DECODING URBAN SPACE
A Study of Practice and Applied Theory

Aalborg University
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This project is an exploration of the practice of planning and development of urban spaces and in the way planning and design theories are applied to our cities.

The project has its roots in the disconnect we sometimes see between what was planned and what was built, as well as the question of what makes an urban space work well. The project’s point of departure is the urban development process, the role that urban space has in this process, and the factors that ultimately shape and dictate the fate of urban spaces.

The research in this paper is practice based, both in the investigative part of the project, and in the planning and design theories chosen in the grounding part of this project. The case studies test the way theory is applied to the city. The last part of the project exposes a few ideas that should be remembered when planning and designing urban spaces.

Last but not least, this project is a testament to the need for the relationship between the planning and urban design/landscape architecture professions to shift from being collaborative to becoming a symbiosis.
This paper is the culmination of the hard work of two university master’s programmes: that of the urban designer (graduated in 2013), and that of the planner (graduating summer 2019). The roots of this project can be traced to 2015, when together with another fellow designer, Kenan Dedovic, I did a study on how Gammeltorv, the old square in the centre of Aalborg, was used. The study started off with a simple question: why is this space empty most of the time? We did mappings, registrations and played with ideas on how to improve the space (see Appendix E for these materials). The study was kept to ourselves, but the question of why that space was empty remained. As time passed by, I noticed that more and more spaces suffered the same fate as Gammeltorv, and I set out to understand why this happens. At the time, my assumption was that there was a design flaw that made some spaces unpopular. Not before my second semester as a student in the Land Management Master program did the planning side of urban spaces and its influence on the shaping and design of these come clear. Together, the planning and the design aspects of urban spaces painted a much clearer picture than individually. This was what planted the idea of this project as a topic for my master thesis.

It is the purpose of this paper to explain the ways planning and design yield urban spaces together, and to shed some light onto how the decisions regarding these are taken. Furthermore, this project also sheds some light onto the way planning and design theories are applied to the city.

A great thank you to LE34 who have provided me with data support for many of the maps in this project.

Another great thank you goes to all the other interviewees: Thomas Birket-Smith from Aalborg Kommune, John Keller from Aabo Sørensen, Torben Nielsen from TN Udvikling A/S and to the fifth interviewee that chose to remain anonymous.

To my supervisor Lars Bodum, thank you for your help and support throughout this process. Especially in the last few weeks of the project.

Last, but not least, to my significant other thank you for your unflattering belief in me, and for your unwavering support throughout this entire process. This is for you.

Aknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without the help of Bente Lindstrøm, head of the planning team at LE34 A/S. She was very kind in not only providing some of her contacts for the interviews, which part of this project is based on, but also in agreeing to being interviewed herself. I thank you profusely.
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INTRODUCTION

“Cities are an immense laboratory of trial and error, failure and success, in city building and design. This is the laboratory in which city planning should have been learning and forming and testing its theories. Instead the practitioners and teachers of discipline (if such it can be called) have ignored the study of success and failure in real life, have been incurious about the reasons for unexpected success, and are guided instead by the same principles derived from the behavior and appearance of towns, suburbs, tuberculosis sanatoria, fairs an imaginary dream cities - from anything but cities themselves” [Jacobs, 1960 p: 6]

The quote is taken from the work of Jane Jacobs “The Death and Life of Great American Cities” published in 1961, and, unfortunately, it still speaks to the way cities are currently being planned and built. Even with changing theories and, to a certain extent, the attention paid to research on the reality of cities, Jacobs’ argument is still valid close to 60 years after it was made. The works of Gehl, Reijndorp, Whyte, and Jacobs herself, to name a few, brought into discussion for planning professionals the reality that sometimes the classic theory about planning and building cities does not fully deliver on its promises when applied. Instead, it creates the very type of cities it sets out to avoid. Even with a thoroughly comprehensive body of research literature and theory on how to plan and create cities with people as priority, cities that are safe, pleasant and good to live in, somehow on the way something is lost, and we end up with new versions of the 1960’s modernist development projects. There is no place that illustrates this paradox better that the urban space created through planning and development, and less on theory. However, theory is used for anchoring some of the empirical information obtained through interviews with relevant actors in urban development in Aalborg. For this purpose, planning and design theories will be presented and discussed.

While this study aims to create a general picture of the processes behind urban development, the city of Aalborg, Denmark is used as an example and as a physical framework for how the urban development processes explained throughout this study, unravel. This project should however, not be understood as a case study of Aalborg. Just like Flyvbjerg studied “the Aalborg Project” and revealed universal relationships between rationality and power [Flyvbjerg, 1998], such is the meaning behind the implementation of projects. Why choose to focus on the urban space? Because it is precisely that part of the urban fabric which provides the physical framework for what we call city life, and in fact, it is the very glue that holds our cities together.

The core of the research in this project speaks to the elusive art/discipline of creating places. This is however primarily, a study of the reality of urban spaces, which means that explaining placemaking in these projects is a secondary goal of the research. Studying the practice of planning and designing urban spaces means that the point of view presented in this research stems from that of the developers and planners. Their language is also used to articulate the different parts of the project.

This study has three aims: to shed some light onto the practice of urban development and planning for urban spaces, to provide an understanding into the “critical factors” that can break even the best planned and designed areas and last but not least to set some principles or guidelines for how to improve conditions in ill-functioning urban areas.

It is the main goal of this project to focus on the practical reality of both physical space and that of planning and development, and less on theory. However, theory is used for anchoring some of the empirical information obtained through interviews with relevant actors in urban development in Aalborg. For this purpose, planning and design theories will be presented and discussed.
this project, to reveal how urban spaces are envisioned, planned for and built in general.

The map below illustrates the city center of Aalborg. Outlined in red are the spaces used as examples and cases throughout this report. More detailed descriptions of these areas are provided in those parts of the project that require it.
The problem articulated as the ground stone of this project is based on three premises: the first is that urban space is the backbone of city life, the second that when planning/designing/renewing urban spaces, something goes wrong and the third that nothing is set in stone; urban spaces can be improved relatively easy if one understands what is needed to improve it.

The first premise, is one that is argued in many academic works from authors like Jacobs, Gehl, Haley, Whyte and many more.

The second premise is that sometimes something goes wrong somewhere in the process of planning and designing urban spaces. One need not look further than one’s own city in order to identify urban spaces that not only have functioning issues, but are unsafe and in many cases unusable for anything other than passing through.

It is not an easy task to try to identify the “something”, since no two cases are the same. It is however, the author’s belief that understanding general factors that influence the functionality of urban spaces alongside the understanding of the process of planning and building them, can be a lifeline for improvement of entire urban areas.

The third premise is argued for by the works of many activists and consultants like the placemakers at Gehl Architects who work tirelessly to improve city life all over the world. [Gehl Architects, 2019]

In the introduction to this paper the focus area for the research in this project was mentioned as the urban space in development areas that don’t function well according to the existing theories about urban space. This was meant to simply introduce the topic studied in this project, but a further explanation is needed in order to set the direction of research.

The subject of functioning urban space is a complex one which is detailed in many books and academic papers. It is in a way a secondary point of interest for this research. What the project concerns itself with is those situations where the visions for developments and the subsequent plans for those areas set goals that should, in principle, create well-functioning urban spaces, and yet the results disappoint. The question that this project aims to answer is:

We plan and design for well-functioning urban places, but somehow end up with ill-functioning spaces that can negatively impact large areas of cities. How does this happen, what can be done to prevent it and how does one change the status quo for the spaces already built?

There are two terms used in this statement that form the very core of the research conducted in this paper: place and space. The difference between the two from a planning perspective, and the way they are used throughout the planning of cities, is part of the basis this project is being built on.

The problem statement above opens up three distinct directions of research: the planning and design of urban spaces, the application of urban space theory in concrete situations, and the establishment of ways to remedy situations where damage has already been done.

The project is divided into four chapters, with chapters one and four corresponding to the first and third directions, and chapters two and three corresponding to the second one. Each chapter aims to answer a research question as follows:

Research question 1:

What is the role and the importance given to urban space in urban development projects and the planning associated with these projects?

Research question 2:
How do the experiences from practice relate to urban space theories?
Research question 3:

How do the theories and the empirical knowledge apply to the city?
Research question 4

What to keep in mind when planning and designing urban spaces?

The Core of the Research

The two terms that form the basis which this project is built upon are space and place. Both have philosophical connotations outside the scope of this paper. However, it is important to understand their meaning, as used in this paper as they are used herein.

Space

“A continuous area or expanse which is free, available, or unoccupied.”

“The dimensions of height, depth, and width within which all things exist and move.” [OOD, 2019] (The Oxford English Dictionary provides multiple definitions for the term space but only the ones relevant to this paper are presented.)

Urban space(s)

1. “Urban spaces are those outdoor spaces that are among the buildings and allow communication, transit and social interaction of the inhabitants within the city. These may be public, semi-public and private, being delimited by the “facing” of buildings and/or natural physical barriers that the clash (sea, rivers, reliefs topographic, etc.)” [Palomares Franco, 2011 p: 7- author’s translation]

Place

“A meaningful location” [Cresswel, 2004 p: 7]

The definition used here is the one that is most suitable for the use of the term in this paper. With regards to the relationship between space and place we need to delve a bit deeper.

“Space is a more abstract concept than place. (...) Spaces have areas and volume. Places have space in between them.” [Cresswell, 2004 p: 8] Cresswell states here that space includes place. However, he goes on to suggest that while the relationship between space and place is inclusive, space is still a component of place. He outlines three elements of place: location, locale and sense of place. [Cresswell, 2004 p: 7] The first two apply to the term space, while the third one is place specific, and forms the core of the placemaking urban movement. It is towards creating this third element that the research in this paper speaks to in trying to improve the use of urban space. Patsy Haley supports the sense of place as defining for place: “a sense of place and of place quality can be understood as some kind of coming together of physical experiences (...) produced through individual activity and socially formed appreciations” [Haley, 2010 p: 34]

Place doesn’t really have a scale. One can think of a country as a place, a city, a town, a square, a house, a room, even a corner. All can be places. What is essential is the meaningful attachments people make to them. To a displaced immigrant, their country is a place, a home. A square can be the place where one has grown up and made friends. Patsy Haley supports the argument that scale is relative when applied to place in the way she refers to the term in her book “Making better places” [Haley, 2010 ] in the context of “the planning project”. To her, place refers to entire neighbourhoods, cities, and even individual urban spaces.

Places have memories and those memories can in fact come to affect the physical space. The traces of previous users in an urban space are proof of the memory of the space, and that at one time it was a place where certain activities happened. Memory is a way to give space meaning, but not the only one. Meaning is created by personal experiences, and it is a part of the sense of place discussed above. “We get such a sense (sense of place) when we feel that we have arrived somewhere, when we sense an ambience” [Haley, 2010 p: 34]
SUBSTANTIATING THE RESEARCH

The rationale behind the research in this project is to understand what the forces and factors that shape our cities and our urban spaces are.

In his book, “Rationality and power”, Bent Flyvbjerg [Flyvbjerg, 1998] excellently documents the process behind “the Aalborg project” and how a lack of resoluteness in the city’s vision, correlated with the rationalisation of scientific data and study results in order to fit a pre-conceived conclusion had led to the eviscerating of the project. It wasn’t done with any malice or bad intentions, but the preconceptions that those involved in that project had, has led them to distort the status quo into their version of reality, the one that corresponded to their ideas of what is good for the city.

Does this happen to urban spaces as well? If so, why, and can it be prevented? Better yet, how is urban space regulated and who decides in the end what our cities come to be? How are visions for urban areas created, and how do we go from vision to reality? In the case of the Aalborg project, the idea that dominated the rationalisation of everything was based on the syllogism: “(1)what is good for business is good for Aalborg; (2) what is good for motorists is good for business; (3) therefore what is good for motorists is good for Aalborg” [Flyvbjerg, 1998, p: 58 ] It was an idea that wasn’t tested objectively, but considered true.

Which are the theories applied when creating urban space, and how are they applied? What is the theory referring to, is it just the physical space, or is it more than that? In cases where the final product does not live up its goal, is the theory at fault, or is there something lost along the way? And last, but not least, what can be done to change these spaces so that they live up to their goals?

When looking at urban space in cities, it is often easy to understand the purpose of the space. Streets for example, have sidewalks for walking, lanes for driving cars, and sometimes lanes for bikes. A street is easy to understand because typically, the dimensioning of these user defined spaces makes the functionality obvious: the cars cannot drive on the sidewalk, for example. At the same time, people follow other people’s behaviour in urban spaces. They sit where others sit, they walk and bike where others walk and bike, and drive cars where others do the same. Other urban spaces, are more difficult to read and understand because there is a level of ambiguity in their purpose and functionality. This happens to spaces everywhere in the world, old and new, and can have severe consequences in the life of the nearby neighbourhood. When it is not clear what one must do, and when the other people you could perhaps mimic in behaviour are having the same troubles as you, the best choice is often to just keep going, until you reach another area that is more easily readable.

A good example of an old ambiguous space is for instance Gammeltorv in Aalborg (ill.0.2). It is a pedestrian square, literally the “old square” in the middle of Aalborg, with a water feature and little permanent furniture. It is not immediately clear what one is supposed to do there, what is obvious is that it is mostly a pedestrian designated space. Cars have no access, the uneven cobblestone and the stairs are deterrents for cyclists and pedestrians seem to be welcome, though in a rather cold way.

Similarly, a new urban space that suffers from the same kind of ambiguity is Musikkens Plads, also in Aalborg, also with restricted car access, better accessible for cyclists than Gammeltorv, better furnished, but still not immediately readable. (ill.0.2)

While the Gammeltorv has been a part of Aalborg for many centuries (no exact date for its establishment can be found, but it is estimated that it originates from the early 13th century) [Trap Danmark, 2017], Musikkens Plads however, barely 4 years old. And yet the same ambiguity and illegibility persists here. One can argue that the original purpose and use of Gammeltorv has changed over the many years it has been part of the city’s fabric.
and in fact, it is currently undergoing a process of rehabilitation and reconnection with its surrounding area. The origins Musikkens Plads on the other hand, can be documented from the first sketches up to the current built space. And a look at sketches from the city’s vision for this space, the drawings presented in the portfolio of the architect, and finally at the built space as it stands today, shows that significant changes have been made to this urban space throughout the process of planning and building this area of the city. (ill.0.3) Changing the space throughout the planning and design process is a natural occurrence, after all a sketch is just a starting point. What is actually interesting about this urban space is the fact that almost all activities that were planned during the vision stage of the project have been removed. Trying to understand the impact that removing these activities had on the final space in this case and others, is the underlying motive of this project because this is a phenomenon that happens everywhere, and can be a reason for which newly built urban spaces don’t live up to their goals.
METHOD

The project is divided into three parts: a part investigating the practices in urban developments, a part grounding the findings of part one into planning and design theory, and a part that establishes a set of principles for the future planning and design of urban spaces.

Problem statement

We plan and design for well-functioning urban places, but somehow end up with ill-functioning spaces that can negatively impact large areas of cities. How does this happen, what can be done to prevent it and how does one change the status quo for the spaces already built?

Part 1: Investigating Ch.1 The Role of Urban Space in Urban Developement Projects

Part 2: Grounding Ch.2 Practice and Theory

Ch.3 Applying theory and empirical knowledge to the city

Part 3: Perspective Ch.4 Things to keep in mind when analysing and designing urban spaces

The overall research approach for the project is epistemological, due to the nature of the knowledge it seeks. (see Appendix A1 for the way epistemology is used in the project)

The research methodology of this paper was defined already from the way the problem statement of this project is articulated:

We plan and design for well-functioning urban places, but somehow end up with ill-functioning spaces that can negatively impact large areas of cities. How does this happen, what can be done to prevent it and how does one change the status quo for the spaces already built?

Breaking down the problem statement into four research questions (see paragraph about problem analysis for the questions), each pertaining to a chapter in the research is an adapted form of Bent Flyvbjerg’s phronetic research method (explained in Appendix A3), which is not only used for the overall method in this project, but also in creating the case studies in chapter 3.

The question of how do we get one thing while planning for another points in the direction of investigating and researching the processes that happen
behind the formal and informal planning. The framing of the problem requires an ontological research approach, because of the need to understand these processes, and epistemological approach because the main concern is the reality of urban development, and not so much the theories. (see Appendixes A1 and A2 for more on ontology and epistemology)

Understanding the processes and phenomenons pertaining to urban spaces in urban developments forms the basis of the investigative part of this project, containing chapter 1. The research done in this chapter, though ontological and epistemological in nature relies almost entirely on a series of five interviews with key people in Aalborg’s urban development environment. The interview method and is better described in chapter 1. The part of the chapter not relying on the interviews relies on study of current legislation on planning in Denmark, and analysis of excerpts from Aalborg’s municipal plan.

Part two of the project, consisting of chapters 2 and 3 is a study on urban theories and the application of those theories in 4 case studies. Chapter 2 takes the findings of the investigative part of the project and grounds them in the theoretical works of Jan Gehl, Jane Jacobs, William H. Whyte and Patsy Haley. The empirical information from the first chapter is used to expand on some of the concepts of these authors.

Another method employed is the use of the work of three of the mentioned authors to detail and explain the work of the fourth: Whyte’s, Jacobs’ and Haley’s theories are used to decode Gehl’s 12 criteria for urban quality. This is done because Gehl’s criteria are used as principles for planning and design of urban spaces in the municipality where the case study spaces are located, and because these theories provide a deeper understanding of the principles that the 12 criteria are based on. The conclusions from chapter two form the analysis criteria for the case studies in chapter three.

Chapter three consists of four case studies, each of them different, and each selected because it has a different set of challenges that are universally found. The case study selection and the argumentation for the use of case studies to generalize on planning and design practices is grounded in Flyvbjerg’s paper on misconception about case studies. [Flyvbjerg, 2006] As a structuring method for the case studies a modified version of Flyvbjerg’s phronetic research method (see Appendix A3 for more details about this research method) is used, with a set of 4 questions that each case study has to respond to:

1. What has planning done for this urban space?
2. What is the context of the space?
3. How does it live up to the 12 urban quality criteria?
4. What should be done about it?

The first question refers to the plans formal and informal that apply to each site. The second question showcases the studied urban space in its larger context. The third question showcases how the space lives up to the 12 criteria for the cases 1 and 4, and how the criteria were applied when planning and designing the spaces from cases 2 and 3. The last question establishes possible principles to follow when redesigning or renewing the space.

Chapter 3 concludes with a summary of the challenges of the case study spaces, a summary on how urban planning and design theories are applied.

Part three of the project consisting of chapter 4, is empirical in nature and contains a set of ideas and principles to keep in mind when planning and designing urban space. It is built on the knowledge gained through parts on one and two.

Data Sources for maps and diagrams in the project:

Aalborg Kommune Web GIS portal - for all satellite images*
LE34 - for all the GIS data on all case study diagrams

*unless otherwise specified, satellite images used in this project are from 2018
The process behind this paper has developed organically from the problem statement. The research questions that broke down the statement have set the path for the process. The decision to start with the practice of urban development was fundamental to the way the project process has evolved afterwards. Basing the investigative part of the project almost exclusively on information gained through interviews made it impossible to set a formal process path. Rather the data from the interviews, once condensed in chapter one pointed towards the next step in the process. Chapter two too set the course for the case studies, both by providing the theoretical arguments supporting the findings in chapter one, but also by structuring the method for the case studies. The case studies served both as a way to test theories and as basis for the ideas and principles presented in chapter four.

Once the course was set with the interviews, the process became straightforward.
PART 1: INVESTIGATION

Research Question:
What is the role and the importance given to urban space in urban development projects and the planning associated with these projects?

CH. 1: THE ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF URBAN SPACE IN URBAN DEVELOPMENTS

The aim of this first part of the project is, to explain the impact urban space has in the planning and design of urban development projects. In that sense explaining the process of development is paramount, as well as an understanding the importance given to urban space in this type of projects because often in the finished project these spaces seem to be an afterthought, if compared to the initial sketches. This is the view from the outside of the process looking in.

