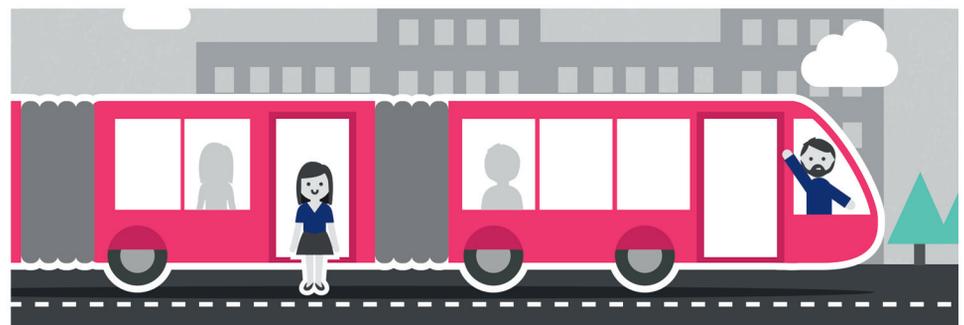
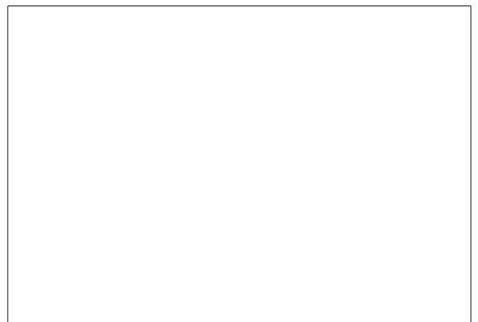


From conflict to crisis to resolution

An interpretive analysis of the Aalborg light rail planning process



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Master's Thesis
M.Sc. Urban Planning and Management
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2016



Photos on front page: (Letbanesekretariat et al. 2015a), (Aalborg Kommune et al. 2016), (Aalborg Kommune 2012)

Title

Form conflict to crisis
to resolution –
an interpretive analysis of
the Aalborg light rail
planning process

Themes

The Aalborg light rail scheme
Power and storytelling
Interpretive analysis
The travelling idea
The role of the public planner

Project period

01.02.2016-02.06.2016

Author

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Supervisor

Enza Lissandrello

Printed reports: 3

Number of pages: 70

**Number of appendixes
and type: 7, CD**

Completed: 02.06.2016

Abstract

An increasing interest in light rail mobility solutions has emerged in Europe. Spreading from one setting to the next, the travelling idea of light rail transit has reached the Danish setting(s) and is being adopted in three Danish cities. Thus, Aarhus, Odense and Copenhagen are in the process of implementing light rail transit schemes. While having a promising start, the light rail transit scheme of Aalborg was faced with a series of changes.

On this contextual basis, this research explores how storylines were constructed in order to represent the idea of a light rail transit scheme in Aalborg and how their enactment influenced the planning process.

In the context of travelling ideas as put forward by Malcom Tait and Ole B. Jensen, the thesis focuses on the Aalborg light rail scheme. The research is conducted on the basis of a theoretical framework consisting of John Forester's conception of power, manifested through and adaptation of Merlijn van Hulst's and James A. Throgmorton's conceptions of storytelling. The operationalization of this framework is done through an adaptation of Dvora Yanow's steps in interpretive policy analysis.

The interpretive analysis consists of two parts: (1) the formal and informal processes are delineated and presented in a sequential manner, enabling the identification of the rationale behind the Aalborg light rail scheme, and (2) four core storylines surrounding the Aalborg light rail are identified. The storylines are analyzed through each of their particular narratives. Each storyline is explored through the specific mechanisms of stories identified. The empirical evidence of this research consists of planning and policy documents, and six semi-structured, conversational interviews with central actors in the case.

The analysis identifies two perspectives adopted by proponents and opponents. The proponents consist mainly of public planners and social democrats, while the opponents consist principally of traffic engineers and liberal parties. These contrasting perspectives are reflected upon in order to understand the role of the planner.

The public planner is part of the proponents of the Aalborg light rail scheme and therefore legitimizes and rationalizes the scheme by putting forward supporting narratives. The perspective adopted by the public planner, should not only consist in technical analysis and the formulation of planning documents, but also in persuasive storytelling and the ability to adapt and anticipate changes in dynamic political environments.

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List of appendices

A complete list of appendices is presented in the following. The original copies can be found enclosed in the attached CD.

- A. Interview with Mette Olesen, project leader at Nordjyllands Trafiksekskab
- B. Interview with Jesper Schultz, project leader at the Department of Urban and Spatial Planning at Aalborg Municipality
- C. Interview with Niels Melchior, part-time lecturer at the Department of Civil Engineering at Aalborg University
- D. Interview with Anne Juel Andersen, architect and planner at the Department of Urban and Spatial Planning at Aalborg Municipality
- E. Interview with Anker Lohmann-Hansen, traffic engineer and former lecturer at the Department of Civil Engineering at Aalborg University
- F. Interview with Niels Agerholm, associate professor from the Department of Civil Engineering at Aalborg University
- G. Table presenting the mechanisms of the story of the Aalborg light rail scheme

The appendices will be used as follows:

Appendix A: (Olesen 2016)

Appendix B: (Schultz 2016)

Appendix C: (Melchior 2016)

Appendix D: (Andersen 2016)

Appendix E: (Lohmann-Hansen 2016)

Appendix F: (Agerholm 2016)

Appendix G: Table 7

1 Introduction

On 13th of November 2014, a new mobility solution in Aalborg was granted support by the Danish government: A light rail transit system (LRT) (Transport- og Bygningsministeriet 2014). This new urban mobility solution was meant to connect the western part of the city with the city center and the eastern part consisting of the Aalborg University and the new University Hospital. With an estimated number of passengers of almost 26.000 per week-day in 2025 (COWI 2014), the aim was not only to consolidate public transport in Aalborg, enhance the mobility along the route through an environmentally friendly solution, but also to generate urban growth (Transport- og Bygningsministeriet 2014). Such a mobility solution followed European city trends but was not simply about a local improvement, but to boost Aalborg in the inter-urban competition with other Danish cities such as Aarhus and Odense where LRT systems likewise were recently being established.

Considering the benefits of LRT as a mobility solution involved to a great extent the public authorities and all government levels. Many actors were excited about the planning of the light rail in Aalborg: almost the entire city council agreed on the project (Olesen 2016; Andersen 2016; Schultz 2016; Lohmann-Hansen 2016), securing the approval of a government subsidy of 830 million. DKK i.e. 45% of the total construction cost (Transport- og Bygningsministeriet 2014). However, the project did not get full support. While light rails are seen as successful in the improvement of mobility and in generating urban growth, the advancement of the light rail project in Aalborg has also raised some criticism. Opponents argue that the Aalborg light rail system missed financial feasibility, as well as the passenger prognosis have been overestimated, and these are just a few of the raised critiques against the project.

With an expected completion around the year of 2021 (Transport- og Bygningsministeriet 2014), all of the sudden, the Aalborg light rail project had a drastic turn. The state subsidy for Aalborg Light rail was canceled due to the change of the Danish government followed by a new financial act proposal for 2016 (Finansministeriet 2016). It was something Denmark had never experienced before “*to break a clear deal, to cancel the Aalborg light rail*” (Aalborg Kommune et al. 2015).

The Aalborg LRT scheme is emblematic for current trends where cities are competing for public funds and private investments. Recent developments of the Danish planning system have meant an increased focus on economic growth e.g. the structural reform of the municipalities in 2007. In countering this, in many Danish cities, planners and local politicians alike have resolved to copying what seems being as best practice in other European urban contexts. Likewise, mechanisms of storytelling are translated and adopted from other European institutional and urban settings giving rise to so-called ‘travelling ideas’. This is also manifested in Aalborg, where planning for the LRT scheme represents a development characterized by practices of representations where various ideas are advanced that are indeed quite similar to those where the planning idea is accomplished and operating (Tate and Jensen 2007).

In the context of travelling ideas, the herein thesis focuses on the Aalborg light rail project. The research has the point of departure in power dynamics manifested through storylines and their construction in the planning process.

The LRT scheme of Aalborg went from being seen as an overly ambitious vision to being close to reality only to abruptly being cancelled and instead transform into bus rapid transit (BRT) scheme. This thesis aims at studying the dynamics of the planning process and offers a moment of reflection. Therefore, the research explores how storylines in the planning process of the Aalborg light rail have been constructed and how these storylines shaped the planning process in order to discuss the role of the public planner and the influences of power dynamics in planning.

2 Understanding Aalborg light rail as a travelling idea

In order to understand the context of this research, the Aalborg LRT case is viewed through the lens of *the travelling idea*, highlighting the European and Danish trends towards light rail mobility. Before presenting the case, the concept of the travelling idea is presented, followed by a presentation of the proliferation of light rail schemes in Europe and Denmark.

2.1 The concept of the travelling idea

Globalization has meant an increased speed and intensity by which concepts and models for urban planning spread. This includes the spread of spatial planning ideas. Tait and Jensen (2007) argue that globalization as a concept does not address the means by which ideas travel, but is concerned with the wider setting in which they travel. However, by using the concept of the travelling idea, it is possible to “*trace the means by which ideas and models of urban form are developed, transported and imported in diverse places.*” (Tait and Jensen 2007: 110). Tait and Jensen (2007) argue that globalization raises a challenge for planning: To critically translate planning ideas into a local context or to ‘glocalize’ and allow “*global ideas and local practices to co-exist*” (Tait and Jensen 2007: 110).

The two concepts of *translation* and *representation* are key in understanding the travelling idea. Building on Callon (1986), Tate and Jensen conceptualize translation as “*a far wider process than the adoption (or take-up) of an idea, one which focuses instead on the array of actors, objects and actions that serve to transform the social and natural world.*” (Tait and Jensen 2007: 112). Hence, translation is different from transfer or diffusion and it is not a neutral process, but a process in which actors interact. To understand the process of translation and “*how ideas are translated across diverse spaces and into diverse places*” (Tait and Jensen 2007: 114), a focus on the concept of representation is needed. The concept of *representation* refers to how planning ideas as well as settings of planning ideas are framed and represented by groups of actors. The setting that a travelling idea travels from, the travelling idea itself and the setting it travels is thus seen as being subject to representation with the purpose to match different settings with certain understandings of planning ideas including the agendas of powerful actors in that setting. While Tait and Jensen propose a discourse approach to understand travelling ideas, the herein research uses storytelling as a way to explain how representation is understood (Tait and Jensen 2007). The reason for this is that storytelling, as much as discourse, is a way of “*Thinking about the way ideas are represented to actors suggests that the linguistic and visual imagery in which such ideas are embedded must become pivotal.*” (Tait and Jensen 2007: 114). The notions of representation and storytelling also shed light on how actors in networks use intermediaries such as texts to frame ideas. In this research, intermediaries are seen as a manifestation of storytelling. Identifying the way in which these intermediaries are constructed in networked relations brings up the power dimension.

Building on Tait and Jensen’s (2007) approach of travelling ideas, an analytical framework of power and storytelling is beneficial in understanding the concepts of translation and

representation. The two concepts of power and storytelling are conceptualized in the theoretical framework for this research presented in chapter 3. Furthermore, it is necessary to understand the context where the LRT model is produced and adopted. Therefore, the following sections present the context where the idea travels from, i.e. where it is produced, and the context where the idea travels to, i.e. where it is adopted.

2.2 The proliferation of light rail schemes in Europe and Denmark

The proliferation of LRT schemes as drivers for urban development in Europe can be viewed as a spatial planning idea which has spread from one setting to another. In the following, a brief chronological overview of the 'supply-side settings' of the LRT model is introduced.

The sustainable mobility discourse dealing with, among other, travel demands, mobility enhancement, and urban growth, boosted the advancement of light rails in the urban areas. Moreover, despite the fact that light rails are more expensive than busses, their capacity to meet these goals, along with their permanent character, have made them attractive for European cities (Olesen, Making light rail mobilities 2014). Mette Olesen (2014) argues that: "*The trend of constructing new light rail systems (1) in medium-sized cities in Western Europe has become progressively stronger since the first modern light rail system was opened in Nantes, France, in 1985 - also called the 'tram revival'.*" (Olesen 2014: 262). Nantes light rail project is seen as a "*tram renaissance in Europe*" (Olesen 2014: 266), and it was one of the examples brought up when, in 1989 the idea of introducing a light rail was officially presented in Bergen, Norway, in the *Bybanehoringen 89* report. A completely new network was introduced in Bergen in June 2010 (Olesen, Making light rail mobilities 2014).

After Nantes in 1985, Grenoble in 1987, in 2001 the city of Angers started the planning process for the light rail project in the *Mission Tramway* report. In June 2011, a light rail system framed as a generator for urban growth was operating (Olesen, Making light rail mobilities 2014).

The strategy in Bern, Switzerland, has been to minimize car traffic in the city center. With a history of trams since the beginning of 20th century, the modernisation and extension of the light rail lines, as well as the replacement of some bus lines, was the solution. Olesen states that: "*In Bern, the light rail was framed as the future for public transport and urban development with a reference to the tram-renaissance that happened around the world, the travelling idea of light rail mobility also reached Switzerland.*" (Olesen 2014: 274). Hence, in December 2010, the upgrade to light rail of the Bern West bus line was opened (Olesen, Making light rail mobilities 2014).

The LRT schemes mentioned here are only a few examples of how the idea of LRT has spread on European cities. The first attempt to reintroduce trams in Denmark was in 1990's after the examples of the French cities, when in June 1999 Aarhus Municipality was allocated funds, by the Ministry of Traffic, for the preliminary analysis of a light rail. This analysis consisted in a survey which had three phases: screening, traffic analysis and environmental and economic con-

sequences (Melchior 2016). The results consisted of recommendations about the route and the effects of the light rail city project. However, this process ended in 2000 without a finalization. In 2005, new analyses were conducted for a new, regional LRT system. Hence, the previous analyses and proposals were used for the inner city, while the extension to towns outside Aarhus was made on the old railways. The Aarhus light rail is now under realization estimated to be operational in 2017 (Aarhus Municipality 2016).

Another major light rail project is Ring 3 in Copenhagen which starts from Lyngby, running until Ishøj along the highway (Lohmann-Hansen 2016). This project gathers the Ministry of Transport, the Capital Region and 11 municipalities working together (*Lov om letbane på Ring 3*), making it a one of a kind project. And while the planning process started around the year 2000, “*there’s a discussion in Copenhagen and some of the Government supporting parties would like to turn down the support for the Greater Copenhagen light rail system*” (Schultz 2016 :3). Due to the administrative scale, it differs from the remaining light rail projects in Denmark.

Around the year of 2009, Odense started planning for the light rail and after the results of the preliminary analysis in 2014, the state allocated funding for the project (*Lov om Odense Letbane*). An important part of the project was closing the 1960’s road *Thomas B. Thriges Gade* which cuts through central parts of the city. The LRT scheme addresses the past mistakes of modernist planning and the idea is “*to use the light rail as a generator, it should be an element in the rebuilding of the city.*”(Melchior 2016: 3). This meant removing cars and busses, and building along the road, thus linking two parts of the city (Melchior 2016).

If viewing the Danish context through the lens of the travelling idea, the Aalborg LRT scheme, as well as the LRT schemes in Aarhus, Odense and Copenhagen, must have undergone a process of *translation* during which both settings and planning ideas have been *represented* through *storytelling* in order to reframe the specific projects. Based on the described concepts and cases, the following section presents the Aalborg LRT as a travelling idea.

2.3 Aalborg LRT as a travelling idea

While the previous section explained the contexts in which the idea of LRT is produced and travels from, the following goes into the context of where the idea is adopted and travels to.

Aalborg light rail was proposed along one part of the growth axis, the area around which urban development is concentrated. The LRT’s main purpose was to connect the Vestbyen and the city center with the campus area and the new University Hospital via Boulevarden. The 1.8 billion DKK project was seen as “*the best bet for a good and sensible sustainable solution*” (Kaastrup-Larsen in Aalborg Kommune et al. n.d.) focusing on the “*crucial*” connection between the center and the university. The project was envisioned to “*effectively handle*” the amount of passengers expected to double until 2025, at the same time to “*accelerate development along the growth axis*” while at the same time “*changing mobility behavior*” and creating new “*urban identities*”. The Aalborg LRT was to become “*a powerful symbol of the modern Aalborg.*” (Letbanesekretariat 2013: 7).

With the implementation of the Metrobusses in 2004, came along the concept of “*Think tram – Drive the bus*”. The idea of a light rail was initially published in the 2008 report *Letbane i Aalborg – en vision for udvikling af den kollektive trafik* where the concept of *collective corridors* was central for public transport (Aalborg Kommune et al. 2008).

It was seen as a long process which would have involved:

“large investments to realize a light rail in Aalborg. Rebranding of street spaces will be needed and will also be the visible sign of a higher priority to public transport. The level of investment means that light rail must be established in stages. In Aalborg, the strategy will be to start work on the light rail in the corridor, which is estimated to have the greatest overall potential.” (Aalborg Kommune et al. 2008: 3 emphasis added).

