). What an event might consist of more specifically is not clearly defined previously, but examples from prior literature suggest that not only physical actions taken by, for instance, characters may be seen as events; statements in a conversation and the thoughts of characters can also be seen as such (e.g. Polletta and Lee 2006:713, Ryfe 2006:75 ff). In this thesis events will therefore be defined as physical actions, spoken language and thoughts. Before the sequencing of the story occurs, an orientation section consisting of character(s), place, time and setting is sometimes given. As opposed to the sequencing of events, however, an orientation section has not been defined previously as a necessary part of a story (Labov and Waletzky 1967:32). An orientation is therefore here seen a component that might be part of a story (and which might give indications that a statement is a story) but is not a necessary criteria for a statement to be defined as such.

Another central component of a story, apart from sequencing of events, is its complicating action(s). These actions separate stories from mere descriptions of unlinked

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6 Labov and Waletzky (1967:39, Labov 1972:370) describe three elements of a story: abstract, result and coda, apart from the three determined as criteria of a story in this thesis. They are not brought up here since they are either not mentioned or seen as critical criteria by scholars empirically studying storytelling and deliberation (such as Polletta and Lee 2006, Ryfe 2006).
events unfolding one after another, such as plain timelines. The concept of a complicating action is also somewhat unclear in prior literature. Labov and Waletzky do not go into specifics about what a complicating action might be more than an action that changes the course of the story (Labov and Waletzky 1967:32 f). Ryfe (2006:74) writes that the complicating action can be described as a problem occurring in the plot. However, after an initial look at the material examined in this thesis (see 6.2 below) it was discovered that statements existed which met all the other criteria for a story, but which consisted of a positive complicating action instead of a negative one. A complicating action is therefore determined here to be either a negative or a positive event changing the course of the plot.

The complicating action is often closely linked to the final necessary component, the evaluative aspect of a story. This component is important in order for the narrator to connect the story to the context in which the story is told and for listeners to understand the message that the narrator is trying to communicate with it. The evaluative aspect could be presented in the form of a solution to the complicating action(s), or a mere evaluation of the story (Labov and Waletzky 1967:37 ff, Labov 1972:366 ff, Polletta and Lee 2006:707, Ryfe 2006:74). However, the evaluation of a story does not have to be explicitly shared, or even particularly clear to the narrator or listeners (according to findings by Polletta and Lee 2006). Nevertheless, if no evaluation is at least somewhat evident in or in connection to the story, the significance of it is lost (Labov and Waletzky 1967:33).

To summarize, the following criteria are seen as necessary in order for a statement to be defined as a story in this thesis: a story must contain sequenced events (with at least two events evident), complicating action(s) and an evaluation of the story. A common component, however not necessary, is an orientation section at the beginning of the story. An example7 from the material is given to exemplify these criteria. It comes from session 31, group 1, page 5, and person 200.

“[… I remember my youth, we had some kind of a TV-show, Hylands Hörna in some way, and fundraising. And then it turned out that it was only a few percent of the seven million that we had raised that reached there at all. It was scattered out onto everything else. And I think it has a lot to do with that as well, and it is … If we are going to help them in that way with money so that they get them there, it has to be controlled somehow so that it really, since it is so corrupt there so, yes […]”

The narrator initially gives an orientation of the story saying that it concerns his childhood, characters being him and potential others in the situation of watching the show “Hylands

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7 The stories presented in this thesis have been translated to English by me, and can be found in their original language, Swedish, in the appendix.
Hörna”. The place of the story is not specified, but this is not a necessary criterion for a story, as explained above. There are two events evident, i.e. the minimum requirement of sequencing in a story: (1) people watching the show (which seems to feature some kind of a fundraising), and (2) then it becomes evident that only a few percent of the money raised actually reached those whom it was meant for. The complicating action is the realization that the money raised did not to a large extent reach those it was meant for. The evaluation of the story is that since money raised for charity might not end up in the hands of those in need it is necessary to have a monitoring system to ensure that corruption does not occur.

4.3.2 Critical aspects of stories

Two important aspects of stories will be discussed here: the temporal aspect of stories and their level of particularity. There seems to be somewhat differing opinions among scholars concerning the temporal aspect of the story, i.e. which time period a story refers to. While Labov and Waletzky (1967:20) describe stories as past experiences, Black (2009:10) refers to stories as statements concerning experiences outside the current situation. Polletta and Lee (2006:713) also include hypothetical, imaginative experiences as stories (e.g. statements like “if I were in a certain position, I would do this, and then that”). They write that imaginative statements where listeners are asked to project themselves to a separate time and space can make these hypothetical situations more tangible. Even though an individual has not experienced what is shared in a hypothetical statement, listeners have the possibility to (in the same manner as with stories of past events) situate themselves in, or at least visualize, the perspective of another (2006:711). It is of course possible that listeners could become more skeptical of a hypothetical statement than a story about real life experiences. They might question whether the hypothetical statement actually could occur, causing the statement to lose its effect of bringing in credible perspective(s) into the discussion. However, due to their possibility of having similar effects as stories of real life experience, statements of imaginative character will also be defined as stories in this study. Polletta and Lee (2006:707) further relax the requirement that a story needs to refer to a specific past-time event, in order to enable statements that describe recurrent events. This will also be done here.

Another aspect of a statement that needs to be clarified in relation to the definition of a story is the level of particularity. Dryzek (2000:69) writes about the importance of a story’s particularity (i.e. its relevance to a specific individual, or group of individuals) being able to connect to the more general crowd. This raises the question of how particular a statement needs to be for it to be seen as a story. Is it limited to only depict a
maximum of a few individuals, or can a story concern a large group of individuals, for instance, women all over the world? Young (2000:119 f) writes that social understandings can become too abstract without the contribution of concrete stories. It is perhaps possible that the particularity does not rest on the number of individuals in the story, but rather on how concretely the story can depict the particular experiences of the characters in the story. In this study, therefore, the definition will not be limited to only include stories with individuals, but can also include larger groups of people, such as women, and even non-human actors such as municipalities and countries. Additionally, a story need not only be focusing on the narrator’s own experience(s), but can also be an account of another individual’s, group of individuals’, or other type of actors’ actions and experiences.

So, in addition to the basic criteria explicated above that a story must contain sequenced events, complicating action(s) and an evaluation of the story, the temporal aspect of a story includes past, present and fiction; and the level of particularity includes individual, group and non-human actors.

4.4 The effect of a story: are stories engaging?

To examine the effects of stories in deliberation, I will begin with looking at how stories are received, whether or not they are engaged by the other deliberators. This was also one of the focuses in Polletta and Lee’s study (2006). They looked at statements following a narrative claim and defined the claim engaged if it generated certain responses. These responses are written in italics below and further operationalized by me to clarify how I will determine whether or not a story is engaged. Merely thanking the narrator for his or her contribution was not enough for the claim to be seen as engaged in Polletta and Lee’s study (2006:708), since a “thank you” does not in itself show that the point of the story is considered any further by the listeners. This type of response, or other responses that do not fit into the categories below (e.g. merely responding “ok”), or not responding to the narrative claim at all, will be seen as a lack of engagement in this thesis.