Explaining this process of urban development opens up the necessity of studying some of the elements of planning from the perspective of urban space.

When one delves into planning processes it is inevitable to run across legislation that needs to be followed, as well as standards that need to be fulfilled in the physical shaping of cities. Other factors that have bearing on the planning and design of urban spaces are: formal plans, that are legally binding for urban spaces and require political approval; the goals set for urban space dominate the space that is built in the end. Last but not least, economy always plays a part in the design of urban spaces.

The method of place and space will be addressed in those areas of the urban development process where the differences between the two are identifiable and important to point out as well as relevant to the topic discussed.

Chapter structure

The knowledge gained from the empirical data provided by five interviews with people working with urban development persons, is arranged into themes, that form the structure of this chapter. These themes are also based on some of the questions sent to the interviewees in the second stage of the interview process.

The first theme is that of the urban development process. Both formal and informal aspects of the process are discussed, as well as the different phases in the process. The next theme is that of the legal framework of urban spaces, in order to understand some of the decision factors, as well as who are some of the decision makers. The theme after, elaborates on the timeline of the development project, and how time affects projects. The following theme is the economy of urban developments and the role it plays in shaping urban spaces. Stakeholders and decision making is the next theme, and last, but not least a series of factors are presented, factors mentioned by the interviewees as important in regards to urban development projects.

1.1 Method

The approach used for this part of the project is ontological in nature. (For a more detailed presentation of ontology and ontological approach to research see Appendix A2) Since the aim of this chapter is to step away from theories about the planning and design of urban spaces, and focus on the real processes behind urban development, a thorough understanding of the practices of urban development is paramount. This is knowledge that cannot be obtained without talking to people who are part of the urban development process. The basis for this chapter is a series of interviews and discussions with urban developers, planning professionals working in the public sector, and consultants that have experience with planning for urban developments.

The format chosen for the interviews was a loose one due to the fact that these interviews served both as source of information on development processes from experienced professionals, as well as a record of their accounts on which factors hold bearing over urban space planning design and building.

The Interview Process

The interview process is explained below, and the documents that were used in the interviews can be seen in Appendix B1.

The first step in the process was to identify the people
who could and wanted to contribute to the research of this project. This step was facilitated by Bente Lindstrøm, head of the planning team at LE34, who was kind enough to provide some contacts from her network.

The second step was to contact those people and set up appointments for interviews.

Four private urban developers who work in Aalborg were contacted, and three of them agreed to being interviewed.

Three municipal employees from Aalborg Municipality were contacted, and one agreed to be interviewed.

Two days before the meetings, short project descriptions were sent to each of the interviewees, together with a list of loosely formulated questions, to give them a chance to prepare for the meetings.

The interviews themselves had more the character of discussion, than that of question-answers, due to the fact that ontological nature of the goal for using the information gathered.

The meetings were recorded and later transcribed. The data has not been processed directly after that. The transcriptions for the interviews can be reviewed in Appendix B.

The interviewed persons have been sent the transcriptions of their interview, as well as the parts of the project that their input was used in. This was done in order to give them the chance to comment on the interpretation of the discussions. One of them chose to be anonymous in the report.

The interviews and the preamble to the meetings were all conducted in Danish. The transcriptions were written in English, since this is the language of the report.

In addition to the interviews, the legal framework of urban space is detailed by listing some excerpts of the Danish Planning Act and describing the regulation of these spaces within the Municipal Plan and local plans.
1.2 The Process of Urban Development

There aren’t two processes that are the same” [Appendix B4.2, 04:10 – 09:20] says an urban developer in Aalborg with more than a decade experience in developing urban areas. While this is true, there is a common thread in all projects, and that is the journey that starts from the initial idea, continues with the approval of a legally binding plan that sets the legal basis for building and ends with implementation. This common ground is the part of the process that can be followed through the documentation published by the municipality, and is illustrated in ill.1.1 which also shows the actors involved.

That being shown, there are many other processes behind this common thread that are far more difficult to document and explain, due to the fact that those are in fact what makes each project unique. Since the goal of this subchapter is to give the reader an overall understanding of how urban development projects unravel, the focus is set on the common ground of these projects. Some of the processes that fall outside of this common ground will be presented and explained for specific cases in subsequent parts of this chapter.

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<th>Actors involved</th>
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<td>Developers</td>
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<td>Vision</td>
<td>Municipality</td>
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<td>Formal planning</td>
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<td>Implementation</td>
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<th>Description</th>
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<td>describes places</td>
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The Property

Urban development starts with the identification of the property or properties that have potential for development. The property is the first key element that shapes the course of the entire process. Size, location, relationship with the city, zoning in the municipal plan, possible coverage of a local plan, status, and possible servitudes are all important factors that shape the course of the development process.

The size of the property is defining the extent of the development. Combined with the location of the property in relation to the rest of city, its size also defines the complexity of a development. Zoning is important for later steps in the process, because a change in zoning requires a legally binding local plan to be approved; if a local plan already covers the property, its binds are legal for the property. In order to change them, as well as possibly cancelling existing servitudes on the property, a new local plan must be approved, that voids the pre-existing one. The developer typically doesn’t buy the property at the beginning of the process however. This is because the purchasing of the land can be negotiated better once the legal binds set by local plans are in place. In this way, the developer knows what is possible to build, and the market value of the property can be accurately set. Part of the negotiation for buying the property is also knowing what the municipality requirements are for the quality of the buildings and the outdoor space. [Appendix B6.2]

The Idea

The idea of an urban development project can come from anyone that has or that wants to have a stake in the development of an area. It can come from an owner of a property, a developer, or the municipality, for example. The idea must be relevant in the context of possible restrictions for building that different laws may set upon the property. These laws differ from country to country, but the principle is the same and for the purpose of this paper, the Danish legislation is the only one discussed. A development idea is irrelevant if it is not achievable within the existing legal framework of the country. The relevance of the idea is typically established through a discussion between the developer and the municipality, where the municipality, after consulting the Municipal Plan, establishes a baseline for the developer to start sketching a vision. Basic parameters are discussed, like maximum number of floors and square meterage, percentage of built space out of the entire property, the character of the area, accessibility, etc. In many cases, experienced developers start creating rough sketches even before they engage in discussions with the municipality.

The initiator of the idea does not necessarily have to own the property that is to be developed. They can probe the possibility of an investment, and buy the land after the idea is proven sound and the local plan is approved, or they can just make an agreement with the owner that they develop together. There are numerous forms of partnerships that can be formed when the development is estimated profitable. The municipality itself can choose to act as developer, especially when the area has a high significance for the city, and when they want the strictest level of control over the development. It has become common that former industrial parks be developed into fashionable mixed-use areas, that benefit cities and keep the memory of the area alive at the same time (see the waterfront developments in Aalborg, Aarhus and Copenhagen). Projects like these are usually regulated more strictly by municipalities, even if the area is developed by others.

The Vision

The vision is, according to Bente Lindstrøm, “physical expression of the description provided by the municipality.” [Appendix B2.2, 10:29 – 12:44]. The interested actors get together and use words to articulate what kind of place the development should be. The vision description is that of a desired state, including the kind of activities and urban life the planners and developers envision- the kind of place they want to create. Wording is key, since the words of the vision get translated later into the physical space. The vision text relies heavily on reference images from other projects, in order to visually articulate the wishes for the new area. These references include materials for the buildings and the urban space, lighting fixtures,
possible amenities, like playgrounds, urban furniture, plants activity levels, as well as the overall character of that is desired for the area. Already at this point building parameters like percentage of the property that can be built, maximum height and number of levels of the buildings and accessibility are established. Having these parameters set, makes it easy to start the design process, by sketching and drawing the placement and extent of the buildings, and the configuration and programming of urban spaces. It is usually this sketch that the design is built upon, though it may very well be that the sketch itself is less important than the wording of the vision. The trouble with the sketch is that it not only sets a preconception about how the area should be programmed, but it is often unrealistic, because it does not spatially accommodate the practical requirements that the final technical project must. These requirements can (and most often do), alter the project dramatically from what the vision sketch shows [Appendix B2.2]. The programming of urban spaces can also be problematic, since the programs are typically set by the architects, who are looking to fulfil the goals set for the urban spaces in the vision text. The programs set on the sketch are an expression of the architects understanding of what activities would create the place described in the vision, and they can prove to be irrelevant to the fulfilment of the set goals: “just because these activities are set here on the vision sketch, does not mean that they would bring about the urban life described in the vision text. How to get that urban life is the hard part” - Bente Lindstrøm [Appendix B2.2 18:50 – 19:29]. The “urban life” referred to in this quote speaks to the sense of place mentioned as an element of “place”. The “activities” here are the means to create and infuse the new space with this sense of place.

The vision document is in most cases created by the municipality, in collaboration with the developers and possibly with external consultants. It refers to both space and place, in the way it is built. The references to activity and character speak to place, while the descriptions and examples of materials plants and fixtures speak to the physical space. The sketch created as a physical representation of the description is in fact the articulation of the spaces described in the text.

**Formal Planning**

Once the vision is created and agreed upon, the formal planning phase can start. A local plan is required for any “larger land division or construction” [Planloven, 2018 §13 paragraph 2], according to the Danish Planning Act. Bente Lindstrøm refers to it as a “sanctioned agreement between developers and the municipality that legalizes both actors’ wishes for the development” [Appendix B2.2 12:44 – 14:30]. Urban development projects tend to fall under the description: “larger land division or construction” [Planloven, 2018 §13 paragraph 2], and therefore they typically imply the approval of a local plan. It is through this formal plan that the legally binding requirements for the development are set. The local plan must follow a specific process and it can take up to 9 months to get a plan approved, if it isn’t contested throughout the process.

Once the local plan is approved and published, the developers can apply for building permits and start the construction work. The design of the area is done sometimes in parallel with the local plan, other times after the local plan is in place. It is during the design and the elaboration of the technical projects that the area is getting its final shape both in terms of architecture, landscape and urban space. The local plans are usually formulated to be somewhat flexible, because the approval of a local plan does not automatically guarantee that the area will be built. Sometimes years pass from the approval of a local plan and until a project starts being built, and flexibility is valued in such cases. Local plans are written by the municipalities, or by external consultants hired either by the municipality or the developer.

The local plan has 3 parts: a descriptive part, that lists the existing situation, the desired outcome (also in terms of urban spaces) and the connection to other plans and legislation that impacts the site.

The second part of the local plan is the part that states the “decisions”, i.e. the legally binding framework for the realization of the project. This part must touch on a
number of subjects, urban space being one of them. It is through this part of the local plan that the actual framework for urban space is set.

The third part of the local plan is the appendixes. There are a number of maps that are always a part of a local plan: the property map (shows the limits of properties registered in the Danish property registry), the existing situation (a map that shows the property as is, with the existing buildings), and a future situation map that shows the changes that the local plans allow; these can be supplemented with other maps, drawings, sketches, regulations that are relevant for the plan.

The local plan is however limited by the Planning Act’s §15 - the local plan catalogue - [Planloven, 2018, §15] in what it can regulate, and to some extent, the urban space is one of those areas where there are limitations in how much the local plan can regulate. More on these limitations in the local plans, in the next subchapter that discusses the legal framework for urban space.

Implementation

Implementing an urban development project is the responsibility of the developer. Implementation of an urban development project requires the creation of detailed technical drawings for all the buildings and urban spaces agreed upon. It is during the elaboration of these technical drawings that the final details in the design of urban spaces are set. These designs are to respect the principles and guides set in the vision for the area, as well as the legal binds set by the local plan. They concern themselves mostly with the creation of the physical space. The sense of place is not their purview, though the design can absolutely influence it. For example, the water feature in Musikkens Plads was intended to be used for water play. It’s design however is not inviting people to play with the water, so it loses an interactive potential that could attract people to it. [Appendix B3.2]

The Rest of the Process

As mentioned above, these steps are just a representation of the common thread in the process, and they are in fact the part of the urban development process that can be followed from the outside. The process of urban development can be compared to a mobile or computer app: the front end, the part that the users see and interact with, is the formal process briefly described here, while the back end, the part of the app that makes the front end function is represented by the processes that happen behind the formal ones. These are far more difficult to follow and document. There are numerous meetings and discussions between the developers, the municipality, architects, landscape architects, financial institutions, and all possible interested groups (neighbours, inhabitants of the area, groups that have specific purposes, like business owners, housing associations and many more). It can take years of work to come from a project idea to a vision, because the interests of the involved actors can diverge. The proceedings are usually private, with only the directly interested parties involved in each meeting. The public, usually the people who are most likely to be impacted by the project are invited to take part in some of the discussions. Depending on the location and the size of the project, it can be only neighbours, or representatives from the entire city that partake. Once a consensus is reached on the vision for the project, the vision document is created and presented to the politicians, who in change, come with their own input. The document is edited to take this into account, and finally it is published on the municipality’s homepage. In the case of Aalborg Municipality, the vision documents are published as a Quality Catalogue for the area.

Urban development project timelines tend to be longer proportionally to the size and the significance the development has for a city. For example: the development of the old asbestos cement factory in Aalborg has been in the works for more than 15 years, with the local plan being approved in 2007. Twelve years later, the construction is yet to be finished. [Appendix B4.2]

The Place of Urban Space in the Development Process

So where does urban space land in this process? The above paragraph briefly describes the complexity of the informal planning processes that unravel in urban de-
development projects. Even more difficult to document than the process itself are the discussions taking place around the topic of urban spaces, and if it is place or space that is referred to. Without being privy to the discussions in such a project, it is only through relevant literature that some answers can possibly be provided about the terms referred to. Patsy Haley argues that urban development projects and their processes invariably discuss space but can in fact refer also to place if the “long term public realm qualities for their cities as place to live, work, do business and visit for the many and not the few” [Haley, 2010 p: 161] are at the core of the project and if the involved actors have the vision, expertise and drive to will these qualities into being.

The vision documents for Aalborg waterfront and Eternitten [COWI, 2009; COWI and C.F. Møller, 2012] show clearly that a great deal of importance is allocated to urban spaces and a great deal of thought is put into the programming of these spaces as promoters of a sense of place. The space is programmed, and detailed in terms of not only the physical appearance and form-materials, furniture, plants, fixtures (design attributes that relate to space), but also in terms of activities, character, feeling, and usage, which relate to place. In the local plans urban spaces are sometimes presented and regulated quite detailed. Yet the space being built sometimes lacks the attributes of place. So, one wonders how this happens, and how are urban spaces and places actually regulated within the legal framework.

1.3 The Legal Framework of Urban Spaces and Places

It was mentioned in the previous subchapter that urban space is regulated through the local plan. However, the topic of place is a lot more than that. We will come back to the local plan, but first other plans and forms of planning must be discussed. An argument can be made that one could follow the planning of urban spaces throughout the entire Danish planning system. It is however, the view of the author that the one most relevant for this study, and what also shows the most direct impact, are the plans and legislation on the municipal level. The Planning Act regulates urban space through the Municipal plans and through local plans.

The Municipal Plan

The Municipal Plan has the purpose of setting the direction of the development for the municipality. It is renewed every 4 years, and it is in general consistent from one period to the next. It consists of multiple parts: an overall structure, a “redegørelse”, guidelines, frames (the equivalent of zoning in other countries) and appendices.

The overall structure presents the goals for the development of the municipality divided in specific themes like: living in cities, economic growth, and so on. Urban space is part of the way towards the “good life”. Loose goals are set.

The “redegørelse” builds upon the goals set in the overall structure, and sets goals and principles for the different areas of the municipality. The division is geographical. All the addendums to the plan are found under this part of the plan. Part of “redegørelse” can be earlier versions of certain parts of the Municipal plan. For example, in the Aalborg Municipal Plan, the “redegørelse” from 2009 had a completely different structure than the current one, divided into themes, as opposed to geographical zones. Urban space is one of these themes.

The guidelines are the part of the plan that detail the principles for development and growth based on themes. Theme nr. 6 in the Aalborg Municipal Plan guidelines is “urban life, parks and urban space” [Appendix C1]. There are two dimensions of this guideline: a quantitative one that specifies the required area of urban space related to a new development for example, and a qualitative dimension. [Appendices C2 and C3] This is where the principles for urban design and improvement of urban spaces are set. The guidelines can even point to a specific urban space theory that the municipality applies when designing urban spaces, in the case of Aalborg Municipality, the 12 urban quality criteria introduced by Jan Gehl and Birgitte Svarre in their book “How to Study Urban Life” [Gehl and Svarre, 2013]. These principles are to be followed in local plans and in all new development areas, as well as in urban renewal ones.
The frames are specific to different areas of the municipalities, and each frame states the purpose of the area, and sets requirements and restrictions for building and development. Urban space might be part of those; the overall principles set in the guidelines must still be followed.

Interesting about the Municipal Plan and its regulation of urban space, is the fact that the plan deals with urban space both in terms of space and place. The quantitative guidelines deal with the physical space, while the qualitative ones refer to place, especially through the urban theory applied. Do note though, that the Municipal Plan refers to both rather loosely, and holds little power in regulating places in specific cases.

**Urban Space in Local Plans**

The local plan is the de facto document that regulates construction and urban development in Denmark. In relation to Urban space, local plans can, according to the Planning Act regulate:

- “*Streets, paths and other relations of traffic and accessibility importance, including access conditions to traffic areas and for the purpose of separating the traffic routes*” [Planloven, 2018, §15 stk 4]

- “*Location of track and wiring systems, including for electricity supply*” [Planloven, 2018, §15 stk 5]

- “*Design, use and maintenance of unbuilt areas, including terrain regulation, fence conditions, conservation of vegetation and other planting conditions, including the permissible height of the planting, and illumination of roads and other traffic areas*” [Planloven, 2018, §15 stk 10] (author’s translation)

A local plan may also regulate the use of materials in the urban space, on the streets and sidewalks, and the type of plants and their height used in the design. A local plan can in fact be very detailed in its regulation, “*down to the exact placement of a tree*” [Appendix B3.2, 31:16 – 37:29]; however, it happens very rarely that the legally binding regulations in a local plan are very detailed. There are two reasons for this: the first one is the lack of assurance of project implementation. The second reason is the fact that there can be surprises once the construction work starts, as to what can be found in the ground. This makes extremely detailed local plans impractical because any change would require an exemption from the plan’s regulations which can both be costly and time consuming. A third possible reason could be the fact that in the case of extensive developments, it can take a long time from when the local plan is approved and until the project is finalized, and extensive changes can occur in the project. Worthy of note is also the fact that the flexibility in the regulations of the local plan can play to the advantage of urban space, in that if the space requires altering after a period of time, no additional planning is required.

It must be mentioned here that no two local plans are the same. They are alike, in that they touch on the same subjects, but every one of them differs from the others and there is sound reasoning for the level of detail in the regulations.

It was mentioned above that the Municipal Plan refers to both space and place in its regulations. Local plans however, can only refer to physical space. Some mentions of the activities in the urban space can be found, but never in the legally binding part of the plan, unless the activities mentioned require a physical frame that the plan can regulate.
1.4 The Evolving Nature of Urban Development Projects

It was mentioned in the subchapter 1.1 that urban development projects have timeframes that can stretch well beyond a decade. This is due in part to the complexity of these projects in terms both of size, interested parties, architectural and technical challenges, diverging interests, and many more factors. What is important to understand is the fact that even though they may appear to be standing still, the projects evolve during this time. The final result of the push-pull interaction between the interested parties is what materializes in the final project, but many alternatives are considered and discarded along the way. Take the case of the Eternitten neighbourhood in Aalborg. If one were to take a look at the maps from the local plan, a document approved in 2007, and a satellite photo of the area from 2018 it is quite clear that the project has evolved. In this case it is not only the placement and extent of the buildings that have changed, it is also their appearance and volume.