The corridor referred to was officially introduced in 2012 in the *Norddanmarks Vækstdynamo Planstrategi 2011* report where it was presented as the “*driving force and the backbone that should be driving the growth throughout northern Denmark.*” (Aalborg Kommune 2012: 5). This was further emphasized in the *Fysisk Vision 2025* part of the *Hovedstruktur 2013* of the Municipal Plan. The aim was to create “*A targeted and focused urban growth in the growth axis supported by a light rail route*” which was to “*develop Aalborg as ‘The tough little big city’ with international city vibe.*” (Aalborg Kommune 2013: 4). Moreover the *Phase 1 report of preliminary analysis of the Aalborg light rail* was published in 2013 where the whole route was marked starting from Vestbyen to the new University Hospital via Boulevarden (Letbanesekretariat 2013). This was followed by the *Analysis report for Aalborg light rail/BRT* in 2014 where an alternative for the light rail was presented in the form of a bus rapid transit (BRT) (Aalborg Kommune et al. 2014), securing the government agreement to support the establishment of the light rail in the same year (Transport- og Bygningsministeriet 2014). After the agreement, the environmental assessment report, *Aalborg Letbane VVM og MV Miljørapport*, together with the project plans and maps, *Projektplaner og Kort*, were published in June 2015 together with the proposal for the municipal plan attachment. In order to enact the municipal plan attachment, a public phase was required. The focal point of this public phase was an exhibition which started on the 20th of June and ended on the 9th of September 2015. Throughout the process, two public hearings took place (aalborgidag.dk 2015). On the basis of the herein mentioned documents, the municipal plan attachment, *Redegørelse for tillæg H.031 for letbane i Aalborg*, was approved on the 9th of November 2015. This supplemented the municipal plan with the *Guideline 13/10 Aalborg Light rail* allowing the implementation of the LRT (Aalborg Kommune 2015). In the meantime the government elections resulted in a change in government. Thus, on the 18th of June 2015 the change from a social-democrat government to a liberal government was made. The state subsidy for Aalborg light rail was canceled in the financial act for 2016. The apparent reason of the cancelation was a Danish government change and subsequent cancellation of the previous government's budget proposal for 2016, as mentioned in the *Forslag til finanslov for finansåret 2016*. The remaining light rail projects in Denmark were instead allocated funds (Finansministeriet 2016).

The above summarizes the official planning process of the Aalborg LRT project, however, as Tait and Jensen argue, in order to explore a process of translation of a travelling idea it is necessary to investigate the representations of space mobilized by actors in networks. This relational approach to space means that space is embedded in multiple meanings and that *“attaching meaning and intervening cannot be thought of without a notion of power.”* (Tait and Jensen 2007: 116).

The above key events are the results of significant work undertaken by actors in representing and framing the sites of production and adoption as well as the planning idea itself. Tait and Jensen argue that *“any travelling idea must be embedded into a network of capabilities.”* (Tait and Jensen 2007: 116). Hence, the network is responsible for *grounding* the idea in the adoptive setting being *“dependent upon the existing networks and nodes of power in place.”* (Tait and Jensen 2007: 116). Moreover, the travelling ideas depend on *“a representational logic of urban intervention”* (Jensen 2004: 218), which is the link between narratives and physical interventions (Jensen 2007). Therefore, *“travelling ideas in the light of the representational logics of urban intervention suggest that we should include not only a notion of power (in the sense of manufacturing the dominant representation) but also a notion of narrative.”* (Tait and Jensen 2007: 116). The aim of this research is to identify how storylines were constructed in the case of Aalborg LRT. In order to achieve this, the narratives are mapped and the mechanisms behind these are identified.

2.4 Presenting the research question

The decision of the Danish government to first approve the Aalborg LRT scheme and then rejecting it is unique for a Danish context in the sense that never has the Danish state granted state funding for an infrastructure project and cancelling the funding (Finansministeriet 2016). The LRT scheme went from being an ambitious vision, to reality, to finally transform being transformed into a BRT scheme. It is in the light of (1) the dynamic character of the planning process and (2) the growing tendency towards implementing LRT mobility solutions, that the Aalborg LRT scheme is the object of the research of this thesis. For these purposes, the following question will guide this research of this thesis:

How were storylines constructed in order to represent the idea of an LRT scheme in Aalborg and how did their enactment influence the planning process?

For a better understanding on the outset of this thesis, the research question is divided into parts and presented in table 1.

Part of the re-search question	Clarification
<i>“How were</i>	The use of 'how' rather than 'what' or 'which' implies the aim is to explore, interpret and understand the dynamics behind processes, rather than simply identify or measure outcomes. This is in line with epistemological considerations of unveiling and constructing knowledge, and ontological matters of social constructivism.
<i>storylines</i>	A focus on storytelling in line with Throgmorton’s conception, operationalized by an adaptation of Yanow’s interpretive analysis.
<i>constructed</i>	A recognition of the way in which networked actors chose to construct storylines
<i>in order to represent</i>	The construction of storylines is seen as being undertaken by actors to deliberately represent travelling ideas, the settings they travel from and adopted in. This shows recognition of the role of storylines in relation to political power and the power of the planner.
<i>the idea of an LRT scheme</i>	The object of the study is delineated as the planning for the light rail transit scheme.
<i>in Aalborg</i>	The setting of the case study is delineated as the city of Aalborg, Denmark
<i>and how did their enactment influence</i>	A recognition of the power of storytelling in influencing planning.
<i>the planning process?</i>	Signifying a focus on the procedural rather than the substantive side of planning, i.e. the study aims at exploring the planning process and does not evaluate the LRT solution itself.

Table 1: Elaboration of the divided parts of the research question.

3 Theoretical framework

For theoretical clarification, the following chapter will present a theoretical framework explaining the conception of power and storytelling as used in this research. First, a conceptualization of power in planning will be presented. Second, storytelling in planning is conceptualized and operationalized in order to design *an analytical framework including both power and storytelling theories*.

3.1 Conceptualizing power in planning

Lasswell and Kaplan (1950: 75) argue that the concept of power has long been the focus in political science: *“the concept of power is perhaps the most fundamental in the whole of political science: the political process is the shaping, distribution, and exercise of power.”* (quoted in Arts & Tatenhove (2004: 340)).

The multifaceted character of power is highlighted by Arts & Tatenhove (2004) in the three-layered model which goes from dispositional to relational to structural power. This was developed to analyze the relation between power and change, emphasizing that different approaches produce different levels or dimensions of power.

Lukes' (1976) conceptualization of power, serves as a useful point of departure in the understanding of power, as different dimensions are identified. Lukes argues that power can be perceived as (1) *control over outcomes* (direct power); (2) *agenda setting* (indirect power); (3) *manipulation* (control of consciousness). Central in Lukes' conceptualization of power is that the actions of A have the intent to oppress or restrict the actions of B (Lukes 1974). However, this rather pessimistic view on human relations has seen an advancement with Hay's (1997) alternative understanding of power contributing with the concepts of *conduct-shaping* (direct and sometimes involuntary control) and *context-shaping* (indirect and sometimes involuntarily control). This view reconsiders the intentionality of the actions as conceptualized in Lukes' power dimensions, and adds the involuntary dimension. Moreover, it draws a broader view to the concept of power which can be interpreted as *institutional power*, where regulations, norms and cultural cognitive systems alter the conduct of individuals (Scott 2001). It is in part the kind of power that Foucault delineated as governmentality, emphasizing cultural-cognitive elements and the process of internalization: *“the origins of the ways in which people govern themselves, govern other individuals, and govern society at large”* (Fischler, 2000: 262). Foucault (1991) argues that knowledge generates power, while at the same time is generated by power. He accentuates the permanent presence of power in society and acknowledges its importance in the dynamic of power relations (Fischler 2000). In the same manner, Flyvbjerg (2003) argues that power in planning practice should rather be dealt with than ignored. He studies the relation between rationality and power stressing that power defines rationality to a larger extent than vice versa: *“rationality is context-dependent, the context of rationality is power, and power blurs the dividing line between rationality and rationalization”* (Flyvbjerg 2003: 320). Moreover, the context of rationality is dependent on the existing power and rationalization is the exercise of the power in

defining rationality (Flyvbjerg 2003). He states that: *“the absence of rational arguments and factual documentation in support of certain actions [are] more important indicators of power than arguments and documentation produced”* (Flyvbjerg 2003: 321). This can be interpreted as an argument that with more power comes less rationality, meaning that power has autonomy in defining reality (Flyvbjerg 2003). For studying planning, Flyvbjerg (2004) developed a *phronetic approach* where power and values are balanced. He defines *phronesis* as *“a sense or a tacit skill for doing the ethically practical rather than a kind of science.”* (Flyvbjerg 2004: 287). This is further characterized as being context-dependent, action-oriented, and based on practical value-rationality and is a way of exploring power relations (Flyvbjerg, 2004).

Another approach of examining power relations, are the factors developed by Faulks (1999). This approach is building on Hay's (1997) stance on the concept of power. Faulks (1999) elaborated the factors as an response to Hay's division of power and intent resulting in a vague notion of power. The herein mentioned factors go as follows: (1) *types of power* described as techniques of power distributions e.g. military, communicative and economic; (2) *resources of power* e.g. wealth, physical strength, knowledge, ideas, language and technology. Their *distribution* is key in identifying decision making entities; (3) *methods of power* consist of force, manipulation, persuasion and authority, the latter one being the most secure one; (4) *structures of power* and the sharp division between them, enable or obstruct actors in exercising their will. These include class, ethnicity, generation and gender; (5) *sites of power or arenas* where power relations are played out. Family, associations of city society and the state, to mention a few; and (6) *outcomes of power* encompassing sense of efficacy to the most empowered, and incapacity to the ones deprived of authority or influence (Faulks 1999). In this note, Faulks concludes that: *“The exercise of power is therefore a dynamic rather than static process that is shaped by previous instances and outcomes of its usage.”* (Faulks 1999). Therefore, power is a dynamic process dependent of the results of its previous performance.

Forester (1989) considers that planners should acknowledge how power relations shape planning processes in order to improve their own actions. He stresses that planners are in charge of gathering not only information and data but also building support. Hence, planners are coalition builders and information accumulators. Moreover, criticism and spreading questions are important tools in the work of the planner. Having to shape expectations and actions in an unstable and uncertain environment, with vague opportunities and goals, planners should get information by asking questions (Forester 1989). Receiving information empowers, while the one delivering information is the source of power. This dynamic enables actors to perform in a specific context:

“How analysts organize attention is the central political problem of their practice. They must stress some issues and downplay others. They clarify some opportunities but obscure others. They encourage the participation of some citizens, but not that of others. They open up particular practical questions, but they close off the discussion of others.” (Forester 1989: 19).

Moreover, Forester (1989) proposes five distinct perspectives, each characterized by a different basis of power that planners adopt in their planning practice although, usually, a combination of these perspectives is reflected in practice.

The approach on information as a source of power is delineating five types of planners that have a different understanding about the notion at hand. First, Forester (1989) starts by describing a technical perspective where the power lies in the technical information. This view is found in the practice of what he defines as being *the technician*. It is characterized by the ability of accessing data by asking relevant questions, and conducting appropriate data analysis. This problem-solving approach provides solutions to technical issues. One of the most important critiques of this approach is that it disregards political power. The technician believes that technical work proves to be more powerful than the political dimension (Forester 1989).

The second perspective described by Forester is *the incrementalist*. This perspective views power as the information answering organizational needs. The organizationally pragmatic incrementalist stresses the importance of knowing where to attain information, "*how to get a project approved with minimum delay*" (Forester 1989), and how to avoid design issues. This view takes a more communicative direction where contacts and a network of influential actors provide the necessary information. Key information is dependent on various actors and is, what Forester calls, social problem-solving. The incrementalist planner narrows this power to only having an impact in the organizational politics. However, when others depend on the information held by the incrementalist planner, this information is a source of power (Forester 1989).

The third perspective, the *liberal-advocate* considers that power lies in the information answering the pluralist political system's requirements. Hence, it concentrates on the information needs of the underrepresented, and the powerless in order to enable their participation in a planning process, thus, redressing inequalities (Forester 1989).

Forester further identifies a fourth perspective that empowers the existing structures of power naming it *the structuralist*. Within this view, planners have power, but use it to "*keep people in their place and protect existing power.*"(Forester 1989: 30) Forester emphasizes the political-economic context in which the existing power structures and planners work: "*The actions of the state, and the planners who work within it, inevitably function to prop up capitalism.*" (Forester 1989: 30).

Finally, the fifth perspective that Forester identifies, is *the progressive* which addresses the misinformation, accidental or not, that might occur in a planning process. For this, the progressive needs to act based on an analysis of the existing political context which helps anticipate the irregularities of that political system. Moreover, this perspective seeks to gather relevant information to further supply it to citizens, communities, and unrepresented in order to support their organizing and democratic efforts, as well as responding to expectable misinformation. Forester (1989) further poses a set of questions of political and organizational analysis:

“What types of misinformation can be anticipated? Are some inevitable while others are avoidable? Are some distortions socially systematic while others are not? How does misinformation planning and citizen action? What practical responses are possible? Might planners themselves be sources of distortions? Can this be justified? How can planners expect misinformation to flow through the relations of power that structure the planning process? Finally, in the face of expectable misinformation and distortion threatening well-informed planning and citizen action, what can progressive planners do in practice?” (Forester 1989: 33).

All these questions have the dimension of power, and while acknowledging the political power and value differences, Forester (1999) proposes a step back from the reasoning that planning is political and planners are not heard. Moreover, Forester argues the planners should take a closer look at how planning is performed. Thus, they should take act in the *“contested and fluid power relationships”* and understand *“when planners in certain circumstances can use or abuse power, when planners can respond to or even resist established power”* (Forester 1999). A way for planners to engage with power in political processes is through storytelling. This concept views planning as telling stories and plans as providing meaning to unstructured and conflictual situations. Building on Forester’s insights in the role and dynamics of information as source of power in everyday practice, a conceptualization of storytelling in planning is introduced in the following.

3.2 Conceptualizing storytelling in planning

In order to unfold the concepts of translation and representation within the lens of the travelling idea, this thesis draws on the field of storytelling. Storytelling in planning has been the focus of scholars such as James Throgmorton (2007), Leonie Sandercock (2003), John Forester (1999) and Merlijn van Hulst (2012). The subject of the matter has taken many perspectives throughout time and it is important to understand different views in order to move towards an in-depth and thorough approach of analysis. The work of the herein mentioned scholars is used to sketch the main ideas of what storytelling is and for conceptualizing storytelling in planning.

Forester (1993) highlights the importance of what he calls *practice stories*. These types of stories are characterized by their descriptive, moral, political and deliberative work. Hence, the stories are constructed through interaction and not only can they speak about the environment planners are dealing with, but also about planners as individuals (Forester 1999).

In the same note, Sandercock (2003) emphasizes the importance of stories calling them *catalysts for change*. Furthermore, she acknowledges that stories can improve planning practice *“by expanding our practical tools, by sharpening our critical judgment and by widening the circle of democratic discourse”* (Sandercock 2003).

James Throgmorton argues that *“it is not merely the individual stories that count, but storytelling and the complex social networks, physical settings, and institutional processes in which those stories are told”* (Throgmorton 2007). Moreover, Throgmorton (2003) describes stories as being

day-to-day life transformed into narratives and then told. Hence, stories are constructed and the content of a story depends on one's purpose of telling it. Choices about which stories to tell or not are being made consciously or unconsciously, enabling powerful actors to exclude or marginalize competing stories. Throgmorton (2003) describes storytelling as *persuasive* and *constitutive*. Stories must be persuasive by creating narratives and physical space for diverse locally grounded urban narratives. Therefore, persuasive stories are a tool for creating space for groups that would otherwise be marginalized. Storytelling is also constitutive as it has the power to enact or establish planning actions and shape the authors and readers of stories and their actions (Throgmorton 2003).

In a planning practice understood as persuasive storytelling, Throgmorton (2003) proposes a pattern to be followed when constructing stories. He proposes to identify planners and others involved in planning as *authors* who create *texts* which include plans, analyses and articles. These texts have the characteristic to *emplot* direction of future actions. *Characters*, including planners, developers, neighbors, elected officials animate the direction of future actions and act in *settings* e.g. neighborhoods, public hearings. After going from conflict through crisis and resolution, *points of view* are built while using *imagery and rhythm of language*, e.g. environmental assessment reports, traffic and population forecasts, maps designating spaces for urban growth, surveys, renderings using *tropes* i.e. figurative language such as metaphors, enumeratio, hyperbolas etc. to suggest a preferred attitude in a specific direction (Throgmorton 2003). These elements constructing the stories are what Sandercock calls mechanisms of stories when describing what should the focus be when dealing with a story: "*We need to understand the mechanisms of story, both in order to tell good stories ourselves, and to be more critical of the stories we have to listen to.*" (Sandercock 2012: 22). Therefore, these mechanisms of stories are used in the herein thesis to get in-depth knowledge about the dynamics of stories.

Expanding on Forester, Sandercock and Throgmorton's work, Hulst (2012), distinguishes between two positions of storytelling. The idea is based on the models *of* action and models *for* action identified by the anthropologist Greetz (1993). The first model can be used as a model of how people behave, the latter one used as a model guiding future actions. Hence, Hulst (2012) proposes storytelling as a model *of* planning where the emphasis is on the planning process. And storytelling as a model *for* planning, where storytelling is a tool used to improve planning (Hulst 2012). In order for the theory of storytelling in planning to see an improvement, Hulst (2012), contours two major characteristics: (1) storytelling as part of political processes; and (2) storytelling related to activities that do political work. In the case of 'the Heartless City' Hulst identifies four storylines: the core story, the intriguing story, a story about hope, and the outcome or no outcome story, all having a political dimension (Hulst 2012). In a similar way, this thesis seeks to identify different narratives that represent storylines of competing and compelling stories. Building on this, the analytical framework for this thesis is inspired of Hulst's (2012) work and is further expanded with the relevant Throgmorton's (2003) terms of selective and purposeful construction of storylines, previously delineated as mechanisms of stories where authors who create texts which emplot characters in settings, while building points of view created through

imagery using tropes (Throgmorton, 2003). These terms serve as units of analysis in combination with narratives, constructing various storylines. This helps in creating a broader picture of a process, and unravels its dynamics.

Furthermore, the linkage of power and storytelling is delineated, both to show how storytelling is a form of power, but it can also be downplayed by other forms of power.