- Agreement with the narrative claim. Agreement with a story and its claim can be identified by explicit comments such as “yes, I agree”, “my thought precisely” or “I think so too”. It could also be seen in comments by other deliberators who repeat the claim shared by the narrator. Other, less explicit forms of agreement could be:

- Presenting a similar or corroborating claim. A supporting claim could be shared either in narrative form through a story with similar or the same evaluative point, or by a non-narrative claim with the same type of argument. While repeating the claim is a more obvious sign of
agreement, a similar or supporting claim also shows that the narrator’s claim has impacted and engaged other deliberators. Polletta and Lee (2006:714) describe that a common form of corroborating claim is one that builds on the line of reasoning of the story. The claim can for instance be carried on with another deliberator helping the narrator to clarify, nuance, or suggest a solution based on it.

- Acknowledgement of the story’s impact on one’s opinions, priorities, or definitions. While not being as strong as the above mentioned forms of agreement, this type of response still makes evident that the narrative claim has impacted the thoughts of fellow deliberators. This type of acknowledgement could come in the form of statements such as “the point you made is interesting” or “this changes the perspective I had”.

- Disagreement. Some might argue that disagreement with a narrative claim is not a form of engagement since it could be seen as an attempt to delegitimize the role of a story in deliberation. However, as with non-narrative claims, disagreement among deliberators is a common part of deliberation and not necessarily a sign that certain thoughts are irrelevant to the discussion, but merely that different opinions exist. Statements in disagreement of narrative claims will therefore also be seen as forms of engagement. Disagreement could be phrased in the explicit form of “I disagree”, “that is not correct”, or by acknowledging the story but then advancing a claim with a different, opposing view.

- Request for clarification or elaboration. A request for clarification of a story might not be an equally strong indicator of it being engaged as those previously mentioned, since clarification could also be followed by skepticism of the relevance of the narrative claim. A request for elaboration, however, should be seen as a stronger indicator of engagement since listener(s) are interested in hearing more about the perspective, indicating that they find it relevant for the deliberative discussion. When determining whether a story is engaged or not, a mere request for clarification of a story will not in itself be enough for it to be seen as engaged in this thesis, there needs to be some other form of engagement accompanied as well.

- Expression of doubt about generalizability or relevance. This final indicator was also a part of Polletta and Lee’s definition of engagement (2006:708). However, I find it problematic. It could rather be seen as an indication of other deliberators’ lack of engagement, and as such an indication of a story’s lack of effect on deliberation. If this type of questioning by other deliberators is satisfyingly responded to by the narrator, in a way that strengthens the legitimacy of the narrative due to its generalizability or relevance, the claim could of course be further considered and engaged by other deliberators. In this thesis, however, a closer
examination of the situation in which these expressions of doubts occur will be done in order to see whether this type of response is an engagement with the narrative claim or not.\(^8\)

As previously said, I will in this study use these above-mentioned indicators to determine whether or not a narrative claim is engaged. If these types of responses are not evident (and with the special exceptions regarding the final two types of responses) a story will not be determined engaged.\(^9\)

**4.5 Stories’ widening effect: a tool for expressions of unconventional claims**

As described in the theoretical background, stories are understood by some to widen deliberative discussions by being used as a tool for deliberators to bring in new, unconventional, unfamiliar and perhaps also unpopular claims. To further examine the effects of stories in deliberation, I will look at whether or not stories are used to bring in unconventional claims. In the earlier theoretical debates, arguments were made that stories were important tools to voice the claims of the marginalized (Young 1996, 2000, Sanders 1997). I will therefore examine whether stories are used proportionately more by members of marginalized groups such as women and individuals with lower levels of education (meaning those without a college degree, the same dichotomization made by Polletta and Lee, 2006:710). This will be done by examining whether more women tell stories compared to men, and whether more individuals of lower levels of education tell stories compared to individuals with higher levels of education.

In the study by Polletta and Lee (2006) a shift concerning how to define and operationalize an unconventional claim was made. To determine whether or not a claim could be categorized as unconventional, Polletta and Lee looked at how the narrator presented the claim. Claims shared with comments like: “I guess I’m in the minority for thinking”, “I’m also opposed to some people ”, “I know this will sound strange” or “I have a different opinion”, were categorized as unconventional claims. Polletta and Lee made sure that these types of comments were directed to the group, and not an individual, in order for the claim to be characterized as unconventional (Polletta and Lee 2006:708 f, Polletta 2008:94 f). This way of operationalizing an unconventional claim will also be used here to further examine

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\(^8\) Polletta and Lee (2006) also defined *a challenge to the interpretation of a prior claim* as a type of engagement. However, I found this type of engagement rather unclear and not evident in the material examined here, and therefore chose not to give it any further attention in this thesis.

\(^9\) Another possible way in which deliberators could indicate engagement with a narrative claim is through body language such as nodding and smiling or in other ways physically showing agreement or disagreement with the claim. It is not possible, however, to examine these types of responses here since the material studied consists of transcripts.
and compare whether unconventional claims through this definition might be evident in this study.

Finally, in order for unconventional claims to have an effect on the deliberative discussions, it has been described above that it might not be enough that they are voiced, they also need to be engaged. Therefore, if unconventional claims are found to be voiced through stories, I will further examine whether or not they are engaged to determine if they can be seen as having a widening effect on the deliberative discussions.

4.6 Stories’ limiting effect: personal stories and expert role

Stories’ potential for limiting deliberation has been discussed above and to some extent found in prior research. However, as previously mentioned, these limiting tendencies may be difficult to detect. They often concern the narrowing of perspectives within deliberation that could occur due to domination of a certain perspective, but could also merely be the result of a natural development of a discussion where some arguments are found more convincing than others. Because of this difficulty in determining if a discussion has been limited, only two types of limiting effects are examined: the potential effects of personal stories, and the potential effects of stories creating “experts”.

When examining whether stories of personal character can be determined to limit deliberation due to other deliberators unwillingness to disagree with or question a personal story, it must first be determined what a personal story is. This is a somewhat difficult task since whether or not stories are perceived as personal depend both on the perception of the narrator and the listeners, and may differ between individuals. In an attempt to cast the net quite broad and capture stories that might be perceived as personal either by the narrator and/or listeners, all stories told in first-person (i.e. stories in which the narrator describes experiences that he/she has experienced him- or herself) will be regarded as personal stories. Furthermore, a qualitative reading of the stories told in first-person will also be made to see if some can be excluded from being labeled personal. Having established which stories are to be seen as personal in the material (if any), it also needs to be determined whether or not these stories can be seen to limit the deliberative discussions. An indicator that the stories are not limiting deliberation is responses to a story that disagree with the claim of it. An examination will therefore be made to see if the stories labeled as personal are followed by responses of disagreement by other deliberators. If not, if responses only come in the form
of agreement, it cannot be excluded that these types of personal stories have a limiting effect on the deliberative discussions.10

Concerning the identification of some participants as “experts” in deliberative discussions, Sprain and Hughes (2015) found that this had a powerful effect on group discussions, causing the perspectives of the “expert” to become dominant and other perspectives to be seen as less legitimate. The types of stories that caused some participants to be seen as experts by the group were first-person-accounts of experiences closely related to the issue discussed in the group (2015:545 ff). Concerning the issue discussed in the citizen dialogue examined here it is not likely that any of the participants themselves have experiences of being a EU-citizen coming to Uppsala to beg since no members of this group participated in the dialogue. However, it is possible that other accounts such as knowing, having worked with, or in other ways having come in contact with the vulnerable EU-citizens (and as such having some insight into their situation) may create this similar position of an “expert”, since there were no EU-citizens present to give this type of account themselves. Stories of experiences from people having come in contact with vulnerable EU-citizens begging in Sweden will therefore be examined to see whether other deliberators in the group come to see their perspectives as more relevant and legitimate compared to others. As previously said, this is a quite difficult tendency to estimate. However, in order to try to see if the tendency is evident, the context around these accounts and the (potential) responses to these types of narrative accounts will be examined. If they are responded to mainly by comments of agreement and if they can be seen to change the course of the discussions to conform with this type of agreement, it could be argued that the same tendencies as those found by Sprain and Hughes (2015) are also evident concerning the creation of an “expert”-role in the material examined here.