Time alone is not the factor that influences these projects, and certainly not the changes in their shape and form. It is what happens during longer periods of time between the approval of a formal plan for an area and the implementation of a project: circumstances can change, sometimes dramatically. In the case of Eternitten, the formal plans were approved a year before the financial crisis that gripped the globe. Part of the project was implemented, with the construction of office and supermarket buildings planned on the northern part of the site, but the rest of the project was slowed down. Construction started to gain momentum again after 2012, and by that time there were significant changes in the form, aesthetics and placing of some buildings had occurred. [Appendix D3] These changes were made possible by the flexibility of the language in the regulating part of the local plan. Had the plan been stricter and more detailed, further planning would have been necessary to accommodate for these changes.
1.5 The Economy of Urban Space in Urban Development Projects

Who pays for urban space? To answer that question, one must first understand the status of urban space. In Denmark, urban space can be public, semi-private or private. Public urban spaces are spaces that are accessible to all, inviting to all (in principle) and built for intense urban life. They can be designed to favour certain user groups, and to accommodate more or less people, but their purpose is in principle that of entertaining urban life. They are public also in the sense that the responsibility of maintaining them falls also on the shoulders of public authorities.

Semi-private urban spaces are spaces that are freely accessible to the public, but they are to be used by specific user groups. These spaces are privately built and maintained, for the benefit or the organizations that built them. For example, a housing association builds several student housing blocks and spaces dedicated to the people living in those buildings. The spaces are openly accessible, but designed to be less inviting for people outside the area.

Private urban spaces are areas that can be accessible to the public, but where outsiders are explicitly unwelcome. They are created for the use of the community they are located in, and you will be asked to leave if you wonder there. These can be roads, playgrounds, even small parks.

Returning to the subject of economy and financing, the simple explana-
tion is that in general, public urban spaces are financed by public funds, while semi-private and private ones are privately funded. [Appendix B2.2] There can however be negotiations and agreements between the municipality and private actors for the funding of urban spaces. For example, the municipality can agree to add an extra level to the building, if the developer agrees to pay for the building of an adjacent urban space, or to have the ground level of the building open to the view and with a function that brings people in the area.

What Does Urban Space Cost?

The costs can be divided into two categories: the costs of planning and designing, and the costs of building. The costs of planning and designing urban space are often a part of a larger financial cost, that of the outdoor areas project, that includes the roads, parking, fire access and landscaping, as well as part of the costs the associated with the formal plans themselves. These depend on the extent of the project, and the quotes from the different professionals involved. The costs associated with building have also two components: the labour involved in the construction, and the costs of materials. The materials are the elements that can make urban spaces more or less expensive. This is where the regulations in the local plan really make a difference. If the local plan requires high quality materials and a high-quality space, the price of urban space goes up. However, there is a direct correlation between high quality urban spaces and urban life they produce (in certain circumstances see part 2 of this project), so in the great picture of an urban development project the cost of urban space is in fact an investment in the quality of the development itself and its future attractivity. Bente Lindstrøm explains: “more and more project developers have opened their eyes to the idea, that creating a good area, filled with activity can promote their economy in housing areas for example.” [Appendix B2.2, 21:21 – 23:49]

Torben Nielsen agrees: “It is in our interest as developers to create attractive urban spaces, because they increase the attractivity of the development and that means higher selling prices” [Appendix B6.2 02:40 – 05:40]

1.6 Interested Actors and Decision Making in Regards to Urban Space

It was mentioned in a previous subchapter that in urban development projects there are several interested parties that must work together to bring their desires to life. The number of actors can vary from project to project, but a municipality is always involved, then there are developers and investors, the public, and possible interested groups that can be impacted by the development.

The Municipality

The municipality is always involved because it is the organization that legally approves plans and construction throughout its administrative territory. Regardless of the extent of a development, the municipality is the entity that issues construction permits, approves of plans and has the responsibility to safeguard public interests throughout its territory. It is the interest of the municipality to ensure that urban developments are in accordance with existing plans, strategies and visions, and that the goals and principles set in the Municipal Plan are reached and followed. Therefore, the municipality holds a great deal of power in the decision-making process on urban development. This power, however must be exercised with a degree of caution, because it is also in their interest to promote certain areas for development. For example, the Eternitten neighbourhood used to be an industrial factory, placed relatively close to the city centre - 20-minute walk /10-minute bike from Nytorv. Aalborg Municipality had a great interest in having the area redeveloped once the factory was closed down, because of the potential for great investment in an area so close to the city centre. They could have imposed more restrictions for the development in order to realize their vision, but that could have spooked investors and made the development financially impossible for private developers. Developers and investors are in it for profit. It is in their interest to build attractive and safe areas, but the bottom line must be a positive return of investment for them. In extreme cases, where the municipality feels that an area is too important for the city and for the public interest and they want to exercise more control over the
final product, they can choose to develop it themselves. Like in the case of the Aalborg waterfront and promenade. While some the buildings on the waterfront have been privately developed and built, the public spaces were developed and built by the municipality.

The municipality is in a sense subordinate to the City Council, due to the fact that it is the council that has power of approval on all formal plans. The City Council also holds a role in the decision making, and sometimes they come with their own proposals for changes in urban development projects. An example to that is Musikkens Plads on the waterfront in Aalborg. It was the vision of the developer created in partnership with the municipality that this urban space was to have an area that permitted a multitude of activities. From gathering of rainwater to be used for playing, to uneven surfaces used for other activities, seating and the possibility for it to be used for concerts. This area was to be paved in some way. At the request of the city council who wanted the area a lot “greener”, the idea of this “multi-area” was dropped, and Musikkens Plads was made to have a lawn with over 300 trees planted.

Developers and Investors

As mentioned above, the developers and investors have an interest both in making a profit and creating attractive urban areas that people want to flock to. Their power in the discussions with the municipality comes from the fact that they are investing vast amount of money in these projects. Money that the municipality would not be able to invest itself. The investment must be profitable, though, or it will not make sense to invest. Developers calculate the costs of a development in price/m² to plan for and build, and balance them with a selling or renting price/m². The larger the difference between the selling/renting price and planning for and building price, the larger the profit. They are very much interested in creating attractive areas, because that increases their chances for a larger profit.

The interaction between the municipalities and the investors and developers are a push-pull process where each manifests its power. On one hand developers have to make economic plans for these projects, and stick to them, which means that any changes in requirements from the municipality’s side that come after these plans have been made, can lead to friction between the two actors. Torben Nielsen Explains: “we typically buy the land for a new development once we know the content of the local plan. If the municipality has set requirements for high quality in both buildings and urban space, we will offer less money for the land, so that we can balance the costs of creating the high quality required. (...) if you want a higher quality for both ground floors of buildings and urban spaces, they must be sharply described in the local plan. If they come in the project phase (design phase) and say that now we would like to raise the quality level, it becomes a conflict between us and our economy, and them. (...) it often happens that we meet each other halfway, in that the municipality gets the quality they want, and we get more square meters.” [Appendix B6.2 02:40 – 05:40]

Decision Making in Regards to Urban Space

Decisions regarding urban space happen throughout the entire process described in subchapter 1.1. The description provided in the vision serves as a guide for the initial design sketch, and from there in almost every step of the way to implementation decisions are made based on the interaction between the different actors and their interests. Yet who decides what?

The municipality has the responsibility to ensure that the vision for a new urban development is aligned to the goals set in the municipal plan, and that the principles of urban design set in set plan are applied to urban space. They decide on the character of the new urban area, and set the guidelines for the quality of the space. They also make sure that the area set for urban space is corresponding to the quantitative requirements set in the municipal plan. They then set the rules for urban space in the legally binding local plan for the area. About the need for precision in local plans, Torben Nielsen explains: “if the municipality wants high quality, they must not give the developer a choice in materials. They must state that they want things to look like “. [Appendix B6.2 02:40 – 05:40] The same goes for set activities in the urban space
or on the ground floor of buildings. If there are activities set in the vision for a development, these activities must be detailed in the local plan in terms of ways the urban space should be used. For example, if the vision for an area shows that a playground or a skate park would produce the desired urban life, then the local plan should specify that space must be awarded for said activities. In the absence of detailing of activities in the local plan, the developers will stick to the letter of the plan and not build what is not absolutely necessary.

1.7 Factors that Hold Bearing on Urban Space Design

In the discussions with the five interviewees that form the basis of this part of the project, they have been asked to voice their thoughts on what planning related factors have, in their opinion and based on their experience as actors in the urban development process, had an impact on urban life and the use of urban space. These factors are not necessarily related to the formal planning, most of them are so called “soft factors” that are used in analysis for informal planning. This subchapter is a summary of their input on the topic. These are also pertinent to the space-place discussion, in that most of them refer to place.

A Bit More on the Ambiguity of Local Plans

Some of the dissatisfaction developers have with the ambiguity or flexibility of the local plan have been mentioned earlier in this chapter. They will not be repeated here, but the topic needs to be expanded somewhat.

John Keller, developer at Aabo Sørensen in Aalborg says that past experiences have taught him that whatever is important in the developer’s vision for a project must be written in the aims of the local plan. He explains further: “the greenery was the most important principle for this plan, and it is exactly that that was omitted when the project was built. (see ill. 1.6) We and the municipality didn’t describe it well enough, and the case worker could not ask for a landscape plan when the local plan does not support such a request, nor could he deny a permit because the building project was technically in agreement with the local plan. (...) The local plan is the best tool to bring the vision to life, if it is detailed enough. And it must be a part of the aims of the plan”[Appendix B5.2, 24:10 – 31:39]

The goals of the plan are the first regulation the local plan sets in its legally binding part. Once the aims are set, no project or construction can contradict them. If a project does so, a new local plan must be approved before the project can continue. John’s point is that if the desired character of the area had been set as goal in the local plan, the housing association would have been bound to respect it.

Another developer, working for a major company in Aalborg talks about a
contrary effect. The local plan for Eternitten emphasized the creation of a “town street” in the area, described as a coordinating element for the development in the local plan and the vision. Yet once it was established, almost to the letter of the local plan, it was clear that it did not fulfil its purpose as the city street full of life described in the vision. The developer mentions that there are multiple reasons for why this happened, but in his view, what created the problem was the fact that the plan while very detailed in regards to this urban space, was much more flexible in regards to the uses for the buildings on the street. In his view, either more flexible regulations were needed in regards to this street, or stricter regulations in regards to the functions and activities housed in the buildings adjacent to the street. [Appendix B4.2]

The Users of the Spaces and Times of Day

Buildings and urban space are, or should be, in a symbiotic relationship, where they feed each other with life. Urban life cannot be created in a vacuum. People are needed to fill and use urban space, and they go where their needs take them: work, home and in between, leisure, relaxation, shopping and so on. Throughout the day, people find themselves where they need to be for their daily activities, which means that urban space gets used differently at different times of day. Planners must be careful not to create today’s equivalents of the dormitory towns popular around the middle of the 20th century. To avoid this issue, multifunctionality in the urban space, and mixed functions and activities are required to ensure an area’s usage throughout the day. Planners must be careful not to create the traps of perceived mixed use. A developer exemplifies this issue in the Eternitten area: “the area has two types of housing for students and for families. It further has office space, three supermarkets, and that is pretty much it. Where are the public services, the education institutions, where are the creative workshops described in the vision?” [Appendix B4.2 30:50 – 38:00]

People living in this part of town leave for work or study in the morning, and maybe around noon some students come back. Between 15:30 and 17 is the shopping window, where people flock to do their grocery shopping, usually coming by car, and after 17 the activity dies down. During working hours there are very few people out and about in the area. [Appendix B4.2] The relation between building ground floor and the outdoor space

Further building on the previous paragraph, mixed use does little for an area, if the relationship between indoors-outdoors space at ground level is not synergetic. People need to see other people. Blank facades and windows covered to block outsiders viewing what happens inside won’t do. As Jane Jacobs put it, “there must be eyes upon the street” [Jacobs, 1961 p: 35], but the opposite is also true to a certain extent: people need to see and understand what is happening inside on ground level in order to feel comfortable. Coming back to the Eternitten example, with Alexander Foss Gade, the street would work better if there were people looking in from the street and out from the ground floors of the adjacent buildings. The fact that the entire area is time programmed so strictly really hurts urban life. The lack of synergy between the indoors and outdoors is not specific only to Eternitten. It happens in many other areas of Aalborg, and other towns and cities throughout Denmark and Europe.

Seeing Things in Context

When analysing urban space, the context of a space and its understanding is essential.

Thomas Birket Smith, architect at Aalborg Municipality explains: “the Music House area is something we have worked a lot with. It must be seen in the context of the entire waterfront. And we have worked a lot with the fact that the waterfronts programming must happen in certain places. It mustn’t be the same all the way.” [Appendix B3.2, 01:31 – 04:00]

Seeing things in context is important because context offers clues to why things happen the way they do, and can help identify patterns that are relevant for functionality and activity in urban space.

Mobility patterns

Mobility patterns relate closely to the context of urban
space. Understanding where people are coming from, in what numbers is crucial for planning and designing urban spaces. It also helps define user groups for urban space. Understanding mobility possibilities for an area helps explain the number of users of urban spaces. The way in the Eternitten area mobility patterns explain the level of activity during different times of day, the patterns around the waterfront explain why some spaces are overused, while others less so.

**Space programming**

The purpose of urban space as it was established from ancient times was that of places where people meet each other and discuss the events of the day, as well as participating in important events for their city. It was so for the Greek agoras, and for the Roman forums, and these spaces were fitted with the tools to serve this purpose. As society evolved, so have the purposes we build urban spaces for, and in present times, there is a tendency to build urban spaces not without purpose, but more often that we would like to admit, without the fittings and furnishings to serve those purposes. A developer interviewed for this project touches on the subject when discussing Eternitten: "this area here that is named town square on this drawing, is nothing more than a flat empty surface, paved with a nice material, without any furniture, anything people might use to sit or give them an idea of staying there. What is the point of it then?" [Appendix B4.2, 19:30 – 24:24]

Urban spaces need to be understood in terms of what people should do there. The same developer continues about Alexander Foss Gade: “We’ve got this street; it starts and ends nowhere. What do we have? Nothing, because we didn’t create anything on this street.” [Appendix B4.2 52:20- 56:40] The purpose it was built for isn’t matched by its furnishings. When people see benches or edges that are at knee height, they immediately understand that can sit and stay, and know how to use space. When all it is offered is a flat oversized sidewalk, the purpose of the space is lost.

**Vision and visionaries**

When planning for new developments the vision of the developers and their willingness to push for that vision to become reality can make the difference between an attractive and exciting new part of town and a bland one.

A developer who worked on Eternitten explains “We had an open dialogue with the city architect regarding this plan as well (Eternitten), but we were missing this person, the one to push for the qualities that this place needed. (...) You need to be pushy in order to get the important things across.” [Appendix B4.2 47:21- 52:19] This is similar to Bente Lindstrøm’s view on the subject of good urban space: “having people involved that understand that this here creates value, those are the projects that come closer to the vision when realized” [Appendix B2.2 19:46 – 21:20]

**Time**

The timeline for urban development projects has been discussed in a previous subchapter of this study. Time-lines for the life of urban spaces are a different matter. The urban development project is finished when the buildings and spaces are taken into use. Buildings as well as urban spaces start their life at this point. While buildings are taken into use quickly, and their uses are clear from the beginning, urban spaces can surprise planners and designers in the ways they are used. Taking an urban space into use is a process in itself because it takes time for it to be acknowledged, understood and for people to start using it. Of course, there are spaces that are taken into use right away. This speaks to the need an area has for them. Other spaces come into their own much slower. The lifespan of urban spaces is recorded in centuries, not years, and while people throughout their life move from one user group to another, urban space changes little over time, unless major interventions are deemed necessary. Thomas Birket-Smith on Musikkens Plads: “It isn’t a secret that we thought that it would be used more for staying than it actually is. It isn’t used like that much" [Appendix B3.2 12:16 – 14-15] He continues: “we test. It could be also seen as a process: this space must be here maybe for 100 years and in 10 years we may decide that
we want to change something” [Appendix B3.2 16:26-21:40]

One must also remember that urban development projects are often implemented in stages, and a condition of taking buildings into use is the fact that the outdoor areas must be established already when the buildings start their life. This means that sometimes the urban spaces are built while the neighbourhood is still under construction. Which may have an impact on the way they are being used. This has happened in the Eternitten area. [Appendix 4.2]

Another thing to remember in the lifespan of urban spaces is that they can be changed. Thomas Birket-Smith explains that Aalborg Municipality tests urban spaces, they are aware of what is happening, and how they are being used. They keep an overview over what is going on in a larger context, and act when they feel like we can improve the level of activity in one or more spaces without having to rebuild them. [Appendix B3.2]

**Place vs. Space (interview empirical data)**

Throughout the interviews that formed the base of this chapter more than one interviewee have expressed their views on the fact that urban spaces can help create character, a sense of community, urban life and safety, all attributes that describe places, without necessarily using the word place. Place and space are intimately linked in that the locality element of place identifies with geographical space. Their connection goes beyond mere geography; the physical framework that defines spaces, its architectural details and furnishings are all influencers for the sense of place. The planning, development and building processes create space: the physical framework for the life of a new part of town. Places are created by attaching meaning to space, and this cannot happen overnight, and it cannot happen in a vacuum. This is why some urban spaces take years to get established in the minds of their users. It depends on how many people use the space, how many want to use it, and what their experiences are in using a space. If an urban space does not have enough users, creating a sense of place can be very difficult.

Urban development aims to create places, but it can only build space, and when it clears an area in a city of all or most of its past traces, special efforts must be made in order to help people attach meaning to the new. Urban developer about Eternitten: “(Students) Once they are finished, they have three months to move out. And so are they out of the area. Student housing, (...) creates life, but in reality, they don’t make a connection to the area, because they know that they will leave soon.” [Appendix B4.2 30:15- 38:00] How long students live in the area may be less relevant than the rate of renewal in the population. Every summer, the graduates move out, and new students move in. The faces are constantly renewed. Just getting to know your neighbours becomes daunting, creating a sense of community becomes both unattainable and futile.
1.8 Conclusions

It has been the goal of this part of the project to reveal the practice of planning and designing of urban spaces in urban development projects. The chapter contents are based on the interview transcripts seen in Appendix B. The structure of the chapter has been thematic in order to make coordinating the information received during the interviews more easily understandable. The interviews used for this chapter revealed some interesting things about how urban space is planned and shaped.

The first important conclusion of the interviews is that there are two dimensions of urban space in the development project: planning and design. The two are intertwined, and should have a cause-effect sort of relationship. The principles for urban space creation set through planning are a direct influence on the final design of the space. At the same time the final design of an urban space is a direct effect of the planning process. Planning and design processes of urban spaces should achieve a form of synergy, but this does not always happen because often planning and design are seen as two tangent themes instead of having a certain degree of overlapping. This means that planners are concerned with legal frames, and the governance of urban space, while designers are concerned with aesthetics and standards to implement.

The argument that this project tries to make is that there is a common ground between these two where mutual understanding of each profession’s power and limitations create the kind of places described in the vision for a project.

Throughout the planning and design processes for urban spaces the themes of space and place are inadvertently touched upon in that some parts of the planning process deal with place, while others with space.

For example, the vision document describes places, but influences physical spaces through the suggestion of materials and furniture. The sketches created for the vision speak to space, though they are often programmed to inspire the kind of place the text describes.

The municipal plan deals with both space and place through its quantitative and qualitative guidelines, while the local plan focuses on regulating spaces.

Local plans lack the power to regulate place, and they are objects that create frictions between developers and planners due to the opposite views they have on the topic. Developers want the plans to be more focused precise and detailed, while the planners value flexibility based on the timeframes of urban development projects and their experience in working within the planning system.

The object of designs and technical projects is space, though the physical framework of urban space affects the sense of place that these spaces can inspire.

What has become clear throughout the process of writing this chapter is the fact that the legal framework and the formal planning system can only regulate spaces, while the creation of places lies within the part of the process of urban development that is informal and specific to each project. Most of the factors mentioned in subchapter 1.7 fall under these processes.

Economy plays a secondary role in the creation of urban spaces though by gaining the sense of place, these can greatly enhance the economy of the entire development project.