3.3 Linking power and storytelling

The herein thesis explores the concepts of power and storytelling in combination. While Forester's concept of power as being used to frame power in planning practice, a Hulst inspired frame of narratives combined with Throgmorton's mechanisms of stories provides a conceptualization of storytelling. Moreover, the operationalization of this framework is done through an adaptation of Dvora Yanow's (2000) steps in interpretive policy analysis. This adapted method will be explained in detail in chapter 4, Methodology.

In combination, power and storytelling can complement and support each other, but they can also be contrasting, making it a dynamic interesting to explore. Forester's concept of power is delineated by the idea that the one who holds specific information is in power and by sharing the information, the receiver is empowered. As mentioned above, Forester stresses the importance of focusing on practice stories. Storytelling is the tool that makes practice stories heard. This way it becomes a source of power. Storytelling has the power to influence people and actions; hence, it is a way of making them choose one way over another. Moreover, a case can have multiple stories, depending on the mechanisms of stories previously identified in Throgmorton's work. Each story is influential in different settings, but there will always be stories which weigh more in the decision-making about change. Stories are therefore catalysts for either just or unjust change and stories can both enable and limit actions. However, when storytelling disregards other sources of power e.g. technical information, it can become weak. Nevertheless, storytelling is useful in discovering how certain actors build support through stories legitimizing their agenda, but also how other actors are excluded. This thesis is engaging in a critical investigation of the Aalborg LRT scheme through the combination of the two concepts of power and storytelling.

Figure 1 provides an overview of how the previously described theories are working together and how they are operationalized. As mentioned, the methods used to operationalize the theories are described in detail in the following chapter.

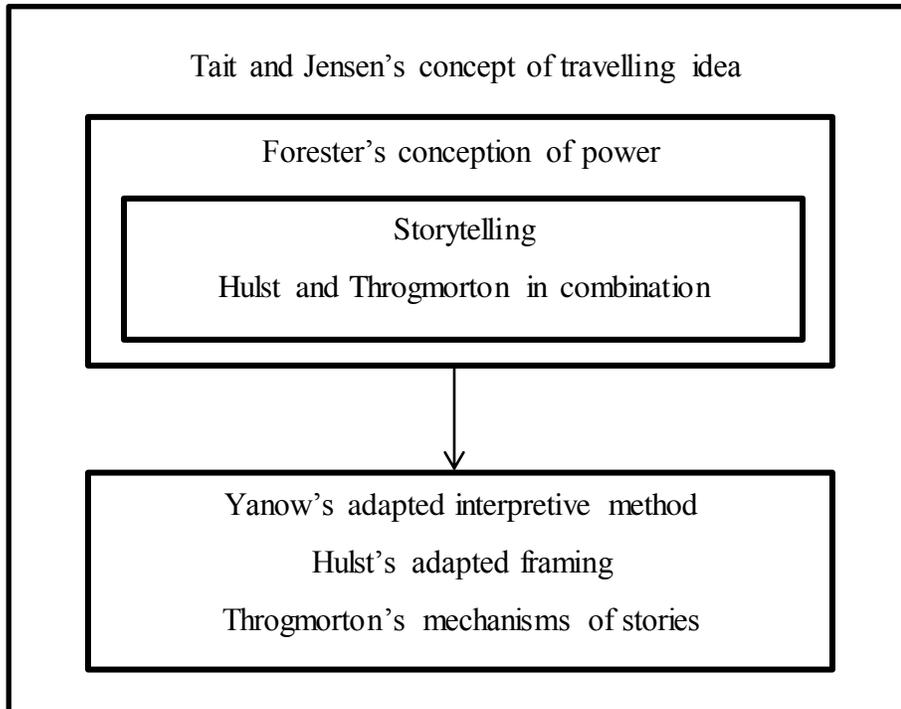


Figure 1: The figure is illustrating the theoretical framework of the research and the operationalizing method.

4 Methodology

This section presents the methodology for this thesis. The aim is to answer the research question on account of the theoretical framework previously presented. First, the research design is presenting the systematic steps taken in this research. Afterwards, the methods i.e. single case study, semi-structured interviews and data collection are described. The methodology is based on an adaptation of Yanow's (2000) steps in interpretive policy analysis.

While traditional approaches of policy analysis and planning have often been presented in an exclusively instrumental and goal oriented manner, interpretive approaches "*add the expressive dimension of human policy-making action, demonstrating and enacting for a variety of audiences, near and far, what a polity finds meaningful.*" (Yanow 2000: 88). Undertaking this approach requires access to local knowledge by *learning the "vocabulary"*, exploring the meanings of the "*language*", being able to explore the events both from a subjective and objective dimension (Yanov 2000).

Figure 2 provides an overview of the structure of the approach undertaken in this thesis, adapted from Yanow's (2000) structure of the analytic process. The iterative process here presented shares the idea of the researcher who "*makes provisional sense, engages in further inquiry, and so on, moving in a reiterative fashion from field to analysis to question to study design to field to analysis to writing to analysis, and so on.*" (Yanow 2000: 86). In this case the field is characterized by interviews. Yanow emphasizes that, when conducting an interpretive analysis, the researcher produces "*findings*" rather than "*conclusions*". However, this research aims at drawing conclusions based on a critical reflection and discussion of the findings. It is therefore important to keep in mind that such conclusions do not represent clear-cut answers or finite solutions.

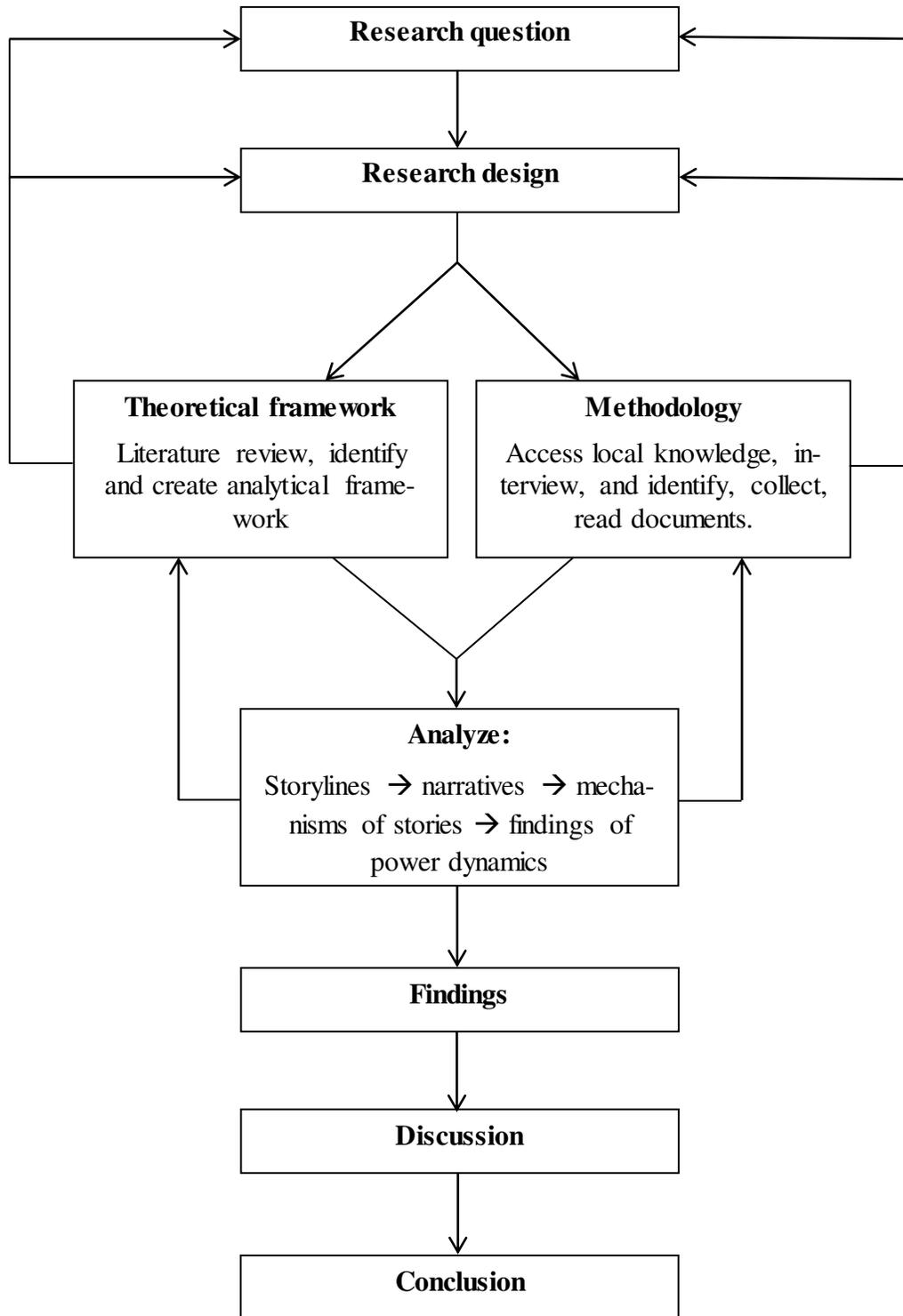


Figure 2: Research design providing the structure of the thesis, adapted from Yanow's (2000) figure of analytical process.

4.1 The case study method

The Aalborg light rail is chosen as case study focusing on an interpretive research method. A single case study is delineated as: “*as an intensive study of a single unit or a small number of units for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units [...]*” (Gerring 2004:342). This method is seen as effective especially when studying behavioral and social problems, enabling the exploration of deeper causes of a given issue (Zainal 2007). Moreover, Flyvbjerg argues that:

“from both an understanding-oriented and an action-oriented perspective, it is often more important to clarify the deeper causes behind a given problem and its consequences than to describe the symptoms of the problem and how frequently they occur.” (Flyvbjerg 2006: 229).

Hence, context-dependent theory is developed through case studies and, according to Flyvbjerg, scholars did not succeed in developing a “*general, context-independent theory*” in social science (Flyvbjerg 2006: 223). This supports the argument of choosing a single case study when exploring social phenomena. In the same note, Robert K. Yin (2014) argues that a case study research provides the investigator with a thorough understanding of the specific case, while maintaining a holistic perspective: “*In brief, a case study allows investigators to focus on a “case” and retain a holistic and real-world perspective*” (Yin 2014: 4). Therefore, it produces context-dependent knowledge. Flyvbjerg (2006) delineates such cases as critical cases being of “*strategic importance in relation to the general problem*” (Flyvbjerg 2006: 229).

Furthermore, Yin (2014) distinguishes between three types of case studies: descriptive, exploratory and explanatory. The one that delineates the herein thesis is the exploratory case study as it seeks to explore a social phenomenon and the dynamics of planning practice and comprehend various complex issues.

4.2 A methodology for an interpretive policy analysis of the Aalborg light rail project

The role of the Interpretive Policy Analysis (IPA) is to: (1) highlight the significance of human action in methodology, in relation to philosophical concerns, (2) understand the actors’ practical reason in deciding how to act in a particular situations: “*What are their conceptual boxes [...]? How did they make sense of the situation?*” (Yanow 2000: 23), (3) understand what artifacts i.e. language, objects, acts, mean to their *authors*, as well as their *readers*, thereby explaining the meaning they have in a particular context, and (4) “*explains the practical reason (that is, the intention underlying the actions) of the actors who engaged the event or artifact.*” (Yanow 2000: 23).

A description of this method used in this thesis is inspired by Yanow’s steps in IPA here focused on the storytelling of Aalborg light rail project. Yanow (2000) argues that interpretive methods are based on the idea that the social world is characterized by the multiple interpretations it

holds. Much like the case study, discussed in the previous section, the interpretative analysis requires that the data and the sources required to be treated in their context (Yanow 2000: 27). Furthermore, the purpose of IPA is twofold:

“to identify groups of people who might share understandings of policy ideas and language that would be different from other groups’ understandings; and to identify the artifacts through which these understandings are expressed, communicated, and interpreted.” (Yanow 2000: 27)

The knowledge used by the actors from a specific context is needed in order to conduct an interpretive analysis, and it is what Yanow calls *local knowledge*. The context-dependency of the issue implies that there is no general framework for interpretive analysis, thus, the adaptation of Yanow’s steps in IPA is required, as presented in the following (Yanow 2000: 31).

1. Document analysis, public hearings and exhibitions

With the scope of providing a background and initial understanding of the case study, an analysis of official documents, various reports, the attendance of an exhibition and a public hearing was made. These analyses aided in identifying key stakeholders which in turn provided insights that made further, more focused analyses of the documents and reports possible.

The document analysis includes texts on a case-related level such as the environmental impact assessment report, *Aalborg Letbane - VVM og Miljørapport*, the municipal plan strategy, *Planstrategi 2011*, the municipal plan, *Aalborg Kommuneplan 2013*, and the feasibility study report, *Aalborg Letbane/BRT Samfundøkonomi*. Additionally, other official sources such as presentations endorsing the project were analyzed. These documents were studied with the purpose of understanding the structure of the concepts, ideas and future actions. Moreover, the official exhibition for the light rail during the public hearing phase, arranged by The Light Rail Secretary, was attended previous to conducting this research and a recall of the event was made. Furthermore, a public hearing arranged by the local youth department of the national center-left party *De Radiale* was attended. Together these sources have been interpreted in this thesis as related to what Yanow (2000) identifies as significant carriers of meaning for the case of Aalborg light rail. An initial perception of how storylines are structured through narratives and the mechanisms of stories are identified. The importance of analyzing these documents is emphasized by the fact that they emplot constructed narratives. Limitations in the document analysis were encountered in the form of a language barrier.

2. Conversational interviews: Interviews with key actors of the Aalborg light rail project

The conversational interviews allow the researcher to explore how people construct their narratives, hence *“how people make sense of their emotional experiences and how this sense making connects to action.”* (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006). Much like the conversational interviews, in the semi-structured interview described by Kvale (2007) *“the interviewer can encourage the subjects to let their stories unfold, and also assist the subjects to structure their stories.”* (Kvale 2007). Moreover, these types of interviews enables the researcher to manage the narrative struc-

tures, and the temporal sequences, identifying the characters of the story, what they emplot, they points of view through tropes (Kvale 2007). The characteristic of going beyond the straightforward meaning of words makes “the “in-depth” aspects of in-depth interviews make them more conversational than a fixed-format interview [...]” (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006).

With a background information about the Aalborg light rail project provided by the document analysis (step 1), conversational interviews were conducted (step 2). The key actors interviewed were identified on the basis of the documentary sources, as well as through the initial interviews when the interviewee’s in which were asked to suggest other actors important for the project (Yanow 2000). The interviewees are experts such as public planners, planners from public transport providers, academia. Six interviews were conducted with the following: Mette Olesen, project leader at Nordjyllands Trafikselskab (NT), Jesper Schultz, project leader at the Department of Urban and Spatial Planning at Aalborg Municipality, Niels Melchior, part-time lecturer at the Department of Civil Engineering at Aalborg University, Anne Juel Andersen, architect and planner at the Department of Urban and Spatial Planning at Aalborg Municipality, Anker Lohmann-Hansen, traffic engineer and former lecturer at the Department of Civil Engineering at Aalborg University, Niels Agerholm, associate professor from the Department of Civil Engineering at Aalborg University. Both planners and representatives from Aalborg University provided information about the origin of the project, temporal sequences, particular events, and challenges, information used to identify site-specific narratives, and practice stories. The interviews are extensively used throughout the analysis as they were the main contributors in understanding how various actors from different organizations are constructing narratives by interpreting events and practices, and how much influence these had in the process.

Furthermore, contact with one member of the Danish Parliament for the social democratic party, *Socialdemokratiet*, and with the Communication Department from Aalborg Municipality have been carried out from the author. Table 2 provides an overview of actors contacted for the completion of the IPA approach.

Conducted interviews	Other contacted actors
Project leader from Nordjyllands Trafikselskab	Member of the Danish Parliament
Project leader and planner from the Department of Urban and Spatial Planning at Aalborg Municipality	Communication Department from Aalborg Municipality
Architect and planner from the Department of Urban and Spatial Planning at Aalborg Municipality	
Former lecturer from the Department of Civil Engineering at Aalborg University	
Associate professor from the Department of Civil Engineering at Aalborg University	

Table 2: List of actors contacted.

4. Identifying interpretive stories through mechanisms of stories

Based on the analysis from the previous steps, it was possible to map the architecture of the events throughout the process of the Aalborg light rail project. Throughout this step, the interviews were used extensively in order to gain an understanding of the various interpretive stories and identify their mechanisms. Certain mechanisms of stories were fairly easy to identify, while others required revisions of the transcribed interviews and recordings. The authors were at times easy to identify because they were stated as the official authors or publishers of planning documents and reports or mentioned by interviewees. On the other hand, other authors required more analysis and 'unboxing' to identify as they were not stated as the formal authors, but even so took part in creating or indirectly shaping the texts as informal authors. Furthermore, identifying the meaning of the tropes used by the interviewees required interpretation. These mechanisms of stories enabled the revealing of a pattern and drawing the connections to identify the creation of the different narratives and map the dynamics of these. Yanow (2000) stresses the importance of identifying the interpretive communities. The identification is possible by mapping the authors and characters, and pair them in communities taking into consideration "*people spending time together or working in the same organizational area or having similar training*" (Yanow 2000: 37). This, amongst others, enables the researcher to identify the proponents and opponents in a planning process.

4.3 Interpretive policy analysis and power

A focus in the field of interpretive policy analysis stands in how to empirically engage with power. Yanow (2000) argues that knowledge is developed through interpretation, it being impossible for the researcher to stand outside the issue:

"Interpretive methods build in and on human variability among actors and researchers alike and thereby facilitate not just the gathering of facts, but an insight into what those "facts" mean." (Yanow 2000: 93).