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10 In cases where stories do not receive any response, these stories will be seen in the same manner as stories that only receive engagement in the form of agreement, since no clear disagreement from other deliberators is evident. It is possible that other deliberators might choose to remain silent instead of disagreeing with a personal story due to fear of offending the narrator.
5. Analysis and results

The analysis and results from this study are presented in this section. They will be presented following the order of the research questions. In 5.1 the research question 1), concerning how often stories are told, will be responded to. In 5.2 research question 2 a) about stories’ effect and deliberators level of engagement will be elaborated on. In 5.2.1 results concerning research question 2 b) about characteristics of stories and level of engagement is presented in relation to the expected outcomes as described in the theoretical background (see 3.3.1 above). The research question 2 c) concerning stories’ potential widening and/or limiting effects will be analyzed in parts 5.3 and 5.4, and discussed in relation to the expected outcomes described in the theoretical background (see 3.4 and 3.5 above).

5.1 Number of stories told

55 stories were identified in the eight deliberative sessions examined.\textsuperscript{11} This gives an average of between 6 and 7 stories per session. In addition to these 55 stories, another 25 statements were first identified as potential stories but after further examination determined not to be stories. These were disregarded due to some lack in sequencing, complicating action and/or evaluative aspect, the three criteria determined as essential components of a story. It is somewhat difficult to estimate whether or not 55 narrative claims can be considered a great, normal or small amount of stories told in relation to the amount of material examined since, for instance, no estimation was done of the amount of non-narrative claims in the deliberative sessions. However, as will be further presented below, a majority of the deliberators used narrative claims and a majority of the narrative claims were engaged by other deliberators. These results support the argument that storytelling is used and perceived by deliberators as a meaningful tool to present their claims.

5.2 Are stories engaged?

Out of the 55 stories told, 40 were engaged by other deliberators and 15 were not. 35, a majority of the responses, were given in some form of agreement such as repeating the claim, voicing a similar or corroborating claim or further building on the claim, while 10 of the responses were given in disagreement. In the following statements several types of agreeing responses are evident. The story is shared in session 31, group 4, on pages 31-32, by person 188:

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\textsuperscript{11} In two instances, a narrator shared more than one story in the same statement. These stories were counted separately, resulting in a total of 5 stories.
“As an example, the day before yesterday I went to shop from Coop Forum. And then I saw two Romani, woman come in and they looked at me and immediately they asked me ‘Muslim, Muslim’, it means that you’re a Muslim. I said ‘yes, yes, yes’. And they wanted me to help them, and they walked and asked which meat is pork and not […] And then when I went to get some change, I wanted to give them ten crowns each. But I saw immediately that she left all her groceries, a lot, cost around 200 crowns. I was just going to shop for 30 crowns, [the Romani woman] left [her groceries to me] and said, which meant for me to pay. And then I felt … this is the wrong message. I wanted to help her but she demands more and more, and it is there that we should somehow, not give them a message. No, there is the limit there, I said ‘no, but ten, here you go’, and then I left. I mean these [people], they take advantage of the situation, they may not do that, and it is there that there needs knowledge. But I say this just as an example […]”

The story was responded to by comments like:

Person 230, page 32  “No, that is interesting.”
Person 196, page 32  “Indeed.”
Person 217, page 32-33  “Yes, but that was a good example, that you wanted to give them ten crowns. It’s sort of like when I said: ‘should we give them three millions, will they be content then?’ No, they are going to want more, so to speak.” And later: “Because it is clear that if you help them now they are going to want more, and if they get more help they will want even more. One has to have some will power of one’s own as well.”

The responses are given in the form of acknowledgement of the story’s impact on the listener, such as “that is interesting”; in the form of similar claims such as person 217 referring to his own example of giving the Romani three million; and also with a statement that builds on the narrative claim such as person 217 saying that the more help the Romani would get, the more they would want and that they instead need to develop some determination of their own instead of living of others.

Out of the 15 cases where narrative claims were not engaged, 2 instances were found where a narrative claim was somewhat explicitly questioned in terms of generalizability and relevancy. This thus gives evidence of the skepticism toward stories’ role in deliberation, which has been discussed by scholars such as Miller (2000) and Dryzek (2000). The difficulty in knowing how generalizable a story is might cause the legitimacy of a narrative claim to decrease and be dismissed by others as less relevant, a tendency only explicitly evident in 2 cases here. However, it is uncertain whether lack of engagement regarding the remaining 13 stories also depended on skepticism toward their relevancy in the deliberative discussions, instances where the claim might have been ignored instead of questioned. A few other
potential explanations as to why some narrative claims were not engaged were nevertheless found. In 2 cases the narrative claims were immediately followed by comments from the group facilitator saying that the group needed to move on from the present topic due to lack of time left to discuss the matter. In these cases there was thus no possibility to respond to the narrative claims even though some participants might have. In another case, a story was shared when all the groups came together to present their discussions so far. This situation makes responses from the next speaker presenting the thoughts of his/her group less likely than it would have been if the discussion had been open and free for anyone to give a response. In 3 other cases the responses given to the narrative claim were unclear and as such determined not engaging. They were either posed in a way that made them difficult to interpret, or incomplete due to parts of them not being heard by the transcriber. Yet another 3 of the narrative claims might have been poorly understood by the listeners due to language difficulties. In the remaining 4 cases, the reason why the stories lacked engagement was not clear from the context in which they were given.

Overall, looking at the large amount of engagement of narrative claims in the deliberative sessions (in 40 of 55 cases), it seems as if the stories in the citizen dialogue in general did connect to and engage other deliberators and as such contributed to developing and moving the deliberative discussions forward.

5.2.1 Which type of stories are engaged?

As described in the theoretical background, a previously rather unexplored aspect of stories’ potential effect on deliberation is whether some characteristics might better enable engagement of them. The first type of characteristics examined here regards stories’ proximity to the narrators. In the table below the results concerning this classification and engagement is shown. Since the number of stories told differs between the categories, comparison is made looking at percentages rather than number of stories.

Table 1: proximity to narrator

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic of story</th>
<th>Told(^{12})</th>
<th>Engaged</th>
<th>Not Engaged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First-person</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17 (94 %)</td>
<td>1 (6 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second-hand</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13 (76 %)</td>
<td>4 (24 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10 (56 %)</td>
<td>8 (44 %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{12}\) Two of the 55 stories told are excluded since listeners were unable to choose whether or not to respond to them due to lack of time left to deliberate.
The table shows that 94 percent of stories told in first-person were engaged, while 76 percent of second-hand stories, and 56 percent of stories labeled other were engaged. These results thus indicate a tendency for first-person stories to be engaged to a greater extent than both second-hand stories and especially stories categorized as other. This tendency is in accordance with the reasoning and expected outcome in the theoretical background which described that as a story moves away from the narrator’s own experiences, the amount of engagement may decrease due to greater difficulty for listeners to estimate the credibility of the story.