The actors involved in the development project have power of decision over what is being built. They deal with both the issues of places and spaces, even though they may not realise that they do. It is clear that they create space, but at the same time, their decision-making process can support the creation of places by means of infusing the project with “long term public realm qualities” [Haley, 2010 p: 160].

This chapter is an account of the experiences of planners and developers in urban development, and of the things they consider important in the processes of development in order to achieve the qualities of places described in the development vision documents. The information presented here is empirical in nature. The next step in this research is to see where the things discussed in this chapter...
stand in relation to well established planning and urban space theories. This step is necessary in order to test the validity of theories in practice, and in order to establish a methodology for the analysis of specific urban spaces in a subsequent part of the project.
PART 2: THEORETICAL GROUNDING

Research Question:
How do the experiences from practice relate to urban space theories?

Ch. 2: Practice and Theory

Introduction
In the previous chapter the practical experiences of planners and developers have been documented in relation to the role and importance urban space has in the urban development project. At the end of the investigative part, a series of factors that the interviewees felt that are important for urban spaces have been explained, outside of any theoretical or academic context. This was done deliberately, in order to preserve the practice and experience-based approach of the investigative part of this project. In the theoretical and application part of the project, they must be put in the context of relevant urban space and planning theories for two reasons. The first one is to check if they are or are not completely out of theoretical and academic context, and the second one to see if the existing theories have considered these practical factors.

Though some of these factors regards planning and others design, they are interconnected and therefore will not specifically be set into planning or design categories.

All the factors presented in the previous chapter are discussed (though some of them are grouped together) and form the structure of this chapter. Additionally, the links between planning and design are discussed. The conclusion is built to base a summary of the things discussed throughout the chapter, and will serve as the method for studying application in the next chapter.

2.1 Method
As a method for checking the placing of the above mentioned factors within planning and design theory, the several planning and urban space theories are used. They were chosen on the basis of being reality based, meaning that they relied on empirically obtained data, observations and their keen interest in understanding and explaining how real cities work.

The works of Jane Jacobs, Jan Gehl and William H. Whyte are used in connection with explaining different design parameters, but not limited only to design. Patsy Haley’s book “Making better places” is used in connection to explaining context in the planning field.

There are certainly more theories and theorists that could be relevant for the topics discussed in this chapter. It is however, the author’s opinion that the the works of aforementioned people suffice to explain the topics discussed here.

The use of these theories throughout the chapter is done by combining two or more on each topic. In one particular case, Whyte and Jacobs’ theories are used to explain Gehl’s principles for urban quality.

2.2 Formal Plans too Flexible or too Focused?
The previous chapter has showed that formal plans can be a source of friction and disagreement between planners and developers. The source of this friction has been revealed to be the local plan and especially the level of detailing of the plan regulations in regards to the quality of both buildings and urban spaces. Developers wish for them to be more detailed, while planners value flexibility. While the topic of local plans in Denmark is not subject to general urban space or planning theory, it is worth mentioning here because it is the main instrument of urban space regulation. It is not only the plan through its regulation that influences the physical space, the friction these plans can sometimes create also plays an important role in shaping the final product.

Urban development projects do not have a linear progression. Throughout the process the designs are revised again and again, and this can both be a blessing and a curse. A blessing because with each revision the project evolves, and a curse when the initial premises and principles the project was built on, are changed or lost sight of. (see Appendixes B3.2 and B5.2)

The argument of the developers for more detailed regulations is that the local plan should ensure that these
original principles are respected. Friction is created when during the process, and especially in the late stages of planning and design, the base principles are changed. This can happen for various reasons, and it inevitably impacts the timeline, financial planning and ultimately the physical appearance of the project.

The reverse side of the coin is planning in too much detail, so detailed in fact that the project risks becoming unachievable. This is what planners are trying to avoid. The root of the issue here is the fact that an approved formal plan does not guarantee the project. It creates the legal framework for the project to be built, but the implementation is the responsibility of the developer or project owner. The need for flexibility in local planning is a lesson learned through experience and isn’t something planners are likely to renounce. It is important to note that this is not only an issue in the Danish planning system. In New York, the attempt to regulate suitable ledges through zoning regulations was more difficult than expected. Whyte notes: “the attack came on the grounds that the zoning was too specific. And it came from members of a local planning board. Rather than spell out the requirements in specific detail, the board argued, zoning should deal only with broad directives - for example, make the place suitable - leaving details to be settled on a case-by-case basis.” [Whyte, 1981, p:30] He identified the same issues that Danish developers are dealing with within their planning system.

This sort of friction between planners and developers is a condition in the development process that is unlikely to change, due to its nature and origin. It is simply part of the reality of the development process.

2.3 Mixed Use

The paragraph in 1.7 entitled “The users of space and times of day” speaks the mixed use concept in planning theory. It also touches on uses of space during different times of day, but this, as will be shown below, is intrinsic to the mixed use concept.

The concept of mixed use areas can easily be explained as the areas with mixed activities. This is however just the surface, and it would be a mistake to assume that this sums it up. In order to provide a better understanding of the concept, a look at research regarding mixed use is necessary.

One of the first advocates for mixed use areas as generators of urban life was Jane Jacobs, writer, journalist and activist who documented the state of American cities and the way traditional city planning was destroying them instead of fixing their problems. Jacobs argues for mixed use in cities because she understands that the premises of creating lively cities depend a lot on understanding what people need as well as those forces that create lively neighbourhoods (diversity) and those that eviscerate them (what she calls “the great blight of dullness” [Jacobs, 1961 p:144], uniformity).

Mixed use speaks to the need cities have for diversity in activities, in uses, in time. Jacobs correctly observes that neighbourhoods that are lively and where people feel safe are neighbourhoods that have people on the street at all times of day. Looking closer at these neighbourhoods she notices that besides housing and/or offices, a multitude of other activities are happening throughout the day. Small businesses servicing the area, cafes and
restaurants catering mostly to the residents and to the day workers in the area, theaters, bars and cinemas that activate the area during the evening. The level of activity on the street makes it safe, someone is always watching and they intervene if people misbehave. [Jacobs, 1961] She concludes that a multitude of activities are necessary to bring people in the area at all times of day, and that this is what gives an area a welcoming character for residents as well as for strangers. Jacobs’ personal observations are supported by her deep understanding of the nature of the city and especially of the way it works. The life of a neighbourhood, she argues, is created by those who live there, those who work there, and those who find themselves there by their own design or by coincidence. [Jacobs, 1961] The physical space of the neighbourhood is a place where the paths of all these groups criss cross. A good neighbourhood is one that has something to offer to all these user groups, hence. It requires diversity. Jacobs structures functions into primary and secondary uses, and sets mixed use as a condition for generating diversity, provided that the neighbourhood “must serve as more than one primary function; preferably more than two” [Jacobs, 1961 p: 150].

Primary uses are “those which, in themselves bring people to a specific place because they are anchorages”. [Jacobs. 1961 p: 161] They are housing, offices, factories, cultural institutions, education and certain recreation areas [Jacobs, 1961] However, just mixing primary functions is not enough to generate diversity, what is essential, it seems is timing: “If it (a primary use) is combined with another primary use that brings people in and out and puts them on the street at the same time, nothing has been accomplished. In practical terms, we cannot even call these differing primary uses. However, when a primary use is combined, effectively, with another that puts people on the street at different times, then the effect can be economically stimulating.” [Jacobs, 1961 p:162]

By this Jacobs argues that primary functions can be used as chessmen to create the premise for the emerging of secondary uses: “the entreprises that grow in response to primary uses, to serve the people that primary uses draw” [Jacobs, 1961 p:162]. This is why timing is so important. Areas that get surges in activity levels at certain times and are deserted the rest of the day cannot support these secondary uses. Businesses require consistent flows of customers in order to survive. Secondary uses are dependent on the mix of primary uses for the flows of people that these generate. It can happen that secondary functions come to become primary, when the character of the area is established and they themselves become anchors in the neighbourhood, and main attractors of people.

This is why it is important to understand that simply mixing uses is not enough to achieve diversity, and this is where many development projects go wrong. They only understand the concept of mixing uses on a superficial level, ignoring the timing of people flows.

2.4 Context

The paragraph from 1.7 that deals with context has set the focus on the physical context of a project. There is however another aspect of a project’s context that has just as much bearing on a development project, if not more, and that is the context of the people that are a part of the project and their relationships. These people can be active participants in the project, in which case they act as stakeholders, or passive participants, as users and consumers of the final product. This context of people and relations form the politics of the development project, and the first chapter on this thesis is, in a sense, an account of this context in Aalborg. (We will call these the politics of the project from now on) Why discuss it here? Because while the physical context of a project is easier to understand given the documentation of the project and the availability of maps and satellite imaging, the context of people and their relationships are much harder to see. Subchapter 1.2 detailing the urban development process gives some insight into this matter.

Patsy Haley argues that understanding this part of a project’s context is essential because ultimately it is the relationships between the interested parties that shape both urban spaces and our cities. [Haley, 2010] She underlines the importance of understanding the politics behind projects because in many cases it is the forces of push-pull and the friction between actors that drive
In their book, “How to Study Public Life” [Gehl and Svarre, 2013] Jan Gehl and Birgitte Svarre create a guide for method in studying city life. Whyte focuses more on specific behavior in what he calls “small urban spaces” [Whyte, 1981] and builds his study on the reality of city life. Both authors in fact, are less concerned with theories and look at the way people actually behave and use the city, unlike their contemporaries who are comfortable planning the city at their desk.

It must be said that both Gehl, Svarre and Whyte study city life in the already built city, while the argument made in the previous chapter is about creating a new part of town. In the case of the new project, planners and designers must forecast the needs of future residents and users, which is much harder to do than making an analysis of what is already there. However, the works of Gehl, Svarre and Whyte are relevant because they give planners a set of tools that they can use to both understand what is needed and to achieve the desired results.

Gehl and Svarre conclude their book with a “check-list to assess public space qualities” [Gehl and Svarre, 2013 p: 106] narrowed down from 43. These 12 criteria have been widely adopted in practice as a way to study urban life. In fact, they are listed as a principle of design in Aalborg Municipal Plans’ guideline on qualitative requirements for urban space and parks. [Appendix C3]

Whytes’ work provides a more focused account of those factors that tend to make people stay and use urban space. His book is structured around these factors, things like sitting space, climate and microclimate, but he also makes an interesting point about the capacity of an urban space to host people. He argues that based on the patterns of the usage of seating space, a sort of formula can be derived for calculating the maximum number of people using the seating area in an urban space. [Whyte, 1981] He calls this “effective capacity, that is, the number of people who by free choice will sit at a place during normal peak use periods” [Whyte, 1981 p: 68]. Why is this parameter important? Because one of his observations, corroborated by both Gehl and Jacobs is that “what attracts people most, it would seem, are other people” [Whyte, 1981, p: 19]. “The activity generated by people

The two major scholars that study city life are Jan Gehl and William H. Whyte.

As “the Aalborg project” (described in Flyvbjerg’s book) shows, the importance of critical questions when studying the context or a development project, cannot be stressed enough, since the same data can be interpreted in multiple ways. When analysing cities with the purpose of designing or redesigning parts of them, one must always ask what is relevant here, in this case, at this time. The analysis criteria must always be relevant to the area of the new project, the city, and to the people (future residents neighbours, visitors, etc.). There are, however, three criteria that invariably are part of such an analysis: the physical conditions, people’s behaviours and the relationships between the two. Analysing the physical conditions requires setting the point of view of analysis and the required criteria for data collection. It further requires understanding the needs of the people interacting with it in order to establish how it responds to them. That is where the interaction between people and the physical city comes about. This, along with the behaviour of people in the area are the subject of city life analysis.

The politics of the development project is in fact a structure of power relations that can make or break a project (see Flyvbjerg’s account of “The Aalborg Project” [Flyvbjerg, 1998]). The result of these relations is the physical project that ends up being built. The politics of urban development projects are worth mentioning as a part of the context. Especially when design solutions for one project are inspired by another development.

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these projects to their end result. Haley warns that “great caution is needed when learning from experiences in other places. All too often and apparently ‘successful’ exemplar is used in as a template in another situation.” [Haley, 2010 p: 227] this is because while the physical qualities of the space can be replicated other places, the forces driving those projects are not as easily understandable, let alone replicated. “Nevertheless, the cases show that the success of such exemplars is rooted in conditions that are not easily replicated.” [Haley, 2010 p: 227]
JAN GEHL’S 12 CRITERIA FOR URBAN QUALITY

1. Protection against traffic & accidents - feeling safe
   - protection for pedestrians
   - and cyclists
   - eliminating fear of traffic
   - safe crossings

2. Protection against crime & violence - feeling secure
   - lively public realm
   - allow for passive surveillance
   - diversity of functions 24/7/365
   - well lit/lighting in human scale

3. Protection against unpleasant sensory experiences
   - wind/draft
   - rain/snow
   - cold/heat
   - pollution

4. Opportunities for walk/cycle
   - room for walking
   - interesting facades
   - no obstacles
   - good surfaces
   - accessibility for everyone

5. Opportunity to stop and stay
   - attractive & functional edges
   - defined spots for staying
   - objects to lean on or stand next to
   - facades with good details that invite staying

6. Opportunities to sit
   - defined zones for sitting
   - pleasant views
   - people watching
   - good mix of public and cafe seating
   - resting and waiting opportunities

7. Opportunities to see
   - reasonable viewing distances
   - unobstructed views
   - interesting views
   - easy orientation
   - lighting (when dark)

8. Opportunities to talk and listen
   - low noise levels
   - public seating arrangements conducive to communicating
   - “talkscapes”

9. Opportunity for play and exercise
   - allow for physical activity, exercise, play & street entertainment
   - temporary activities (markets, festivals, exhibitions, etc.)
   - by day and by night
   - in summer and winter

10. Dimensioned at human scale
    - dimensions of buildings & spaces in observance of the important human dimension in relation to
    senses, movements size and behaviour

11. Opportunities to enjoy the positive aspects of climate
    - sun/shade
    - heat/coldness
    - shelter from wind
    - breeze

12. Aesthetic qualities + positive sensory experience
    - good design and detailing
    - good materials
    - fine views/vistas
    - rich sensory experiences: trees, plants, water
on errands, or people on aiming for food or drink, is itself an attraction to still other people.” [Jacobs, 1961 p: 37]

The point of understanding Whyte’s effective capacity is quite simple: the more people can sit at once, the more likely it is for them to attract other people. Sitting space is, however, not enough. The spectacle of other people’s activities is the strongest attractor of people. Jacobs further states: “people’s love of watching activity and other people is constantly evident in cities everywhere.” [Jacobs, 1960 p: 37]

Another element that both Gehl, Svarre and Whyte refer to is scale. While Gehl and Svarre are preoccupied with the human scale of urban spaces, and more specifically how furnishings and amenities in urban spaces relate to the human dimension, Whyte takes a different route. He focuses on the size of urban spaces and argues for a sense of human scale, in that urban spaces should be large enough to make one feel welcome, but not large enough so that one feels lost and exposed. [Whyte, 1981]

The study of mobility and mobility patterns also fall within the purview of a project’s context. Mobility patterns are relevant because they show the flows of people that pour in and out of the project area. They are worth studying both before and after a project has been implemented because mobility patterns cannot be completely accurately predicted. While the projects typically do account for patterns of mobility for cars and cyclists, because these require infrastructure, patterns for pedestrians are less emphasized and less studied. And yet, in regards to urban spaces, they are the most relevant.

2.5 Visionaries

The argument that one of the interviewed developers made is that some urban development projects require a visionary, (a person who keeps the vision alive and pushes for the principles be followed through in both the planning and design processes) is supported in both planning and urban design theory.

Patsy Haley makes an argument for this by explaining how the vision of one man, or in some cases a group of dedicated stakeholders, helped push for projects that ended up setting examples for the entire world. In one example, “an imaginative developer exercised great persuasive power backed by a keen sense of social responsibility” [Haley, 2010 p: 155]; in another, “a great deal depended on the skilled negotiating of a few professionals who acted, within their own organisations, as persistent project champions.” [Haley, 2010, p: 155]. She argues that major projects need visionaries that drive the focus of such projects to social responsibility, especially “as belief sags when the difficulties of assembling resources pile up” [Haley, 2010 p: 155]. Project visionaries “do the work of continual troubleshooting, coordinating, finding ways to tricky disputes, keeping key principles in play and negotiating good deals.” [Haley, 2010 p: 155]. They are important in situations that are complex in nature and projects that have long timelines and are at risk from changes in their political and economic contexts.

Visionaries are not necessarily people who are directly involved in the planning and designing process of urban development projects. They can sometimes reveal themselves to be a force that opposes the project because they can cut through the artifices of a project’s presentation and publicity and see the possible real impact that it would have on the existing city. The entire book of Jane Jacobs, “The Death and Life of Great American Cities” [Jacobs, 1961] is a testament to this. Her entire career as an activist for New York City is proof of this. Unfortunately for her, and for many others that challenged the modernist and postmodernist planning concepts and theories, recognition for their visions came relatively late. If there is a lesson to be learned from this history, it is that people must be heard, and that challenging the status quo is a way to ensure that planners and decision-makers do not get too comfortable with theory, and ignore the reality of cities. Every development project is a chance to ask why we do things the way we do, if there isn’t a better or different way, and if everyone involved has been heard.

2.6 Programing and Furniture

Programing of urban development projects happens on two levels: the programing of primary uses for the buildings, and the programing and furnishing of the
outdoor space. The programming of buildings, or their use has already been discussed in a previous part of this chapter (see 2.2). What would be discussed here is the furnishing and programming of outdoor space. This would appear to be, by excellence the purview of urban design and landscape architecture. However, in setting regulations for outdoor space, planning plays an important role in how urban space is designed and furnished. As was shown in chapter 1 of this project, though, planning cannot regulate urban life. It can, at best create conditions to support it, but life in urban spaces is greatly influenced by design.

Jan Gehl’s 12 criteria for urban quality [Gehl and Svarre, 2013] while providing a tool for analysing the quality of urban spaces, also provide answers to how urban spaces should be programmed and furnished. We’ll set aside Gehl’s quality criteria and turn our focus on the work of Whyte. Whyte structures the factors that create life in urban spaces into themes, that will be discussed further on.

Through observations on the behaviour of people, Whyte and Gehl establish the characteristics of urban space furnishings and furniture that support different activities in urban spaces: sitting, standing, playing, meeting and observing other people.

**Sitting space**

“People tend to sit most where there are places to sit” [Whyte, 1981 p: 27]

Whyte’s study of urban spaces in New York has had unexpected conclusions, disproving many of the ages’ myths about urban space use, and one of the first observations was the fact that sittable space is essential in urban spaces that are being used.

He notes however, that sittable space does not only refer to the space or furniture specifically designed for the purpose of sitting: “the amount of sitting space does not include any qualitative factors: a foot of concrete ledge counts for as much as a foot of comfortable bench space” [Whyte, 1981 p: 27] However, sitting space must have an extra quality in order to be used. Personal comfort is less important, what is important instead, is that the sitting spaces be “socially comfortable” [Whyte, 1981 p: 27], which means having choices to sit in the foreground or the background, according to the sun or shade, etc. He goes further to state that sitting choice should be something built into the design of an urban space, making the different edges, ledges and features sittable. [Whyte, 1981] This means for example having steps that are high enough that it is comfortable to sit on every other step and narrow enough so that you don’t have to have your legs stretched awkwardly in order to reach the third step. It also means that if for example some surfaces are elevated, their height should be at a comfortable sitting height, something like 45-50 cm. However, people will sit on ledges with heights anywhere between 30 to 90 cm if something else attracts them there [Whyte, 1981]

Another important point with sitting space is its depth. This is easy enough with benches, but a point that needs to be made when the sitting space is informal and double sided. One sided ledges should be at least 45 cm wide, while double sided ones, at least 90cm.

Whyte also makes a very interesting observation regarding the placement of sittable space in relation to pedestrian flows: “the most coveted sitting paces are the ones closest to these flows” [Whyte, 1981 p: 33].