Not only the researcher, but all actors interpret issues while making their own sense of the policy. Building on this, the previously mentioned approach that Forester (1989) provides on information as a source of power, engages with different perspectives which hold power in different fields. This means that it creates the context of enabling different constructions of the social world. Yanow (2000) stresses that local knowledge has frequently been left out in development policies. Therefore, interpretive analysis, being a form of social constructivism, unfolds the different types of power in the context they were constructed. In this context, stories unfold power and processes of rationalization are unboxed.

Not much guidance has been developed on how to undertake an interpretive research (Yanow, 2000). However, Yanow addresses one practical issue of writing interpretive research, which is the pillar of guidance for the herein research. In proceeding with the analysis, the researcher selects from the gathered data the *directly quoted words and phrases* and other notes supporting the direction which the research is intended to take. Information which is not directly linked with

the research is summarized, when relevant for the subject of analysis. Hence, the summarizing and selectivity means that the researcher is contributing in presenting the manner in which the policy issue and events are perceived and acted on. The analysis is a form of *world-making* in which the researcher's interpretive lens is rooted. The subjectivity of the analysis is further argued by the theoretical concepts previously presented, and diminished to some extent by presenting quoted words and phrases alongside with the interpretation, encouraging further discussion: "*In a narrative sense, this constitutes the joint production of an understanding of the policy situation.*" (Yanow 2000: 88).

In the following chapter, the above presented methodology is applied. First, the formal and informal processes are delineated and presented in a sequential manner, enabling the identification of the rationale behind the Aalborg LRT scheme. Second, in the main analysis, four core storylines surrounding the Aalborg light rail are presented. The storylines are presented through each of their particular narratives. Each storyline is summarized through the specific mechanisms of story identified. This analysis is the result of Yanow's adapted IPA approach. Afterwards, the findings are presented, followed by a discussion, reflecting upon the power dynamics and the role of the planner in the Aalborg light rail project.

5 Analysis of the Aalborg light rail planning process and the storylines

In this chapter, the Aalborg light rail formal and informal planning processes and the storylines surrounding the project are delineated and analyzed. Both of the mentioned analyses are the result of the application of the adapted IPA approach as previously presented. Hence, the chapter aims at exploring the formal and informal planning processes of the Aalborg light rail, and at the same time identifying and analyzing the main storylines, narratives and mechanisms of stories. The next section starts with the former, while the latter is presented in 5.2.

5.1 The formal and informal planning processes of the Aalborg light rail project

In this section the aim is to delineate the formal and informal planning processes in the case of Aalborg light rail project and thus a twofold perspective of the planning process. Moreover, the section takes into consideration the temporal sequences of the process and creates the basis for the next section of the chapter by exposing the different storylines. The formal process is presented based on the document analysis followed by the informal process built from the interviews.

5.1.1 The formal process

This section presents the planning process of the Aalborg LRT from a formal perspective, through officially published documents. This provides the image advanced for the public at large. Consecutively, an informal process is identified aiming at providing a different perspective, and unveil the course of unofficial actions which shaped the process.

The area where the concentrated investments take place was identified as being what the *Planstrategi 2011* introduced as ‘the growth axis’; a combination of culture, business, education and housing functions. Along the growth axis are located where possibilities for future development were seen as opportune. Emphasis on maintaining momentum of the growth axis by encouraging public and private investments, creating coherence between the growth axis and the rest of the city, and creating additional development brought the City Council working to investigate and create the possibility for implementing a light rail on this axis (Aalborg Kommune 2012).

Before establishing a major infrastructure project such as a light rail, the establishment of a plan basis was necessary. Therefore, Aalborg Municipality developed a municipal plan attachment for the light rail, which got the final approval on the 9th of November 2015. Being the authority responsible for environmental planning issues, the municipality carried out a combined environmental assessment of the plan and the project itself. This combined assessment had to live up to the requirements specified by law. The results of the environmental assessments were combined

in the environmental report titled *VVM og MV miljørapport for Aalborg Letbane* (Aalborg Municipality 2015).

The scoping and hearing of relevant authorities in spring 2014, marked the beginning of the environmental report was followed by a pre-debate from the 2nd of April to the 30th of April 2014. Aalborg Municipality received a total of 18 responses with suggestions and ideas for the plan. The results involved minor adjustments of non-technical type such as the change of stops names, while other responses were used as input for the assessments and analysis that were carried out in connection with the development of the investigation report and the environmental report

In the summer 2014 the investigation report was published. The report contained a technical and economic conclusion for a high classed public transportation solution in Aalborg. In the process carried out before the establishment of the investigation report, both a LRT solution and a BRT solution were treated as equal alternatives. Three reports were at the basis of the political decision to move forward the plans of implementing a light rail in Aalborg. These consisted in the municipal plan attachment *H.031 Aalborg Light Rail*, the investigation report, and the environmental report, the latter, as mentioned, combing the environmental assessments of the plan suggestion and the infrastructure project (Aalborg Municipality 2015).

In the summer of 2015, the municipal plan attachment was published for public debate and during the autumn of 2015 a readjustment, based on the inputs that the debate had led to, was made. The municipal plan attachment and the accompanying environmental report were approved by the end of 2015 (Aalborg Municipality a, 2015; Aalborg Municipality, 2015).

For the implementation of a light rail in Aalborg, the enactment of a construction law for the project and allocation of the necessary funds on the Financial Law were necessary. Furthermore, Aalborg Municipality and the Region of North Jutland were obliged to allocate budget funds corresponding to the specific agreement between the state, the Region of North Jutland and Aalborg Municipality. This was the principle agreement realized in the summer of 2015 and it was the basis for the state's further work with what would have been the formulation of the construction law (Aalborg Municipality 2015).

The economic agreement was built on the estimated construction costs in the investigation report. The total allocation of funds for the light rail was estimated to be 1.730 billion DKK. In addition to this were the operating-related construction costs, with an anchor budget of 758 million DKK, and the expenses for communication of 14 million DKK. The state's engagement was considered mainly concerning the establishment of the light rail. Hence, the additional expenses would have been covered locally (Aalborg Municipality 2015).

A part of the principal agreement was concerning the establishment of a light rail company with the purpose of constructing and operating the light rail in Aalborg. This light rail company would have carried out several tasks, which would have lied ahead of the opening of the light rail in 2021. The major tasks are stated in the environmental report as follows: Calls for construction tasks, calls for rolling material and equipment, project implementation, acquisition of necessary

security improvements, and calls for operating the light rail (Aalborg Municipality 2015). The formation of the light rail company would have required the enactment of a construction law for the Aalborg light rail. The construction law would have been enacted the earliest in the summer of 2016. In order to maintain momentum in the project, Aalborg Municipality established a light rail secretariat, which at the establishment of the construction law would have become part of the light rail company. The company was expected to create approximately 70 work places. However, the process did not get that far. Christian Roslev, now the general director of the Municipality, was hired as the director in charge with building the company. At the time when the process stopped, only Jesper Schultz, from the Department of Urban and Spatial Planning at Aalborg Municipality, and Christian Roslev were part of the company (interview by the author with Schultz 2016). One to two years of pre-investigations, detailed projecting, site visits, and expropriations would have been planned if the light rail construction law would have been approved. This would have been followed by three to four years of construction work. During this phase, meetings with owners and users of the concerned properties were envisioned to happen. The construction work would have been followed up by a phase where the complete facility would have been tested and approved in terms of security, before the light rail would have been used on a daily basis (Aalborg Municipality 2015).

The cancelation of the state subsidy for Aalborg LRT, published in the *Forslag til finanslov for finansåret 2016* published on the 29th of September 2015 (Finansministeriet 2016), did not end the aim of effectively solving the mobility challenge as it was replaced with the Municipality's focus towards a BRT solution. To maintain momentum a meeting was held on the 29th of November 2015 where the city council was rapidly mobilized in proceeding with a BRT solution following the same route as the LRT. The EIA report for LRT covers BRT solution, thus only EIA screening for the planning conditions in place should be adjusted. At the moment of writing, the planning for a “*green and reliable BRT solution*” is in progress (Aalborg Kommune 2016).

5.1.2 The informal process

Apart from the officially published documents, important actions taking place outside the formal sphere of activities aimed at the LRT project. This thesis investigates not only the official documents, but attempts to identify the practices which have or might have influenced the project's outcomes. This unveils the causes and consequences of the different changes the project has undergone.

In June 2010, Peder Baltzer moved from Copenhagen to Aalborg to become the new city architect. His move was a step towards the creation of the growth axis (Andersen 2016). The growth axis includes “*the realities of growth in Aalborg area and also political desires, because it's hard to see the direct connection from Aalborg East, where the main campus is, and to the harbor, east harbor.*” (interview by the author with Agerholm 2016: 1). While it is hard to see a physical connection of the university area and the east harbor, the remaining part of the axis i.e.

from the airport to the university area, is considered justified, as it connects two facilities with international importance for the city. Part of this route became the route for the light rail.

Olesen identifies the key moment for the Aalborg LRT as having the right alliance of political parties, which created a window of opportunity for the project:

“I think it’s a matter of, yeah you are writing it here, window of opportunities. We had a red government, and they are keen on public transport so there was a big focus on creating more sustainable urban mobility solutions.” (interview by the author with Olesen 2016: 1).

Moreover, this coalition granted funds for the remaining light rail projects in Denmark making the idea of a light rail in Aalborg even more politically feasible. Olesen further emphasizes that the agreement *“was made in a purely red parties alliance, without the Venstre which is now in government, they were not a part of this alliance.”* (Olesen 2016: 2). The term ‘purely’ highlights the fact that the agreement was lacking support from the right wing and indicates the acknowledgement of a weak support. Meanwhile, the local support for the project was perceived by the planners as solid as 30 out of 31 members of the city council, consisting of members from both left and right wings were in favor of the LRT scheme (Schultz 2016; Olesen 2016; Agerholm 2016; Lohmann-Hansen 2016). Despite this, Schultz raises the issue of a weak public communication:

“in reality some of the liberals, Venstre, they didn’t quite have the support for the project in the political hinterland. In the city council, they were all pro light rail, but a lot of people living around the municipality couldn’t really see.” (Schultz 2016: 5).

Even if the majority of the city council members voted in favor of the LRT scheme, Schultz suggests that they did not exercise their influence to promote and communicate the project outside the city council. This is due to low support for the project from the neighboring areas, as well as from citizens and it can be translated into a political fear of losing votes. It can also mean that while the members of the council from the right wing parties were not contributing in communicating the project to the public, it was only the members from the left wing parties which were fully supporting it.

Explaining the process of persuading the government members to allocate funds for the Aalborg project, Schultz states:

“so up to the finance act for 2015, it must have been in 2014 we were visiting the politicians on Christiansborg, the Parliament and arguing that Aalborg should have a light rail system as well as Odense and Aarhus and Copenhagen, Greater Copenhagen.” (Schultz 2016: 2).

The visits had a clear goal: To secure government funding for the Aalborg LRT scheme. However, Schultz further claims that the approval came as a surprise:

“suddenly it was just there, the proposal for the financial act, said, ‘oh, money for Aalborg!’, and it was kind of a surprise, we weren’t really ready. This was the finance act for 2015, but we couldn’t even use the money before 2016, we still had some preparations, so not very much happened in ‘15, in consideration of establishing the [LRT] system.” (Schultz 2016: 2).

The use of the term ‘suddenly’ that means the approval was perceived as quick and unexpected. Likewise, stating that *“it was kind of a surprise”* and *“we weren’t really ready”* is intriguing as the purpose behind the visits was accomplished. Nonetheless, this is the moment when the story reached a turning point and the following process became visibly accelerated.

After securing the agreement for the government funding in 2014, the finalization of the EIA report was necessary before autumn 2015 for the allocation of the actual funding and implementation of the project (Schultz 2016). After finalizing and publishing the EIA report, a required public hearing having the purpose of providing and receiving information about the project from the public at large was held during summer 2015 (Olesen 2016). Announcing the opening of the exhibition, a regional newspaper publishes a rather intriguing story: *“Now it gets serious visible that Aalborg should have a light rail.”* (Nordjyske.dk 2015). Supporting this title is the picture from figure 3 which can be interpreted as a metaphor to the allocated support for the LRT project. Another interpretation can bring in the mentioned aphorism *‘the though little big city’*, hence breaking the pattern of a small city and becoming closer to the set goal of striving to establish superiority over the competition among Danish cities.



Figure 3: The building where the Aalborg LRT exhibition was held, displaying a large light rail breaking through the glass façade (Photo: Martin Damgård; Source: Nordjyske.dk 2015).

While a public hearing lasts eight weeks, the Aalborg LRT public hearing lasted for twelve weeks. An extension was needed due to holidays which meant a reduction in attendees (Olesen 2016: 2-3). And while Olesen states that:

“the only thing that prevented us from securing the funding was that we had to sign a bill, like a legal document saying ‘now you have the authority to go out and establish a company that can build the Aalborg light rail’ it’s called an anlægslov” (Olesen 2016: 2).

It can be assumed that if the public hearing would have lasted eight weeks as a typical public hearing, the document would have been signed, and the LRT company could have started the implementation.

Before the election the government came to a standstill point meaning that all projects from the previous government were *“put on a pause”* (Olesen 2016: 3) until the new government was elected. This *“prevented the old government from signing the bill”* (Olesen 2016: 2), thus arriving to the new government’s cancelation of the funding. When acknowledging the cancelation several efforts to retrieve it were made: *“we tried to get into a talk with the politicians in the Parliament”* (Schultz 2016: 4).

Returning to the idea that the coalition played a critical role in securing the funding and that the new government was not a part of that coalition, Schultz mentions the efforts of reestablishing the agreement were in vain:

“we wrote letter for the Minister and we were talking to politicians, the problem is that the parties agreeing for the financial act for 2015, where the funding was, but those parties lost the election.” (Schultz 2016: 4).

He further states that the argument advanced by the government of canceling funding was the unsatisfying socio-economic impact of the project. This highlights the idea that power defines what counts as relevant: *“political arguments are one thing and reality is maybe another thing.”* (Schultz 2016: 3). This encapsulates Flyvbjerg’s (1998) conceptualization of the dialectic relationship of power and rationality in which *“power has rationality that rationality does not know.”* (Flyvbjerg 1998). This attitude of eliminating and disregarding important elements has uncertain and uncontrollable initiatives results: *“if one day the politicians want one thing and they want another thing the next day, not even the best plan will secure that decision from day one is the one that is realized.”* (Schultz 2016: 4).

Summary

Throughout the formal process, plans, reports, analyses etc. were developed with the purpose of rationalizing the idea of the LRT scheme in Aalborg and thereby fulfill the requirements for getting state funding. Simultaneously, the informal process is unveiling how support was mobilized locally and how persuasion was carried out at the parliament. Thus several storylines are emerging both in the formal and informal processes. Initially, the growth axis was feasible of operating

independently i.e. stand-alone; subsequently it became contingent on the LRT scheme, to then settle for the BRT scheme. These are three positions identified as the main storylines of the Aalborg LRT scheme. Political visions form the underlying argument of the storytelling, while the dominating technical-economic narrative of infrastructure analyses are part of creating the story of a feasible LRT project. Neither of these positions can operate independently, thus supplementing and strengthening each other. The following is presenting this dynamic and it is aimed at providing meaning to the unstructured and conflictual situations identified.

5.2 Main storylines surrounding the Aalborg light rail planning process

In the case of the Aalborg light rail project four main storylines have been identified: (1) A stand-alone growth axis, (2) the light rail transit, a prerequisite for the growth axis, (3) the light rail substitute – bus rapid transit along the growth axis, and critique or misinformation. In the following sections, the storylines of the project are explored in detail through the narratives supporting them. Moreover, the mechanisms of stories and their dynamics are presented. The following is based on Yanow's interpretive analysis structuration.

5.2.1 Storyline 1: A stand-alone growth axis

In this section the period when the growth axis was planned without the Aalborg light rail as a main generator for growth is explored. Hence, the main storyline here is of a stand-alone growth axis. Moreover, this section investigates how the LRT became the main storyline by identifying the mechanisms of story behind the narratives surrounding the growth axis as well as the transition from a stand-alone growth axis to a light rail transit along the axis. The mechanisms analyzed in this section are significant in understanding the dynamics of the storyline as well as the motivation behind the planning of the light rail.

5.2.1.1 Narrative 1: Urban growth through development along the North-East axis

The geographical area on which the growth axis is based starts from the airport in the North and stretches to the port in the South-East and includes the following urban areas: Lindholm Brygge, Nørresundby Waterfront, Nordkraft, Aalborg Waterfront, the Utzon Center, the Music House, Karolinelund, Godsbanearialet, Eternitten, Gigantium, the University and the new hospital (Aalborg Kommune 2012). These physical settings are seen as the areas which are of great significance for the urban growth of Aalborg.

The concept behind the growth axis builds on the idea that a clear focus on a concentrated area increases the opportunities of fostering and enhancing growth by achieving synergies between public and private investments. Three priorities are highlighted in the *Norddanmarks Vækstdynamo Planstrategi 2011* as follows: (1) *Necessary connections* – here, the international, national, regional and municipal importance is highlighted, (2) *the attractive city* – emphasizing the international attractiveness of the city whilst maintaining the historical and industrial character, and (3) *a good place to stay – for life* – creating the right environment for residents in both urban and rural areas, while living up to a knowledge-based, exciting life essential for growth.

Fulfilling the implementation of the three priorities is seen as the backbone of the growth axis. The broad range of public and private investments concentrated along the growth axis is seen as bringing long term economic efficiency while expanding the opportunities to further developments. Some of the identified projects are in the areas of culture, leisure, business, commerce, housing, health and education, to mention a few (Aalborg Kommune 2012). The process of identifying and creating the growth axis is described by Andersen as comprehensive:

“...we had some mapping going on, and some of these maps showed where the development was strong in the city. And it was very clear, and at least when Peder Baltzer came, he saw this map and he said ‘well, that’s kind of a growth axis’, and so I think it was invented there in ’10, ’11, and officially it was born as part of the planning strategy 2011.” (Andersen 2016: 1).