The second type of classification instead concerns a story’s level of particularity. In the table below the results of this examination is shown and again the comparison is made looking at percentages.

Table 2: level of particularity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic of story</th>
<th>Told $^{13}$</th>
<th>Engaged</th>
<th>Not engaged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22 (88 %)</td>
<td>3 (12 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10 (67 %)</td>
<td>5 (33 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-human (Municipality, State, EU)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5 (56 %)</td>
<td>4 (44 %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows that 88 percent of stories told on individual level were engaged, while 67 percent on group level, and 56 percent on the non-human level were engaged. The same type of tendency is thus indicated here, where individual level stories are engaged to a larger extent than the other two types of categories. $^{14}$ Also this tendency is in accordance with the expected outcome described in the theoretical background where identification with characters might decrease the further away from individual level the focus of the story lies, making engagement of stories less likely.

$^{13}$ Apart from the two already removed stories due to inability to respond, four stories were removed due to inability to determine which category they fit into.

$^{14}$ A test was made to ensure that not the same tendency was examined twice, i.e. that the categories first-person/individual level, second-hand/group and other/non-human were equivalent, consisting of the same stories. This was not found. The only combination not found was first-person and non-human. Apart from this, all forms of combinations were found regarding stories, e.g. first-person/group, other/individual etc. It could be questioned whether a story told in first-person could be categorized as focusing on non-human actors. However, since the classification concerning actors is made looking at which actors are in focus, such as municipalities, it is possible that a story told in first-person can concern this level of actors. For instance, a story could concern an experience a narrator has had with the municipality of Uppsala, where the focus lies on Uppsala municipality as the main actor in the story.
Important to note, however, concerning the results of both types of classifications is that the observations are few and it cannot be excluded that these tendencies might depend on other explanations, or that they appear just by chance and might not be consistent in other, bigger sets of material. These results should therefore be interpreted with caution. The indications found here would nevertheless be interesting to examine further in future research to see whether they are consistent and whether clearer patterns regarding type of story and level of engagement can be seen.

5.3 Stories’ potential widening effect on deliberation

As discussed in the theoretical background and further operationalized in the methodology section, the definition of an unconventional claim, which could be argued to have a widening effect on deliberation when shared and engaged, has differed within prior research. I will therefore present findings from having defined and operationalized this concept in two different ways. I will furthermore in 5.3.3, after having presented the results from these two types of examination, problematize what the concept of an unconventional claim might be understood as.

5.3.1 Unconventional claims voiced by marginalized groups

As described above, a significant argument in favor of storytelling is that it can better enable members of marginalized groups’ voices to be heard. As such, it can bring in more unconventional perspectives less often heard, creating a more inclusive deliberation (Young 1996, 2000; Sanders, 1997). To examine whether this is evident here, I have looked at two different characteristics of the individuals presenting stories: sex and level of education. The results of the examination are presented in the table below. Since the groups of comparison are different in size, comparison is made looking at percentages.

Table 3: group and number of storytellers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Number of deliberators(^{15})</th>
<th>Number of storytellers (share of group that are storytellers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8 (67 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9 (64 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower levels of education</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10 (90 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher levels of education</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7 (47 %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{15}\) One male participant did not express a single statement in any of the sessions. He was therefore excluded from comparison since he would have been counted as part of the group using only non-narrative claims when in fact he did not speak at all.
The table shows that 67 percent of the women and 64 percent of the men used stories to advance their claims. With only a slight overweight of female storytellers compared to male, there is no clear tendency evident that storytelling is a tool used mainly by women. Looking instead at differences in educational level, 90 percent of individuals with lower levels of education and 47 percent of individuals with higher levels of education used stories to advance their claims. As opposed to the results concerning men and women, a clearer tendency is evident where more individuals with lower levels of education use stories to advance their claims compared to individuals with higher levels of education. In both cases it is evident that stories indeed are used by members of marginalized groups such as women and individuals with lower levels of education. In a majority of the cases, these stories were responded to, thus enabling a widening of the deliberative discussions. In only one of these cases, however, there is a clear tendency for members of the marginalized group to use stories proportionately more than members of their counter group. In part these results thus support the expected outcome and the theoretical arguments by proponents of storytelling (such as Young, 1996, 2000; Sanders 1997) that this type of communication would foremost be a tool for more marginalized groups in the society. These results furthermore differ from those found by Polletta and Lee (2006:710) where individuals with lower levels of education were no more likely to use stories to advance their opinions, and instead women were slightly more likely to use stories compared to men. What these differences may depend on is not possible to establish here. A possible explanation to the differences between women and men, however, might be different levels of gender equality in the United States and Sweden. Greater gender equality could potentially decrease differences between groups of women and men. Differences in findings regarding levels of education might be due to cultural differences, for instance differences in educational systems. Both these differing tendencies would be interesting to study further in complementing studies.

An interesting finding to note regarding marginalized groups’ use of storytelling and the issue debated in the citizen dialogue concerns the vulnerable EU-citizens themselves. When looking more closely at the stories shared in the deliberative sessions it was found that storytelling seemed, at least partly, to be used to illuminate the perspective of this marginalized group even though they were not present. Around ten of the stories were used to call upon this perspective in the deliberations. Some of the stories were second-hand stories shared by deliberators that had met vulnerable EU-citizens during a visit to the City mission’s (Uppsala Stadsmission) shelter. Other stories were of fictive character, where the narrator
tried to imagine and communicate to other deliberators how it must feel to be a vulnerable EU-citizen begging in Uppsala. Yet another few stories were shared with the message that it is strange that politicians and others in Uppsala do not request to hear the perspective of the vulnerable EU-citizens themselves in order to better solve the issue. Two examples of these types of stories are given below. The first comes from session 33, group 1-4, pages 15-16. Person 180 is responding to another deliberator who suggests that the politicians should visit the EU-citizens to ask for their perspective on the matter, what their needs and desires are.

“Yes. And then I would also like to get some kind of perspective of trust in this, that if we then all the time … I think that if one goes around all the time and gives them [the EU-citizens] rides from place to place and force them away from place to place, and then people come and talk to them and expect that they would trust this person and answer what their needs are or what they want, that is not something that one [the EU-citizens] will do, instead one will meet that person with quite a lot of suspicion. So one can … Yes, in my head it is a little like this whether one has someplace to stay, but then it is difficult to define what that would mean of course, but if one has safety and knows that one is allowed to remain in one place then that could give the opportunity for such a vision.”

As can be seen in the statement, person 180 wants to communicate how she imagines the vulnerable EU-citizens might experience a situation in which politicians visit to hear their perspective, when the common encounters the EU-citizens have with Swedish authorities are when they are being forcibly removed by the authorities for staying someplace illegally. By sharing this fictive story from the perspective of the EU-citizens, person 180 wants to point out the need for them to first be given a safe place to stay, to then be able to trust the authorities and politicians and then imagine and communicate what their needs are.