**Standing**

Standing requires less of an infrastructure than sitting, but, while people sit because they have a place to do so and a need for it, standing requires external factors, independent of the urban space design. It requires typically groups of at least two people, and reasoning for those that chose to stand alone. For example, two acquaintances pass each other and strike a conversation for a short enough period of time that they do not want to sit. Strangers experience the same event and discuss it, someone is waiting for their friends for such a short amount of time that they do not want to sit, etc. You typically see many people standing where there is something extraordinary to be seen or experienced: a street artist making art, a dance team that perform, street musicians, and food vendors.
What is important for standing is pedestrian flows. Whyte notes: “when people stop to talk on a plaza, they usually do so in the middle of the traffic stream. They also show an inclination to station themselves near objects such as a flagpole or a statue. They like well-defined places such as steps or the border of a pool” [Whyte, 1981, p: 21]

Play

Playing in urban space requires either something or someone to play with. In spaces where no special allowances have been made to encourage play, like providing lower edges for children to play on, play occurs spontaneously when the curiosity and playful spirit of people is awakened by something in their surroundings. It could be something like trying to catch petals blown away from trees in the spring, or a drawing of something like hopscotch on the pavement that makes people jump around, or anything that awakens curiosity. Water specifically has an irresistible attraction that draws people to it and incites them to dig in. Whyte notes that water’s attraction consists of its look and feel, as well as its sound. [Whyte, 1981] It should be accessible and people should be allowed to enjoy it, especially in places where there aren’t any amenities for children because children actively seek water for playing.

Meeting and observing other people

Urban spaces are rarely designated meeting places. In situations where these spaces are located in close proximity of intense flows of pedestrians, they can become meeting places. In serving as meeting places, they are however, heavily dependent on these intense flows of people. They will not become meeting places if the people flows are less than intense.

Until the invention of that marvelous device that is the smartphone, the most common activity for people sitting in urban spaces has been, well, observing other people. Gehl, Jacobs and Whyte all observe the same pattern: people like to watch other people’s activities. A street is a safe place because of the number of eyes on it [Jacobs, 1961], but these numbers dwindle if there are no people on the street to be watched. The most used urban spaces are the ones that are on the edge of major pedestrian flows. [Whyte, 1981] Gehl puts it as a prerequisite for analysing opportunities to sit: people watching, in his 12 quality criteria [Gehl and Svarre, 2013]

Climate and shelter

One of the factors that has the strongest impact on urban space use is climate and the weather.

In temperate climates, such as that of Denmark, the weather plays a major part in urban space usage, especially for spaces that require people to actively seek them out. Its location in Northern Europe and the distinctive differences between daylight hours in the winter and summer make sunlight an important factor to consider when planning and designing urban spaces. The second major factor is wind. Denmark is a windy country with no point located further than 52 km from the coast. The dominating wind is from the Atlantic, blowing from the West. This is relevant, because while sun draws people out to urban spaces, the wind has the exact opposite effect.

Whyte notes in regards to sun and wind: “what people seek are suntraps. And the absence of winds and drafts in this regard are as critical for these as sun.” [Whyte, 1981 p: 44] He argues that cities tend to add to this problem by building in such a way that augments the existing winds. Very tall buildings tend to create strong drafts down their sides that make spaces at their ground level uninhabitable [Whyte, 1981] In Whyte’s time (the time of his study on New York City) this happened due to wind studies only performed to check the strength of a building, and not the effect of a high tower on ground level drafts. Today there is no such excuse, though, just as in Whyte’s time, results of wind studies can be downplayed or ignored, and “outdoor space designed as if for some ideal climate, ever sunny and pleasantly warm.” [Whyte, 1981 p: 44] Whyte citing James Marston Fitch.

So, what can be done to combat such practices? Well one solution is to provide some form of shelter from the wind in these spaces. It can be done in many ways. Gehl advocates for better planning to remove the underlying causes
of the problem [Gehl and Svarre, 2013], but includes protection from wind as a factor in protection against unpleasant experiences in his 12 criteria [Gehl and Svarre, 2013], while Whyte advocates for using trees and plants as shelter. Shelter can also be achieved through other means: lowering the space so that one finds themselves in a sort of valley with the wind blowing over them, setting panels for protection, etc.

Decoding Gehl and Svarre’s 12 Urban Quality Criteria

The twelve urban quality criteria presented by Jan Gehl and Birgitte Svarre in their book (ill.2.1), are divided into three themes: protection, comfort and enjoyment. Most of these criteria are intuitive and seemingly easy to understand. However, this simplicity is deceiving. Each of these criteria must be thoroughly understood in order to be applied to either urban analysis, or the creation of new urban areas.

Protection

1. Protection against traffic & accidents - feeling safe

This first criterion refers to traffic issues, and the requirements, all speak to traffic regulation and mobility design. The solutions for fulfilling this criterion is to be found within the traffic standards and models. There is also an element of comfort here in that even though pedestrians might be safe from traffic threats, they must also feel safe, and in that regard, it must be understood that this is also an element that needs to be taken into account.

2. Protection against crime & violence

The second criterion refers to safety from the ill will of strangers. The elements of this criterion are correctly identified as the necessity for mixed use (see 2.3) and proper lighting. However, lighting can do very little for someone being mugged on a well-lit but empty street or square. Safety against crime comes from eyes on the street/urban space, and from the behaviour norms imposed by busy areas. Mixed use buildings and activity on the streets throughout the day (and part of the night) are the generators of safety [Jacobs, 1961].

3. Protection against unpleasant sensory experiences;

The climate conditions have been briefly discussed above, but the focus has mostly been on wind. Urban spaces need to provide a form of protection from the elements if they are to be used throughout the year. But this doesn’t mean that it needs to be a complicated matter. On streets balconies and overhangs provide shelter from rain and snow. In urban spaces, the edges can provide shelter. If, however, the space is 100% open, the design must create some shelter. It can be done either through vegetation, or through fixed furniture that has that purpose. Shelter must not be forgotten as a design element.

Comfort

4. Opportunities for walk/cycle

This criterion is pretty much self-explanatory. A walk or bike ride should not be a challenge for either pedestrians or cyclists. However, the speed of cyclists must be kept low, in order to prevent accidents.

5. Opportunity to stop and stay

Some of these things have been discussed in the part of this chapter about sitting space and standing. (ill 2.2)

6. Opportunities to sit

Seating space has been previously discussed. Gehl suggests that a combination of public seating and cafe seating is important as well, but perhaps it is less about the cafe seating itself, as it is about the fact that a cafe is a service that invariably attracts people.

7. Opportunities to see

Whyte said that what people like to see and observe other people. As simple as that might sound, practice has shown again and again that this is one thing that is easily forgotten in the planning and designing of urban spaces. (ill.2.3) What people see from urban space must be a factor in the design. On landscape drawings it is often easy to place benches for example in places that look good in plan drawing, but that often set the viewer against a blank facade. Instead, place seating where sitters can see
furniture might be required. Another option for inciting people’s playfulness is to use unusual furniture, that awakens curiosity and imagination. These will work for adults as well as for children.

### Enjoyment

#### 10. Dimensioned at human scale

Jan Gehl has based more than one of his books on the importance of planning and designing urban spaces with the human scale in mind. It is an important criterion. But what does human scale mean in urban spaces? It means, for example, having sidewalks dimensioned so that two people can pass each other without entering each other’s personal space. It means having ledges at a height that people can sit on, it means dimensioning spaces so that they are easily understandable. Whyte advocates for large spaces to be visually divided as to appear smaller in order to make people feel less lost and small. [Whyte, 1981] That is not to say that very large urban spaces cannot function. Europe is full of such examples. But in each of these cases there are a lot more forces at work that the eye can discern. Italian plazas like the Signoria square or San Marco square in Florence and Venice respectively work because they attract huge crowds of people through their history, architecture and role in the city. They are enormous, but they work in connection with their surroundings and with the crowds they attract. For new urban spaces this doesn’t apply. People need to understand urban

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#### 8. Opportunities to talk and listen; low noise levels, public seating arrangements conductive to communicating, “talkscapes”

While the criterion states that a low noise level is necessary, I would argue that it is just preferred. One can easily have a private conversation within the wide noise produced by many other conversations in a crowded space. What is to be avoided are creating spaces that echo and carry your voice. Whyte also argues for this in his example of the waterfall feature at Paly Park in New York. Even if the noise produced by the water is quite high (taken out of the context people found it to be annoying) it provides a cover under which private conversation happen without hindering. The objective should be comfortable spaces for conversation. Noise levels can be irrelevant.

#### 9. Opportunity for play and exercise

This criterion has two aspects, one is about design, and the other about temporary activities. The important part to retain about the design aspect is that the design should be inviting to exercise and playfulness. About the second aspect, that it is a generator of people flows. In order for exercise and play, people are needed, which temporary activities attract. When these two aspects work together, there is little need for specialised exercise furniture. Any ledge or bench can do. In the absence of temporary activities, some specialised
space. And they intuitively understand spaces that they can physically relate to. A space with an area of close to 1000 m² is easier to understand than one 20 times that size. But a 20,000 m² urban space can be made to feel smaller by visually dividing it using furniture and vegetation, and all sorts of other features. Seen from above, it is still one space, but at eye level it appears smaller, or it appears to be a collection of smaller spaces.

11. Opportunities to enjoy the positive aspects of climate

This criterion speaks to the placement of seating Whyte recommended and has been discussed in the paragraph about seating. It also speaks to the third criterion about protection from the elements. This has also been discussed in the paragraph regarding climate.

12. Aesthetic qualities + positive sensory experiences

This is the only criterion that relates to aesthetics. It also relates to some of the other criteria, specifically 6 and 7. Aesthetics are important but take secondary place to function, and in the case of urban spaces form should always follow function. That being said, it is important to understand that the materials and the quality they bring to an urban space can be upgraded at any time. What is important is that the place has other qualities that make it popular and used and that these are preserved. We know all too well of pretty spaces that look good, but are almost always empty.

Programming and Context

Last but not least, the programming and furnishings of urban spaces must be done in accordance to their contexts. The importance of having a synergetic relationship between the two, cannot be stressed enough because the context reveals the needs of the space, while the programming and furnishings must respond to these needs.

2.7 Relationship Between Indoors and Outdoors

It was mentioned earlier in this chapter that buildings and urban space should have symbiotic relationship that fills both with life. In order for this to be achieved, it takes more than just making the ground floors of buildings transparent. This is a premise used in many cities. If we want something to happen in the space next to a building, then making the ground floor transparent so that people can see each other from the outside looking in and opposite is a solution. More important are the activities that happen on the ground floor. Because the true generator of life in the space next to the building is not the visual connection between the two. It is in fact the flows of people generated by the activities in the building. The more people need to come in and out throughout the day, and the more access points into the building, the more activated the space surrounding the building becomes. This is why Jacobs’
secondary uses are important, because while the primary uses bring a lot of people in an area, it is the secondary ones that generate flows of people that support the economy of the area, and urban life.

About the relationship between urban space and ground floors of buildings Jacobs notes: “there must be a clear demarcation between what is public space and what is private space. Public and private spaces cannot ooze into each other as they do typically in suburban settings or in projects.” [Jacobs, 1961 p: 35]

2.8 Time

Jacobs calls cities “immense laboratories of trial and error” [Jacobs, 1961 p: 6] and she hits the nail on the head in that the cities we see today, especially city centers represent the result of trial and error experiments that unraveled throughout centuries, and in some cases even millennia. This is why old city centres tend to work very well, because throughout the years they have weeded out the obsolete activities and preserved only what worked. It is the same with the urban space in these areas. They have been challenged, tested, shaped and reshaped by the needs of the city while keeping the memory of these changes. Newer urban spaces lack the experience to create and incite the kind of city life that centres have. And they should not have to try and imitate city centres. When they do, the result is false and unattractive because they are trying to artificially imitate something that came about organically. What they need is time to come into their own and to be assimilated into the city fabric. Time is important because things change in time. The city changes, develops and expands. Entire areas that were once on the fringe of cities are today completely assimilated and become boroughs of the big city. (see London’s map of boroughs) A similar phenomenon also happens in smaller cities. When a part of town is transformed from an industrial site into something else (housing, commerce, offices, etc.), the new development can, and often does, stand out like a sore thumb in its surroundings. In time, however, the surroundings catch up to it. They are renewed themselves, or new areas are developed in the vicinity, making the first one less obvious.

We must remember that any city analysis we make, is made a specific moment in time, though that doesn’t mean that it isn’t relevant for the future. Where problems and their sources are not understood and addressed, the results of an analysis will not change significantly in time.

2.9 Place

The theory of place and space has been presented at the beginning of this project. It was important to explain it there, because it stands at the core of this research. That being said, this entire chapter up until now, has inadvertently been discussing how to create places and not just how to make spaces. It is the argument of the author that any urban planning or design theory about how to make urban space and urban areas work for human beings (not for car traffic) is in fact dealing with place as described by Creswell.

2.10 Planning and design, bridging the gap

Up until this point in this study it appears that planning and design are mixed together. We have investigated urban development processes as a whole, with their planning, and referred to urban spaces both as planning and design products. This was not done by accident, and it was not done due to a lack of understanding. Even though they appear to be separate disciplines/arts, planning and design are closely knit together. Planning can regulate the physical appearance of urban space, but it cannot regulate levels of activity. It can, however, help create activity by providing generators of flows. Design on the other hand, cannot bring people to a space if they don’t have a reason to be there. Jacobs notes: “you can’t make people use streets they have no reason to use” [Jacobs, 1961 p: 36]. At the same time, a lack of design can leave deserted even the best located and connected spaces. This is a phenomenon that plagues spaces that are deliberately left empty of fixed seating or any form of programming through furniture, under the cloak of falsely perceived flexibility of use. These areas fill out only on special occasions.

Successful urban spaces are a result of planning for diversity and designing for the use of people. This is the reason why the importance of understanding what creates city
Life and what drives it away cannot be stressed enough. Planning sets goals, and design must deliver on these goals. But, when the planning fails to deliver on diversity or on any other parameter, even the best thought designs fail.

2.11 Conclusion

It was the purpose of this chapter to anchor the important factors identified in the practice of the development project in the academic research relevant for planning and design. All the factors mentioned at the end of chapter one have found a resounding board in the academic works of well-established authorities on the subjects. Furthermore, an attempt has been made to add specific details in order to avoid the kind of ambiguity that confuses rather than enlightens professionals. Words like “sittable” have been explained in practical terms, and the same treatment has been applied to the 12 urban quality criteria of Jan Gehl.

Planning and design have been seen as being closely linked and interdependent in the process of urban development.

The anchorage of practical experiences into existing theory has validated both. The next step in the research for this project is to see how have the theories been applied in practice. Not so much in the process of urban development, but in one of the final products of the process: urban space. The practical things discussed in this chapter form the method for an urban analysis done on existing urban spaces. The next chapter represents this analysis, made in the form of several case studies from Aalborg, Denmark.
There is an old saying in Romanian:

“Theory, theory, but practice kills us”

What it means is that theories in general are nice and easy to understand. Applying them to the reality of everyday life, however, can prove to be more difficult than imagined because it means challenging the established way of doing things. This is a valid point in any field, including those of planning and design. It is the goal of this chapter to research the way the theories discussed in the previous chapter have been applied in building or renewing parts of Aalborg.

In the Municipal Plans’ guideline on qualitative requirements for urban spaces and parks Jan Gehl’s 12 urban quality criteria are quoted as the basis of “evaluation of qualities in a recreative area that should have the starting point in the knowledge of relationship between people’s social behaviour and the area’s/spaces’ physical and aesthetic characteristics.” [Appendix C3]

It is the purpose of this chapter to study how these principles apply to four of the city’s urban spaces by analysing them on the criteria set by Gehl.

It is not within the purview of this project to create a thorough analysis of Aalborg’s city centre, as this endeavour would require more time than the single semester this project was realised in. It must also be mentioned that the method used in the case studies is strictly based on the factors discussed in the previous two chapters. There are other relevant criteria when analysing urban spaces and cities, but ultimately the goal of this chapter is to shed light on how theories are applied in practice. It is for that purpose that the analysis criteria are so focused.

3.1 Case Selection and Method

The cases selected for studying in this chapter were chosen based on two premises: first that they represent places of different ages, and second that they are all from Aalborg. The reason behind choosing spaces of different ages is the fact that the theory that old (and really old) urban spaces are great places is not always right, as the two cases here will show. The reason for choosing spaces located in Aalborg is that all the empirical information collected from the practitioners of urban development and planning was about projects in this city. It only makes sense to verify the principles discussed in the previous chapter in the same framework that generated the empirical data in the first place. Another criterion for the case selection is the fact that all these spaces have different configurations, uses and serve different purposes.

The urban spaces chosen for the case studies are: Gamletorv, Nørresundby Square, Musikkens Plads and Jomfru Ane Park. The first two have been a part of Aalborg’s fabric for centuries, while the last two are very new by comparison. The first three are recognised as spaces that are being sparsely used, while the fourth is very successful.

While the analysis done in this chapter relies on cases from a single city, this project should not be understood as a mere study of Aalborg. The challenges and issues identified in these four cases are universal and so are the ideas that the methods used in analysing these cases are based on. Flyvbjerg strongly argues for the validity of case studies in his paper “Five Misunderstandings about Case-Study research” [Flyvbjerg, 2006] as a means to both establish theories and to make the jump in learning from beginner to expert. In his views, experts in any field became experts by gaining practical case study knowledge on top of the contextual independent rational knowledge. [Flyvbjerg, 2006] This is the reason why case studies are necessary in this project, as well as serving the purpose of testing theory application in practice.

Method

The case studies are built on the framework provided in the previous chapter. In order to keep things organised,
the analysis will be done thematically using three themes: planning, context and design. Each case study will end with guidelines for what to keep in mind for a possible future renovation/redesign.

The method used for creating the case studies derives from Bent Flyvbjerg's phronetic research. [Flyvbjerg, 2002] (see Appendix A3 for a thorough presentation of the method) Flyvbjerg used 4 critical questions in his case study in order to assess the power relations that were at play in his case study. Similarly, the themes that form the analysis for these case studies, with the addition of the guidelines are meant to answer four critical questions:

1. What has planning done for this space?
2. What is the context of the space?
3. How does the space live up to the 12 urban quality criteria?
4. What should be done about it?

The first three questions correspond to the three analysis themes, while the guideline answers the last one.

The planning theme is done by looking at the formal and informal plans that apply to these spaces. If additional documents are available, those will be examined as well. Analysing the formal plans provide an inkling into what is possible for each of the spaces.

The context theme embodies many of the factors discussed in chapter 2, although emphasizing the physical context. Data on the political context for each space is not readily available, and therefore a process analysis is not possible. The factors that will be analysed are: space definition, use of buildings and urban spaces, mobility, climate, and time programming.

The design theme encapsulates Gehl’s 12 criteria and the specific parameters of the spaces will be analysed.

Where it is needed, additional criteria will be added, but not without explaining their relevance.

Last, the guidelines provide a possible direction for changing the status quo.

3.2 Introduction to the case study sites

The urban spaces chosen for the case studies have several things in common. They are all located within the historic centre of Aalborg and they are within walking distance of the fjord, with two of them right on the edge of the
The two historic spaces, Gammeltorv and Nørresundby Square are part of the historic fabric of the city, while the two newer ones were created in the process of urban transformation that the waterfront has experienced, from an industrial site to a recreational part of town.

**Gammeltorv**

Gammeltorv is one of the city's oldest urban spaces. A date for its creation cannot be established, but it is mentioned in documents from as far back as the 13th century. [Trap Danmark, 2017 p:129] It was probably created as a commercial square, because at the time it opened its eastern end towards the river Østerå, which ran through the city.