After the process of mapping the developed areas and areas which were considered as having potential for future development, the idea of a growth axis was materialized:

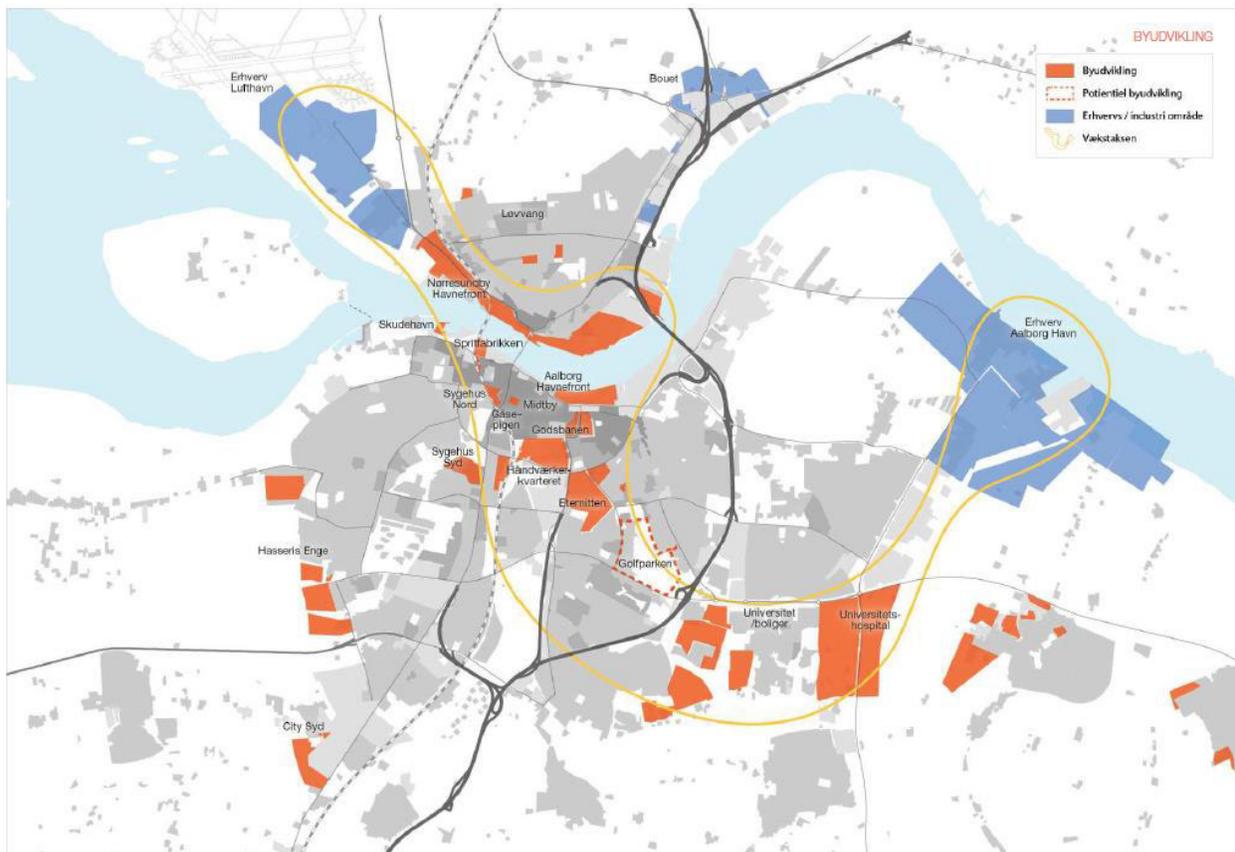


Figure 4: Visualization showing the mapping of present urban development areas, the areas with urban development potential, business and industry areas, and the growth axis’s shape (COWI 2012).

The main strategy of the urban growth was following the logic of “*concentrated growth within the existing borders*” (Andersen 2016: 2) being very much in line with the identified growth axis.

“So it was more or less looking at the city seeing where the drivers for growth are and where are the working places, the jobs, where are they concentrated, and the housing development, where is it concentrated.” (Andersen 2016: 1).

However, growth is not perceived as an isolated action but it is described as one of the fragments constructing a whole, as presented in the *Fysisk Vision 2025*:

“In efforts to strengthen Aalborg competition it is important to focus on ensuring coherence between growth and welfare. Work on Aalborg’s growth potential cannot stand alone, but must be incorporated into a whole, where growth is not an end in itself but a means to create attractive, sustainable cities with well-functioning municipal services where people thrive.” (Aalborg Kommune 2013: 5).

Here the idea of welfare through urban growth is presented; in order to secure the future welfare of residents in Aalborg, the city must remain competitive or else growth will take place elsewhere. This idea is presented in an open manner, leaving room for interpretation, and creates the view of being able to accommodate various actors from various settings, hence enabling ownership. Andersen highlights the fast ownership of the growth axis among the politicians, and even faster among the developers because of the physical connection and identification on the map of the growth: “*the politicians saw this plan as a good way, too, because it’s much easier to discuss with developers when you know what you want to do.*” (Andersen 2016: 1).

As seen in figure 5, because of the irregular form, the character of the growth axis can be perceived as an amoeba, having the ability to alter its shape by expanding or retracting. It is thus not a clearly delineated area with administrative boundaries or a ‘hard space’ but a flexible soft space, somewhat open for interpretation. By the use of a graphic representation of a growth axis planners make use of imagery and convey the story of a growth axis to developers and other actors more persuasively than text could have alone.

The planners knew where the growth was taking place, and where the functions were but they lacked a coherent vision. When Peder Baltzer became city architect, he formulated a vision, which became the storyline of the growth axis, as quoted before: “*when Peder Baltzer came, he saw this map and he said ‘well, that’s kind of a growth axis’*” (Andersen 2016: 1). It was ‘kind of a growth axis’ which highlighted imprecise elements of the storyline, however, support was quickly mobilized for the idea and private investors enrolled in supporting the growth axis through their investments. In turn the investments depended on the storyline of the growth axis and all the elements attached to it e.g. population forecasts etc. This shows how the growth axis has a life of itself. By talking about a growth axis it is constructed, comes into life and becomes something ‘out there’.



Figure 5: A visualization of the growth axis showing its irregular shape. The axis stretches from the airport in the North-West to the port in the East. It stretches across the fjord, connecting the central city with the campus and university hospital area (COWI 2012).

Andersen furthermore states that Peder Baltzer has a major role in promoting the axis among these stakeholders. Communicating and promoting the area to developers and others as a growth axis is an example of representation whereby a certain meaning is attached to a space which thereby is transformed into place. In this case the space is positioned within a growth discourse making it attractive for inward investments. Planners have the role of converting an abstract space containing all the important functions into a place attaching meaning to it. This was first presented to the public during an exhibition taking place at the airport: “*we made some posters ‘projects for billions’ and we had two big posters as a part of an exhibition at the airport.*” (Andersen 2016: 1). The exhibition presented the future development along the growth axis. Much like Odense, which has used the phrase “*From large Danish city to Danish metropolis*”, symbolizing the planned future growth, Aalborg uses the phrase “*Though little big city*” (Odense Kommune 2016) representing the big ambitions the city has planned for the future. The developments in both cities consist in e.g. University areas, new hospitals, and cultural institutions. The similar types of developments bring about the concept of translation. This implies that the ideas are represented from one city to another. The traveling idea is further emphasized by Olesen (2016) and Agerholm (2016) when stating that every city is aspiring to become a

knowledge-based city, to have iconic landmarks, or impressive waterfront developments. The growth axis is a way of framing and presenting the existing and future developments of the city.

5.2.1.2 Narrative 2: North-East mobility enhancement

The *Fysisk Strategi 2025* from 2013 mentions the importance of regulating car traffic and the need for creating more efficient transport links focusing on public transport and cycling. Low priority in the city center for cars is seen as key in transforming traffic space into functioning urban space, thus the hierarchical prioritization starts from pedestrians, to cyclists and public transport. “*Mobility as the backbone of the growth axis*” (Aalborg Kommune 2013: 11) is emphasized, highlighting the need of high connectivity between the center and regional and international relations, including University, University Hospital, East Harbor and the airport (Aalborg Kommune 2013).

The objective was to create a mobility solution that could accommodate and stimulate growth:

“It was important to connect the inner city and the University, it was important to densify the city and to make it mobility oriented, because you cannot have a good connection between the University and the city if the mobility is not very good, the connections are not very good.” (Andersen 2016: 1).

The metaphor ‘mobility as a backbone of the growth axis’ is reoccurring through the planning documents concentrating the attention on the possibilities which mobility brings. As mentioned, three priorities are highlighted in the *Planstrategi 2011* document: (1) *necessary connections*, (2) *the attractive city*, and (3) *a good place to stay – for life*. The three priorities are linked together in the mobility enhancement narrative.

5.2.1.3 Narrative 3: The mobility solution along part of the growth axis

The 2011-2015 government, consisting of the parties *Socialdemokratiet* and *Det Radikale Venstre*, along with the coalition parties *Sociolistisk Folkeparti* and *Enhedslisten* were one of the key actors advocating for public transport. The government’s agenda highlights the ability of public transport to solve urban mobility issues and this created momentum for focusing and planning for a mobility solution in Aalborg: “*We had a red government, and they are keen on public transport so there was a big focus on creating more sustainable urban mobility solutions.*” (Olesen 2016: 1).

The idea of a light rail was introduced in 2011, however, the analyses behind the planning document were not looking favorable towards the light rail:

“In Aalborg the Municipal plan strategy, you know we make those every 4 years, and the one from 2011, the one with the growth axis, where we introduced that, we also introduced the idea of a light rail system, combining urban development and transportation. And if you look into the papers behind the plan strategy from then, we had actually said that maybe Aalborg will never have the passengers for a light rail system, but, even though, we introduced the ambition.” (Schultz 2016: 1).

Schultz uses the metaphor ‘the ambition’ when describing how the project was presented in the first instance and how it would be represented in Aalborg. The argument is that an investment in the implementation of the light rail would attract and advance urban development – something that cannot be reached without ambitions.

Coupling the growth axis with the light rail represents the physical and discursive connection between the two, giving further meaning to the space: And transforming it into place: *“the first time you see that growth axis appearing, and couple it with the light rail, I would say that is really one of the key ways of putting it into an urban context.”* (Olesen 2016: 6). This key representation of the two ideas is further enhanced by the following imagery:

“You can’t go out and find the growth axis, it’s a strategic tool, but the fact that you are putting the light rail line into it makes it visible. This is where we are prioritizing growth. I would say the first time you see this appearing is really when you see the shift happening.” (Olesen 2016: 6 emphasis added).

The place created by planners through representations provides the setting which can be further communicated to the public consisting in citizens and developers representing the characters. The term ‘strategic tool’ is used to emphasize the role of the growth seen as an instrument in the city’s development process. The imagery of placing the light rail along the growth axis is creating the visual identification of the axis, making it easier for citizens to understand it.

The ambition of the light rail turned into reality during the negotiations of the financial act in November 2014 when *“suddenly it was fixed that Aalborg should have a light rail.”* (Andersen 2016: 3). Again, the most significant actor mentioned in advancing the project *“was the left wing party, Enhedslisten, which negotiated about the transport act as a part of the financial act in the government.”* (Andersen 2016: 3).

Lohmann-Hansen identifies the process as being connected with the light rail project in Odense:

“in Aalborg they said when Odense also gets it, we will have it too. And the state, the government at that time was social democrat and the mayor here in Aalborg was also social democrat, but a young one, he’s young and new, but he persuaded his very good friend Rasmus Prehn, I don’t know if you know him, to work for a solution where an LRT system could be built in Aalborg, and secured Aalborg the same amount of support that Odense has got.” (Lohmann-Hansen 2016: 4).

This quote shows how Aalborg LRT is a translation of light rail travelling idea as well as the main characters of the story i.e. social democrats for all projects, and Rasmus Prehn for Aalborg. However, Schultz argues that the planning process of the Aalborg light rail cannot be delineated into a sequential timeline:

“it’s not a process that is very linear, it’s a process moving in different levels in the organization, political, and here among technicians and the leadership. I’m not sure that

we are able to describe a linear, direct proof; from nothing to now we are going to build a light rail system.” (Schultz 2016: 1).

This statement creates the imagery of how the Aalborg LRT is a dynamic and iterative process and that the identification of the narratives behind the main storylines enables the construction of a more coherent understanding. Moreover, it identifies the enabling power as well as the marginalized characters.

Summary

In this section, the storyline of a stand-alone growth axis has been explored. Three narratives were identified: urban growth through development along the North-East axis, North-East mobility enhancement, and the mobility solution along part of the growth axis. The author of the concept is perceived as Peder Baltzer, the city architect, who moved from Copenhagen to Aalborg and brought the idea. The characters who represented it in the setting of Aalborg were identified as local politicians, planners and developers. The need for growth and mobility is put forward as shown by the mechanisms of stories presented below.

Authors	Peder Baltzer
Texts	The planning strategy, Fysisk Vision 2025
Emplot	Create urban growth, and better connection from the airport to the East harbor
Characters	Local politicians, planners, developers
Settings	City Aalborg, the space of the growth axis
Points of view	Urban growth as a necessity for welfare, centralization of investments brings synergies, mobility infrastructure as a driver for urban growth
Imagery and rhythm of language (e.g. tropes)	Placing the light rail on the growth axis makes the latter visible, describing the process as moving in different levels, illustrations, use of terms: tough little big city, strategic tool, the ambition, mobility as a backbone of the growth axis

Table 3: Presenting the identified mechanisms of a stand-alone growth axis storyline.

5.2.2 Storyline 2: The light rail transit, a prerequisite for the growth axis

A prominent storyline in the Aalborg LRT revolves around the fact that the light rail was seen as a prerequisite along the growth axis. This section explores how the narratives surrounding the LRT were constructed. It identifies which narratives support the storylines such as (1) high quality public transport solution, as well as (2) urban development generator, (3) placing Aalborg among the competing cities in Denmark and creating economic growth. Furthermore, the mechanisms of stories are identified enabling the understanding of the storylines and its narratives as well as the practices and sites of their practices.

5.2.2.1 Narrative 1: High quality permanent mobility solution

The proliferation of light rails in Europe had its basis, among others, in their capacity of working towards sustainable mobility goals, together with its permanent character attracting public and private investment (Olesen 2014). This way the status of the light rail became higher than the one of a bus, and cities directed their attention to this type of public transportation. In the following Aalborg LRT is presented as a high quality permanent mobility solution, while identifying and exploring the mechanisms behind this perception.

A permanent mobility solution has the ability to attract more passengers, improving Aalborg's status and development potential: *"Some people connect something else with a train. It's a bigger city, also business men go by train, but busses are for people with no money, and people out of the job market."* (Andersen 2016: 5). Initially, both a LRT solution and a BRT solution were analyzed, the LRT was considered to meet the set objectives. Niels Melchior points out the fact that politicians have an inclination for LRTs rather than BRTs because of the higher status of the former, disregarding the alternative of the latter: *"some politicians I've met, when they hear about railways, it's quite another thing than a bus, it has a much higher status, a bus is a low status project."* (Melchior 2016: 3).

The aspiration of the city was to advance the public transportation system to a higher rank both in quality and capacity: *"The starting point for the initial analysis is a desire to raise the level of quality and capacity for collective traffic."* (Letbanesekretariat 2013: 10). Through this advancement it was believed that it was going to *"be more attractive and more efficient to travel collectively. It involves a change to more high-class public transport solutions."* (Letbanesekretariat 2013: 10). Several characteristic are perceived as key attributes for public transportation. It must *"raise the level of quality and capacity"*, and be *"attractive"* and *"efficient"* in order to fulfill the perception of a 'high-class public transport solution'. This idea was picked up by local characters supporting the Aalborg LRT scheme:

"Aalborg is booming. Analyses show that in 2025 will be approximately 25,000 more inhabitants. This requires infrastructure and public transport. A light rail will be the best bet for a good and sensible sustainable solution." (Kaastrup-Larsen Aalborg Kommune et al. n.d. emphasis added).

Here the growth of the city is emphasized using the hyperbole *"booming"*. Furthermore, the growth is associated with the need of an improvement in the public transport and a light rail is perceived as *"the best bet"*. The use of this type of trope i.e. metaphor, unveils a degree of certainty of the light rail's effectiveness. This perception of a light rail is strongly connected with its permanent character and brings the assumption that economic growth, urban development, and efficiency are undoubtedly achieved: *"when there is a light rail you know it will stay there for many years so you dare to put your investment in a neighborhood."* (Agerholm 2016: 2). Hence, the narrative of a high quality permanent mobility solution brings the attention to the following one, urban development generator. This show that the narratives are intertwined and mutually reinforce each other, while being mobilized by the same characters.

5.2.2.2 Narrative 2: Urban development generator

The second and most dominant narrative of Aalborg LRT is that of it being an urban development generator. As mentioned in the previous section, it is argued that this narrative is an extension of the previously described one. The underlying support for this narrative are the socio-economic considerations presented in the investigation report (*Udredningsrapport for Aalborg Letbane 2014*) where urban development, based on experience from other LRT schemes, is presented as a result of implementing the light rail:

"There could therefore be a positive synergy between urban development and the project for the first stage. The presence of a high quality public transport solution will make it more attractive to live and do business in the corridor, which will strengthen the basis for conversion in urban areas. This concentration will, in turn, increase passenger numbers for the collective traffic." (Aalborg Kommune et al. 2014: 10 own translation).