In this next example from session 35, group 2, page 18, person 236 shares a story as a response to another deliberator’s suggestion. The suggestion was that if the municipality of Uppsala is to provide pre-school education to children of the vulnerable EU-citizens, one of their parents or someone else acquainted with the child should stay with the child at the pre-school during the day (in Swedish: “öppen förskola”). 236 responds by saying:

“Mm. I think that might be a bit problematic. When I was at the day-shelter there was a guy who came in with his son who was five years old maybe something like that. And I asked what he [the son] does during the day. And he [the father replied] ’no, but my wife goes around begging and I take care of my son and we go around picking up cans in the mean time’. So they relied on what they could get from both these types of income. If then one parent would have to give up his/her income, I don’t know if that would be so …”
In retelling this story, person 236 wants to communicate how the suggestion made by another deliberator might be perceived and found problematic from the perspective of the EU-citizens. While not being stories that are shared by a particular marginalized group, since there were no vulnerable EU-citizens present in the deliberative discussions, one could perhaps still view this story and the one above as being similar to what has been discussed by proponents of storytelling within deliberation (such as Young 1996, 2000 and Sanders 1997). Due to stories’ function of making members of other groups situate themselves and connect to the particular experiences, in this case of the vulnerable EU-citizens, these perspectives can be better understood in deliberative discussions. Young (2000:72) argues that storytelling in many cases may be the only vehicle for understanding experiences of people in certain types of social situations, by those situated differently. The examples of stories shared with a focus on vulnerable EU-citizens’ perspective can be seen as attempts to bring in these types of voices.

In summary, looking at stories’ potential to widen deliberative discussions by bringing in unconventional claims of marginalized groups such as women and individuals with lower levels of education, it was found that stories were indeed shared by members of these groups and a majority of them were engaged by other deliberators. However, a tendency for these groups to use storytelling proportionately more than others was only clearly seen among individuals with lower levels of education. A tendency was also found for stories to be used as a tool to call upon and bring in the perspective of a marginalized group highly central to the issue debated, however not present in the deliberative discussions.

5.3.2 Unconventional claims from the perspective of the narrator

When examining whether or not deliberators brought in unconventional perspectives into deliberative discussions, Polletta and Lee (2006:708 f) looked at statements made by deliberators which contained comments like “I guess I’m in the minority for thinking…” or “I know this will sound strange” et cetera, to determine whether or not a statement could be considered unconventional. In the material examined in this thesis, no phrasing of this kind was found in any of the statements containing narrative claims. This lack of finding is thus in contrast to the expected outcome described in the theoretical background. This type of phrasing was furthermore not found at all when reading through the material as a whole. When reflecting upon potential reasons why this type of phrasing is not evident in the material studied here, several possible explanations can be presented. 6 of the 55 stories were
shared in a context where the participants were explicitly asked to one by one present their perspectives. Perhaps it is less likely that the deliberators in these circumstances feel the need to express that they have a minority perspective since they are explicitly asked to share their own perspective. Being invited to the speaking arena by being asked to share one’s perspective might be perceived as giving legitimacy to it. This might make the speaker feel less in need of expressing that one has a minority perspective compared to situations when the speaker him- or herself has to claim the space. However, this situation with deliberators being explicitly asked to share their perspective was only evident in 6 of the 55 cases in which narrative claims were made.

Another possibility could be that expressions such as “I guess I’m in the minority for thinking” would be more common at the beginning of a discussion. As described above, Polletta and Lee (2006:703 f) argue that stories have a way of bringing in unfamiliar or even unpopular views in a less threatening manner compared to non-narrative claims. This function of stories might then be especially important at the beginning of a discussion when the participants are less familiar with one another and may feel more uncertain about their role in the group. As described previously, the citizen dialogue was held during three days, and the deliberation examined here only took place on the third day. However, the groups met already on the first day to prepare questions for the lecturers. It is thus possible that informal discussions in the groups could have taken place before the deliberation examined in this thesis where this type of phrasing might have been expressed. This is a possibility that would be interesting to examine further in complementing research, looking at the session in which participants prepared questions during the first two days.

Another potential explanation to the differing findings between this study and the one by Polletta and Lee (2006) might be due to cultural differences. The need for being more expressive, saying that one has a minority perspective, might be more common in the American context that Polletta and Lee studied compared to a Swedish context such as the one examined here. It could further be possible that there exists a difference between online deliberation, as was examined by Polletta and Lee, and face-to-face deliberation examined in this thesis. In online deliberation it is possible to think that participants have more time to reflect on their own perspective in relation to others and to formulate their answers more carefully due to the format being written instead of spoken conversation.

Yet another perhaps quite obvious possibility is that no participants in the citizen dialogue perceived themselves as having unconventional perspectives and therefore did not feel the need to express this. This could especially be true if the deliberative
discussions consisted of participants who all perceived themselves as having similar perspectives on matters discussed. However, the following examples show evidence of lack of consensus regarding the matters discussed in the citizen dialogue. The first example is found in session 35, group 2, pages 22-23, and the second one comes from session 31, group 2, pages 14-15. Person 226 expresses both statements. In the second example the statement is followed by a narrative claim.

“I do not feel that different from others in the society in general, so I find it difficult to place myself in the position that I should be the only one who has these opinions among all of us in the larger group that were here previously [...]” [...] No, but I’m just saying that I see this in the bigger context here, in this citizen dialogue I have difficulties thinking that I would be the only one who has this opinion about …”

And in session 31, person 226 says:

“[…] I sort of understand … I might be perceived as a person who only thinks of myself and ours and so on, but that is not me, I am not like that in my everyday life. I care for the the weak, I do not want to walk all over someone or so, to gain advantages […]”

These comments are shared in contexts where other deliberators have agreed upon an opinion concerning an issue and where person 226 disagrees with this perspective. In the examples, it seems as if person 226 is unwilling to place himself in the position of being in a minority, to be perceived as having an unconventional claim. This differs from what is discussed and found by Polletta and Lee (2006) since instead of having a wish to present his claim as a minority one, person 226 is unwilling to admit that this might be the case. It is possible to think that the unwillingness of placing oneself in the position of having a minority perspective comes from a fear that the claim would then be seen as less legitimate. This might thus cause participants to refrain from using this type of phrasing found by Polletta and Lee (2006). Instead (as is evident in the first example above) individuals might argue that others, perhaps just not present in the current deliberative setting, share his perspective. In the second example person 226 tries to convince the other deliberators that he is not different from them by saying that he also cares for the weak in the society. Similar to the first example, this could be seen as a way to try to strengthen the legitimacy of his claim by ensuring that he has an empathetic personality similar to others, and shares the same basic human values.

However, as with the other possible explanations to why the type of phrasing found in Polletta and Lee’s study (2006) was not found here, it is not possible to know
whether or not the deliberators refrained from expressing that they have an unconventional claim due to fear of it seeming less legitimate by other deliberators.

### 5.3.3 Problematizing the concept of unconventional claims

Having looked at two different ways of defining what an unconventional claim is: either as claims presented by members of marginalized groups as discussed by Young (1996, 2000) and Sanders (1997); or as claims presented by individuals who perceive and express themselves as having a minority perspective as examined and found by Polletta and Lee (2006), it could be asked how we are to understand what an unconventional claim is? Could it be problematic to determine that a claim automatically becomes unconventional if members of marginalized groups voice it, when it is possible that these groups might not be homogeneous and instead consist of persons with different types of opinions? Is it further problematic to define a claim as unconventional only because the person voicing it perceives him- or herself as having a minority perspective? A further possible way of determining whether or not a claim could be considered unconventional is to look at the opinions shared in the deliberative context and determine whether some of them could be seen as unconventional compared to more general opinions among the deliberators.