The square has a an elongated shape, that follows the side of Budolfi Church. The church we see today, was built in gothic style, at the end of the 14th century on the location of several older churches, the oldest of which dated from 1000 – 1050 [Trap Danmark, 2017 p:128]. It was already built in more or less its current form in 1399. [Aalborg Domkirke, 2019] The spire was built in 1799. The sacristy that protrudes into Gammeltorv was added in 1900 after an ample restauration process. [Aalborg Domkirke, 2019]. The two buildings that are located on the North side of the square were built as bank offices and Gammeltorv was, at the beginning of the 20th century a financial node in the city. [Trap Danmark, 2017]

In the 1990’s the Student House was established in one of these former bank buildings that received a modern extension, and the second building served as a university building for the Architecture and Design program until 2013. It has since been used as an office for Folkekirken. Towards the west is the building of the last post office in Aalborg closed in 2013, now functioning as a bank. On the North-eastern corner of the square stands Aalborg’s’ old city hall. The institution of the City Hall has been placed in Gammeltorv since the 13th century. The building we see today dates from 1762. [Trap Danmark, 2017 p:156]

With covering the Østerå river at the beginning of the 20th century, Gammeltorv started to lose its purpose as a commercial square to the newly established Toldkammeret and Tolbodsplads. When the industries present at the adjacent C.W. Obels Plads were phased out, it changed its purpose to that of recreation, and such it stands today. There is a project underway to connect a new housing block to Gammeltorv, however at the time of the delivery of this project, it is underway, and the analysis conducted for this urban space is done on what can be seen today.

**Nørresundby Square**

Nørresundby Square, or Torvet as it named on most maps, is an urban space located north of Limfjorden, close to the bridge connecting Aalborg and Nørresundby. It is located in the historic commercial area, but the current configuration of the square dates from the middle of the 19th century. [Jensen, 2008] In 1865 a great fire destroyed most of the downtown Nørresundby, leaving little standing. This was when Nørresundby Square was redesigned close to the form it has today. It was originally designed to be the gateway into Nørresundby after crossing the old Pontonbroen bridge over the fjord. [Jensen, 2008] With plans at the beginning of the 20th century for a new, fixed bridge over the fjord, and great pressure from Aalborg on a new location of the two bridge ends, Nørresundby Square started to lose its meaning as a gateway into the town, and needed to have its southern end reconfigured in order to provide a much needed visual focus centred on the new bridge ending. This is the Brogaarden building, designed by architect Charles Jensen in a functionalist style and finished in 1934. Another functionalist building, Nørresundby City Hall designed by S.C. Larsen, is finished in 1937. [Jensen, 2008] At this time, Nørresundby Square was a heavy traffic place, as Torvet street was one of the two ways towards the northern neighbourhoods. In the 1990’ the square was redesigned and car traffic diminished, but not without fierce opposition from the public, who felt that removing car traffic from Nørresundby Square will effectively kill downtown Nørresundby. The square has n’t changed much since, there has been an addition to it, the small built in scene in the northern part of the space.
Musikkens Plads and Jomfru Ane Park

These two places are part of a larger picture, Aalborg waterfront.

What we refer to today as Aalborg waterfront was originally (before 1850) divided by several rivers that flowed into the fjord. The waterfront was changed at the beginning of the 20th century when these rivers were covered up, and it became a long continuous stretch. The covering of the rivers happened in connection to the establishment of several industrial enterprises on the waterfront. The images in Appendix D1 show how the waterfront has changed throughout the years. The stretch between the bridge over Limfjorden and the Music House was finished being built in 2015. The Østre Havn area is still being built as of the delivery of this project.

Jomfru Ane Park is the older of the two spaces, and as part of the first phase of the transformation of the waterfront. This first part of the project stretched from the bridge towards east, until the First Hotel Aalborg and was completed in 2010. Jomfru Ane Park was designed by C.F. Møller. In fact, the entire waterfront project was a C. F. Møller design. The park was finished in 2008. [Appendix D1]

Musikkens Plads is the newest space analysed and was a part of the second phase of the Aalborg waterfront transformation that comprised the new university facilities, the Music House and the student housing towers. It was finished in 2015. [Appendix D1]
PART 2: THEORETICAL GROUNDING

ill. 3.2 historic map of Aalborg waterfront 1948

ill. 3.3 satellite image of Aalborg waterfront 2016
3.3 Case study: Gammeltorv

What has planning done for this space?

There is no local plan covering Gammeltorv. The Municipal Plan, Frame 1.1. C1 is the zoning frame that includes Gammeltorv. It specifies that the buildings defining the square are protected, and that from a cultural heritage perspective, high quality requirements must be fulfilled when building new, and renovating urban space. [Appendix C1]

Gammeltorv is, however, a part of Teaterkvarteret (the theatre neighbourhood), an urban transformation project, that is in its implementation phase at the time of this study. Though the focus of this project is mostly the block South of Budolfi church, the urban space intervention will stretch all the way to (and possibly into) Gammeltorv.

III. 3.5 shows the way the area south of Gammeltorv is planned from a functional perspective. The new urban spaces are intended to connect to Gammeltorv on its part of the southside that is not built.

In the analysis of the project’s role within the fabric of the city, it is acknowledged that Gammeltorv is not used to its potential. [Aalborg Kommune, 2012, p: 22]

There are no plans to change Gammeltorv itself. The configuration of the space will be kept as is, but the green urban space planned towards the East will open into Gammeltorv, which means that on the eastern south edge, “the wall”, will be interrupted in some places for this purpose. This part of the project is close to completion at the end of May 2019.
Conclusion

There isn’t much planned that would change Gammeltorv as a space, however, the development under construction on its south edge will come to affect the way the Square is used today.

What is the context of Gammeltorv?

Gammeltorv is located in the very centre of Aalborg, within walking distance of 7 other important urban spaces: Nytorv, C.W Obel Plads - the cafe square, Tolbodplads, Jomfru Ane Park, Aalborg’s waterfront promenade, Slots Park and Utzon Park. (ill.3.6) Gammeltorv’s location in relation to these other urban spaces means that it competes for users with all of them. It often loses that battle.

While some of these spaces have been embedded into the mindscape of people as this or that, Gammeltorv does not seem to be used for something specific every day. Tolbodplads is where you take your children so they can play with water and jump up and down the fountains while you have a cold one at a pub or on the stone seating. Nytorv is downtown’s meeting place, with its many bus stops it is an important node for public transport. Jomfru Ane Park is where you take your coffee on the waterfront, or where you have a barbecue and see what the hip cool young people are up to. Utzon Park is a quieter place, possible a good place for a picnic. The promenade is the best for a stroll or a run. Slots Park is a more secluded area, where you can have more privacy. Not all of these spaces function in the same way.

Gammeltorv at the moment seems to be a crossing space, one you go through to get someplace else. [Appendix E]

Defining Gammeltorv

Gammeltorv Square is defined by several elements: the buildings edging it, the walls of the parking lot towards the South and the staircases that di-
vide it in three different levels. There are two sculptural elements in the square: the fountain and the staircase of the building housing the Folketirk-ken house.

Gammeltorv is an elongated space, with a difference in height of ca. 150cm with the western end of the square being higher than the eastern.

It has entry points from all directions. It is approximately 130m long on its East-West axis, and ca. 30m wide at its widest point. It has an approximate area of 3100m2. It is difficult to grasp what 3100m2 looks like so below a comparison between Gammeltorv and a handball court is shown to better illustrate its scale. ill.3.8

Land Use

Ill.3.9 on this page shows the use of the buildings in the area surrounding Gammeltorv. There are over 100 commercial businesses in the area, and numerous service providers. There are also many buildings that combine more than two uses. However, as Jacobs has shown, merely combining multiple uses isn’t enough to provide true diversity. ill.3.10 shows how the entire area is activated during the day.

The land use study shows that Gammeltorv is located in a diverse area. Not surprising given that it is the very core of the city. The entire area surrounding the square is activated during multiple times of day, which provide almost continuous flows of people during business hours and some in the evening.

The Use of Gammeltorv

Gammeltorv is a recreative square, without an obvious purpose. Several times of year it is used for special events, such as the Christmas Market in December, the Blue Festival, in August, for screening of important sporting events and sometimes for concerts. However, it sits mostly empty during regular days, with most people that find themselves there just passing through. A study conducted by the author together with fellow urban designer Kenan Dedovic in 2015 showed that during nice summer days, most people just pass through. When asked why not stop and stay, they replied that there is nothing
The same study also showed that during major events in the city centre, people will come to Gammeltorv to sit and relax. The images in ill.3.11 were taken during the Tall Ship Races event that happened in Aalborg between the 1st and 4th of August 2015. As you can see, people came and used the steps and the fountain in the square for sitting. However, when compared to the amounts of people at Nytorv, not more than 150m away, at the same time, it is easy to see that Gammeltorv was still underused.
Mobility around Gammeltorv is influenced by the mixed use of buildings and by the public transport hub at Nytorv. There are 5 bus lines that stop at Nytorv, and 3 more stopping at Vingårdsøgade one block South of Gammeltorv. Due to that, Nytorv and implicitly Gammeltorv is connected by public transport to all parts of town. The high intensity pedestrian flows occur on the shopping streets around Nytorv, with Boulevarden, Bispensgade and Algade taking the heaviest loads.

The flows of pedestrians and the pattern of movement are shown in ill. 3.12 and 3.13.

Nytorv is the meeting place in downtown Aalborg. Most leisure meetings occur here, and that is because it is the best-connected spot in the centre. It is also a point of origin for many pedestrian trips, for people that arrive by public transport or bike. At the same time. It is a point of dispersion for pedestrians who meet there, and then go do the things they met for. There are four main directions of dispersion: Bispensgade, the waterfront, Boulevarden and Nytorv. The attractors shown on the second map are the shops and cafes present along the mentioned streets.
Climate

Due to its orientation, Gammeltorv suffers from strong winds blowing from the west through the narrow opening between the old post office building and Budolfi church. Even though there are strong winds. The North-West corner of the square, where the entrance and terrace of the Student House can be found, are sheltered.

The church also casts significant shadows in the square, making Gammeltorv darker during the later hours of the afternoon.

Conclusions of Context

Gammeltorv is located in a very attractive area for all user types. There is something for everyone around the square. The pedestrian flows are excellent, and diversity of uses flourishes. It is a large square, with a length of almost 130m, and an elevation of ca 150cm. It is very well connected to the public transport network and in close proximity to the downtown meeting place, Nytorv. It is a very attractive location for urban life, however, the square is mostly used for special events, and it remains empty on a daily basis. Its potential is not well used.

How does Gammeltorv live up to the 12 urban quality criteria?

1. Protection against traffic accidents and feeling safe

Gammeltorv is not affected by car traffic as cars don’t have access to the square. It is therefore deemed that the square fulfills this criterion.

2. Protection against crime and violence, feeling secure

The three factors that fulfill the criterion are: lively public realm, diversity of functions 24/7/365 and lighting. Lively public realm refers to having people in the square. In the context part of this case study, it was shown that Gammeltorv is mostly empty during the day, but that there are people crossing it quite often. This makes it a safe space, even if the activity level is very low. The second factor is passive surveillance. This happens to a limited extent because there are very few eyes on the square. See criterion 5 where the facades of the buildings facing Gammeltorv are discussed. Diversity of functions is the next factor. Out of the six buildings surrounding the square four have single use, one has proper mixed use, and the fourth, even though it has mixed use, has a blind facade towards Gammeltorv. Ill. 3.15 shows the times of day that the buildings are active. Lighting. The place is well lit and in accordance to the human scale, though it is somewhat dark at night. See ill. 3.16 for placement of lamps.

This criterion is fulfilled.
3. Protection against unpleasant sensory experiences

Ill. 3.14 from context shows the wind strength and direction in Gammeltorv. There is no form of shelter or protection from the elements in the square. No overhang to hide from the rain or snow. The square is receiving excellent light from morning and until early afternoon. This criterion is partially satisfied.

4. Opportunities to walk/cycle

Gammeltorv provides excellent opportunities to walk, though cycling is uncomfortable due to the cobblestone pavement, making for a bumpy ride, and the fact that there are two staircases to overcome. There is ample room for walking and the square is accessible to the disabled as well. This criterion is partially fulfilled.

5. Opportunities to stop and stay

Gammeltorv does not really provide opportunities to stay. There are few functional edges that would be attractive: the wall towards the South, and the edge of the fountain.

There are no defined spots for staying, and even though there are lighting poles that one could lean against, the emptiness of the space doesn’t invite to it. This criterion is not satisfied.

6. Opportunities to sit

There are few opportunities to sit in Gammeltorv. There is one bench next to the City Hall building, and another one next to the first staircase from Boulevarden. The steps are at an
uncomfortable height for sitting. The staircase to the Folkekirke building could be used for sitting but the height and the depth of the step make it very uncomfortable. This is the entire sitting capacity for Gammeltorv. At best, there are 20 linear meters of sitting space (excluding the stairs). This means that the minimum effective capacity is of around 33 people. For an area of 3100 m² that is a very low number. There is a cafe that sets up terrace furniture in the square, though these are reserved for their guests, and are therefore not for public use. The new urban space connecting Gammeltorv and Teaterkvarteret is close to being finalised. It is of note the fact that no seating is provided in this space. (see ill. 3.19)

Gammeltorv is a pleasant place to be. Even if the buildings edging it are not particularly interesting to observe. The City Hall and the old wing of the Student House have good facades. The new wing of the Student house looks more like an office building, with highly reflective windows that do not allow you to see inside. A redeeming factor is that the new Student house is the only building creating some activity in the square, even though it is mostly limited to its terrace and entrance. Only the Student House, Folkekirken House and City Hall have their entrances from the square although the Folkekirken house has its entrance elevated and its facade rather dull. The building is protected and therefore this is unlikely to be changed. The indoor-outdoor relationship of all buildings to the square, with the exception of the Student House and partially the City Hall, is non-existent. (ill.3.21)This criterion is not fulfilled.

7. Opportunities to see

The view in Gammeltorv is only hindered by the difference in height of the three levels of the square. However, there is little to see beside empty space and the few pedestrians passing by crossing the street every 5 minutes. This criterion is fulfilled.

8. Opportunities to talk and listen

There are good opportunities to talk and listen in Gammeltorv. The place is rather quiet, though the church bells can be loud. However, the sound of the bells is unlikely to go away. This criterion is therefore satisfied.

9. Opportunities for play and exercise

Gammeltorv is not a particularly well suited place for play or exercise.
There is little to play with, and as for exercising, there is nothing to incite people to do that. The stairs and benches could be used for play and exercise, but it is an unlikely activity for the square because of the lack of any furnishings. This criterion is not fulfilled.

10. Dimensioned at human scale

The facades of the buildings surrounding Gammeltorv are at a human scale. The square, however, is oversized. (ill. 3.21) Even divided by the 2 staircases, it is just too empty to be perceived as having a human scale. The situation changes dramatically when the Christmas market is happening. (ill. 3.22) It is the only time Gammeltorv is at a human scale and without giving the feeling of being lost. This criterion is not fulfilled.

11. Opportunities to enjoy the positive aspects of climate

Gammeltorv provides ample opportunities for enjoying the positive aspects of weather. What it lacks is furniture to invite people to come and do that. This criterion is only partially fulfilled.

12. Aesthetic qualities and positive sensory experience

Gammeltorv has a high quality aesthetic and a great cultural heritage. It should be a place people want to be in. The lack of any programming and furnishing, however, make people just want to pass by it. The feeling you get while in the middle of it is that of loneliness and being lost. This criterion is partially fulfilled.

Conclusion

Gammeltorv fulfils criterion 1, 2, 7 and 8. It partially fulfils criterion 3, 4, 11 and 12. Finally, it does not fulfil 5, 6, 9 and 10. After analysing both the context of the square, and its urban qualities, it is clear that what this urban space needs is programming and furniture. It is perfectly located to entertain urban life, but lacks the basic furnishings to sustain it. It is a pleasant place to be but one needs a reason for being there.
What should be done about it?

• In order to attract urban life to the square, there are some things that need changing.

• It would be ideal to open the buildings up towards the square in order to make one feel that they are in the middle of an important place. Unfortunately, this is unlikely given that most of the buildings are protected.

• Program the square. If the intention is to have people come and stay here, they must be provided with a reason to do so. Proper seating proportional to the area of the square is required. Activities should be encouraged by providing the necessary furnishing. If these activities are play, for example, unconventional seating furniture can double as a playground. If relaxation, an escape from the city is the activity. Chaise longs can indicate that.

• The character of the square must be preserved. Programming and furnishings can be set up semi-permanently, so that Gammeltorv can still be used for events as it is today. The idea is to also give it an everyday use other than a pass-through space.
3.4 Case Study: Jomfru Ane Park

What has planning done for this space?

Jomfru Ane Park is covered by local plan 10-073 approved in 2004. The purpose of the local plan was to change the use of land in the local plan area from industrial site to leisure and recreation, with some buildings for services and business. There are regulations regarding the establishment of the 15m wide promenade along the water edge, and of a city park. However, the illustration plan for the area shows a completely different park than the one that was eventually built, and that is because the plan does not specifically set the illustration plan as the principal design for the park. [Aalborg Kommune, 2004]

What is the context of Jomfru Ane Park?

Jomfru Ane Park is located at the centre of the waterfront development on the edge of the promenade, within a 5 minutes’ walk from Gammeltorv, Nytorv, Tolbodsplads, Slotspladsen, and the Utzon Park. It is also connected via the waterfront promenade to Musikkens Plads and to the Music House.

Jomfru Ane Park is the city park where young people gather to relax during summer, when the weather is nice. It is located at the edge of the promenade, opposite the open bath in the fjord. (ill. 3.24) Its main function is that of a park, but it also fulfils the role of a meeting and gathering place for people to barbeque, listen to music and relax. It is a very intensely used park, with more than 10,000 people passing through on a good summer day. [Appendix B3.2] So much so, that it becomes off-putting for those who would like to use the park but dislike crowds.
Defining Jomfru Ane Park

The park has very clear edges due to it being lowered approximately 60cm below street level and the promenade. This makes it a very clearly defined space. (ill. 3.24) Its contrast to the large asphalt paved areas surrounding it makes it stand out as a green oasis. On the south side, where it is edged by Nyhavnsgade, the park is separated from the street by a concrete wall with a height varying from 42 to 83cm at the street level. (ill. 3.38)

Land Use

Ill. 3.26 and 3.27 show the land use for the buildings in the South area of Jomfru Ane Park and the times of day that the buildings are being activated. Combined, they show that the park is located in close proximity to an area of very diverse functions and that it is very active during different times of the day. Add to this the fact that the promenade is in itself a factor that activates the waterfront from morning until late at night, and it makes Jomfru Ane Park a space with close to constant flows of people throughout the day. This explains the intensive use of the park to some degree.

The Use of Jomfru Ane Park

Jomfru Ane Park’s purpose is recreation and leisure. It is meant as a place to take a break from the promenade walk, though it has become a destination in itself. It is the place people go to have their coffee/juice/smoothie on a nice day. Its users are mainly young people, and its appeal to this
particular user group will be further explained in the next part of the analysis, that checks how the park lives up to the 12 urban quality criteria. ill.3.28 shows the park being used during summer.

Ironically, there are events that activate the entire city centre, but which have little influence on how Jomfru Ane Park is used. The same event that activated Gammeltorv, the Tall Ships Races in 2015, had little influence on Jomfru Ane Park. Even if the promenade itself was more crowded than ever. (ill. 3.29)
PART 2: THEORETICAL GROUNDING
Mobility

Mobility around Jomfru Ane Park is influenced by the pedestrian flows originating at Nytorv and along the waterfront promenade. Strandvejen, which edges the park on its South side, is a medium traffic road that has little influence on the park except for the cyclist flows that can bring people onto the waterfront. The conditions mentioned in the previous case study about the flows generated at Nytorv apply here as well, with the correction that a large part of the pedestrian walks originating at Nytorv are directed towards the promenade and implicitly towards the park. The flows of pedestrians and the pattern of movement are shown in ill.3.30 and 3.31.