The quote stresses the interconnection of urban development and the project. Much in line with the previously presented narrative, Aalborg LRT constitutes a transport project that can support and create urban development. This way of framing urban development idea of the LRT scheme is a manifestation of powerful characters framing and rationalizing the LRT scheme. Building on this, is the message forwarded by the mayor of Aalborg when the proposal for the financial act was approved: *"we are prioritizing urban development and we are putting effective and superb public transportation high on the agenda."* (Thomas Kastrup-Larsen in Letbanesekretariatet 2014).

Olesen emphasizes that NT, the traffic company covering North Jutland and one of the authors in the project is more transport focus. However, through the association with Aalborg Municipality, the project takes a focus in urban development:

"we are not purely transport focused, but we are working with public transport in Northern Jutland, whereas the municipality is responsible of urban development, so the fact that they are also taking more and more responsibility in the process makes more an urban project also." (Olesen 2016: 6).

Hence the narratives that the organizations support are different. NT cannot refer to the narratives of urban development as it is a traffic focused company. She adds that the department of the Municipality managing the project further highlights the character of the project: *"the fact that the light rail project is placed in the planning department, not in the traffic and roads department, is also framing it as an urban development project."* (Olesen 2016: 6-7). This implies that the approaches of the two departments are different. It can be said that the traffic and roads department is acting on a more technical perspective than the planning department. This highlights that different departments and organizations need to mobilize different narratives but they can still be part of the same setting. And while the technician believes that technical work is key for a good project, the Aalborg LRT showed a passenger prognosis which was not favoring the LRT over other modes of transport:

“we all have been knowing that we are a small town and we can just, we just have the right passenger numbers for arguing that it could be a light rail solution. So we have had to put the urban development into consideration all the way along and that has been an important argument for the system.” (Schultz 2016: 1).

The word “*just*” is underlined as it was intonated differently. This identified rhythm of language stresses the fact that the passenger numbers were right at the limit of making it possible to opt for a light rail. Moreover, it is mentioned that urban development was required in the process of arguing for the system. The route is also seen an argument used to consolidate the idea: “*the alignment you choose, whether is to support urban development or, if it’s to get fast enough from A to B then you shouldn’t put it through the old city center.*” (Olesen 2016: 7). Going through central parts of the city, the chosen route of the light rail is slower than if a less developed area was chosen.

A significantly important event for communicating and promoting the future actions of the planning process to the general public was the official exhibition. Renderings, posters and roll-ups were displayed and had the purpose of delivering visual interpretations which represent the envisioned future landscape along the route. Besides the personnel hired to provide information about the LRT, screens with videos carefully directed were played in a loop and were displayed with the purpose of delivering a story. While one of the videos had Hans Henrik Henriksen, alderman from Aalborg Municipality, and Mads Duedahl, alderman from Department of Health and Culture, as main characters, the other video was presenting a best practice case implemented in Tours, France. The first mentioned was presenting an exhaustive and comprehensive overview of the LRT route with scenes presenting and explaining the purpose of each station. The focus was on explaining the developments such an infrastructure project is bringing for the route as well as for each station whilst creating a visual understanding. The latter was showing the example Tours, a university city much like Aalborg, while displaying technical facts about LRT scheme. Moreover, a physical representation of a light rail vehicle, created by SIEMENS, was displayed. A scale model does not provide an identical representation of the original, but has the purpose to present an idea.

Another video presenting the development brought by a LRT system through drawing was published at that time by the Municipality. The video was presenting the creation process of a drawn illustration. The illustration was portraying the benefits of the LRT implementation in Aalborg in terms of, among others, environment, congestion and urban development. This form of visual art is a mechanism to communicate, and can be interpreted as a form of boosting the viewer’s interest. Moreover, representing an idea through drawing can distract the viewer from noticing the flaws and only focusing on what the author is trying to communicate. The video presents the process of the drawing and the outcome, creating a dynamic where the viewer is lured more into the artistic side than the actual content of the information.



Figure 6: Rasmus Prehn, member of the Parliament for *Socialdemokraterne*, in the video promoting Aalborg light rail project.

Figure 6 shows the ending of the video with Rasmus Prehn as a main character having a dominant position over the illustration. It can be implied that giving the fact that he is one of the strong proponents of the project, the message of the video is biased and it might stress certain issues, while downplaying others. This can also be a way of manifesting his enthusiasm for the project, considering it a personal achievement as it is implied by Lohman-Hansen when asked why it was possible to secure government funding in the first place: “*It was Aarhus, Odense, and Rasmus Prehn.*” (Lohmann-Hansen 2016: 14).

Creating a persuasive narrative, in the form of urban development, for communicating the assets of the project became the most important feature on which proponents were focusing. As the passenger prognosis was not favoring a LRT, the urban development dimension was advanced in order to create a well-founded project.

5.2.2.3 Narrative 3: Light rail as a tool for increased interurban competitiveness

The following section investigates how the idea of the LRT has been shaped as a means for increased interurban competitiveness. When investigating the Aalborg LRT, the logic of ‘interurban competition’ is recurring.

The argument is further explained by Agerholm as: “*a trend that all cities which are bigger have got more railway solutions in form of light rail and metros.*” (Agerholm 2016: 2 emphasis added). The “*trend*” here is a general direction in which public transportation in Denmark is developing. As the biggest cities in Denmark have turned their attention to light rails it became one of the arguments in the process of rationalization:

“So it’s a trend and it has to evolve. And it doesn’t start from the smallest city. Then people would have said ‘well you’re never going to get a light rail here, the city is too small, it’s unrealistic’. But because then Odense got one it became even more realistic.” (Olesen 2016: 4).

The evolutionary dimension of this general direction in public transportation emphasized once again by using the term “*trend*”, has the characteristic of developing gradually and continuously. It can be considered that this trend bring about a general direction of long-term development and economic movement. Olesen further describes Odense’s achievement as “*one of the big moments in order to secure funding in Aalborg*”, meaning that it was a crucial moment, not only for the LRT but for Aalborg as a city and region. It is further emphasized that without the example of Odense, the support for Aalborg LRT would not have been mobilized:

“I’m not sure in an earlier stage of the process that everybody would say ‘we agree on this project’. I think they all agree because they see that Odense has created a good project. It’s because the smaller the city gets, the more expensive the project also gets, because it’s a quite big investment. So, I think, you have to see that if my big brother can do it, I can also do it. So it’s also a matter of intercity competition. It’s very much a matter of how cities are competing. You know, very different parameters are competing. Everybody wants to be a university city, everybody wants to have a light rail, so if Odense, ‘if my big brother gets it, then I want it as well’.” (Olesen 2016: 4 emphasis added).

Hence, the previously called “*ambition*” became a reality when powerful actors built support and legitimize their agenda. In this case the powerful actor was Odense, described using the metaphor “*big brother*”. This can be interpreted as learning from the experiences of others and it means representing the idea from the context of Odense to Aalborg. This can also indicate that the planners do not believe in the power of persuasive of storytelling if the right foundation is not in place. Furthermore, examples of similar representations are listed through enumeratio: “*Everybody wants to be a university city, everybody wants to have a light rail*”. This form of trope is used for amplifying the expressed idea.

Other meaningful events within the narrative of interurban competition involves various field trips in cities with successfully implemented light rails, as well as displaying the best practice example at the exhibition from the public hearing phase. A study tour in Western France, in Lorient, Angers and Nantes, was carried out in 2012, had the purpose to gather information about best practices for both LRT and BRT solutions (Nordjyllands Trafikselskab; et al. 2012). A later study trip in, Bergen, Norway, was a strong argument for referring to the LRT solution as a mean for urban development:

“it started after the mayor and other politicians have been to Bergen in Norway. Before that, I didn’t hear that argument, but after coming home from Bergen, it was the only strong argument from the mayor.” (Lohmann-Hansen 2016: 1).

This shows that other cases were studied with the purpose acquiring knowledge about the setting where the idea travels from. While the study trip in Western France provided an overview about the possibilities of both a LRT and BRT solution, Lohmann-Hansen associates the moment when politicians shifted their attention towards LRT solutions connected with urban development with the study trip to Bergen. This shows a more narrow and focused approach influenced by the idea of using a representation of the Bergen light rail project.

Summary

The storyline of the light rail transit along the growth axis is consisting of three narratives which intertwine and mutually reinforce each other: high quality permanent mobility solution, light rail as an urban development generator, and light rail as a tool for increased interurban competitiveness. These narratives shifted from a general focus on creating a space for investments and urban development along the growth axis, presented in the previous section, to a focus on the ‘element’ placed along the growth axis. The mechanisms of story creating the storyline are identified as illustrated in table 4. The mechanisms of stories unveil the proponents and their attitude towards the herein storyline. This storyline consists in the following authors/characters: public planners from the planning department in Aalborg Municipality, and NT, politicians, mainly social democrats. In putting forward the storyline of the LRT on the growth axis an evolutionary dimension is identified. In the first narrative, the focus was on an efficient transport solution, while the interest for the LRT scheme increases, the focus shifts towards the capacity of the LRT of being a generator for urban development. Finally, the last narrative is both the creator and the result of the previous two. As the idea of an LRT evolved from studying best practices, it further became a tool for increasing interurban competitiveness. This evolution is reproduced through narratives and the use of mechanisms of stories as identified below.

Authors	Public planners from the planning department in Aalborg Municipality, and NT, politicians, mainly social democrats
Texts	Planning strategy, environmental impact assessment
Emplot	Create high quality, effective public transport solution, represent ideas from sites of production to the adoptive context
Characters	Public planners, Rasmus Prehn, Hans Henrik Henriksen, Mads Duedahl
Settings	City of Aalborg, cities seen as sites of production i.e. Lorint, Angers, Nantes and Bergen, the physical route of the LRT, exhibition
Points of view	LRT is a high-class mobility solution, it would make the city more attractive; Aalborg could not have planned for a LRT before Odense
Imagery and rhythm of language (e.g. tropes)	Visualizations in the form of renderings, posters, roll ups videos, drawings, scale model, and videos, emphasis on the word ‘just’, use of terms such as: raise the level of quality, high-class, booming, trend, best bet, big brother and enumeratio: <i>“Everybody wants to be a university city, everybody wants to have a light rail”</i>

Table 4: Presenting the identified mechanisms of the light rail transit, a prerequisite for the growth axis storyline.

5.2.3 Storyline 3: The light rail substitute - bus rapid transit along the growth axis

This section investigates how the LRT solution has been replaced after the government canceled the funding in a short time with another alternative solution, the BRT. The narratives supporting the storyline of the BRT were quickly mobilized by a wide range of actors, including those actors previously promoting the LRT as a far superior solution than the BRT. Planners played an important role in the construction of these new narratives of the BRT and by exploring the dynamics of them, this chapter focuses on the lessons that may be learned on how planners can adapt to critical situations in dynamic political environments. In the following, three narratives are identified and explored: (1) The bus rapid transit working as a light rail, (2) the route's functional aesthetics, and (3) expanding the urban mobility network. Furthermore, the mechanisms of these diverse narratives creating the storyline are identified.

5.2.3.1 Narrative 1: The bus rapid transit working as a light rail

Schultz recalls that when the LRT solution “*was turned down for good on the financial act, they [the city council] had taken the decision that we [Aalborg Municipality] are going for BRT solution*” (Schultz 2016: 5). With the use of the pronoun ‘they’ he refers to the politicians, meaning that it was mainly a political decision. Schultz functioned as a key planner in the formulation of the plans for the LRT solution, investing time and resources in the project. However, Schultz quickly points to the benefits of a BRT solution in relation to the former LRT solution. The BRT is “*a solution where we will not have to move all the pipes, the utilities in the ground, and we will make a project that is much cheaper.*” (Schultz 2016: 5). While the extensive construction work was not stressed as a disadvantage of the LRT, the lack of extensive construction work of the BRT is highlighted as an advantage by Schultz. This is an example of how narratives are transformed through diverse storylines by means of decision-making on (not).

After the cancellation of the LRT, planners and politicians started working together on the new BRT solution. This solution was investigated just as an alternative in the EIA report, so attempting to draw future planning actions:

We knew already then that we will be able to create a system, a BRT system, with the same capacity as the light rail system. Because we, in our environmental impact assessment, were working with both BRT system and light rail system all the way and so we would be able to make that switch.” (Schultz 2016: 5).

While the BRT was therefore framed as ‘non-solution’ but just an alternative that could show that the LRT was much more the optimal solution, capable of meeting the goals set out in municipal plans and strategies, the EIA showed that, technically, the BRT solution was instead fully capable of meeting traffic demands.

Likewise, Andersen argues that while developers might have been attracted by the permanent character of the LRT, giving the relevance of high class mobility infrastructure in relation to urban growing investments, the BRT can function in the same manner:

“what we were saying when we were struggling so hard for the light rail was that this ‘permanent thing’, is not only flexible but it also gives a good sign for the developers that we really think this is the right thing to do and really invest in this area. But then again when we look at this project (BRT), I think we can give the same signal, because when we do this and invest half a billion DKK, it is also a high priority, and it is the growth axis, and it is not just something on paper it is there in reality, it is where the areas are dense already.” (Andersen 2016: 6).

Andersen is here mentioning the growth axis thereby consolidating the public transport project in relation to urban development. This shows how the narratives of the growth axis support the narratives of the BRT or LRT together and legitimize new forms of public transport. However, the LRT solution was perceived as a generator for growth itself, while the BRT requires a new reorientation of the argument to the growth axis. Moreover, the resemblance between the light rails and the new generation of busses is another way to rationalize the forced decision:

“when we started out looking into BRT it was single articulated, traditional diesel busses and today BRT busses are something else. The new hybrid double articulated electrical busses are in a very high degree doing the same as a light rail system.” (Schultz 2016: 5).

Not only visual resemblances and technical advancements of BRT technology are used to foster the BRT scheme, but also the differences:

“we are not in need of the tracks and the overhead catenary wiring and so on. So it’s a cheaper solution, but it’s very much a tram and you can also see the way you can do interiors, it’s also very much a tram solution and not a traditional bus solution.” (Schultz 2016: 5-6).

While the LRT required a higher infrastructure investment, the choice of BRT rolling stock can even make the solution resemble the LRT. To further strengthen the idea of a BRT planners *“try to get the best out of a +BUS and we think that, if you think theoretically about it, it should be possible to have the same effect from a bus.”* (Andersen 2016: 4 emphasis added). The idea of acquiring the same “effect” is shaped through the appropriation of the pseudonym “+BUS” used to name – and therefore highlighting - the idea that the BRT is actually more than just a regular bus. *“To get the best out of a +BUS”* means creating a persuasive story in order to *“to change people’s view on taking the bus.”* This is identified by the planners as the biggest “challenge” and this is because:

“The comfort can be nearly as good as the train if you make it right. And it can also transport the same amount [of people] and you can make it special as you want it [...]; you can do nearly everything. Almost all the advantages of a light rail you can also have them on a BRT solution.” (Andersen 2016: 4).

The BRT can thus what require time as *“to change people’s minds that the bus is for everybody, also the people who are in a hurry, who are busy.”* (Andersen 2016: 4).

5.2.3.2 Narrative 2: The route's functional aesthetics

Underlying the herein narrative is the goal of beautifying the route, and the city: *“we are trying to deal with a new element in the city and we're looking very much, not to the element itself, but what it can do to the city.”* (Andersen 2016: 6). As mentioned, the focus shifted from the element itself in the case of the previous storyline, to a focus on development of the city, similar to the first storyline identified. However, the *“new element”* creates the frame of the development, meaning that there is an emphasis on the *“journey”* that is facilitated by the bus:

“what I'm working with very much is to make the journey interesting so that you will experience green and interesting urban spaces, with life and different kinds of environments.” (Andersen 2016: 5 emphasis added).

The imagery used here creates the captivating scenery intended for the route of the +BUS. The word *“journey”* is used as a metaphor for describing the route. The purpose for using a metaphor here is to emphasize the attractive and visually captivating character of the route. Furthermore, it is stated that bus users *“will experience”* various surroundings. The spaces created along the route are described as having *“life”*. This personification is used for emphasizing the point i.e. the route will foster attractive urban spaces. This can also be seen in the brochure created for the project where illustrations portraying the different environments are presented. The brochure presents the BRT as *“The city's new life nerve”* (Aalborg Kommune et al. 2016 emphasis added). The metaphor *“life nerve”* highlights the purpose of the BRT to provide a pathway for growth. To reiterate the point Andersen further highlights the connection of the bus lanes, stations and different areas along the route:

“we work with the design of the bus lane and also the design of the station and how it can be when we want to prioritize the busses, where should the cars be, and how could we connect recreational and functional parts to and from the station area so that the bus stops will be a kind of a station. The urban development project has to be connected to the stations.” (Andersen 2016: 5).

She emphasizes the focus on a coherent and accessible design between the bus lane, bus stations and surroundings. This is aimed at changing *“people's minds to go by bus instead of driving their own car.”* (Andersen 2016: 6).

5.2.3.3 Narrative 3: Expanding the urban mobility network

The narrative of expanding the network refers to the opportunity provided by the BRT to expand public transport throughout the city. One of the disadvantages of the LRT solution was the technical challenges, and in some cases inability, of expanding the network, especially across the Aalborg Limfjord. In order to create the connection between Aalborg and Nørresundby another high investment was necessary. This is due to the fact that the two bridges could not have accommodated a light rail. Melchior points to the analyses he undertook for COWI, an engineering and planning consultancy company with a department in Aalborg, which show that it is not pos-

sible to use the existing railway bridge for the LRT due to risk of collision, and low capacity (Melchior: 2016). Moreover, analyses of the separate car-bridge were made. Melchior states:

“COWI made some analyses and the bridge was strong enough, but the politicians will not reduce the capacity for the cars in the way it is necessary. I think the light rail in Aalborg would have been just one line and it was not thought how we can make it to a whole system.” (Melchior 2016: 5).