It has not in this study been possible to map all the opinions appearing in the process of the deliberation, and therefore with certainty determine which opinions are in majority or in opposition to them. However, when reading through the material, the overall impression found was that the general opinion among the deliberators was one of helping EU-citizens in Sweden and emphasizing Sweden’s role of being an actor in solving this issue. Against this perspective, perceived as held by the majority, other opinions were also voiced. These opinions could for instance question whether Sweden or Uppsala had a role in helping the vulnerable EU-citizens. They could further be opinions speaking in negative, generalizing terms of EU-citizens, saying that they were a disturbance on the streets of Uppsala, bringing criminality with them to Sweden. Against this background, a minor examination was made to see if these opinions, perceived as in opposition to the majority, were shared through narratives. Only one example was found, however, in session 35, group 2, and page 37. Person 226 says:

“"We cannot change their philosophy of life. They carry it with them and they have … Yes, yes, yes. I can talk for a long time, but in any case I have experienced having Romani people employed, and when their paycheck came, then they’re gone. Then one is not that inclined to come back and continue working. Then one has some money."
What can be interpreted here as being a part of a perspective in opposition to the majority is the generalizing view of the vulnerable EU-citizens as having a philosophy of life that is unchangeable and characterized by unreliability, not remaining at work but quitting as soon as having earned some money. This narrative claim may not in itself be a strong example of this type of perspective, but still it indicates a differing view from that of the majority. However, looking at the material as a whole, it rather seems as if these types of opinions in opposition to the majority were voiced in a non-narrative form rather than a narrative one. Nevertheless, without having done a systematic analysis of non-narrative claims, this cannot be stated with certainty. Given this example of an unconventional claim being one in opposition to the majority in the context of the issue debated, and not coming from a member of a marginalized group or being presented as a claim perceived by the narrator as a minority perspective, this problematization points to the need for further clarification and systematic exploration of the concept of unconventional claims and the use of storytelling in articulating them.

5.4 Stories’ potential limiting effect on deliberation

In addition to examining stories’ potential widening effect, their potential limiting effect will be examined below. Firstly, it will be examined whether personal stories have a limiting potential. Secondly, stories potential to create “experts” in the group, causing unequal relationships between the deliberators, will be examined.

5.4.1 Personal stories

As described in the theoretical background, personal stories could have a potential limiting effect on deliberation since they might cause deliberators to refrain from disagreeing with, or question, the perspective of the narrator due to fear of embarrassing or offending him/her. In this study personal stories have been identified as stories told in first person. Out of the 55 stories told in the deliberative sessions, 20 were identified as stories told in first-person. However, two of them were disregarded due to lack of time for potential responses since the group facilitator ended the discussion just after the narrative claim was made. As described in the methodological section, a story that received responses in the form of disagreement is not determined to have a limiting effect on deliberation since other deliberators obviously felt free to go against the perspective of the personal story. If responses were only given in some form of agreement, however, it cannot be ruled out that the story might have a limiting effect on the deliberation due to lack of disagreement. Out of the 18 stories told in first-person, 15 were
responded to with only comments in agreement with the claim, 1 story did not receive any response at all, and 2 stories were responded to with disagreement. From these results it cannot be ruled out that personal stories might limit deliberative discussions since many of them were only responded to in agreement.

A further in-depth reading of all the stories told in first-person was made to see whether some could be determined as clear cases of non-personal stories and therefore excluded. After this examination, 9 stories remained that were interpreted as personal. 7 of them were engaged with comments in agreement, and 2 with disagreement. With the results still showing many stories only responded to in agreement, it cannot be ruled out that personal stories may have a limiting effect on deliberation. However, it cannot either be concluded that stories have a limiting effect since it is not possible to know whether or not the lack of disagreement towards a majority of the narrative claims labeled personal came from fear of going against the perspective. An alternative explanation for the lack of disagreement is that all the other deliberators did agree with the narrative claims responded to only in agreeing terms.

A closer examination of the context in which the stories were shared might give better evidence of whether some personal stories came to silence other perspectives in the deliberative sessions. Having read through the material carefully, no indication of this was found. However, from a more systematic and in-depth study of the different perspectives presented in the deliberative discussions one might be able to present a clearer picture. It might then either be possible to rule out that personal stories had a limiting effect on deliberation, or find more clear indications of personal stories indeed limiting the deliberative discussions. An examination of this kind was not possible to carry out here since examining stories’ potential to limit deliberation was not the only focus of this thesis. This would nevertheless be interesting to examine further in future research.

5.4.2 Expert role

Prior research has found that certain stories told in first-person might cause the narrator to be perceived as an expert on the subject discussed. His or her perspective was then perceived as more legitimate and relevant compared to others, causing it to dominate the deliberative discussions (Sprain and Hughes 2015). The first-person accounts that were found to give this status to the narrator were accounts central to the issue debated, such as having experiences of coming as an immigrant to the United States when the issue debated was immigration to the U.S. (Sprain and Hughes 2015:547). In the citizen dialogue examined here, no first-person
accounts of being a vulnerable EU-citizen in Sweden were shared. However, there were some stories shared by individuals who had visited the City mission’s (Uppsala Stadsmission) shelter and met EU-citizens and staff working there. This visit made by two individuals participating in the citizen dialogue was made as a part of the dialogue project. Especially one of these individuals, person 236, relatively often shared his experiences from the visit and retold accounts he had heard from the EU-citizens. He was also at times asked by other participants and the group facilitator to share his experiences or answer how he thought the EU-citizens might think about a certain matter or act regarding a certain policy. An example of this is given below. The situation occurs in session 31, group 2, and can be found on page 8. The group facilitator says:

*Group facilitator:* “[…] I also thought it was interesting to hear from you, 236, who got to talk to some of them [the vulnerable EU-citizens].”

*[General agreement in the group]*

*Group facilitator:* “How did they view it?”

*Person 236:* “View the act of begging?”

*Group facilitator:* “Yes, begging. Would they want something else?”

In this situation person 236 is asked to answer the question of how the EU-citizens he had met viewed the act of begging and whether or not they expressed a wish for their lives to be different. It is one example of instances where person 236 is directly asked to share the perspective of the EU-citizens and as such bring in knowledge and perspectives into the deliberation that had previously been unheard. In another situation (session 35, group 2, page 18) person 236 again shares experiences from his meeting with a vulnerable EU-citizen as a way of disagreeing with a suggestion given by another deliberator. The other deliberator, person 183, suggests that if the municipality of Uppsala is to provide day care for the children of the EU-citizens, then one of their parents or someone acquainted should remain with the child there during the day (in Swedish: “öppen förskola”). Person 236 tells a story about meeting a father and his son (quotation already presented on page 34), where the father explained that the son accompanies him during the day when he collects cans to recycle, while the mother begs on the streets. From this story he draws the conclusion that the EU-citizens would lose income if one of the parents instead had to remain with the child in day care during the day. Having shared this story and opinion, person 183 changes her opinion to say that perhaps they would only be at the day care for a few hours. As such, it can be seen that the accounts shared by person 236 is influential in the deliberative discussions, even
though they concerned accounts of individual experiences that may not be representative for the whole or even a large part of the group of vulnerable EU-citizens begging in Uppsala. This situation is similar to what has been previously described in prior research (Sprain and Hughes 2015) where these types of personal accounts of individual experiences are seen as important perspectives. This gives the narrator a certain status, even though the narrator is not referring to any statistical data or general patterns found through for instance research.