The pedestrian flows coming from Nytorv towards the waterfront divide towards the East and the West. With the western part of the promenade taking the most intense of the two. There are many reasons as to why the pedestrian flows divide this way, and one of them could be the fact that Jomfru Ane Park presents a more attractive route than the its neighbouring Utzon Park when viewed from the edge of Tolbodsplads. (ill. 3.32)

Climate

The park is located in the open, without any walls to direct the wind. This works to the advantage of the park because even on windy days the wind dissipates. The fact that the park is 60cm lower than street level also works to its advantage, in that it feels more sheltered. The pergolas on the western edge of the park also provide shelter.
Conclusions on Context

Jomfru Ane Park is located in the path of intense pedestrian flows originating in Nytorv. It is a space that lives up to this potential by providing a green oasis in an area dominated by asphalt and concrete.
How does Jomfru Ane Park live up to the 12 urban quality criteria?

1. Protection against traffic accidents and feeling safe

Jomfru Ane Park is not affected by car traffic as it is separated from Strandvejen, the only street in its vicinity, by a solid concrete wall that rises 80cm over the sidewalk level and 140cm from the level of the park. This criterion is satisfied.

2. Protection against crime and violence, feeling secure

Out of the three factors that make up this criterion two are satisfied and the third is somewhat irrelevant. Jomfru Ane Park is located in a lively public realm, on the edge of constant people flows, and it is well lit during the evenings. The diversity of functions 24/7 is only partially satisfied due to the fact that the functions are not in the direct proximity to the park (see ill.3.26 from context for diversity of functions.) Ill.3.34 shows the lighting pattern at the park as black circles.

3. Protection against unpleasant sensory experiences

The park provides some protection from the elements in the form of the pergolas on its western edge. (ill. 3.35) Otherwise, it is completely open to the elements. It is somewhat protected from wind due to being at a lower level that the promenade and the street. This criterion is partially satisfied.

4. Opportunities to walk/cycle

The park itself is too small to entertain possibilities for walking and cycling. A walk around the park takes less than 2 minutes. However, its proximity to the promenade, where both are primary activities, satisfies this criterion. (ill. 3.36)
5. **Opportunities to stop and stay**

Jomfru Ane Park provides excellent opportunities for stopping and staying. The grass lawn, located at the centre of the park is very inviting for people to use as a sitting place, and it is used as such. There are not many things one could lean against, but the fact that there are so many edges that can be used for sitting makes up for this. This criterion is satisfied. (ill. 3.37)

6. **Opportunities to sit**

The northern edge of the park, built as two 30cm high steps covered in wood provides the best sitting space for the park. The eastern concrete edge also functions very well as a sitting place. Even the planter edges are at a 30cm height and can be used as sitting edges. This criterion is satisfied.

7. **Opportunities to see**

There are ample opportunities to see and be seen from the park. From the promenade it is a preferred sight. The only hindering is found on the southern edge in the form of the wall separating the park from the street. It blocks the view towards the street providing noise protection at the same time. (ill. 3.38) This criterion is fulfilled.

8. **Opportunities to talk and listen**

Jomfru Ane Park is a good place to talk and listen. When the park is partially used, the groups position themselves at a distance that helps keep conversations private. When the park is full of people, the white noise of the general conversation and the music some play provide perfect cover for more private conversations. It is a pleasant place to talk and to listen. This criterion is fulfilled.

9. **Opportunities for play and exercise**

The park is used for play, when chil-
Children with their parents are there. As for exercising, there is little incentive for this activity because right next to the park towards the West, there are sports courts that are much better adapted for exercising. This criterion is partially fulfilled.

10. Dimensioned at human scale

Everything in Jomfru Ane Park is dimensioned at the human scale. All the edges are sitable and the park is easily accessible for everyone. The way the park is designed is very relatable and understandable. It is programmed clearly, so that people know where to sit and stay. (ill. 3.39) This criterion is satisfied.

11. Opportunities to enjoy the positive aspects of climate

As for the third criterion it was mentioned that the park is almost completely open. This plays to its disadvantage on days with bad weather due to the lack of shelter, but very much to its advantage when the weather is good. Jomfru Ane Park is the perfect place to enjoy good weather, and its location next to the open pool makes it an ideal place even when the weather gets too hot. This criterion is fulfilled.

12. Aesthetic qualities and positive sensory experience

The park is very pleasant aesthetically. It has a variety of plants in different sizes, and the green contrasts well with all the concrete and asphalt that surrounds it. This criterion is therefore satisfied.

Conclusions on the 12 criteria

Out of the 12 quality criteria Jomfru Ane Park satisfies nine (criterion 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11 and 12), and partially satisfies the other three (2, 3 and 9). The park is a very good example for a successful design in the right place, and should serve as a lesson for those aspiring to apply the 12 criteria.
What should be done about it?

- The short answer is, nothing. The space is very successful as it stands today. However, if there is one disadvantage that Jomfru Ane Park has, it is that it has become too popular, and on days of very intense use, being there can be overwhelming. This is as much a consequence of the park’s popularity, as it is a consequence of the fact that Utzon Park located immediately East of Jomfru Ane Park is far less attractive. A good solution would be to improve the latter in order to ease pressure on the former.
3.5 Case Study: Musikkens Plads

What has planning done for this space?

Musikkens Plads is covered by local plan nr. 1-1-111 approved in 2011. The area that the local plan regulates includes the university building, the student housing, Musikkens Plads and the stretch of waterfront promenade that crosses it. Below are the important excerpts from the local plan regarding urban space.

The goals of the local plan are:

- “that the area “can be transformed into an experience rich and sustainable urban area, with urban qualities and recreational purposes in connection with the city and the fjord, for mixed urban purposes in the form of housing, culture, shops, restaurants, hotel, teaching and office;
- that the desired cohesion, high quality and green, sustainable solutions reflect in the area’s buildings and its outdoor areas;
- that the area is decorated with attractive and usable urban spaces with good living possibilities;
- that there is an area reserved for a waterfront promenade with at least 15m width.” [Aalborg Kommune, 2011 p: 22]

Only one building has to have public oriented uses, and that is the southernmost student housing building. The other student housing buildings are not required to have this, although both student housing build-
For the public urban space, the plan defines the character that the urban space must have.

The public spaces with green and recreational character must follow these general guidelines:

- “The layout of the urban spaces is based on its use and should generally be safe from traffic, have connections and good overview conditions.”
- A wind comfort level must be ensured in the urban spaces which supports the opportunity for long stays.
- There must be ample public, staying opportunities for both shorter and longer stays.
- The sight line towards the fjord must not be hindered
- The primary flow lines for pedestrians and cyclists must be secured through the urban spaces.
- The lighting must mark the spatiality of the urban spaces; road lighting must be aimed at pedestrians and cyclists in housing areas.
- New planting must be robust and consistent with the use of the urban spaces, scale, character and growth conditions.” [Aalborg Kommune, 2011 p: 25]

The semi-private spaces are not strictly regulated through the plan. Overall the plan details the intensions for the urban spaces in the area well, pointing in the direction of creating urban spaces that support activities and urban life.
What is the context of Musikkens Plads?

Musikkens Plads is located on the eastern side of the waterfront, between the Music House the Henning Larsen student housing, Strandvejen and the waterfront promenade. It is within a 2 minutes’ walk from Nordkraft, the city library and Karolinelund Park. It is connected via the promenade to the Utzon Park, and Jomfru Ane Park. (ill. 3.41)

Musikkens Plads is a new urban space finished it 2015 and serves as a recreation area for the student housing, the university and the Music House. It is rarely used for staying, being mostly a pass-through area for people on their way someplace else.

Defining Musikkens Plads

Clearly defining this space is a challenge because it does not have clear edges. Towards the North it merges into the promenade, towards the South it is not clear if it stops or continues after the change in pavement from asphalt to concrete and towards the west, it merges into the area in front of the university building. Only on the eastern side there is a clear edge of the space, namely the Music House platform. For the purpose of this study the space will be defined as shown in ill.3.42. Ill.3.43 shows the edges of the space.

The space is visually divided in two: the northern part, merging into the promenade, paved with asphalt and black gravel, and the southern part, paved with white concrete that opens up into the sidewalk of Strandvejen. The northern part is intended as a recreational area with possibilities for staying and sitting, while the southern part is more of a natural continuation of the semi-private enclaves around
the student housing. As mentioned above, Musikkens Plads is difficult to define, due to its merging with its surrounding area. The area marked on the above map measures ca. 8,820 m² evenly divided between the northern and southern parts. It is a very large area for an urban space. Just one of its parts is larger than both Jomfru Ane Park and Gammeltorv. Ill.3.44 puts Musikkens Plads’ scale in perspective by showing its size in relation of that of a handball field measuring 40x20 m.
Land use

Ill. 3.45 and 3.46 show the uses of the buildings in the vicinity of Musikkens Plads and the times of day that these are active. Musikkens Plads is located in an area of mostly single use buildings, with the exception of Nordkraft, which is a hub of mixed uses. There are a few other buildings that are mixed use. This, combined with the fact that most single use functions are activated mostly during regular business hours, is a great disadvantage for the square. This is because it will lack users after hours. At the same time, most of the single uses in the area do not require frequent comings and goings in the buildings, which means that the flows of people using these buildings are rather weak. Exceptions are the university building, Nordkraft and in the evenings the Music House, but even with the flows generated by these there are not enough people to fill Musikkens Plads.

The use of Musikkens Plads

The purpose of Musikkens Plads is that of recreation and leisure. The original plans for having it as a multi activity space were changed throughout the planning process and at the request of the politicians the space was made much greener with way more trees. [Appendix B3.2]

The reality of the space is somewhat different than the plans. People mostly just pass through it on their way to the promenade or somewhere else. Even during events like the Tall Ships Races that activated the entire
waterfront, there were few people using the square, and none used the grass for sitting and staying (it was also fenced off). Ill. 3.48 contains photos taken minutes apart show activity levels in Musikkens Plads and the waterfront promenade during the event.

The most used urban furniture in the area during the Tall Ships Races and on an average day are the chaise longs placed on the promenade, and all the edges of planters that could be used for sitting. The steps in Musikkens Plads, along with the seating placed there were scarcely used in comparison. On an average day, however, the square is mostly empty. There are people passing...
Mobility

The main pedestrian flow in the area around Musikkens Plads happens on the Shopping street of Algade, which is located two streets away from the square. The pedestrian magnets shown in ill. 3.50 are the university, the Music House and Nordkraft. They attract large numbers of people. Mostly pedestrians and cyclists. Nevertheless, they fail to disperse these flows in the same way that Nytorv for example does because the activities they sustain happen inside. This means that even though they bring a lot of people into the area, few of those people actually go outside to use and enjoy the urban spaces. People mostly come from the South, and leave the same way.

The promenade provides a constant but low flow of pedestrians. As it was shown in the case of Jomfru Ane Park, the pedestrian flows directed towards the East, meaning towards Musikkens Plads are weaker than the ones directed towards the West. These flows weaken even more in the proximity of the Music House. Musikkens Plads, along with the large space in front of the Music House, suffer because of these weak flows.
Climate
Musikkens Plads is located between two tall buildings edging it from the East and West. This helps create a wind corridor with a N-S direction in the space. The natural wind direction is altered by the student housing buildings and the speed of the air movement increased. Ill. 3.51, shows a mapping taken from the municipality’s analysis of wind patterns surrounding the Music House and the student housing and it reveals the areas where the wind is strongest.

With regards to climate, Musikkens Plads is not the most comfortable urban space to be in. There are strong winds and, as can be seen in the satellite images, [Appendix D1 the buildings surrounding the square cast large shadows on it.

Conclusions on context
Musikkens Plads is located in an area of low pedestrian flows that also suffers from strong winds. Furthermore, the square stands in the shadows cast by the tall student housing building and the Music House for significant periods during the day. Additionally, the area in which it is located is mostly uni-functional with uses that do not create constant flows throughout the day. Last but not least, its size is disproportionate to the pedestrian flows it experiences.
How does Musikkens Plads live up to the 12 urban quality criteria?

1. **Protection against traffic accidents and feeling safe**

Musikkens Plads is not affected by car traffic as it is a pedestrian urban space. Strandvejen is the only street close to the square and it has a wide sidewalk in front of the square that acts as a buffer in between the square and the street. Strandvejen is a street where the car lanes are divided by a median strip which helps keep the driving speed low. This criterion is satisfied.

2. **Protection against crime and violence, feeling secure**

Musikkens Plads is not located in a lively public realm, due to the lack of intense people flows. It is well-lit during evenings and there is a level of surveillance from the student housing tower. There is little diversity of functions and the area is time programmed in a way that leaves long times during the day without any people in the urban spaces. However, the openness of the space works to its advantage in that any movement is visible from a long distance, so even if there are not many people in the space or its vicinity, there is a level of surveillance in the area. This criterion is partially satisfied. See ill. 3.53 for the square’s lighting pattern.

3. **Protection against unpleasant sensory experiences**

Musikkens Plads is a completely open urban space that provides no shelter from the elements. The wind speed is increased by the tall building, which make it drafty even on the days with nice weather. Shelter could potentially be found under the overhang from the student housing building, but it is somewhat uncomfortable to do so due to the very open nature of the facade. The
facades were designed to be open, but not to have a good relationship with the urban space surrounding the building. (ill. 3.54) It is unlikely that someone might seek shelter there. The wind study made by the municipality did not find a corresponding design solution to attenuate the effects of the strong winds in the space. This criterion is not fulfilled.

4. Opportunities to walk/cycle
Musikkens Plads is a pedestrian space, and a good one too. You can also cycle through it, due to the accessibility slopes built into the landscaping. The surfaces are good for both walking and cycling. What is less interesting are the facades: the student housing facade is a continuous glass wall with many doors inaccessible from the outside. The Music House facade could be interesting in its details, but the grey concrete that it is made out of make it look and feel boring. There are few windows opening towards Musikkens Plads, the building mostly turns a blind side towards the square. (ill. 3.56) This criterion is partially fulfilled.

5. Opportunities to stop and stay
Musikkens Plads affords few opportunities to stop and stay. There are the lighting posts that could be used by people leaning against them, but there are no defined spots for standing, and no edges to gather towards. The facades of the surrounding buildings are not at all inviting people to get close and stay. This criterion is not fulfilled.

6. Opportunities to sit
There are many seating places in Musikkens Plads, but they are more aesthetic than functional. Seating surfaces are dimensioned for one person (60cm) and placed at what is deemed the comfortable distance for two strangers to sit next to each other (60cm). If a group of two-three people would want to use the
seating, one of them would sit on the seat, while the other on the concrete step, lower than their friend and far less comfortable. There are also larger seats, but not large enough to host two people (90cm) (ill. 3.56 and 3.57).

The seating in this part of the space is also placed on the eastern and western edges, turning one’s back towards the Music House and the student housing. While the edge next to the student housing is close enough to the building to make it comfortable (ill. 3.57), the one towards the Music House is not (3-58). Making one feel like they have to watch over their shoulder to see what is happening.

In the southern part of the space, the seating is in the form of three fixed chairs, that can be rotated after one’s desire. (ill. 3.59) Their location in Musikkesn Plads is, however, unfortunate, because they are found in the sides of what is the path through, but without any means to make people stop and use them. They are also placed at odd distances from each other which makes it unlikely that groups of people might actually use them. These should be placed closer to the buildings instead. That would incentivise people working there to gather if they needed some fresh air, and at the same time they will be more sheltered from the wind than in their current location.

Unsurprisingly, the seats used the most at Musikkens Plads are the ones on its northern end, where the space merges into the promenade. These are fixed chaise longs that can be rotated as one pleases, and are very comfortable. (ill. 3.60) Even if they are not technically wide enough for two people to sit comfortably side by side in one chair, they are often used by couples to enjoy the views. Even on days where the weather is less forgiving, there are people using them. Why are they being used while the others shunned? First, their placement in the middle of the pedestrian flows make them an obvious choice for seating. Second, they are the most comfortable out of all other seats in the area. And third, they provide a playful element in that they can be turned around as one wishes. The other chairs have this characteristic as well, but are far less attractive. The grass areas are never used for sitting. This criterion is partially fulfilled.
7. Opportunities to see

Musikkens Plads provides opportunities to see and be seen, but, the seeing distances are large because the space is so big. This criterion is satisfied.

8. Opportunities to talk and listen

There are good opportunities to talk and listen at Musikkens Plads. The space is large enough to allow groups to sit at comfortable distances, and there are no echoes. This criterion is fulfilled.

9. Opportunities for play and exercise

Musikkens Plads could provide opportunities for exercising and play. But, some of those are hindered by active measures to prevent the usage of the edges for such activities like skateboarding. (ill. 3.61)

The water feature in the square was meant to be used as a play feature, and it was designed so that it is comfortable to step into and play inside. The water is only a few centimetres deep, so there is no danger even for small children. It is not used for play, however, and that is due to the fact that there is no indication that people and children can play there. It has a more sculptural quality than a playful one. There is also little doubt that the lack of users in the square plays a role into the fountain not being used for play. Water is a magnet for play, but people are needed. This criterion is partially fulfilled.
10. Dimensioned at human scale

Musikkens Plads is not dimensioned at a human scale. The furniture and furnishings, plants and seating edges are at a human scale. The space itself however, is too big and open for it to be perceived at the human scale. The buildings are tall and dominate both in height and volume. The size of the space is in harmony with the buildings, but the human being is lost. What it lacks is a visual division that would make it more easily comprehensive to people. The seats discussed for criterion 6, the ones deemed unfortunate in their location, could help in creating some enclaves. But, having them placed next to planted areas of low vegetation does not help create a more intimate feeling. This criterion is not fulfilled.

11. Opportunities to enjoy the positive aspects of climate

There are ample opportunities to enjoy good weather at Musikkens Plads. There is seating, and even having the large shadows can be advantageous on really hot days. The rotating chairs and chaise lounges contribute greatly to the enjoyment of good weather. This criterion is fulfilled.

12. Aesthetic qualities and positive sensory experience

Aesthetically, Musikkens Plads is a good space, with high quality design and materials. One could say that it is more aesthetically pleasing than functional. This criterion is fulfilled.
Conclusions on the Criteria

Out of the 12 criteria Musikkens Plads fulfils criterion 1, 7, 8, 11 and 12. It partially fulfils criterion 2, 4, 6, 9 and does not fulfil 3, 5 and 10. After looking at both the criteria and the context of the space, it becomes clear that what Musikkens Plads needs is people. The space is grossly underused.

What should be done about it?

• In order to attract more people into this space a strong attractor is needed in the square. It must be an activity that generates flows of people throughout the day and the evening, so that people have a reason to stop at Musikkens Plads. It could be housed on the ground floor of the student housing, or in a temporary building in the square. It could be a restaurant cheap enough to appeal to a student’s budget, or a cultural activity that appeals to people’s curiosity. Ideally it would have the entire ground floor of the student housing rented out to businesses that require constant flows of people.

• A second suggestion is to create shelter from the wind. Strong winds are the main deterrent for people staying in the square. The sheltering solution does not have to drastically impact the aesthetic qualities of the square, but is needed to get people to use the space in less than ideal weather conditions.

• Activity in the square must be encouraged, in the form of short events (like a DJ playing music one afternoon, a dance performance, a theatre play, etc.), so that Musikkens Plads becomes associated with interesting activities. These events could be organised by the municipality, or by private actors with the municipality as a facilitator.

• The southern part of the space should be redesigned to include more intimate areas that would help not only with giving Musikkens Plads a more human scale feeling, but also activate this part of the space that now sits empty.
3.6 Case study Nørresundby Square

What has Planning Done for this Space?

Nørresundby Square is not covered by a local plan. It is covered by the municipal plan frame 1.2.C2 that also covers most of the central part of Nørresundby, though. The goal of the frame is to preserve the character of Nørresundby’s old town centre, preserving and expanding its mixed use and the existing housing in the area. The frame can be seen in Appendix C5. Regarding urban space, the frame refers to the renovation process from the 1990’s that has formed the square as it is seen today. The character of the place must be preserved and city life promoted. Many of the buildings framing the square are protected, and for future planning endeavours it is important that the overall structure and sightlines form the square are preserved.