A lacking fjord connection would have decreased the opportunity of creating a coherent network throughout the entire city, without a considerable investment. Melchior recognizes the advantage of the BRT solution in relation to future expansions considering that: *“it’s very good that we have the BRT because what is happening now on automatic vehicles will, in my opinion, totally change the way we transport each other in the town.”* (Melchior 2016: 5). This implies that the BRTs will overtake the high status of LRTs through the new technical advancements which are progressing constantly.

Similar views emphasize the advantage of the new BRT solution of expanding the network. Agerholm emphasizes the economic advantage of the BRT network expansion: *“we can, for relative small money, increase the connection to the airport, while this money would have probably gone to operate the light rail, if it was getting through.”* (Agerholm 2016: 10). Thus, the BRT has the potential of covering the entire growth axis and beyond, unlike the LRT, which actually at the time of writing (May 2016) is seen as not achieving the goal of creating a high-class mobility solution along the entire axis raising up issues, lacking connection to the airport and branching out.

Moreover, Schultz assesses the expansion and economic advantage:

“we can say that this is the West-East part of this system, we would very fast go to a North-South line and thinking of that, because is so much cheaper. So this will give us, you can say enhanced agility in making the public transportation in Aalborg better in a quicker way.” (Schultz 2016: 6 emphasis added).

The use of the term *“enhanced agility”* stresses the ability to rapidly adapt the system to creating a wider transport/mobility network. This is therefore seen as advantageous issue for the public transportation in Aalborg. Likewise, Lohmann-Hansen stresses the flexibility of the BRT solution and argues against the perception that BRT would not attract investment due to this:

“I think the busses are very, very flexible. And this flexibility, I think, is an advantage. Some say it’s a handicap for the bus because investors would like to know if there is a bus line or LRT here in the street. But you should be an idiot as a bus planner if you move your busses away from a street where you have lots of passengers and a lot of people, and a lot of urban development.” (Lohmann-Hansen 2016: 17).

Lohmann-Hansen thereby deconstructs the narrative that only a LRT, and not a BRT, can be ‘a high quality permanent mobility solution’. He points out that the route is the same as for the

LRT, i.e. along the growth axis, and that on a high concentrated route, a bus would also be a permanent solution. He stresses the point with the statement that only “*an idiot as a bus planner*” would relocate a bus line from a concentrated area making it seem obvious that also the route of a BRT would remain in place.

Summary

The presented storyline is an effect of the withdrawal of the funding for the LRT solution. While the politicians decided to adopt the BRT solution, the planners are working on framing the project focusing on enhancing the status of busses as well as the urban space. The storyline of the bus rapid transit along the growth axis consists of three narratives as follows: the bus rapid transit working as a light rail, the route’s functional aesthetics, and expanding the transport network. The focus now is no longer on the ‘element’ of public transport LRT versus BRT, instead planners’ work, as shown in the search of their own storytelling, is to create a synergy between investment, urban development and the ‘element’ i.e. now the BRT solution. The mechanisms of story identified are presented in table 5.

Authors	Politicians/planners
Texts	Reports and documents used in the previous storyline e.g. EIA report
Emplot	Reproduce the light rail features to the BRT solution, beautify the route to create an attractive journey, expand the BRT network
Characters	Public planners, traffic planners
Settings	City of Aalborg
Points of view	Flexibility is an advantage
Imagery and rhythm of language (e.g. tropes)	Illustration, use of terms and idioms: to get the best out of a +BUS, effect, journey, will experience, life, life nerve, enhanced agility

Table 5: Presenting the identified mechanisms of the light rail substitute - bus rapid transit along the growth axis storyline.

5.2.4 Storyline 4: Critique or misinformation

Despite the focus on issues as urban growth of storylines advanced by the proponents framing the Aalborg LRT, as presented in 5.2.2 *The light rail transit, a prerequisite along the growth axis*, the opposition of the LRT was more focused on technical issues. This section explores the narratives surrounding the critique put forward about the LRT scheme. In the following, two narratives are identified: (1) Overestimated feasibility of the LRT solution, and (2) lack of transparency in the planning process. The two narratives are overlapping, but mutually reinforce each other. Furthermore, the mechanisms of the storyline are identified.

5.2.4.1 Narrative 1: Overestimated feasibility of the LRT solution

The narrative of an overestimated feasibility solution touches upon three main ideas which unfold in the following order: Fabricated induced urban development, too optimistic passenger prognosis, and high construction and operating costs.

First, despite the proponents' claim building upon the urban development generator narrative, arguments against that were advanced stating that: *“research, as far as I know, has not shown a direct connection between light rail implementation and urban growth in a corridor.”* (Agerholm 2016: 2). This claim has its basis in investigating materials and sources reaching conclusions through ‘scientific facts’. Hence, if evidence is not supporting the induced urban development, means that it does not exist. In a similar way, Lohmann-Hansen recalls analyzing the connection between the implementation of the LRT in Bergen, one of the sites of production for the Aalborg LRT, and prices of private property. The analysis did not provide a clear connection of the price rising and the light rail: *“I couldn’t point out on this straight line when the light rail was introduced. It has been that development before, and it has been the same development after.”* (Lohmann-Hansen 2016: 1). This meant that the socio-economic development of the city has not seen advance as a result of the light rail. However, details show that in proximity of larger stations there has been an increase of real estate prices. This means that if an increase in the central areas was produced by effects of the light rail, a decrease in another area was generated: *“if you look at Bergen as a whole, there has been no change. So if one place goes up, another place must have gone down. So it has been a change in central development according to the introducing of the light rail in Bergen.”* (Lohmann-Hansen 2016: 2). He further argues that politicians from Aalborg did not investigate these types of issues, but:

They [politicians] said in Bergen the light rail was followed by a large development of new housing, new institutions, schools, hospital, university, and so on. And I have asked the people in Bergen: Did this come because of the light rail, or is it the same time as a light rail, because if it came at the same time, it could have come anyway. You don’t build a university expansion in Bergen just because a light rail, you build it because there were many, many more students. You don’t build a hospital, extension of the hospital, because of the light rail, but because there’s a need for a new hospital.” (Lohmann-Hansen 2016: 2).

Lohmann-Hansen contradicts the idea of light rails generating growth, considering that new developments are demand-driven. A high demand for higher education brings the expansion of the university, as well as a high demand of hospital care services brings the construction of a new hospital:

Our hospital here in Aalborg is not built because of the light rail; it’s because there’s a need for a new hospital in the Northern part of Jutland. The mayor says it’s because of the light rail, and I said: no, it’s at the same time as a light rail.” (Lohmann-Hansen 2016: 1-2).

It is implied that the representation of the light rail idea from Bergen did not have a foundation. Again, a foundation is perceived as investigations leading to the discovery of scientific facts (as opposed to the constructions of stories): “*you build it [the university] because there were many, many more students.*” and a hospital is built “*because there’s a need for a new hospital*”. According to Lohmann-Hansen, this means that a light rail does not generate such developments. It is just a coincidence that a light rail is implemented at the same time with the developments. Further drawing upon the notion of the scientific method is the idea that: “*when you compare different solutions you have to go down into detail*” (Lohmann-Hansen 2016: 14). And this is because the contexts differ: “*Bergen is not Aalborg. And Nantes and Grenoble is not Aalborg. I think Aalborg is Aalborg. Not even Aarhus is Aalborg.*” (Lohmann-Hansen 2016: 14). This indicates that there is a more complicated process in implementing a project than just representing ideas from other contexts. This process is based on scientific facts, hence “*it was not the light rail in itself but it was the economy and the underlying prognosis for the passengers.*” (Lohmann-Hansen 2016: 1). As mentioned in the previous section 5.2.2 *The light rail transit along the growth axis*, Schultz emphasizes that the amount of passengers was right at the limit for arguing for a light rail. Furthermore, Lohmann-Hansen maintains:

“the prognosis work was very poorly done. They said it would double the traffic in Aalborg and there was no ground for such an assumption. We have seen the same in Aarhus and in Odense that the prognoses were artificial, or deliberately made much higher than reality shows. Therefore, in Aarhus now you have seriously economical trouble with the LRT already” (Lohmann-Hansen 2016: 1 emphasis added).

The identified idiom “*no ground*” implies that the passenger prognosis in Aalborg did not have a solid foundation. The example of the other cities in Denmark is made to emphasize the effect of questionable passenger prognoses. The prognoses are characterized as “*artificial*”, meaning that they are not reflecting the reality. Moreover, the term “*deliberately*” is used to suggest that this situation was created with the purpose of obscuring reality. It is believed that the passenger prognosis led to creating an expensive project in Aalborg: “*It’s a very costly system for that few passengers, when a bus system could do the same job.*” (Lohmann-Hansen 2016: 8).

Likewise, an opposition criticizing the economic feasibility of the project was active on social media. A *Facebook* profile had the purpose to communicate Liberal Alliance’s objections towards the Aalborg LRT underlying the overly expensive aspect of the project. In a post from the 9th of June 2015 the Alliance writes:

“Liberal Alliance has again today voted against the EIA report on light rail in Aalborg. We think light rail is an expensive and bad option for Aalborg’s traffic problems, and we do not believe in the economics of the project. The price of the project is now 2.4 billion, and now it emerges that the passenger prognosis for the project is totally unrealistic.” (Liberal Alliance 2015 emphasis added, own translation).

The Facebook post informs about the Liberal Alliance’s position towards the project. The Facebook profile, *Stop Letbanen I Aalborg*, has gathered 886 followers, more than the profile created

to promote the project, *Letbane mellem Aalborg Centrum og AAU*, which gathered 517 followers. However, while the former's description provides information about the organization in charge of managing the profile i.e. Liberal Alliance, the latter's description only communicates the purpose of it i.e. "to establish a light rail between the center of Aalborg and Aalborg University." (Letbane mellem Aalborg Centrum og AAU 2012). Hence, it is not known to the author who actually manages the profile page.

The critique of overly high construction and operating costs is further highlighted by Agerholm when he states that: "*the experts in the filed have been against it because they knew from the very beginning that it will be extremely costly*" (Agerholm 2016: 5 emphasis added). The emphasis on "*the experts*" is made to show the connection with the previously made point of results founded on 'scientific facts', providing a superior outcome. Agerholm further states his point of view in relation to the cancelation of the LRT solution: "*If you ask me as a traffic researcher I would say it's a benefit that we did not get the light rail, because it would be so expensive to operate it, the light rail.*" (Agerholm 2016: 8 emphasis added). He brings attention to his specialization, "*traffic researcher*", emphasizing the knowledge in this particular field.

5.2.4.2 Narrative 2: Lack of transparency in the planning process

The lack of transparency in the planning process is a narrative which comes from the idea that particular aspects were left out when communicating the LRT project.

Lohmann-Hansen argues that during the public hearing phase, in summer 2015, questions and comments were sent by him and other citizens. He further shows his disappointment towards the Municipality's answer:

"if you read the answer from the Municipality here in Aalborg, there's only two concrete things that they reflected on. One was the solution, the local solution in the Western part of the light rail system, around the swimming hall, Haraldslund. There was a discussion about other solutions of the parking and access to the stadium and so on. [...] Another thing was the bus system in the Eastern part of the system. The bus system connecting to the light rail was also discussed in the answer." (Lohmann-Hansen 2016: 11).

According to Lohmann-Hansen the Municipality only addressed issues that did not actually challenge the underlying integrity of the project:

"but the passenger prognosis or other things, nothing. So what I call important things were not discussed, but there was an extra comment. I think 5 or 6 specified papers would get a direct answer. One of them was one of mine, because I've asked certain, specific questions. [...] But did they answer? They specified that I would get an answer, but did they answer? No, they didn't." (Lohmann-Hansen 2016: 11 emphasis added).

This statement implies that particular critical points were actually raised that were apparently neglected throughout the public hearing phase. The "*important things*" in this case are the 'scientific facts', much like in the previously discussed narrative. And while it was stated that Lohmann-Hansen would get a direct answer, requiring a more comprehensive and thorough re-

sponse due to the issues rose, the answer failed to arrive. Lohmann-Hansen uses the rhetorical question “*But did they answer?*” to make an assertion, and not to elicit an answer. This question was posed to highlight and insinuate the lack of answer. He further adds that in order to get an answer he had to get in contact with the mayor: “*So I’ve been corresponding with the mayor ever since. But now I got an answer, but it’s not an answer going into detail or into the substance of it.*” (Lohmann-Hansen 2016: 11 emphasis added). Finally, when an answer was received, after the project was suspended, it was rather dissatisfying. The metaphor “*substance*” is used to delineate matters of interest, which were further neglected when delivering the requested answer. This issue of putting forward certain matters over others is seen legitimized by Agerholm as follows:

“when you’re a public servant you have to serve the city council, and you have to make solutions that they want, but you have to present the advantages and disadvantages for the solutions and I think they presented the disadvantages, if you could find them, but reality is that they presented the positive thing with much more high profile, and more clear, and to understand the financial connection you had to read very carefully in the reports. (Agerholm 2016: 4).

While justifying the work of public planners as performing services for the city council, Agerholm considers that the disadvantages of the project could have been presented in a more transparent manner. The argument here is that the storyline was one-sided, presenting only the positive aspects, while the critical matters were difficult to identify. He further maintains that:

“they were not hidden, some of them were just not very clear, e.g. from where these numbers come from, but it’s not hidden. I think they did what you, in reality, could expect from a public servant. This is not to say that we could have hoped that it would have been more straight-forward and show the negative impacts in the same way, but I think, in reality, they are hired to serve the city council and this puts some pressure on people.” (Agerholm 2016: 4).

While this statement highlights the role of the public planner i.e. to serve politic interests, it also implies that certain actions have been not fully endorsed by them, but rather imposed: “*they knew very well some negative effects and they were not keen about them, all of them, especially not on the ground floor.*” (Agerholm 2016: 5 emphasis added). The expression “*not on the ground floor*” suggests that planners, who are directly involved in political work, were not completely positive about the project. And despite the fact that planners notified the politicians about the consequences; however, the project went forward without appeal: “*they inform the decision takers, of course they did, but they cannot speak up against it if they’re not asked to*” (Agerholm 2016: 5). This might have led to framing the project in a way which was difficult to comprehend:

“I think some of the information was served in a way that it was less easy to sort out the negative impacts of the light rail, and again we are talking about financial negative impacts. I think that they could have been more straight forward in the presentation of these impacts, but I have no reason to believe that they directly hid something, because it’s

too easy to see that they hide something and ask for them, then it's more convenient to present it in a way that is difficult to sort out." (Agerholm 2016: 7).

While Agerholm criticizes the transparency used in delivering the information from the planning documents, he at the same believes time that it was not a matter of suppressing information, but rather presenting it in a vague, difficult to understand form.

Summary

The critical storyline consists of two narratives. The first identified narrative is related to the overestimated feasibility of the LRT solution touching upon fabricated induced urban development, too optimistic passenger prognosis, and high construction and operating costs. The second narrative covers the lack of transparency in the LRT scheme's planning process. The focus here is not to find a reason of why the state funding was canceled, but rather to provide an augmentation to the previously presented storylines. Specialists from traffic planning together with liberal parties represented the biggest opposition group. Furthermore, the mechanisms of story are presented in table 6.

Authors	Traffic planners and researchers, liberal parties
Texts	Planning documents, traffic analyses
Emplot	Create sound passenger prognosis, communicate technical details of the project
Characters	Traffic planners and researchers, liberal parties
Settings	City of Aalborg, Facebook, Bergen
Points of view	Aalborg cannot be compared with other cities, planners are hired to serve the city council, certain information was neglected
Imagery and rhythm of language (e.g. tropes)	No ground, artificial, deliberately, the experts, traffic researcher, important things, 'but did they answer?', policy making that did not happen at 'the ground floor'

Table 6: Presenting the identified mechanisms of the critique and misinformation storyline.

5.3 Representation of findings

In the following, a representation of the course of events is illustrated. This provides a better understanding of the temporal dimension of events and when change was produced. The three distinct phases in the process overlap both opening and closing windows of opportunities. Key actors on a local and national level influence the storylines presented. Moreover, table 7, from the appendices, provides a comprehensive overview of the identified mechanisms of storylines.

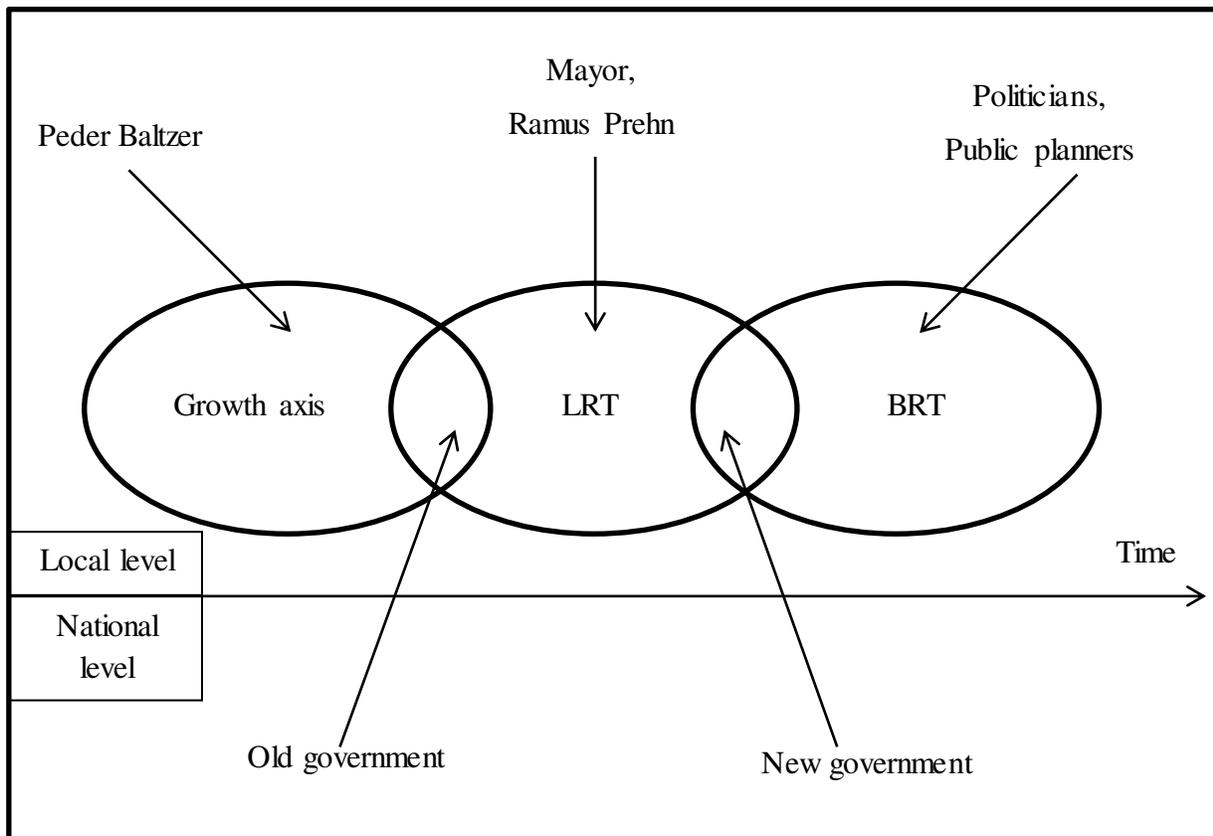


Figure 7: An illustration of the three distinct phases identified in the Aalborg LRT scheme.