Again, the limiting tendencies of stories, in this case through the creation of “experts”, are difficult to determine here. On the one hand, a person is seen to be given a special role by being asked to share perspectives central to the issue discussed, and also having the authority to change others opinions through the personal stories shared. On the other hand, this situation was only found with one individual, person 236, among three participants retelling accounts of EU-citizens they had met. Person 236 was not either given such a status in the group that differing perspectives were not at all shared, although the differing perspectives were found to not be equally engaged and agreed upon by other deliberators as the accounts given by person 236. Important to note is also that the status of person 236 could be depending on or be strengthened by other aspects such as personality traits, which are not studied here. The findings concerning person 236 are nevertheless similar to the ones found by Sprain and Hughes (2015). A central difference compared to their findings, however, is that the accounts made by person 236 were not first-person accounts of own experiences, something that might have given further status to his role in the group. At the same time, since there were no first-person accounts given by vulnerable EU-citizens, the second-hand accounts could possibly have gained a greater status than they would have if first-person accounts were also given.
6. The definition of a story – a discussion

In addition to primarily examine the role of stories within deliberation, an ambition with this thesis has been to clarify the definition of storytelling in relation to prior research. The definition has been described above in the methodological section. Below I will further discuss some of the different choices made concerning my definition of storytelling and what implications these choices have had on the analysis made and the stories found in this study.

6.1 Sequenced events and fictive stories

Sequenced events have been determined a necessary criteria for statements to be considered stories in this thesis. They are also described as necessary components of a story in prior literature (Labov and Waletzky 1967:20 ff, Labov 1972:362 ff, Ryfe 2006:74, Black 2009:10, Polletta 2009:9). Labov (1972:306 f) describes that a statement needs to consist of a minimum of two clauses, i.e. two events, in order to be seen as a story. In the context of face-to-face deliberations such as those examined in this thesis, this minimal definition of sequencing could on the one hand be seen as beneficial. Many of the narrators did not seem to want to waste time giving long reports of several events occurring in their narratives, but rather shared brief stories, just long enough for the audience to understand the evaluative point the narrator wanted to communicate. A definition of stories in which more than two events is needed might thus have omitted some of the stories shared in the material examined here, and as such not taken into consideration a common way that stories are shared in face-to-face deliberation with spoken conversation.

At the same time it could be questioned whether or not statements only consisting of two events, some of them also lacking an orientation at the beginning, have the ability of situating listeners in a world separate from the one they are presently in. As described in the theoretical background, it has been argued that stories have a function of suspending initial criticism and urges to either agree or disagree with a claim. Instead listeners focus on interpreting the world they have entered through the story to gain a greater understanding of the perspective shared. This function has as such been argued to be beneficial for deliberation (Polletta and Lee 2006:703 f). If a story is so short, however, as to only consist of two events, and perhaps also lacking a setting in which the events take place, it could be questioned whether a story could have this effect on listeners. In the material studied here, these more brief statements labeled as stories were often of fictive character. An example of this comes from session 31, group 3, page 6 and is shared by person 186. He states that the reason why the vulnerable EU-citizen are alienated in their country of origin, in
this example Romania, has not been viewed as a problem by the state of Romania. The situation only started to be perceived as a problem by other states when Romania joined the EU. He ends the statement with the following sentences:

“[…] And then we ask Romania ‘what are you going to do about this?’ and they just ‘why should we do anything about it? We haven’t done anything about it before’.”

These types of statements could be called “fictive dialogues” in which the narrator plays out a very brief fictive conversation between two actors, in this case Sweden and Romania. The dialogue is not preceded by any background information concerning the setting in which such a dialogue may take place. In future research, it might be meaningful to consider whether these types of statements are to be seen as stories or whether the definition might need to be altered, perhaps requiring more than two sequenced events or by excluding fictive statements as stories. At the same time it should not be forgotten that there seems to be a tendency among deliberators to keep stories short in the context of face-to-face deliberation.

6.2 Complicating action

Another central component of stories is the complicating action, or actions. It has been described in previous literature as an event occurring that complicates the plot of the story in some way (Labov and Waletzky 1967:32 f). Some have further defined it as a problem occurring in the plot (Ryfe 2006:74, Black 2008:100 f). However, as described above in 4.3.1, the definition of a complicating action was revised after having examined some of the statements in the material. These statements contained other characteristics of a story, such as an orientation section, sequencing of events and evaluative aspect, but they did not contain any evident problems occurring during the plot. Instead a clear positive action occurred that altered the course of the plot. An example of a story consisting of a positive complicating action is given below. The story is shared in session 35, group 1, and page 19. The discussion concerns the need to build some sense of trust between the vulnerable EU-citizens and Swedish authorities. Suggestions are made to allocate a specific place where the EU-citizens can stay legally and where representatives from the social service, the police, and medical personnel, could visit the EU-citizens to assist them. This would create a better environment of trust between EU-citizens and Swedish authorities. Person 206 responds positively to this suggestion with the following statement.
“Yes, because that’s what they do already in schools, I mean, schools with a lot of problems. I know when I [went] to Eriksberg in junior high. Then there were, the police came there every week, and just walked around and were seen, which sort of affirmed the trust enormously, and the disturbance decreased immediately. Just to see and talk, and that they do not come there because something has happened, but that they come there because they … And that improves the environment and everyone …”

In this story no problem occurs as a result of the events. Instead, events occur that have a positive impact on the situation, solving a problem that was there to begin with. I therefore argue that complicating actions should not be seen as equivalent to problems, since stories such as the one above which center around positive actions occurring can change the course of events. Additionally, in future research examining storytelling, definitions of stories might benefit from further elaboration on what can be considered a complicating action. Many actions can be said to change the course of events, while perhaps not all these would be seen as complicating the plot.
7. Conclusions: the role of stories in deliberation

The aim of this thesis has been to examine the role of storytelling within deliberation, and more specifically what effects stories have on deliberative discussions. From the findings described above it can be concluded that stories indeed are used within deliberation since 55 narrative claims were found in the material examined. This indicates that storytelling is a meaningful tool used to communicate deliberators’ claims, a finding that concurs with prior empirical research regarding storytelling and deliberation (Polletta and Lee 2006, Ryfe 2006). Furthermore, stories were seen to have an effect in the deliberative discussions since other deliberators tended in a majority of the cases to engage with the stories and not dismiss them as irrelevant in the deliberative setting.

Looking more closely at characteristics of stories and engagement, the results show that first-person stories are engaged to a greater extent than stories in the categories second-hand and other, as well as stories focusing on characters on an individual level compared to group, and non-human levels. The results thus indicate that certain characteristics of stories might affect how other deliberators perceive and engage with them. However, important to note is that the observations found were relatively few, causing possibilities for generalizations to be limited. The results are nevertheless interesting and encourage further research on the topic.