What is the Context of Nørresundby Square?

Nørresundby Square is located at the core of the old town of Nørresundby. Its location, slightly off centre from the bridge, has been explained in the introduction to the case studies part of this chapter. It is located in close proximity to the Nørresundby waterfront promenade and the town’s main shopping street: Vesterade. It is also connected, across the bridge with the city centre of Aalborg and its waterfront. (ill. 3.64)

Defining Nørresundby Square

Nørresundby Square is a city square defined by its surrounding buildings. There are several preserved buildings in the proximity of the square, including the old Nørresundby City Hall, the Bridge House and Folkets Hus located at the entrance to Vesterade. Car traffic is allowed in the square, on the street called Torvet, which is an integral part of the space. This street divides the square on a N-S axis, though not symmetrically. The part of the square located West of the street is long and very narrow with a widened sidewalk character, while the part located towards the east of the street is wider and has more of a square character. Nørresundby Square is an elongated space, oriented N-S with an area of approximately 6130m2, 148m long, and 40m at its widest point. It is a large space defined also by the street crossing it and the water feature that acts as a guiding element diagonally across the space. (ill. 3.65)
Land Use

Ill. 3.67 and 3.68 show the land use surrounding Nørresundby Square and the times of day they activate the area. It is mostly a mixed-use area, with commercial and housing as the most common mix. There are several single-use buildings, with offices and finance being dominant. Overall the area is well activated during business hours, but the activity level drops dramatically after 5 o’clock in the afternoon. The area is lacking time programming and functions that activate it in the evenings. There is one pizza place on Vesteregade that brings some people into the area in the evening. Otherwise, after the shops are closed, the area dies. There is some activity along the promenade in Nørresundby, but the distance between the square and the promenade make it mostly irrelevant to Nørresundby Square.

The Use of Nørresundby Square

Nørresundby Square is mostly used as a pass-through space. It is supposed to be a recreative square at the centre of the old town, but its configuration and furnishing do not really support this activity. During summer there is an event happening every Friday in the square in form of a farmers market. Sometimes there are concerts or other events, taking advantage of the built-in stage in the square. During these events there are people gathering, but on a regular day, the square is mostly empty. People gather around the bus stops, but other than that there are few sitting.
Mobility around Nørresundby Square is defined by the vehicle traffic flows. There is a street actually crossing the square dividing it. This alone has a great influence on the way the square is used. Ill. 3.69 and 3.70 show mobility and mobility patterns around Nørresundby Square.

Flows of vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists are intertwined at Nørresundby Square, making understanding the patterns of movement difficult. Most pedestrian flows originate from the surrounding area and gather either on the shopping street Vestergade, or on the promenade. The gathering point in the square is around the bus stops. There is temporary parking (taxi area) allowed in front of some banks located in the square. They not only take up space in the square, but they also set a tone for the entire space that traffic is expected and welcomed here. This should not be so. Nor should parking be allowed on the shopping street. There have been discussions between the municipality and the shop owners on Vestergade to remove the parking spaces, but they are still there at the time this project was made.
Climate

Nørresundby Square is oriented towards the South benefitting from sunlight throughout the day. It suffers somewhat from high winds, but no worse than its surrounding area, with the strongest winds coming from the S-W, meaning from the fjord.

Conclusions on Context

Nørresundby Square’s context is dominated by the traffic coming from and towards the bridge. The square is fragmented by car access and activity is scarce and disparaged. The use of the area does not attract enough people to fill the square. However, when special events are hosted there, people gather.
How does Nørresundby Square live up to the 12 urban quality criteria?

1. Protection against traffic accidents and feeling safe

Given that vehicle traffic plays a great part in the way Nørresundby Square is used, the square is quite safe. The square is designed as a modified form of shared space, where the pavement of the pedestrian areas is similar to that of the car lanes to give the sense of one space, but still distinctive enough as to not confuse the two. Traffic speed is slow because of the sense of unity in the space, but it is clear for pedestrians where they go and where the cars drive. The vehicle flows are close to being constant, which make all the user groups aware of their designated spaces. This criterion is fulfilled.

2. Protection against crime and violence, feeling secure

Nørresundby Square is located in a lively public realm area during business hours. There are constant flows of people going through the square, and there are good sightlines that allow for any event to be seen from a distance. There is not much diversity of functions that would activate the space at all hours of the day. However, the square is well lit in the evenings as ill. 3.72 shows (the black dots). This criterion is partially fulfilled.

3. Protection against unpleasant sensory experiences

There is little shelter from the elements in Nørresundby Square. Here and there, some of the businesses and shops have canopies but these are few. The buildings edging the square have few and shallow overhangs as seen in ill. 3.73. The best shelter is at the bus stops, which are covered. The bus stops also provide shelter from the wind, on days with strong drafts. This criterion is not fulfilled.
4. Opportunities to walk/cycle
Nørresundby Square is a great place to walk and cycle. The pavement is good for both, and the views are interesting. There are multiple opportunities to stop and turn, and the square is interesting enough to slow down the cycling speed in order to experience it better. The facades of the buildings can be seen in ill.3.74. This criterion is fulfilled.

5. Opportunities to stop and stay
Nørresundby Square provides good opportunities to stop and stay. The facades are interesting and people are stopping in their proximity often. Staying however happens for very short periods of time. Nørresundby Square is more a pass-through kind of space than a recreational one. This criterion is satisfied.

6. Opportunities to sit
Opportunities to sit are scarce at Nørresundby Square and disproportionate to the space’s size. Formal seating benches are few (only 8), and they are positioned more from aesthetic considerations than functional ones. (ill. 3.75) There is a built-in stage towards the Northern end of the square which can also be used for seating. This criterion is not satisfied.

7. Opportunities to see
Nørresundby square provides good opportunities to see and be seen. What it lacks is enough users to
activate the sights and make people want to stop and stay. Seeing distances are large on the N-S axis, but much smaller on the E-W axis. This criterion is satisfied.

8. Opportunities to talk and listen

There are good opportunities to talk and listen in Nørresundby Square. The traffic noise is not loud enough to be interfering with these activities. This criterion is fulfilled.

9. Opportunities for play and exercise

There are good opportunities to play and exercise in Nørresundby Square. The fountain can be used for water play, and the stage for exercising. The square is often passed through by runners. (ill. 3.76) This criterion is partially satisfied.

10. Dimensioned at human scale

Nørresundby Square is designed with the human scale in mind, the buildings and their facades make this clear. However, the size of the place in relation to its furnishings posts a problem because there is too much empty space, and that diminishes the feeling that you are in a place where the human scale is important. (ill. 3.77) This criterion is partially satisfied.

11. Opportunities to enjoy the positive aspects of climate

There are ample opportunities to enjoy good weather in Nørresundby Square, however, due to the limited seating not many people can use the space at the same time. This criterion is partially satisfied.

12. Aesthetic qualities and positive sensory experience

Nørresundby Square has a high-quality design, and materials. It is pleasant to be there, and the square’s configuration makes it an interesting place to be. Its collection of older and newer buildings also provide an aesthetic diversity that is most welcome. This criterion is fulfilled.

Conclusions on the 12 criteria

Nørresundby Square satisfies criterion 1, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 12. It partially satisfies criterion 2, 9, 10 and 11, and it does not satisfy criterion 3 and 6. The place needs better opportunities to sit and stay, and land uses that activate it through the afternoons and evenings.
What should be done about it?

- The first suggestion is removing the temporary parking in front of the banks. It should be no doubt that Nørresundby Square is a pedestrian space, with limited vehicle traffic allowed.

- Nørresundby Square needs more seating space. The square is used for events that require it to allow for vehicle access, but that doesn’t mean that it should remain empty on an average day. Semi-permanent furniture can be placed in the square to allow for more seating on an every day. These can be removed in case of special events. And replaced afterwards.

- Nørresundby Square needs diversity of uses in the surrounding buildings. That would activate the area after business hours. Cafes, restaurants are completely missing from the area. These activities should be somehow encouraged, which means that a substantial urban regeneration effort is required for the central part of Nørresundby.
3. 7 Conclusions

The four case studies presented here underline the need for great care when applying planning and design theories to the city. A thorough understanding of the concepts from theory that are applied is imperative. For example, the cases of Musikkens Plads, and Nørresundby Square have shown a superficial understanding of the concept of mixed use. The cases of Gammeltorv and Nørresundby Square have shown a disregard for the physical framework that could make them be better used: seating space. Musikkens Plads, though of high aesthetic quality and with plenty of seating space fails to generate the pedestrian flows that would make it work. Gammeltorv, Musikkens Plads and Nørresundby square lack perception at a human scale. The case of Jomfru Ane Park is peculiar, because it is a space that is overused but that has up until now, held its own. Pressure on it space should be eased.

The case studies in this chapter identify four core issues that contemporary urban spaces need to handle: lack of users, lack of programming and furniture, apparent mixed use and deceiving human scale. Planning and design theories tackle these issues, but they are difficult to apply in real life, because even these theories lack a level of detailing that translates into measurable parameters. For example Gehl’s criterion on seatable space does not specify height, length or depth. Whyte gets closer, but even he keeps actual parameters to a minimum. Jacobs speaks about generators of flows, but the conditions for these to function reach out from planning theory, and into the discussions and agreements throughout the planning process.
The final chapter of this study is, in a way, a synthesized version of things discussed in the previous two chapters. The goal for this chapter is to provide the reader with a simple and comprehensive set of tools that can be used when analysing or designing urban spaces. The case studies have shown that on some level the principles of planning and designing for good, functional urban spaces are misapplied. It is the purpose of this chapter to provide a framework for better applying these theories.

Method

This chapter is empirical in nature and it is built on the foundations set by chapters 2 and 3 in this study, as well as on the multiple planning and design theories discussed throughout these chapters. It is divided into two parts for need of a structure, one dealing with planning related things and the other with design related elements. However, its understanding should be as a whole, because the things that make spaces great are always a combination of the two.

4.1 Planning Related Things to Keep in Mind

Two Levels of Analysis: Contextual and Localized

Urban spaces analysis should be done on two levels: that of the context of the space, which includes a larger area of the city, and on a localized level, regarding only the space itself and its adjacent buildings. While the broader context provides information about the general mobility and land use in the area, the analysis of the space itself establishes the strengths and weaknesses of the design of the place. Both are important, because they show the relationship between the space and its surrounding area. This relationship should be symbiotic.

Context Analysis and Interpretation of What is Relevant.

Context analysis for urban spaces can be done in many different ways, and employing different levels of complexity. Although, it is not necessarily the most complex analysis that yields the best conclusions. More important is identifying what is relevant for the particular analysed space, and pursuing the criteria that can help identify the underlying causes for its status quo.

For example, in the case of Musikkens Plads the lack of people using the space is partially explained by its location in relation to major pedestrian flows. Vehicle flows are close to irrelevant, and cyclist flows matter but a little more than cars. A mobility analysis of that space needs to focus on the pedestrian flows, and any solutions for a possible renovation or remodelling on how to attract or create these flows.

Another example for establishing relevance in analysis criteria is the land use analysis. Mixed use areas are well documented for being safe, functional and popular. But it is not just the fact that buildings in an area house mixed uses. Mixed use brings about the diversity found in good urban areas only if they attract people in the streets and urban spaces at all times of day. That is what creates urban life, not just having a random mixture of functions. Nørresundby Square is a testimony to that fact.

Finding the relevant analysis criteria can be a difficult task, and it often happens that they are only identified after more extensive analysis. This is only natural, though. After all planners analysing urban areas often have little knowledge of the daily routines taking place in the analysed area. What is important is to sieve through the data and focus only on the relevant things.

Understanding How Vision Goals Translate into Physical Space

In chapter 1 it was discussed that the activities set in the vision documents do not necessarily translate into the activity levels set in the goals. While this is true, there are ways to set thing in motion in the right direction.

For example, if the goal for a space is to be a lively public realm, the key word here is people. An urban space needs
lots of people in order to create the atmosphere of a lively public realm. This brings the question of how to get people in the area, and outside in the streets.

If the goal is for a specific user group to use an urban space, then special planning and furnishings must appeal to that user group.

**Understanding User’s Needs**

Planning has the difficult task to try and create or change areas of towns and cities to better fit the reality of the day. Throughout the negotiations for any project, the question of what the users of the area need should be predominant. Understanding the needs of people using the new or improved area means a step ahead in getting them met. Plans are often made for only primary functions, while the secondary ones are not advocated for well enough. For example, having an area of many student housing buildings, and not a single cafe or bar where they can enjoy their neighbourhood, or having an area of offices without a place where someone could get their lunch. The secondary uses, the ones that mostly speak to the personal needs of people, need to be promoted throughout the planning process, because those are the ones that bring people outside and onto the streets. Questions like, where do these people get a take-out pizza from, where can they have a drink, or where can they fix a bike may seem trivial, but they speak directly to people’s actual needs. They need to be asked during the negotiations for urban development projects.

**The Need to Hear the Stories of People**

The case studies presented in chapter 3 were made possible by in-depth knowledge that the author of this study had about them. It is the same with any other urban space analysis. What do we do, however, when as planners or developers we must make such an analysis in areas that are unknown to us? The answer is to talk to the people living or working there. Citizen meetings help with this, but they are not enough, because at these meeting people usually express what they think is important. Not that this information is irrelevant, but many times, the causes of their grievances, or the origins of an area’s problems are hidden in the stories that these people tell about their daily life. Interacting with them on a personal level and listening to them can help planners a lot. It was through talking to the shop owners of Vesteregade that the author learned of their dissatisfaction with the parking spaces on the street.

**4.2 Design Related Things to Keep in Mind**

**Seating and Staying**

Sitting place in urban spaces must be dimensioned in accordance to the intensity of use desired. Calculating the effective capacity of an urban space is a good indicator of its intended use. Seating must be placed according to views, people flows and climate comfort. Sometimes that means a less than neat plan drawing, but it will make for a better used space. Seating must also be comfortable. A comfortable height, a comfortable material. Many times, seating is created out of the materials used for pavement. At Musikkens Plads, the seating is created using the same concrete slabs that the steps are made of, by stacking two of them and adding a metal seat. They look neat, but the metal is uncomfortable and cold. The simple concrete would have done better.

**The Human Scale**

Designing at a human scale is often incompletely understood. Facades designed in a comprehensible scale for humans, and dimensioning seating and furniture for the use of people are just two parts of it. The third part, the one that is forgotten, is the fact that urban spaces must also be perceived at a human scale. People understand outdoor space depending on what they can relate to as human beings. A place like Jomfru Ane Park is perceived as being comfortable and relatable, even if it is ⅔ of the size of Gammeltorv, because it’s design makes it appear smaller, and therefore more relatable. Very large spaces need some sort of visual division that make them relatable to humans, or they need to be crowded enough so that you only get to perceive them in small empty areas surrounded by lots of people. This can be done using vegetation, furniture, and walls.
Indoor-outdoor relationship

The design of urban spaces should contribute to creating a symbiosis with the buildings surrounding it. This relationship is important especially in places that rely on the people using the buildings to use the urban space as well. Seating and staying should be emphasized close to the buildings and shelter created.

Passive Surveillance

Buildings with facades edging urban spaces should provide windows towards these, so that people can see what is happening in these spaces. This ensures not only safety, but provides also entertainment. Buildings cannot turn their backs on the urban spaces because that also has an influence on the way these spaces are being used.

4.3 Common Misconceptions about Urban Spaces in Planning and Design

A common misconception in planning is that building a new housing area, with a high density of housing units will bring about life in the streets surrounding these buildings, because so many thousands of people live here now. It is not true, though. Housing projects in the 50ies and 60ies did just that, and soon they came to be dangerous and, in many cases, hated. [Tynauer, 2016] People need reasons to be outside, and if they are to stay outside, they need things to do. If the public realm accommodates them, then the development will make for a lively area.

Another misconception is that leaving an urban space mostly empty allows for it to be flexibly used. Sometimes the larger the space, the emptier. This misconception is partially based on examples from old cities, like Rome, Florence, Athens, where the old agoras and squares have worked perfectly well empty of any visible programming for centuries. These spaces have, however a solid support in diversity of functions, cultural pearls of architecture and art, and are landmarks of historical events. They work because of all these factors. New urban spaces lack this kind of support. Therefore, leaving them empty of any permanent programming for the possibility of flexible use is not a good idea. Empty urban spaces become pass-through areas.

A final misconception is that of the lawn as an attractive place to sit, stay and play. It is true that grass lawns can be used for sitting and staying, but that only happens when there are other factors at work that pull people there. For example, the lawn in Jomfru Ane Park is used because it represents the largest sitting area in the park. The design of the park, with the lawn at this centre is that of a theatre hall, where the stage is the lawn. Adding to this the intense people flows around the park, there is little wonder that it is used the way it is. Contrary, the lawn at Utzon Park, not 150 m from Jomfru Ane Park, is always empty. There is no design to emphasize it, it is just a green stain in a sea of asphalt. The same flows of people surround it, but it stays empty. For new projects, illustrations are created showing them full of activity and life. In reality, they stay mostly empty.

The ideas presented in this chapter are just the ones that were crystalized throughout the processes of chapters 2 and 3. There are certainly more that can be identified, but this project is restricted only to the methods and theories used in these two chapters.
CONCLUSION

The goal of this project has been that of exploring the way urban spaces are being planned, designed and built viewed from a pracsis point of view. The project also set out to investigate the differences between what is planned and what is built, and in case of failure to deliver on the goals set in the plans what went wrong, and how it happened.

The approach of urban developments and the role urban spaces have in them, from a pracsis point of view has inadvertently led back to theories of planning and design. Having verified how these theories are applied in pracsis, there is now a clear picture of the phenomena that surround urban space planning nad design.

Planning is limited in its formal form to regulate and create urban life. they can regulate space, but the factors that create life in the streets and urban spaces are negotiated and decided in the informal planning process. This happens especially because the kind of activiteis that generate lively areas are the small scale shops and businesses that put people on the streets: neighbourhood shops and workshops, cafes, bars, restaurants, galleries and studios. These activities come about spontaneous behind primary uses like housing and offices, but can be encouraged through planning by making agreements with localised small business owners, or education institutions that get for example cheaper rent prices, in exchange for putting people on the streets. Leaving this aspect to chance is becoming less and less of an option, in the context of new developments. Formal planning can therefore create the spaces, but getting a desired activity level require active efforts to support it.

The number one requirement for a good urban space is it being used. This means people using it, passing through, stopping, sitting, plating, etc. even the best designed spaces lay forgotten if there aren’t people enough around to use them. At the same time, spaces located in excellent people flows stay empty if there aren’t any amneties to get people to use them.

Caution must be exercised when theories are applied to the city. practice has shown that misunderstanding concepts, or superficially understanding them can have severe consequences.

For the practice of planning and designing urban spaces, a critial approach to the methods used for analysing the city is very important. It is easy to fall in a routine of using the same methods again and again, and there are of course, criteria that are reused. The question of relevance for the specific case of these criteria should however, always be asked.
REFLEXIONS

For the research in this project, I ended up turning the classical research approach on its head, by disregarding theoretical frameworks (in the first part of the project) and starting from practice, and the practical experiences of people who make a living in planning and developing cities. This approach brought about a great deal of anxiety, in the same way any new learning experience does. At the same time, it brought on a much needed change of perspective and with it, a much better understanding of the chosen research topic. While the project started from this different perspective, continued by going back to theoretical frameworks, because the study of practice pointed in the direction of well known planning and design theories that deal with the urban life aspect of cities. Stepping away from the well known path, I chose to look at the way theory is applied, because it made little sense knowing the theory, and still building little used spaces. This was the most illuminating part of this project. Last but not least, I tried to condense what I have learned into a few ideas to keep in mind when planning and designing urban spaces. Many of these ideas, expressed in the last chapter of this project have been things that I tried to articulate ever since the first mappings in Gammeltorv in 2015. This paper have been the means to do so.
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