6 The role of the public planner in the Aalborg LRT scheme

In the previous chapter, the story of the Aalborg LRT solution was explored, identifying four main storylines, while unfolding each, through narratives. As presented, the storylines of the Aalborg LRT scheme are manifold and they draw on narratives which are constructed by networked actors in the setting of Aalborg. The story develops from an ambitious vision to reality to then being replaced by the BRT scheme. The relation between power-rationality processes and change is thus explored in the analysis of this transformation, as is the ability of the public planner to adapt to a changing political environment. There might not be a novelty in the fact that the proponents of the LRT scheme consisted in social-democrats and public planners, while the opponents were mainly liberals, traffic planners and researchers. However, it is useful to reflect upon the role of the public planner in the case, since he or she was part of creating and shaping the narratives surrounding each identified storyline. Going through conflict, to crisis to resolution planners had to deal with power shaping their practice and planners were tasked with providing meaning to the unstructured and conflict-ridden situations which occurred throughout the planning process. Considering these situations, this section reflects upon the results of the analysis (section 5.2) and the formal and informal process of the case (section 5.1). The role of the planner in the case of Aalborg LRT is explored building on the conceptualization of power and storytelling as elaborated in chapter 3.

6.1 Misinformation as power

Tait and Jensen argue that *“travelling ideas are narratives of place construction that need “tellers” and “listeners”.*” (Tait and Jensen 2007: 125). This implies that when ideas travel from one setting to another they are framed and communicated through narratives by actors in ways that secure the support of others actors. Hence, the process of translating the idea of an LRT scheme into the setting of Aalborg was not a neutral process but a process in which powerful actors sought to represent the LRT scheme through the use of storytelling. Identifying how the idea of the LRT scheme and the setting of Aalborg were represented is linked with the identification of mechanisms constructing the narratives, thus the *“understanding of places as produced with, by and through relations of power.”* is deployed in this research (Tait and Jensen 2007: 123). Forester argues that an active approach towards power in which the planner deliberately engages with power can improve the work of the planner, while a passive approach in which the planners ignores power only can result in powerlessness. Furthermore, planners have control over information *“selectively shaping attention to options for action, particular costs and benefits, or particular arguments for and against proposals.”* (Forester 1989: 28 emphasis added). This means planners have the power to influence and control information by directing the focus of characters towards certain planning solutions by emphasizing some factors over others. This links to what Throgmorton identifies as storytelling: *“stories cannot tell themselves. Rather, they must be transformed into narratives and then be told. That act of construction is necessarily selective and purposeful.”* (Throgmorton 2003: 128). This is best exemplified in chapter 5, section 5.2.2,

through the identified narratives which put forward the positive effects of the light rail, that of being a high quality solution, generating development and making Aalborg more competitive.

This way of providing information i.e. “*selective and purposeful*”, is identified by Forester to be a type of power. On this basis he argues that:

“(1) information is a complex source of power; (2) misinformation of several distinct types – some inevitable, some avoidable, some systematic, some ad hoc – can be anticipated and counteracted by astute planners; (3) such misinformation undermines well-informed planning and citizen action by manipulating citizens’ beliefs, consent, trust, and sense of relevant problems, and planners can counteract these influences; (4) planners themselves sometimes participate in distorting communication and, in special cases, may be justified in doing so; and (5) because planners can expect misinformation to influence processes of decision making, agenda setting, and political argument more generally, they can counteract it in several ways” (Forester 1989: 28-29).

The first point refers to what is already described in the theoretical framework (chapter 3); that planners and other actors can use information as power. Different perspectives on planning describe how planners make use of information differently and correspondingly how information acts differently as a basis of power. Thus, planners may use information to solve technical problems, meet organizational needs, address political inequality, legitimize systems or empower citizen action (Forester 1989: 31). Furthermore, what Forester refers to as the progressive planner denotes the planner that is able to anticipate and counteract misinformation. This perspective on the planner is discussed in the following section.

The second and following points Forester lists in the quote above are concerned with planning not only being subject to the power of misinformation, but planners themselves also engaging in misinforming. He identifies three conditions where misinforming can be justified in planners’ actions:

“(1) when reasonable activities (as judged by a diverse, informed public) are not available; (2) when the informed consent of others may be available (a client requests a rough summary of issues, not a more precise technical analysis); or (3) when substantial and serious harm may be done otherwise.” (Forester 1989: 43, numbering added).

Each of these conditions is open for interpretations (Forester 1989). And while the first one does not match the case of this research, it can be argued that the second condition does, for which reason it is further interpreted. As Forester explains, planners “*often face organizational and political pressures to legitimate existing processes*” (Forester 1989: 41). In the light of the second ‘condition of justified misinformation’, this means that actions which planners might not agree with are undertaken due to political pressures. As mentioned in chapter 5, section 5.2.4, Agerholm states: “*they [the public planners] are hired to serve the city council and it puts some pressure on people.*” (Agerholm 2016: 4). Likewise, Schultz explains:

“planning is politics, and this is how it is. And if one day the politicians want one thing and they want another thing the next day, not even the best plan will secure that decision from day one is the one that is realized.” (Schultz 2016: 4).

It is clear that the decision to undertake the LRT scheme in Aalborg was political. The city council decided that the LRT scheme should be the mobility solution for the city. Whether this decision was made before or after feasibility studies, EIA and other planning reports legitimizing the scheme is open for discussion. And while planners were aware about the issues of the LRT project, through persuasive storytelling, they constructed a storyline which got the project approved. That power defines what is rational is not a surprising result. However, it is interesting to explore the dynamics in which the planner acts.

The third condition in which planners' misinformation is justified can be found in the narratives identified in section 5.2.2, chapter 5. The intertwining of the narratives of (1) a high quality permanent mobility solution, (2) an urban development generator and (3) as a tool for increased interurban competitiveness serves as the basis of the justification. It can be discussed whether actors, hereunder planners, were convinced that by not implementing a light rail along the growth axis, the development of the city would be jeopardized (and thus “*substantial and serious harm*” would be done to the city). Furthermore, storytelling in the shape of city branding can be interpreted as misinformation; by highlighting carefully selected statistics or analyses the performance of the growth axis is represented in a certain way making it attractive for inward investments. This may aid in maintain a strong position in the interurban competition for which reason it may be justified. In this light, it might be said that the planners did what they had to do to boost the city to a higher status.

It is clear that an interpretation of in what precise circumstances planners' misinformation is justifiable opens up a series of principal questions about the role of the planner.

6.2 The role of the public planner in the case of Aalborg LRT scheme

Several implications of planning practice are considered when exploring the role of the planner. Planning is about “*creating, reconstituting, reformulating problems as well as simply reporting them.*” (Forester 2016: 20). The role of the planner, therefore, is more than that of a technician undertaking analyses and the purpose of planning is not only outcome oriented, but also about creating networked relationships, while focusing the attention towards opportunity. Forester refers to this as “*the organization of hope*”. The formulation and mobilization of support for the storylines of the growth axis and the LRT and BRT schemes can be seen as such organization of hope.

The interviews with key public planners working with the planning of the growth axis and the LRT and BRT schemes indicate a strong awareness of planning being political and planning as being more than outcome oriented. Andersen states:

“some years ago our leading politicians were not that good network builders as the other big cities were. And our mayor, the old mayor, he was not that interested in all this net-

working. And I think that could also have been done in a better way. It was much better when we had the new mayor and then everything was smooth. But I think we were a little bit below the others in communicating and networking and knowing the right people in the government and finding out how to frame and tell about your story again and again. They were not that good some years ago. I think that's also an explanation, but I think we have moved forward since then." (Andersen 2016: 7).

When reflecting on the ability as a “network builder” Andersen states that “we were a little bit below the others” but “we have moved forward” referring to the ability of planners and local politicians alike to mobilize support for a LRT scheme in Aalborg. It is curious that none of the interviewed public planners that worked with the scheme point at the underlying analyses or planning reports as the reason for the LRT schemes cancellation. Instead, aspects such as lack of or insufficient network-building meaning that had they been quicker and more efficient in launching persuasive storylines, representing the scheme and thereby mobilizing support, a the window of opportunity (a government allocating funding for LRT schemes) could possibly have been taken advantage of before it closing (a change of government).

Interviews with critics of the LRT scheme, point at the underlying analyses and planning reports showing a lack of feasibility of the scheme considering that the only reason, but not most significant, for the funding being secured in a first instance was the story framing it:

“I think the mayor did a trick, a very good trick. If you go back to H. C. Andersen, he has a tale about the empress clothes, new clothes, where the tailors said: “Look here! It's fantastic!”. But the people, they couldn't see it. And a little boy on the street says: “He has no clothes on!”. I think it's the same, it's difficult for the people in the city council to say, is it true what he's saying, the mayor, that we will get the same as in Bergen 13 times as much buildings, that's 20 billion DKK we'll get from investments. How can an ordinary man in council say: “We don't want that.”? It's very difficult when the story is told the way the mayor told the story.” (Lohmann-Hansen 2016: 9).

Much like in the tale used to describe the LRT scheme, *The Emperor's New Clothes* written by H.C. Andersen, Lohmann-Hansen suggests that the mayor created a story which no one could deny or argue against. Not because there were no arguments, but because the story was appealing and it was told by an influential character. Lohmann-Hansen acknowledges the influence of the storytelling, however, does not believe that it is meaningful. He argues that “they [politicians] don't have the capability of finding arguments that were there in the report but difficult to find and they wouldn't argue with the mayor who told a very beautiful story, tale.” (Lohmann-Hansen 2016: 9). When suggesting that politicians “don't have the capability to finding arguments” Lohmann-Hansen refers to technical information considering it essential to conduct “calculations in an objective manner with no bias and nothing.” (Lohmann-Hansen 2016: 10). This technocratic attitude suggests that political judgments can be avoided by information which provides solutions to technical issues. He further adds: “I think here in Aalborg, it's one of the worst examples I have seen in manipulation, ever.” (Lohmann-Hansen 2016: 10). Lohmann-Hansen be-

believes that focusing on storytelling but overlooking technical issues, is not an appropriate attitude planners should adopt. Referring to “*manipulation*”, he considers that in the setting of Aalborg, planning is a means for powerful actors to exert their influence.

This shows different perspectives on the role of the planner. The interviewed critics stress the role of formal planning documents and criticize the dimension of storytelling. Thereby, they can be said to take on the role of ‘the technician’. The interviewed public planners from Aalborg Municipality and NT emphasize that planning is political and that they acted accordingly. It can be argued that these planners, in turn, take on a role that can be characterized more as ‘the progressive planner’.

As mentioned before, the progressive planner has the ability to anticipate and counteract planning problems. Furthermore, the progressive planners seek to take advantage of the opportunities which arise. In this case it can be argued that the LRT scheme was a window of opportunity which planners used with the aim of enhancing the city’s transport system, as well as its status. Whether this was the appropriate solution is debatable. The focus here however stands on the attitude of the planner acting in accordance to the phrase which characterizes the city: “*Though little big city*”. Thus, organizing hope in the achievement of a big infrastructure project and putting forward arguments which support their position. Moreover, planners in Aalborg responded to decision-making power by anticipating the state’s cancelation of the funding, and rapidly being mobilized the support of the alternative solution of the LRT. This emphasizes the characteristic of the progressive planner being able to anticipate decision-making power and find other opportunities which can be undertaken.

From another perspective, it can be argued that if planners would have focused on the BRT scheme instead of the LRT, the less expensive solution would have been in the implementation process:

“I think they should have started a little bit earlier. They should have realized from the beginning that they should have gone into this job with a more open mind. They were at a very early stage focusing on the light rail and the BRT was wiped out very, very soon, and an ordinary bus system was ignored. And I think the planning process was not in what I call a good fashion. There were made some shortcuts on the way because they were in need of time.” (Lohmann-Hansen 2016: 13).

This statement draws on a technocratic view. On this basis, it can be argued that planners were not actually progressive. This implies that planners could not anticipate in due time that based on a technical analysis, the project could be rejected, and therefore a BRT scheme would have been ‘the safe solution’. This ties to Forester’s critique of putting faith in technical analyses and disregarding the power of storytelling:

“Technical analysis cannot stand alone. Vivid studies show that the “technician” role of planning analysis is often frustrating and ineffectual if divorced from the pragmatic considerations of political communications: maintaining trust and “an ear,” lobbying, ad-

addressing the specific concerns of decision-making audiences as well as the intrinsic merits of the projects themselves, and so on.” (Forester 1989: 156).

However, in this case, the analyses can be used for the new BRT scheme planners are working to implement. Hence, their work was not in vain, providing now a strong foundation for the new solution.

7 Conclusion

The following presents the conclusion based on the analysis and the critical reflection in the discussion. The aim of the research question guiding this thesis was to explore how storylines were constructed in order to represent the idea of an LRT scheme in Aalborg and how their enactment influenced the planning process. As mentioned, it is important to keep in mind that the aim of an interpretive approach is not to provide clear-cut answers or finite solutions. Instead, the conclusion attempts to bring to light the various circumstances of the Aalborg LRT scheme.

An increasing interest in light rail mobility solutions has emerged in Europe. In 1985, the French city of Nantes implemented what can be seen as the first example of the renaissance of such mobility solutions. Since then, the number of light rail transit (LRT) schemes has proliferated in Europe. Spreading from one setting to the next, the travelling idea of LRT has reached the Danish setting(s) and is being adopted in three Danish cities. Thus, Aarhus, Odense and Copenhagen are in the process of implementing the LRT schemes. While having a promising start, the LRT scheme of Aalborg, was faced with a series of changes. Hence, four comprehensive storylines consisting of different narratives are identified: (1) A stand-alone growth axis, consisting of: urban growth through development along the North-East axis, North-East mobility enhancement, the mobility solution along part of the growth axis; (2) the light rail transit, a prerequisite for the growth axis, consisting of: high quality permanent mobility solution, light rail as an urban development generator, light rail as a tool for increased interurban competitiveness; (3) the light rail substitute, bus rapid transit along the growth axis, consisting of: the bus rapid transit working as a light rail, the route's functional aesthetics, expanding the mobility network; and (4) critique or misinformation, consisting of: overestimated feasibility of the LRT solution, and lack of transparency in the planning process. The mechanisms of stories identified summarize the underlying structure of each of the storylines.

The first three storylines are illustrating the processes of rationalization of the course of practices. Thus, the storylines unveil the temporal sequence of the planning process. The fourth adds the critical considerations brought towards the LRT project. While the first three storylines mainly are proponed by public planners and social democrats, the identified opponents of the fourth storyline are mainly traffic planners and liberal parties.

The conflict started in 2014 when, surprisingly, the agreement for financial support for the Aalborg LRT scheme was approved by the former government and coalition parties. This did not leave much time for preparation until autumn 2015 when the financial act for 2016 was released. However, crisis and uncertainty was triggered with the expected replacement of the supporting government with a new government with a different agenda for transportation infrastructure investments, hereunder different views on investments in public transport. In the face of the institutional power, planners and local politicians alike were rapidly mobilized in order to maintain momentum. The resolution came in the form of the BRT scheme which has opened another way of constructing rationality and power.

The attitude of the planner is contested due to the narratives put forward i.e. high quality permanent mobility solution, light rail as an urban development generator, light rail as a tool for increased interurban competitiveness. These narratives are seen as enabling the positive aspects of the LRT scheme, but obstructing others. A reason for only enabling the positive aspects could be the political pressures to legitimate existing processes which draws on the dialectical relationship of power and rationality. However, this can also be interpreted as a justified misinformation, if the planners were convinced that by not implementing a light rail along the growth axis, the development of the city would be jeopardized (and thus “*substantial and serious harm*” would be done to the city).

In the case of the Aalborg LRT scheme, planners acknowledge that their work is not neutral and are aware of the fact that they have to face “*political realities*”. Within this attitude, planners have the skills to understand the power of persuasive storytelling. Much like in the case of this research, stories can help planners translate ideas into the local setting. The narratives are about what to stress and what to downplay. This creates the tool which planners can use to adapt storylines, through narratives deployed accordingly to changing needs, thereby recognizing the power of information that they are subject to, as well as making use of themselves. This way they enable opportunities. Planners, therefore, should move away from a narrow conception of themselves as purely having the role of technicians and embrace a more progressive role. Their skills should therefore include not only technical analysis and the formulation of planning documents but also persuasive storytelling and the ability to adapt and anticipate changes in dynamic political environments.

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