Findings regarding what type of effect stories might have, whether widening and/or limiting, have been more difficult to evaluate. Potential widening effects were examined by looking at whether stories were used to bring in unconventional claims, and if they in turn were engaged and as such enabled a broader discussion with more perspectives presented. With a starting point in prior research where unconventional perspectives have been conceptualized in different ways, two ways of examining unconventional claims were made. Examining unconventional claims as those presented by members of marginalized groups, such as women and individuals with lower levels of education, no clear tendency was found that women used storytelling proportionately more than men. However, individuals of lower levels of education did use storytelling proportionately more than individuals with higher levels of education. It was further noted that other deliberators engaged with stories shared by members of these group in a majority of the cases. Consequently, unconventional claims were indeed seen to be brought in and widening the deliberative discussions. Hence, these results in part support the theoretical argument made by critics of deliberation such as Young (1996, 2000) and Sanders (1997) in that stories seem to be a tool used foremost by
individuals of marginalized groups. However, since stories also seem to be a tool used by members of majority groups, the results can be said to be ambiguous. The results further differ from the study by Polletta and Lee (2006) in which they find no indications that individuals with lower levels of education use stories more than individuals with higher levels. Additionally, Polletta and Lee (2006) found that women were slightly more likely to use storytelling than men, a tendency not as evident here. When examining the stories more closely, it was further found that stories were in part used to acknowledge perspectives of a marginalized group not represented, namely the vulnerable EU-citizens.

Another way to examine unconventional claims in prior research has been to study whether or not claims perceived as unconventional by the deliberator him-/herself was presented through narratives. As opposed to findings of Polletta and Lee (2006), this is not found here. Instead, indications were found of deliberators wanting to refrain from using this type of phrasing, possibly since acknowledging that one has an opinion in opposition to the majority could be perceived as decreasing the legitimacy of the claim. Other potential reasons for these differing results have been discussed, such as different cultural contexts (American versus Swedish), and different types of deliberation (online versus face-to-face). While none of these explanations have been possible to test, they may be of interest for further research on the topic.

Finally, regarding the results concerning stories’ potential widening effect, it was discussed how one can understand what an unconventional claim is since the conceptualization has differed within prior research. A third way of conceptualizing it was discussed and examined. However, the conceptualization of unconventional claims as being perspectives in opposition to the majority in the context of the deliberative discussions was generally not found to be introduced through storytelling, but rather through non-narrative claims.

Concerning stories’ limiting effect, differences in tendencies were found. The tendency for personal stories’ to limit deliberation could not be ruled out in the examination made here since indeed a majority of the stories determined as personal were only responded to with comments in agreement with the claim. However, since these comments may have been the result of consensus regarding the narrative claim made, and not fear of offending the narrator, it cannot be said for certain that stories’ of personal character had a limiting effect in the material examined here. Additional research would need to be done to examine this further.
Moreover, regarding stories’ potential to limit deliberation through the creation of “experts” in the group, this tendency was somewhat evident. Out of three cases where deliberators retold experiences of vulnerable EU-citizens they had encountered, one case was especially noted. This deliberator was particularly asked to share his experiences and also answer questions of how EU-citizens might perceive different aspects of the issue discussed. He was furthermore able to change the opinions of other deliberators by retelling accounts of individual EU-citizens and these accounts came to be seen as generalizable to the larger group of vulnerable EU-citizens in Uppsala. This tendency indeed point to similarities found in prior research by Sprain and Hughes (2015) concerning the “expert” role. Although it was only found in one case here, the effect can be said to have a limiting potential.

Apart from looking at stories’ function within deliberation, another important result from this thesis has been to discuss and further clarify the concept of a story in relation to prior empirical research regarding storytelling and deliberation. Components such as complicating actions and what can be defined as an event have been discussed and efforts have been made to better clarify these aspects of stories. What can be concluded is that future research could benefit from greater clarifications about how to define the concept of storytelling, and further discussions regarding implications of the definitions. For instance, further discussions could be held about whether proposed functions of stories will occur in instances where stories are so short so as to only consist of two events, without any orientation, and whether or not these types of statements should be considered stories.
8. References


9. Appendix: original quotes in Swedish

Session 31, group 1, page 5, person 200:
”[...] Jag minns väl ungdomen, vi hade någonting tv-program, Hylands Hö in som över huvud taget kom dit. Det hamnade ut på allt annat. Och jag tror det är mycket i det här också, och det är [...]. Om vi ska hjälpa dem på det viset med pengar så de får dit dem, det måste på något kontrolleras så att det verkligen, eftersom det är så korrupt där så, ja [...]”

Session 31, group 4, pages 31-32, person 188:

The story was responded to by the following comments:
Person 230, page 32 “Nej, det är intressant.”
Person 196, page 32 “Eller hur.”
Person 217, page 32 “Jo, men det där var ett bra exempel, att du ville ge dem tio kronor. Det är ungefär som när jag sa att ’ska vi ge dem tre miljoner, är de nöjda då?’ Nej, de kommer vilja ha mer, så att säga.”
Person 217, page 33 ”För det är klart att om ni hjälper dem nu så vill de ha ännu mer, och om de får mer hjälp så vill de ännu mer. Man måste vilja lite själv också.”

Session 33, group 1-4, pages 15-16, person 180:
”Jo. Och då vill jag gärna få någon typ av förtroendeperspektiv i det, att om vi då hela tiden så tänker jag att om man hela tiden då går och skjutsar dem från plats till plats och driver bort dem ifrån plats och plats, och så kommer det folk och pratar med dem och förväntar sig att de ska lita på den här personen och svara på vad de behöver eller vad de skulle vilja, det kommer man inte att göra utan man kommer bemöta den personen med ganska mycket misstänksamhet. Så kan man [...]. Ja, i mitt huvud så är lite det här med om man har en boplats, men sen är det svårt att definiera vad det skulle innebära förstås, men har man en trygghet och man vet att jag får vara kvar på ett ställe så kan det ge möjlighet till en sån vision.”
Session 35, group 2, page 18, person 236:

Session 35, group 2, pages 22-23, person 226:
“Jag känner mig inte så annorlunda i samhället i övrigt, så jag har svårt att sätta mig in i den bilden att jag ska vara den enda som tycker så här i den här stora samlingen som var här tidigare. […]”

"Ja, ja, jo. Nej, men jag säger att jag ser det i det stora sammanhanget här, i den här medborgardialogen så har jag svårt att tro att jag ska vara den enda som har den här åsikten om …”

Session 31, group 2, pages 14-15, person 226:
“ […] Jag förstår liksom … jag kanske upplevs som en människa som bara tänker på mig själv och på vårt och så vidare, men så är inte jag utan jag är inte så i mitt vardagliga liv. Jag värnar om de svaga, jag vill inte trampa på någon eller så, för att vinna fördelar […]”

Session 35, group 2, page 37, person 226:

Session 31, group 2, page 8, group facilitator and person 236:
Samtalsled: ”[…] Jag tyckte också det var intressant att höra dig, 236, som fick prata med några.”
[Allmänt medhåll]
Samtalsled: ”Hur såg de på det?”
236: ”På själva tiggandet?”
Samtalsled: ”Ja, på tiggandet. Skulle de vilja ha någonting annat?”

Session 31, group 3, page 6, person 186:
” […] Och då frågar vi Rumänien ’vad ska ni göra åt det här?’ Och de bara ’varför ska vi göra någonting åt det? Det har vi inte gjort tidigare’.”
Session 35, group 1, and page 19, person 206:
“Ja, för så gör man ju ändå på skolor, alltså, skolor med mycket problem. Jag vet när jag i Eriksberg i högstadiet. Då var det, polisen kom dit varje vecka och bara gick omkring och syntes och liksom bejakade förtroendet något enormt, och oroligheterna minskade på en gång. Bara att man ser och pratar, och de kommer inte dit för att det har hänt någonting, utan de kommer dit för att de… och det förbättrar miljön och alla …”